

## Necropolis 141

### Chapter 141: Making a Scene

“Hahaha!” Zhao Tiefeng responded with furious laughter, contempt rising in his eyes. “What would a venerated disciple of the Exalted Immortal Sect bother possessing a Nephrite buffoon for?”

“Or perhaps Nephrite Major’s cultivators are intentionally breaking rules, then pinning the blame on someone else? My sect happens to be a convenient target for your finger pointing since I’m exposing your scheme, isn’t that right?”

That ‘Ge Cheng’ was dead anyway, so there was no evidence against his word. The Coretrial Arena had forced Ge Cheng back to the golden core realm, nascent spirit and all. Dying meant that the spirit had died within the golden core, so not a trace of anything could possibly remain.

“Using a dead man to accuse my sect? Pathetic.” Zhao Tiefeng continued to sneer. “Lu Yun and that Nephrite envoy Qing Han over there, if you two don’t give the Exalted Immortal Sect an adequate explanation, expect retribution tenfold!”

He didn’t dare do anything in Dusk Province, but his sect could pressure Nephrite Major to act.

“You want an explanation, is it?” Lu Yun swept back a sidelong glance, then nodded. “Alright, then I’ll give you one today. Get out here!”

“Get out here? Who are you talking to?” Zhao Tiefeng blinked before the color drained from his face.

Beneath the stage, the dead Ge Cheng suddenly stood up and a translucent human shadow stepped out from his body. It looked to be a soul fragment, but the man’s appearance drastically differed from the Ge patriarch in life. Ge Cheng was a middle-aged man with a rather sinister look, but this soul was a youth.

“That’s Lao Nuo! He was one of the Exalted Immortal Sect’s best disciples seven hundred years ago!” another immortal shouted hoarsely with surprise. “He’s been missing for all this time, what is he doing here now?”

Evidently, this speaker was the same generation as this ‘Lao Nuo.’

Zhao Tiefeng colored before quickly reacting to the accusation. “Lao Nuo? The man who betrayed the Exalted Immortal Sect seven hundred years ago? So I see he’s joined Nephrite Ma—”

“Zhao Tiefeng, you fecking bastard!” Lao Nuo cursed with outrage when he heard the accusation.

“Seven hundred years ago, I snuck into Pill Fairy Yuying’s tomb with seven senior brothers on the sect’s orders. We were tasked with searching for the Panorama of Clarity, why has that turned to betrayal in your mouth?”

“What Panorama of Clarity? What fairy pill are you talking about? Cease this blasphemy!” Zhao Tiefeng’s facial muscles tensed and he rebuked indignantly, “Accursed child, how dare you forsake your ancestors?! Not content with betraying your sect, now you help outsiders slander it!”

“Hahahaha!” Tears streamed out of Lao Nuo’s eyes as he laughed hysterically. What incredible sadness did it take to cause a soul to weep?

He'd wasted seven hundred years of his youth inside a tomb for his sect. Alas, Yuying had destroyed his body on the brink of success, leaving only a soul fragment to escape and possess House Ge's leader.

Despite those setbacks, he pivoted to using his new identity to compete for the ancient lord's heritage on his sect's behalf, only for Zhao Tiefeng to call him a traitor!

Though Lao Nuo was now Lu Yun's Infernum, his heart burned with bitter resentment and tragic heartache.

"Zhao Tiefeng! You were one of those who plotted to steal Pill Fairy Yuying's Panorama of Clarity. That's why you interfered in her heavenly tribulation that year, which dealt her a nearly fatal injury—"

"Shut up!" Zhao Tiefeng finally became purple in the face.

There should've been no difficulties in Pill Fairy Yuying's heavenly tribulation all those years ago. Without a doubt, she was qualified to become an immortal. Her failure and abrupt death had come as a surprise to all, including the youthful pride of heaven Wayfarer, who'd sunk into depression for quite a while.

The words of this 'Lao Nuo', the Exalted Immortal Sect's supposed traitor, revealed a much better reason for that historical peculiarity. The strangest part of all was that Yuying hadn't died. According to the long-missing disciple, she'd merely been recuperating from her injuries inside the tomb all this time.

"Heheheh, I've heard rumors about something like that, too. Twelve hundred years ago, the Exalted Immortal Sect pestered the pill fairy for quite some time to obtain her Panorama of Clarity. She was forced by the circumstances to seek Nephrite Major's protection, which is why she became Dusk Province's governor."

The immortal who offered this was from Exalted Major as well, but his faction didn't seem to be on the best of terms with the Exalted Immortal Sect. He seemed rather happy to see the latter's misfortunes. "When the pill fairy failed her heavenly tribulation, eighteen tribulation-threshold cultivators from the Exalted Immortal Sect disappeared at the same time. There's been no news of them since..."

"The Exalted Immortal Sect, hmm? Explain yourself, Zhao Tiefeng, or none of you will leave Dusk Province alive!" Two beams of faint silver light shot out when Qing Han opened his eyes, exerting a frightening amount of pressure that gathered from every direction. The pressure came from the celestial emperor's token that was upon the young man's person.

Beet-red blood trickled out of a corner of Zhao Tiefeng's mouth.

"Is this your trap, Nephrite's emperor? This is just a perfect excuse! You want to get rid of all the promising talent of the other majors in one fell swoop, is that it?!" He was causing a scene in the throes of desperation. "Or is the ancient lord's heritage just a sham? It's just a front for you to destroy the foundations of all the other majors!"

"After framing my Exalted Immortal Sect with Lao Nuo, what other centuries-old lost person are you going to put forward for the other factions?" His words were filled with venom, and immortals of the other majors immediately shifted from schadenfreude to wariness.

Dusk Province was a special place. The terrifying restriction here forbade entrance by higher immortals. If Nephrite Major was really conspiring to kill the other majors' geniuses here, no one would be spared.

"Are you a fool?" Lu Yun burst into laughter. "What's Nephrite Major stand to gain from killing all the other young geniuses? What about Dusk Province, for that matter? Wouldn't His Majesty be concerned about the reprisal from his sovereign peers?"

"Do you not use your brain when you talk? Or maybe you're just an idiot." The young man sneered mockingly. "True or not, I've already reported all this to His Majesty and the other eight celestial emperors. We'll see if Lao Nuo was telling the truth real quick, right after this competition."

"I recommend the Exalted Immortal Sect figure out a story as soon as possible. It won't be easy for you to trick Their Majesties. As for Lao Nuo... this competition is a test of cultivation. What would I kill him for? Do you admit defeat, Lao Nuo?"

Lu Yun glanced at the ghost. Anyone he killed became one of his ghostly servants. He had mastery over their souls and existences; if he wanted, he could even send Lao Nuo back into Ge Cheng's body.

"I do!" Lao Nuo returned to his prior vessel, then offered a shaky cupped fist salute. He leaped off the Coretrial Arena, hiding any hint of respect in his eyes as he did so.

A sullen meanness plastered across Zhao Tiefeng's face and he glared daggers at Lu Yun. Unfortunately, there wasn't much more he could say at this juncture. Anything more would have to wait until the nine celestial emperors completed their investigation.

"Well said, Governor of Dusk. We didn't come here for the ancient lord's heritage, we came to test our mettle against the realm's finest! A few vague conspiracies aren't enough to tarnish such a grand occasion!" a hearty voice sounded from a young man slowly ascending to the stage.

"Mo Chenfeng of the Mo Clan, Lazuli Major. Let's see how we measure up against each other!" The newcomer was handsome in both complexion and dress, and his very presence exuded a stylish confidence.

#### **Chapter 142: Divine Goldspirit Constitution**

"After you!" Lu Yun brightened in anticipation.

Mo Chenfeng was around the same age as Feng Yin, but carried himself with considerably more composure. Lazuli was one of the strongest majors, one of the very few that boasted parity with Aureate. The Mo Clan occupied a very lofty position within Lazuli, much like the Qing Clan did in Nephrite.

Whoosh!

A multicolored sword emerged from Mo Chenfeng's body. He pointed a guiding finger, sending his sword on a luminous trail toward Lu Yun.

Anticipating the trajectory of the strike, Lu Yun leaned to the side in the nick of time. However, an endless crescendo of follow-up attacks pressed in on him, as inexorable as the crashing tide.

“What an incredible mastery of the sword!” he gasped, then rapidly stepped away to evade, leaving a series of afterimages.

As Mo Chenfeng followed through on his gesture, his iridescent sword wove a net of blades all around the arena. No matter where Lu Yun darted, the strike pressed in on him.

Yes! He could see it very clearly, Mo Chenfeng had only struck once. A single attack had been enough to envelop the platform in power.

This challenger’s sword art was different from Feng Yin’s. The majority of Feng’s sword light had been illusory, but every inch of Mo’s relentless flood was real. None of the radiant trails dissipated, instead building upon each other as time passed to increase their overall potency.

“Well met!” roared Lu Yun, leaping into the air. Violet light covered his entire body in a coat of bladed scales, almost draconic in appearance. He twisted nineteen times in midair, then crashed down with fang and claw, his transformation complete.

“Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons!” someone shouted from below.

“That’s an ultimate sword technique, lost for thousands of years!”

“Why is it here, of all places?!” Many immortals shot to their feet when they saw the technique. They stared at the sixty-meter-long dragon formed of sword aura that had appeared onstage.

“That’s right, that’s the one! I’ve seen an image of that technique in an old book!”

Upon the Coretrial Arena, Lu Yun’s technique of Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons was frolicking between Mo Chenfeng’s sword waves.

Boom!

The two youths’ blades clashed countless times in an explosion of violet and rainbow light. When everything calmed again, Lu Yun and Mo Chenfeng only stood three meters or so apart.

“I concede.” Mo Chenfeng suddenly flashed a grin. “Thank you for going easy on me, Brother Lu.” He bowed politely. “If your sword had gone an inch further just now, I wouldn’t be walking down from this stage.”

“Not at all, Brother Mo, I merely relied on the strength of my treasure.” Lu Yun cupped his fist, returning the courtesy.

“Not at all.” Mo shook his head. “Your treasures are part of your overall strength. The fact you can use a ninth-rank treasure as a golden core cultivator is your own ability. Compared to you, my sword technique and abilities are both inferior.”

Saying this, he deftly hopped off the stage. The surrounding audience members drew in sharp breaths.

Not many people knew of Mo Chenfeng, since the young man preferred a low profile, but Lu Yun’s usage of the lost sword technique had universally astounded them.

“Is there some faction supporting this governor from behind the scenes?” Many scanned the crowd with glittering eyes, keenly looking for clues.

“The answer’s right in front of us. That sword he wields is Violetgrave, a blade that belongs to Nephrite’s Qing Clan. That’s his benefactor and master, no doubt.”

“Has the Qing Clan gotten its hands on the Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons technique then?”

The Qing Clan members were as confused as everyone else. The only actual connection they had to Lu Yun was through the accursed Qing Han. They didn’t even understand themselves how the boy had befriended the Dusk governor. Hadn’t his original goal been to kill the governor and take the seal?

“If Lu Yun intends to rely on the Qing Clan, he should offer up the Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons as tribute!” A white-haired old man beamed merrily as he stroked his beard.

“Indeed! We can’t back him for free. His Violetgrave was a gift from us... one that we expect great recompense for!”

Others began chattering in discussion.

“Short-sighted rats.” Qing Buyi wanted to smack his kinsmen out of existence.

“All of you, shut up.” The laid-back Chen Xiao finally spoke. “If Lu Yun wants to give you the Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons, he’ll do it without you saying so. If you try to rob him, don’t blame me for taking you to task.”

He raked a scathing glance over the Qing clansmen, who involuntarily shivered before shutting their mouths with embarrassment. Chen Xiao was only a maternal relative; his aunt was the official wife of the head of the Qing Clan: the mother of Qing Buyi and Qing Han. Even so, his name was widely feared among his relatives, an oft-mentioned horror story told to children.

When certain members of the clan had poisoned Qing Han with rimesnake poison, Chen Xiao had taken up arms alone. Despite the lack of evidence, he slaughtered nearly ten thousand Qing immortals, wiping out several subsidiary branches in the process.

His actions had astounded all of Nephrite Major, but not even the celestial emperor had much of a response. That particular instance of bloodshed had stained Chen Xiao’s name red. Before that, he’d only been seen as a prodigal youth, one half of Nephrite’s ‘Twin Devils’.

Chen Xiao dished out the mischief, while Qing Buyi cleaned up after his messes. They were perfect partners in crime, in a crooked sort of way.

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Upon the stage, Lu Yun was beginning to show signs of fatigue. His disheveled hair and ragged breathing were symptoms of exhaustion after three successive rounds.

“This Dusk governor is too uncanny. We need to get him off the stage first!” Zhao Tiefeng’s face was still sullen, rather displeased by Lu Yun’s victories. “Don’t let him recover. Kick him while he’s down! Zhao Ling, you’re up!”

“Yes, sir!” A golden-haired youth leaped onstage at his orders, pressing the visible advantage. “Zhao Ling from the Exalted Immortal Sect. Let us fight!”

His mane of hair strangely glowed as radiantly as the burning sun overhead, and his eyebrows and lips were dyed the same aureate shade.

“The goldspirit constitution! Exalted Major’s specialty!” Surprise sounded from beneath the stage.

In the world of immortals, there were many special constitutions in the same vein as spirit roots. A goldspirit constitution was also called the divine goldspirit constitution, for it was nearly divine in its resilience and quality, excelling in particular at aggression.

“Your ninth-rank treasure is powerful, but how many times can you use it?” Zhao Ling lunged immediately, not wanting to give the governor any breathing room. His body was as keen as the sharpest blade, charging toward his enemy in a straight line.

In response, Lu Yun produced a talisman before slapping it onto himself.

Hum...

The resonance heralded the manifestation of a great calligraphic character over his head. Yu, for ‘Ward’!

Clang!

Zhao Ling bounced off the veil of the light that was produced by the character.

#### **Chapter 143: Vast Dragon Seaturner**

Clang!

Zhao Ling ran headfirst into the barrier of light released by the yu character and bounced straight back.

“What is this?!” He focused his eyes and saw Lu Yun meditating behind the barrier, slowly recovering his internal energy.

“The Yu Talisman!!” Lethargy evaporated, Chen Xiao shot to his feet and stared at the calligraphy with stark disbelief. “That’s a talisman that’s been lost for almost ten thousand years. It’s normally displayed as an antique since there’s such a limited number of them.

“It’s now worth as much as a first-rank immortal city.” Chen Xiao paused his rambling to suck in a breath. “It’s as valuable as ten Dusk Provinces, but that spendthrift activated one without batting an eye!!”

The destitute Dusk Province was worth less than one tenth of a first-rank immortal city, while the talisman was as valuable as one! Other than Chen Xiao, many immortals present were also staring at the talisman with a pained expression. For old fogeys partial to collecting lost artifacts, things like the Yu Talisman and Aurum Openia Pill were more precious than even the heritage of the ancient lord.

“Did Lu Yun loot the tomb of a ten-thousand-year-old heavyweight? Is that how he has these treasures?”

The Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons technique was another clue. Dusk Province was poor, but great resources lay hidden in the ancient tombs here.

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“A Yu Talisman?” Zhao Ling rubbed his swollen forehead. “It’s just a turtle shell. I’ll smash right through it!”

Buzz!

Dense golden light enveloped his body, imbuing his skin with metallic attributes. Then, he approached the barrier and punched it.

Bam!

A slight tremor shook the character over Lu Yun’s head as it released a jade-like glow to offset Zhao Ling’s attack. The challenger staggered back unsteadily.

“Gaaaaaaaah! Break! Break! Break!!” Guttural roars accompanied each punch against the same spot on the light curtain. Sheer velocity and force formed afterimages of his fists.

Again and again, he was thrown back, but he always recovered with the fastest speed possible and returned to the same spot, smashing out punch after punch. Light pulsed through a body that seemed to contain an endless supply of enormous strength.

Crack!

Eyes twitching, the crowd noted a very slight crack in the barrier of light.

“What a waste, what an utter waste!” Chen Xiao pulled at his hair. “What a waste of a great treasure!” He wanted nothing more than to hop onto the stage, punt the two youths away, and snatch the breaking talisman for himself.

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“Break!!” Zhao Ling howled with determination, transforming his body into a figure of metal.

Bam!

Crack!

The talisman finally broke under the torrential downpour of punches and slowly scattered into dots of light.

“Die!” Without pause, Zhao Ling stepped forward and hurtled his fist at Lu Yun’s head.

The governor didn’t even move, but simply fished out another talisman and leisurely flung it into the air before the attack landed.

Yu!

Bam!

Clang!

Another golden yu manifested above Lu Yun’s head, matching the color of Zhao Ling’s body. Caught off guard, the young man was again sent sprawling by the talisman and almost fell off the stage.

“You bastard!!” Wide-eyed, Zhao Ling almost retched a mouthful of blood—not from the impact, but from anger. He’d finally broken the last talisman after tens of thousands of punches, but then the brat just took out another one!

Wasn’t the talisman worth a first-rank immortal city? Since when had it become a common weed by the side of the road that could be pulled out one after another?

Chen Xiao sat back on his recliner and huffed, “His pockets seem incredibly deep. Hmph hmph, if he wants to become my cousin-in-law, I’ll demand a good deal of betrothal gifts!”

Qing Buyi glared grimly at him. “That’s my sister you’re talking about. Any betrothal gifts are coming to me first!”

Their voices were kept low and the Qing members didn’t dare listen in, so no one knew what the two demons were talking about. Qing Han, on the other hand, threw them a murderous glare.

Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi hurriedly put on apologetic smiles and transmitted a litany of explanations. The disguised girl quickly alternated between flushing beet-red and scowling blackly in turn.

“Lu Yun!!” growled Zhao Ling. “Are you going to face me like a man or not?!”

The young man slowly opened his eyes and responded weakly, “My apologies. Fighting three opponents in a row has exhausted my energy. Give me fifteen minutes to recover my stamina, then we’ll have a proper fight, alright?”

In lieu of a response, Zhao Ling stepped forward and threw another punch at the barrier, his jaw set.

“What a troublemaker!” Lu Yun sighed in resignation. “You’re keeping me from digesting Mo Chenfeng’s stroke.” He waved another talisman onto the stage.

Hum.

With a flash of earth-tone brilliance, the talisman turned into two calligraphic characters.

Mount Tai!

The Tai Talisman!

Mount Tai was said to be the supreme divine mountain of the ancient world of immortals a hundred thousand years ago. All of the past celestial emperors had been crowned there.

The characters crashed onto Zhao Ling with the force of towering mountains, pressing him into the stage face first with his limbs sprawled out. The weight of the entire world bore down on him.

Lu Yun closed his eyes again, digesting what he’d learned from the previous fight. He’d long recovered his energy, but had been staying put to study Mo Chenfeng’s wave-like sword art. He could’ve returned to the Gates of the Abyss to do this.

However, at the end of the day, hell was a broken world filled with the energy of ruin. Returning to the netherworld might scatter the burgeoning inspiration in his mind. Hence, he chose to block Zhao Ling’s attacks with Yu Talismans and take his time to digest the sword art. Recovering his stamina was merely an excuse.

“Another long-lost talisman,” Chen Xiao mouthed, dumbfounded by the characters keeping Zhao Ling flat on the ground. “The Tai Talisman... just whose tomb has he raided?!”

“Unfortunately, my dear sister refuses to tell us what’s going on with Lu Yun,” grumbled Qing Buyi. “She’s completely taken his side!”

“That’s a good thing!” Chen Xiao said seriously. “That means Lu Yun is truthful to Little Yu, and Little Yu honors this trust! If Little Yu had told us about Lu Yun, I would wholeheartedly disapprove of their relationship.”

Qing Buyi stared incredulously at Chen Xiao and forced out a grin that was uglier than tears. “But that’s my blood sister!”

“So? She’s old enough to get married. We can’t protect her for her entire life.” Chen Xiao’s tone took a despondent turn. “That is, if she has a lifetime to live....”

“Don’t worry, didn’t you say her accursed spirit root has been removed? I believe Lu Yun will cleanse her of the strange poison in no time.” Qing Buyi was much more optimistic.

Chen Xiao nodded slowly. “Yeah.”

Meanwhile, Zhao Tiefeng kept bellowing his frustration, but didn’t dare question Lu Yun any more.

The dao of immortals followed the rules of the heavenly dao, under which lurked all kinds of dangers. In their pursuit of heaven’s path, immortals needed auxiliary paths to assist them. Equipment, pills, formations, and talismans were the most potent among the supplemental options.

Auxiliary daos were allowed in clashes between immortals and cultivators. The Coretrial Arena could seal one’s cultivation, but the four auxiliary daos weren’t restricted. Thus, it wasn’t against the rules for Lu Yun to use the Yu and Tai talismans. The only problem was the sheer power the talismans possessed.

“Done!” After some time, Lu Yun opened eyes that twinkled ferociously while sword aura rose from his body and pierced the sky. With a wave of his hand, the heavy Tai Talisman vanished in a band of light.

Zhao Ling struggled to his feet, half dead from being pressed into the floor.

“Senior Zhao Ling of the Exalted Immortal Sect,” Lu Yun offered with a tinge of abashment, “Shall we take a break before fighting? I can wait an hour for you to recover.”

“Die!!” Eyes bloodshot with fury, Zhao Ling took Lu Yun’s words as a personal affront and charged with an angry howl, turning into a blur of gold.

“Ai... you’ve wasted your constitution by not utilizing the right fighting style. What a shame that a good talent like you joined the Exalted Immortal Sect.” Lu Yun manifested a flying sword with a twist of his wrist.

“This is a sword art I’ve created by combining senior brother Mo Chenfeng’s billowing waves technique and my Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons. I wonder how powerful it is.” Tracking the incoming golden blur, Lu Yun murmured, “I shall name it... Vast Dragon Seaturner.”

Swoosh!

He formed a seal with the sword, detonating it into countless replicas that circled around Lu Yun as he vanished into thin air. The stage now seemed to be a deep blue, upon which a white dragon comprised of sword energy overturned the seas and rivers, flicking tall waves into being that threatened the sky.

“That’s my sword technique!” Mo Chenfeng’s eyebrows shot into his hair. “No, that’s not it. He extracted only the essence and combined it with his Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons...” He could hardly believe his eyes.

“That’s the mark of a true genius, Chenfeng,” said a smiling, grey-haired old man next to him. “After fighting you, he was able to garner your strengths and turn it into his own, while you only gained some meager battle experience. That is the gap between you and a top genius.”

“This junior understands the wisdom in your words, Patriarch! Chenfeng will work harder.” Determination flickered through Mo Chenfeng’s eyes.

The old man nodded in approval.

“Why, why! He’s just a piece of trash in Dusk, an insect! How can he surpass and walk in front of me?” Feng Yin fussed with anger, shocked and envious of the powerful dragon thrashing above the stage. He wanted nothing more than to tear Lu Yun to pieces.

“Quiet,” said a frowning man next to him. “Observe their fight closely. It will benefit you greatly!”

Feng Yin quieted down, but his eyes were filled with crazed hatred. Trash, trash! I’ll kill you once you leave the arena!

The assembled cultivators stared avidly at the battle, drinking everything in. Every move and technique could bring them inspiration that they’d never encountered before.

Lu Yun was in the throes of creating a brand new sword technique. Being in its infancy, he needed others to feed him various attacks to help mature and polish it.

Zhao Ling was the perfect candidate. He was an experienced fighter, but the Mount Tai talisman had exhausted him. That put him at a perfect level to serve as Lu Yun’s training partner.

They fought for more than a hundred breaths, then Zhao Tiefeng suddenly called out, “Forfeit, Zhao Ling! He’s using you to temper his sword art! Don’t let him!”

Realization dawned on Zhao Ling. With a glower that encompassed every violent intent in his body, he dodged a slash and unhesitatingly jumped off the arena.

#### **Chapter 144: Lapse In Judgment**

Zhao Tiefeng indeed possessed a sharp acumen. His words tapped awake an increasingly frenzied Zhao Ling, just when Lu Yun’s new technique had entered the most crucial moment of the development process.

Anguish and incompleteness left an exceedingly uncomfortable feeling in Lu Yun. Such an abrupt interruption in the midst of fighting to his heart’s content was simply worse than death.

“Do you truly believe you can halt my enlightenment just like this? All you did was ruin a fortuitous opportunity for others.” Scorn appeared on the governor’s lips, then he set foot through the Gates of the Abyss.

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A dreary aura pervaded the broken netherworld, filling the air with the presence of devastation and decay. It wasn’t a suitable place for him to cultivate, but he’d already shaped the embryonic form of his new technique. All that was left was to unceasingly improve on it so that it could reach perfection.

“Aoxue, spar with me and help polish my new art!” he immediately requested, turning to the dragon princess.

Swoosh!

A long sword appeared in her hand and she slashed at him, but her master’s figure vanished once more, giving way to enormous waves rising in a boundless sea. From these waves reared a giant dragon in Aoxue’s direction.

Compared to Zhao Ling, the dragon princess was a much better sparring partner. Someone with her judgment could easily determine what move and amount of force she should use in order to help her master refine his new technique.

The two lost all sense of time in hell, only stopping a long, long while later.

“Congratulations, sir! Felicitations! You have perfected the ‘Vast Dragon Seaturner’!” Stunned astonishment flashed through Aoxue’s eyes. “If this skill can be further improved to the realm of great perfection, it will surpass the Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons by far! It will rank in the top ten among all the sword arts in the immortal world!”

Lu Yun lowered his head in contemplation. “Heh, that’s to be expected. With the Tome of Life and Death as a medium, I can communicate with the heavens to analyze the Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons. By distilling the essence and discarding the dross, my version will naturally surpass the original. Aoxue, thank you for your help.”

“It’s Aoxue’s honor to help complete your technique, sir!” Happiness tinged Aoxue’s expression.

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Meanwhile, the crowd around the arena wished for nothing more than to tear Zhao Tiefeng to pieces. Lu Yun’s ‘Vast Dragon Seaturner’ had been moments away from achieving proficiency. They could all see that once it reached perfection, the technique would become a sword art without compare.

In the present age, cultivators were almost all swordsmen. Apart from some treasures, almost everyone refined a companion flying sword. To witness the birth of such a peerless art would’ve been a blessing, not only for cultivators, but also for many immortals. However, Zhao Ling’s sudden withdrawal put a complete stop to this glorious opportunity. Unable to restrain their wrath, many in the crowd swore out loud.

“Zhao Tiefeng, you’ve crossed the line!” roared an immortal, looking at the Exalted Immortal Sect’s elder. “The birth of such a magnificent technique is one for the ages! But thanks to your petty narrow-mindedness, you prematurely broke it off! You’ve committed a grave sin against the entire world!”

Facing the ire of the crowd, Zhao Tiefeng merely smiled. “He’s still in the arena. If you all are so eager to see his sword art, tell your own disciples to challenge him so they can be a grinding stone for his technique!”

Many immortals seethed at his attitude. Opportunities to break through were fleeting and transient. Developing a new sword art necessitated completion in one stroke from a sudden spurt of insight. How could lightning possibly strike twice?

Such a coincidence had never occurred before, at the very least!

An old, wizened immortal suddenly stood and thundered, “Zhao Tiefeng, interrupting Lu Yun’s creation process is ruining an opportunity for us all! You and I can no longer live under the same sky! I, Wanderer Gu Hong, do hereby break all ties of friendship with you. We will only meet again as enemies!”

An immortal from Exalted Major, and one of Zhao Tiefeng’s acquaintances, his declaration agitated the crowd even further.

“Indeed! Zhao Tiefeng, for the crime of destroying our chance at enlightenment, you and us can no longer share the same roof!”

“Aye, aye!”

“From today onward, the Regal Exalted Sect is enemies with your Exalted Immortal Sect!”

“We will not rest till we see the end of you!”

Zhao Tiefeng blanched, the roars of countless immortals shaking his mind and setting his ears abuzz. He finally understood why these immortals were all so furious. To interrupt Lu Yun’s creation process was a trivial matter, but ruining the enlightenment of so many had made him a public enemy.

Creating a novel combat or sword art required formidable perseverance and wisdom. It was a communion with the land that shared resonance with the heavens! The shaping of the Vast Dragon Seaturner would’ve offered a glimpse of the grand dao, presenting onlookers a window into the principles of the universe and a chance to comprehend the truth of the world.

But it had all come to naught because of Zhao Tiefeng, hence their wrath.

Even those that were prejudiced against Lu Yun, like the Feng Clan and other immortals of Thundergale Major, now nursed a deep animosity toward Zhao Tiefeng and the Exalted Immortal Sect.

“The Exalted immortal Sect’s conduct is truly spiteful. Rumors of them disrupting someone’s tribulation for the sake of a mere treasure are definitely not unfounded!”

“That’s right! If they’re willing to interfere with the pill fairy’s tribulation out of simple greed, it wouldn’t be beneath them to possess the head of Dusk Province’s House Ge either, all for the sake of the ancient lord’s legacy!”

Forcibly taking possession of someone, or meddling in someone's tribulation were both absolute taboos in the world of immortals on the same level as soul sacrifices. Once discovered, the entire world would view the perpetrators as criminals.

It was why Zhao Tiefeng would rather label Lao Nuo a traitor—even going so far as to make a shameless spectacle out of himself—than acknowledge responsibility for these two matters. Once their guilt was ascertained, the Exalted Immortal Sect would be beset from all sides.

Elder Zhao's chest was fiercely heaving, but he dared not utter a word. Many immortals were already on the verge of going berserk, and one wrong word from him would immediately create a mob against him.

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"Everybody, please hold your horses." Lu Yun's voice quietly cut through the din. "Fate is ordained by the heavens. My failure to create the 'Vast Dragon Seaturner' technique must have been written in the stars, so the fault lies not with Elder Zhao Tiefeng."

The crowd sobered at his words. After all, no matter their own losses, Lu Yun was the greatest victim here. If even he didn't take exception, what was left for the rest of them to say?

"Honestly, I'm also to blame for my lapse in judgement. I chose the wrong opponent. If it had been senior brother Mo instead, I'm sure he would've been glad to help complete my technique." Lu Yun nodded at Mo Chenfeng.

The latter smiled. "That goes without saying. To assist senior brother Lu in creating an unparalleled sword technique would've been my honor. Senior brother Lu, please don't hesitate to reach out to me if there's another chance for instruction."

"Naturally!"

"The governor is quite correct. He made the mistake of failing to recognize the Exalted Immortal Sect for what it is!" someone laughed at Lu Yun's words.

"From now on, only imbeciles will fraternize with disciples of that sect." Many in the crowd chuckled as they echoed the same sentiment. With his extremely poisonous attack, Lu Yun's retreat with his moral high ground had directly pushed the Exalted Immortal Sect into the limelight once again.

#### **Chapter 145: The Immortal Who Severed His Own Cultivation**

Oh, how the humiliated Exalted Immortal disciples wanted to dismember Lu Yun, then find a hole in the ground to hide in!

There was already a mortal feud between the governor and their sect after Lao Nuo made his report of the events inside the pill fairy's tomb. Lu Yun knew the sect was convinced the 'Panorama of Clarity' was on him. Rather than wait for their inevitable attack, he'd chosen to strike first in a ruthless assault instead, catching them on the back foot.

Zhao Tiefeng no longer dared speak up after having grasped how his misstep had roused the crowd's ire. But secretly, he now saw Lu Yun as someone he needed to kill at all costs.

As for Lu Yun, he regretted being unable to complete his sword art in the arena. Facilitating the comprehension of all those present would've surely earned him a great deal of goodwill for sal tree fertilizer.

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Enjoying unstoppable momentum after four successive victories, he defeated the next six challengers as well, his ten successive wins shaking all onlookers.

After all, his true cultivation was only at the origin core realm. Almost all of the challengers thus far were peak spirit realm cultivators. Even sealed back to the golden core realm, they were far above ordinary core realm cultivators in their mastery. Moreover, there'd been several world-renowned geniuses among the six defeated challengers who'd simply been overpowered by the governor.

After creating the 'Vast Dragon Seaturner', Lu Yun didn't use Violetgrave, resorting to ordinary spirit weapons and flying swords instead.

"The governor's potential is truly fearsome! No wonder the Nephrite emperor felt confident in letting the entire world challenge him!" many gasped, frowns of dismay deeply etched into their foreheads.

"Didn't they say he was a wastrel who couldn't cultivate only half a year ago? And that he'd only started cultivating after he'd repaired his constitution with an Aurum Openia Pill?"

"It must be a diversion from their celestial emperor. He misled us on purpose."

"That won't do. This Lu Yun is too uncanny, we need to get him off the stage first!"

Ten wins were a far cry from a hundred, but Lu Yun's performance had caused general uneasiness in many.

Up on the stage, Lu Yun's breathing was calm and steady, no hint of weariness to be found after six consecutive bouts. He quietly stood there and waited for the next challenger. Engaging with the most celebrated geniuses of the immortal world had also resulted in extreme improvement for him.

Although Aoxue was powerful, she was only a single person when all was said and done. Fighting ten different people in a row and absorbing their battle styles had further broadened his horizons.

"Beigong Yu of the North Sea court. Please offer your instruction, Governor!" a man clad in black peacefully declared after taking to the stage.

Monster spirits had finally entered the ring. True enough, they weren't prohibited from the Coretrial Arena. Any cultivator of any race or tribe in the immortal world was welcome in Dusk Province to try their luck. The Beigong surname was the name of North Sea royalty, but this Beigong Yu wasn't a blackwater snake. He belonged to another species.

"Beigong Yu...." Lu Yun frowned slightly at the man, a strange expression crossing his face.

"It really is Beigong Yu! That's the greatest manslayer of the North Sea. There's got to be almost a hundred thousand immortals who've died at his hands!" an immortal cried out with shock.

"I heard his true body is that of a divine kunpeng. The North Sea Emperor specially conferred the surname Beigong upon him. This the foremost monster spirit king under the North Sea Emperor that we're talking about!"

"He's fought in the battlefields of the North Sea for a thousand years and slaughtered countless immortals during his time. His infamy is known throughout not only Nephrite Major, but also other territories bordering the North Sea, like the Primus Major and Witherdew Major."

"Isn't he a peerless immortal? Why can he enter the Coretrial Arena?"

"That's right, he's a mighty peerless immortal! From what I heard, he's only a step away from the dao immortal realm. What's someone like that doing on the stage?!" A clamor arose as soon as people connected the dots.

"Why can I step into the arena?" Beigong Yu smiled slightly. "Because I severed my own cultivation and cleaved away my peerless immortal realm. The Beigong Yu you see now is merely a transformed spirit cultivator."

"What? He severed his own cultivation?" Many were taken aback by the explanation, but even more swore at him for being shameless.

The Coretrial Arena could seal the cultivation of any cultivator or immortal. Whether they'd truly ruined their own cultivation or not made no difference. However, Beigong Yu still possessed the mindset of a peerless immortal, as well as the requisite fighting experience and strategy, and even some of the combat arts. For him to step into the arena was simply bullying the weak.

But many still felt hopelessly resigned.

He wasn't the first immortal to think of severing their realm to compete in the Coretrial Arena. However, few possessed the required courage. Someone like Beigong Yu, who'd been willing to give up on all it'd taken to reach peak peerless immortal, was truly one of a kind.

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Qing Han stood up, a little ashen as he looked uneasily in Lu Yun's direction. Sensing his gaze, the governor turned back and smiled brightly at his friend. The imperial envoy blinked, but immediately understood Lu Yun's state of mind: he was supremely confident against Beigong Yu.

Therefore, Qing Han immediately declared, "A peerless immortal is an immortal no longer if he discards his cultivation and falls back to the transformed spirit realm. This does not violate the rules of the Coretrial Arena. The two combatants may begin."

The words sent a ripple of astonishment through the crowd. Wasn't this imperial envoy supposed to be extremely close to Dusk's governor? Did he actually want to send Lu Yun to his death instead?

Zhao Changkong also looked askance at Qing Han. He thought the envoy would've wanted to thwart Beigong Yu's intentions. The crown prince's forehead creased slightly; this outcome was truly unexpected. He glanced at Lu Yun from time to time, interspersing his glances with gazes at Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao.

Can these two troublemakers have been the ones who fostered Lu Yun? he wondered suspiciously.

“It seems the ancient lord’s legacy is going to fall into the hands of the North Sea monster spirits,” many secretly rued.

“That’s not certain yet! Beigong Yu might be strong, but there are geniuses who can defeat him! Primus Major’s number one genius Dongfang Hao, Thundergale Major’s Zi Chen, Lazuli Major’s Mo Qitian, all of them are here today as well! They’re the cream of the crop among the geniuses of the world!”

“That’s right, these supreme geniuses are absolutely invincible at the same level. Even a peerless immortal wouldn’t be their match after sealing their own cultivation!”

“There’s also Wu Tulong of the Martial School in the Enlightened Major. They say he once defeated a dao immortal whose cultivation was sealed when he explored an ancient tomb!”

A spirited discussion flared up between nearby cultivators as they suggested one earthshaking name after another.

As for Lu Yun, no one was particularly optimistic about his chances. The governor wasn’t bad, but he was still some distance away from these outstanding evildoers. Someone like him couldn’t possibly overcome an obstacle like Beigong Yu.

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“A peerless immortal who severed his own cultivation?” Lu Yun narrowed his eyes as he looked at Beigong Yu.

“Don’t worry, I won’t kill you.” The latter nodded gently. “I will extract your living soul and forge it into an immortal weapon. A weapon made from the soul of a genius cultivator is twice as strong as an ordinary weapon of the same level.”

His tone was mild, like he was offhandedly commenting about the weather, but those who heard him had their blood run cold at his words.

Forging a weapon with someone’s nascent spirit was an absolute taboo among immortals all over the world, but human taboos meant little to monster spirits. When monster spirits and human immortals warred, the immortal prisoners usually ended up eaten, or refined into weapons or other treasures.

Of course, immortals also used the flesh of monster spirits to refine pills and weapons. Each race simply viewed issues from their own standpoint. There was no right or wrong, the strong simply preyed on the weak.

“But I will kill you!” Lu Yun responded earnestly.

Dense karmic debt lingered all around Beigong Yu. War followed its own set of rules. No matter the number of victims, to kill enemies during battle was the vocation of a soldier. Hence, good karma usually offset the bad of violence.

But Beigong Yu brimmed with so much negative karma that it was on the verge of materializing tangibly. That was clearly the mark of an indiscriminate, bloodthirsty butcher of countless innocents.

This monster spirit had the blood of innumerable humans on his hands.

“Kill me? Hahahaha—” Beigong Yu laughed heartily, like he’d heard the greatest joke in the world, but suddenly cut it short with a powerful pulse of an overpowering, murderous aura.

A giant, incorporeal beast that seemed to be both fish and bird, but at the same time neither, emerged from his shaking frame. A terrifying energy exploded from him and expanded in every direction.

Boom!

All of Coretrial Arena shook heavily, tiny cracks appearing in the surrounding curtain of light.

“Die.” Beigong Yu stretched out a finger and pointed at a spot between Lu Yun’s eyebrows.

The audience below the stage held their breaths. Even Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao wore grave expressions, while Qing Han was on his feet, staring fixedly at Lu Yun.

The moment the governor showed signs of being overpowered by Beigong Yu’s attack, Qing Han would immediately fly to his friend’s rescue, even if he had to throw caution to the wind and expose the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals and Imperial Star.

“You are the one who should die.” Suffocated by the monster spirit’s formidable presence, every bone in Lu Yun’s body groaned painfully.

“Judgment...

“Of Life...

“Or Death,” he gently uttered five words.

1. This is an animal in Chinese mythology that is a giant fish in the sea, and a roc bird in the air.
2. @(!\*\$ Peerless immortal is the highest of the immortal realms!

## **Chapter 146: Reappearance**

Judgement of Life or Death!

Beigong Yu’s finger was a hair’s breadth away from Lu Yun’s forehead when his expression froze. Tiny tongues of black flames seeped out of his orifices, slowly setting his body ablaze.

“Gaaaaahhhhh!” A short, pained cry was all that marked his existence before he disintegrated into ashes, leaving nothing behind!

The greater the negative karma of the target, the more powerful the Judgement of Life or Death would be. Lu Yun had previously used the art to kill a terrifying akasha ghost with a fearsome level of retribution around it. Although the retribution on Beigong Yu wasn’t at the ghost’s level, it was still more than enough for the governor to kill him several times over.

Even if Beigong Yu hadn’t severed his own cultivation and remained a peerless immortal, Lu Yun would still be able to easily kill him, as long as there was enough retribution associated with the monster spirit.

“Hm?” The governor paused. A significant stream of goodwill formed without warning and entered his body, absorbed by the Sal Tree of Life and Death.

The sapling flickered a deep green, and the power it returned melded into Lu Yun's internal energy, further pushing his cultivation toward the spirit realm. This ascension would be a great milestone, as it wasn't easy for one to refine a nascent spirit.

At the same time, the tremendous power coming from the tree healed all of the damage Beigong Yu had wrought on Lu Yun.

"What in the heavens?!" Everyone shot to their feet and looked at Lu Yun with consternation.

There was no arguing that Beigong Yu was dead, but how? He seemed to have turned to ashes the moment he approached Lu Yun.

They widened their eyes to get a better look. However, with their maximum cultivation limited to the august immortal realm, the crowd's power and spirit were under serious restraint. They couldn't clearly analyze the happenings of the arena.

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"It seems to be a type of fire that killed him." Chen Xiao looked bemusedly at Lu Yun, then sighed with relief when he shifted his gaze to Qing Han. "Little Yu knows what's going on."

"She's completely forgotten who her family is!" Qing Buyi complained, but his eyes shone with approval.

"That's right, it's that combat art!" Qing Han was delighted. He'd seen that move before when Lu Yun killed the akasha ghost in the eastern tomb of the Skandha Extinction Tomb. There was a presence around Beigong Yu similar to the one that had circled the ghost. It wasn't as pure, but was just as uncommonly dense.

Remembering himself, Qing Han schooled his expression back to indifference and snuck a glance at his brother and cousin. He turned just in time to see the suggestive glances from both Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi.

Hurk! Qing Han turned beet red.

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"The Judgement of Life or Death is powerful, but I can only use it nine times a day," Lu Yun muttered. "After that, I'll have to wait until after midnight."

Apart from the art of resurrection, which he didn't even dare think about using, all of his other death arts—the bean soldiers, the realms of yin and yang, Spectral Eye, Judgement of Life or Death, and Mastery of the Five Elements—were tremendously useful.

The Judgement of Life or Death, especially, had enabled him to take out two terrible foes.

"What happened, Lu Yun? How did you kill him?!" asked the immortal from Thundergale Major.

Lu Yun raised an eyebrow at him. "Are you asking me to reveal my secrets?"

Embarrassed, the immortal sat back down. Lu Yun had obviously used a powerful method to kill Beigong Yu, but it was crossing a line to ask about his secret weapon.

"Hypocrite!" sounded a mocking voice. "Didn't you say this is a battle between peers to test your mettle, and that you weren't going to kill anyone?"

It was the same voice that had revealed Violetgrave's origins, but again, no one could tell from where it originated.

"Of course a match between peers should be fighting for points, but Beigong Yu was at least seven thousand years old." Lu Yun was taken aback. "Isn't it farfetched to call the famous monster king of the North Sea my peer?"

The voice fell silent.

"You've been lurking about long enough!" a clear voice suddenly reprimanded. "Show yourself!"

Bam!

A rumbling noise sounded out as a gray figure fell awkwardly from the air, landing in a heap on the ground. It was a goateed old man in a long, gray robe.

"Ah, it's him." Lu Yun's eyes lit up at the interloper.

"Disrupting the tournament is an unforgivable crime!" A stunning figure rose from the crowd. She released starlight with a single point of her finger and confined the old man.

"Y-you can't do this to me!" snarled the old man.

"This daoist's words are hard on the ears, but he doesn't warrant this kind of treatment!" someone immediately protested to the newcomer, a woman in men's clothes. "Who are you and what gives you the right to arrest him?"

"I am the Prefect of Duskwater, serving under the Governor of Dusk." Mo Yi grabbed the goateed old man as she hovered in the air. "This man is a member of the Lu Clan from Nephrite Major. The governor has a standing order prohibiting all Lu members from setting foot in this province on pain of death."

With a wave of her hand, a portal appeared behind her and swallowed the old man before anyone could react.

Lu Yun had surreptitiously transmitted earlier that she was to take the old man into custody no matter the cost. Without missing a beat, Mo Yi had realized the stakes here and used her ultimate treasure to accomplish the task.

The governor was quite pleasantly surprised by the turn of events. The giant willow in the Skandha Range had said the old man was the human form of a treasure, and that he'd disappeared into the Skandha Extinction Tomb with the man in gold. If Mo Yi hadn't discovered his tracks, Lu Yun wouldn't even have known they'd left the tomb.

"Lu Yun remains undefeated in the arena, which means he is still the governor and his order still holds. In Dusk Province, the governor's words are law. Whoever violates the law must die!" Her voice swept through the crowd like a chilling winter gust. Not even dressing as a man could conceal her unrivaled grace, and many of the men in the crowd were entranced by her beauty.

“If that’s the case, we won’t fault you for that. May I ask your name, Prefect of Duskwater? Do you have a dao partner? This gentleman is from the Enlightened Maj—”

With a sniff, Mo Yi vanished under everyone’s disappointed gaze. She’d sent the old man back to the governor’s manor, where Feinie and Yuying were already waiting.

“I made the order against the Lu Clan because they sent me an Aurum Openia Pill that contained a control art in an attempt to turn me into their puppet,” Lu Yun elaborated upon seeing many derisive smiles around the arena. “As for the goateed man, he traveled to the Skandha Range with a man in gold robes, seeking an alliance with Dusk Lord on behalf of the Lu Clan. After hearing the news, I deployed the million-strong Dusk Phalanx to attack the Skandha Range.”

There were certain things that had to be explained, or there’d be trouble from the immortals after the tournament if they were displeased with him.

### **Chapter 147: Magnanimous**

Lu Yun was a slick and tactful man, especially when it came to tricky situations. He knew well that no matter the winner of the provincial seal, the other factions would find an excuse to complain and create conflict.

Because of this, he kept their opportunities to do so to a bare minimum throughout the competition. His duels had largely been friendly affairs, as free from bloodshed as possible. At the same time, he wouldn’t easily let off anyone who threatened his life, either.

Anyone interested in the identity of the old man in gray could find out by visiting the Skandha Range.

Although Lu Yun had conquered that place, in a sense, nobody would possibly believe that such an influential faction in the wider world would so easily obey him. Even Yuchi Hanxing, who’d witnessed it with her own eyes, was no exception. In her eyes, the Skandha Range had sworn fealty to the dragon princess, not Lu Yun. However, she was hardly going to spread rumors about it; the Skandha Range was too influential, and the dragon princess was too sensitive a topic.

The other immortals were content to take Lu Yun’s explanation as fact. He was still Dusk Province’s governor, at the moment, so there was no reason for him to lie in front of countless immortals from all over the world. The absence of Nephrite Major’s Lu Clan was evidence enough, in any case.

“I don’t think there’s a need for a hundred wins.” A spear-wielding youth in silver armor rose into the air. “You’re extraordinarily strong, senior brother Lu. Despite your origin core cultivation, you clearly have immeasurable potential. The rest of these ants aren’t qualified to challenge you.”

“That’s Wu Tulong from the Enlightened Major’s Immortal Martial School!”

“The cultivator who can beat a dao immortal?”

There was a small commotion as soon as he showed himself. Wu Tulong was a common household name; his defeat of a dao immortal had shown that he had more potential than his opponent. As such, he was often acclaimed as the future celestial emperor of his major.

“Most cultivators here are ploddingly mundane. Fighting them is a waste of senior brother’s time.” Wu Tulong ignored his fans below, the silver armor he wore glittering nobly under the sun.

“Well said, senior brother Wu. The weak here can’t touch senior brother Lu unless they conspire to tire him out.” Another youth flew up. His hair and robes were both the purest white and he flared with fighting spirit.

“Dongfang Hao of the Primus Major. Well met, senior brother Lu.”

“Dongfang Hao is here too! Another prodigious genius has shown himself!” Another disturbance rustled through the crowd. They simply couldn’t understand what these geniuses wanted to do.

“Zi Chen of the Thundergale Major. Greetings, senior brother Lu!”

“Mo Qitian of Lazuli Major!” Two more youths flew to the stage, standing at the four corners of the Coretrial Arena with Dongfang Hao and Wu Tulong. Lu Yun remained in the center, surrounded.

The five youths shone with confidence and poise, naturally drawing the eyes of the rest. They stood like five sovereigns, loftily surveying the rest of creation from their magnificent thrones.

Wu Tulong, Dongfang Hao, Zi Chen, Mo Qitian, and Lu Yun. Together, this quintet exuded a collective aura that imparted a sense of humility to almost every other cultivator present, taking away their courage to ascend to the stage.

“Shall we challenge senior brother Lu in place of the useless masses? Forget about the hundred wins. If you can win against us four, you deserve the ancient lord’s heritage!” Dongfang Hao called out.

“I’d like to correct you just a little, senior brother Dongfang.” Lu Yun saluted the four youths, then rose into the air himself. “This competition was arranged by His Majesty the Celestial Emperor of Nephrite Immortal. The ancient lord’s heritage isn’t the focus—gathering the heroes of the realm is. Only by trading exchanges with each other can we improve ourselves and find a brighter future for our world!”

Carrying himself with confidence, he addressed his audience with sonorous speech. “A hundred thousand years ago, a great war between the ancient immortals cut off the path of cultivation itself. Our forebears were indeed powerful, but they have been discarded by time and progress!”

“The ancient lord and his heritage are dead, but everyone here is very much alive!” His words stunned the listeners below. “Elites from a hundred factions are gathered here today, the best the world has to offer. The collective wisdom is far greater than any one of us can muster alone.

“There’s always something we can learn from one another. There are no weak cultivators, only weak wills! If we, as cultivators, become strong, so does our world—the world of immortals! Competing here will help many, many of you realize your talents and unlock your potential. Truly, that’s the most valuable part of all of this.”

As Lu Yun’s words sounded out, a great stream of goodwill came rushing from every direction, gathering in his body.

Boom!

Viridian light glittered upon the Sal Tree of Life and Death and powerful internal energy spun around within him with almost transformative speed.

There was something holding it back, but he would surely reach the nascent spirit realm upon leaving the Coretrial Arena. The tree's sprout was about the size of his palm now.

"The Dusk governor is very much correct. The ancient lord and his heritage are dead, but we cultivators are alive! There's no reason we should automatically think our wisdom is inferior to the ancients!" Qing Han was the first to add his opinion and his crisp voice echoed through the air.

"All of you have the right to fight me, and in doing so, teach me as well!" Lu Yun continued.

"Well said! We can always learn from one another." The hearts of the other four youths trembled as they looked at Lu Yun. Dongfang Hao was the first to incline his head. "We cannot match your great heart, senior brother Lu. Nevertheless, we shall certainly not fall behind your example!"

A heroic air suddenly gripped Mo Qitian and he announced, "Come, fetch the Mo Clan's Lifetrial Arena. Today, I shall accept any and all challenges from the heroes of the world!"

Much like the Coretrial Arena sealed a cultivator to the core realm, a Lifetrial Arena limited its entrants to the qi realm.

Cheering broke out among the assembly. As one of the brightest geniuses in the world of immortals, Mo Qitian was of the same caliber as Wu Tulong. Having the chance to fight him would be an excellent learning experience, even if the challenger lost.

Moreover, Lu Yun had clearly said just now that this was to be instructional sparring, a communication between cultivators.

The hostility seething around the arena shifted away. Innumerable cultivators sized each other up for friendly matches and traded experiences with one another. A lot of them had come here to do that in the first place anyway.

"Sounds nice enough, but the ancient lord's heritage is still yours in the end," a discordant voice cut through the harmony.

Lu Yun's momentum was poised to garner the goodwill of cultivators from all over the world. That was a very bad thing for the Exalted Immortal Sect. Therefore, Zhao Tiefeng was forced to interject, despite his discomfort.

"Your own pettiness prevents you from seeing the kindness of others!" Crown Prince Zhao Changkong stood up before Lu Yun could reply. "If Nephrite Major really wanted to keep the heritage to ourselves, we would've taken it long ago. None of you would even be sitting here!"

The Nephrite crown prince finally understood his father's true intentions.

After the fall of the ancient immortals a hundred thousand years ago, the new world had flourished for eighty millennia, yet, for all its archaeology, it had barely developed beyond the ancients.

The peak of the dao immortal realm remained the strongest level one could attain. No one had yet been able to enter a higher realm.

One of the fundamental reasons for this was the various factions' insular natures. Thus, the Nephrite celestial emperor had taken this opportunity to break down the walls between them.

“No wonder father set his sights on Lu Yun. Their styles are very similar!” Zhao Changkong murmured to himself.

### **Chapter 148: Nascent Spirit**

Lu Yun himself had only understood the emperor’s intentions after inventing the Vast Dragon Seaturner. Rather than a test, this was a chance for growth—for him as well as the rest.

The ancient lord’s heritage was a crucially important thing; rumor had it that the lord had surpassed the dao immortal realm, reaching a cultivation level that his peers could only imagine.

As such, the heritage would be immensely beneficial even to someone like the celestial emperor. However, he’d bided his time instead of taking it for his own. He waited for the situation to ripen and an opportunity to arise.

To that end, His Majesty had successfully forbidden everyone else from taking the heritage. It wasn’t until the current Lu Yun’s appearance that this competition between half the world’s best geniuses could be hosted.

Lu Yun had already gained a great deal from his personal involvement. Being inspired by Mo Chenfeng’s sword technique had led him to create the Vast Dragon Seaturner technique, surpassing the Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons.

If not for Zhao Tiefeng’s interruption, the other cultivators and immortals would’ve learned much from the occasion as well. They were all witness to that fact.

The reason the ancient world was far stronger than the present—and its artifacts uniformly more potent—was because of a rich history, as well as a whole, unified world. Post-great war, the world had been shattered into the nine majors, ten lands, four immortal seas, and a mysterious ‘central heart’. Together, they were called the twenty-four facets.

Each facet housed countless factions of every size, each with its own carefully guarded secrets. None of them had ever thought to associate with one another in mutual growth.

Perhaps the present world was improving, too, but it would take a hundred—no, a thousand—times as long to return to its former cornucopia-like state. Furthermore, a unified, mended world was largely out of the question.

In light of these things, the Nephrite emperor had thought up this plan: if the world’s cultivators experienced the free exchange of ideas with one another, they’d inevitably be shaped by it when they became the leading immortals of their respective factions. Conferences like these would eventually become commonplace.

In ten thousand years, the world might very well take a great leap forward. Some might even break through dao immortality to reach the realm that all emperors dreamed of.

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“Hahahaha—” Zhao Tiefeng burst into a bout of laughter. “You say Nephrite Major doesn’t want the ancient lord’s heritage? Who knows whether that’s because of the dangers surrounding it and Dusk Province’s restriction? You summoned everyone here today to clear a path for you, no doubt!

“The only reason we’re here today is because you can’t make it on your own, can you? Are you going to invite us ‘heroes’ to seek the heritage together after this too?” He glared intimidatingly at Lu Yun. His real level of strength was a mighty peerless immortal, equal in stature to Beigong Yu. He put as much psychological pressure as he could into his fixated gaze.

The four other youths remained in their corners, awaiting Lu Yun’s reply.

“There are always short-sighted, ignorant people in the world.” The young man who was the center of attention sighed, sweeping his crystal-clear eyes all around him. “Given what Elder Zhao Tiefeng of the Exalted Immortal Sect has said, I see no reason to pretend otherwise. He’s absolutely right. After all of this is over, I invite all of you to explore the ancient lord’s heritage together!”

Before anyone else could speak, Lu Yun waved a hand. A seal of faint gold flew out from him and the Coretrial Arena, floating in midair a slight distance away.

“This is the seal of Dusk Province, capable of drawing upon the province’s energies of heaven and earth. It’s the key to the ancient lord’s Sword Tower, and an utmost treasure itself! Whoever feels qualified to take this seal, come!” He slowly rose above the Coretrial Arena’s boundary barrier.

Boom!

The weather underwent an abrupt change. Trails of black energy wreathed Lu Yun’s body in the form of dark thunderbolts, slowly concentrating into a higher form of strength... Mystic force!

Hum...

A rush of potent energy rose from his dantian to his brow, opening a mystical space within the latter: a purple manor!

In the next moment, his origin core broke into a six-colored disk glimmering with color. It followed the path of his energy into the new purple manor, then came to a spinning rest there.

A nascent spirit! Due to practicing the Method of Life and Death, his nascent spirit was modeled upon the six paths of reincarnation.

According to legend, the six minor paths were the ultimate treasure of hell and reincarnated all mortal life, while the major paths corresponded to every existence in general—immortals, demons, and buddhas alike.

Lu Yun’s nascent spirit was currently only a crude facsimile. He needed to perfect it through further cultivation advances, and needed far more progress if he wanted to become the true king of hell.

Behind the Gates of the Abyss, black lightning crackled and danced. The two Infernum inside, Zhao Dianliang and the rimesnake king, tightly clutched each other in abject fear. A closer glance revealed a faint, luminous layer of black armor upon both man and snake, though it hadn’t actually taken form yet.

Lu Yun’s four envoys uniformly flashed with black light. They shared a smile as all of their cultivations were restored to august immortality.

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“Method of Life or Death... Thunder Palmstrike! Smite evildoers with concentrated heavenly wrath!” Lu Yun’s heart trembled. His palm strike wouldn’t be just a thunder-attribute combat art. It gathered real power from heaven and earth to form a thunderclap of pure yang!

“This—this is pretty much every zombie and evil spirit’s natural enemy! If I see any undead in ancient tombs from now on, I won’t have much to be afraid of. As long as it’s not too much stronger than me, eh?” This really was very exciting for the young governor.

“He... he broke through?!” The Dusk governor’s public breakthrough from origin core to nascent spirit astounded the assembled cultivators. Lu Yun had only been at the peak of the origin core realm when he entered the Coretrial Arena. His transformation upon leaving it was unexpected, to say the least. The difference between the core and spirit realms was like night and day.

“Congratulations, senior brother Lu. Now that you’re in the spirit realm, you are every bit our equal on the journey to immortality.” Zi Chen cracked a smile. As one of the foremost cultivators in the world of immortals, he absolutely had the right to say something like that.

Lu Yun returned the smile as well as a cupped fist salute.

“What I said a second ago hasn’t changed. If you think you’re qualified, come forward!” His sonorous voice persisted in resounding echoes for a long while.

“Can an immortal take the seal?” someone asked immediately.

“Yes!” a voice of authority suddenly answered from the sky.

Rumble.

Another turquoise arena descended from the heavens, landing near the Coretrial Arena. The cultivators surrounding it were forced back.

“If an immortal wishes to take the provincial seal, he must first be tried upon the Spiritrial Arena.” The Nephrite celestial emperor’s words were cool and serene.

“Anyone who triumphs against the five youth sovereigns is fit to take the seal. The ancient lord’s heritage will be theirs alone,” another celestial emperor chimed in.

Rumble.

The Lifetrial Arena that Mo Qitian had mentioned earlier joined its two brethren. The three arenas formed a triangular arrangement, lighting up in a triad of pillars.

## **Chapter 149: The Height of Shamelessness**

### **The Five Youth Sovereigns!**

Originating from the mouth of a celestial emperor, the title was destined to reach all parts of the immortal world in the near future. But of course, the five of them had to undergo trials to prove their worthiness. Not only would cultivators challenge them, but also immortals.

Under any other circumstances, immortals wouldn’t have stooped so low as to fight cultivators, but today was an exception. The chance to monopolize the heritage of the ancient lord was too strong a

temptation. That particular lord had broken through the dao immortal realm and reached a legendary level beyond it. Gaining his heritage was an enormous opportunity to ascend to that mythical realm.

The celestial emperors didn't covet the legacy, because their vision extended far further. They considered not only themselves, but the entire world of immortals and all its lifeforms. The world was weak and often invaded by outside forces. In fact, a handful of celestial emperors had already died to protect their home.

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"Then I shall challenge the five youths!" Zhao Tiefeng from the Exalted Immortal Sect suddenly leapt onto the Spiritrial Arena. "Lu Yun, Governor of Dusk Province in Nephrite Major, dare you meet my challenge?"

"This guy has absolutely no shame!" The elder's actions angered almost everyone.

He was a peerless immortal, one whose strength surpassed even Beigong Yu by a hair. It was already the strong bullying the weak for an immortal to challenge a cultivator, but the man went so far as to challenge Lu Yun on the Spiritrial Arena!

The young governor had only just ascended to the nascent spirit realm. His foundations had yet to stabilize, and he was unfamiliar with the realm. Even facing an ordinary nascent spirit cultivator would be difficult for him.

But Zhao Tiefeng chose this moment for his challenge. This was absolutely the height of shamelessness!

However, the old man looked quite pleased with himself, like he didn't care what other people thought of him at all. The nine celestial emperors had adjusted the rules, giving him an opportunity to kill Lu Yun, an opportunity he wasn't about to let pass by. Although the boy had rendered Beigong Yu into ashes with a strange combat art, the attack had only landed because the late immortal was careless. Zhao Tiefeng was on his guard; he wouldn't make the same mistake.

"Shameless?" The sect elder burst out laughing. "My cultivation is restrained in the arena, while the governor isn't affected at all. Strictly speaking, he's the one at an advantage."

"How brazen!"

"He's really the definition of shamelessness!"

Abashed representatives from the Exalted Immortal Sect stayed quiet, while a litany of curses and denouncements arose from the other immortals. There were also those who saw through to the elder's deeper intention.

"Zhao Tiefeng is trying to make Lu Yun lose his calm."

"Alright, I accept Elder Zhao Tiefeng's challenge." Lu Yun nodded gently and landed on the Spiritrial Arena to face the man.

Zhao Tiefeng smiled graciously, like he was tutoring the young. "Show me the combat art you used to kill Beigong Yu. Off you go."

Lu Yun slowly shook his head. The shrewd man had some retribution about him, but not enough to trigger the Judgement of Life or Death.

“Oh, you won’t?” Zhao Tiefeng clasped his hands behind his back, his smile deepening. “Trying to catch me off guard?”

Instead of responding, Lu Yun flung thirty-six sparkling soybeans into the air that morphed into thirty-six warriors in golden armor.

“Puppets?” Zhao Tiefeng narrowed his eyes.

Puppet dao was one of the auxiliary daos, but it was an extremely uncommon specialization. Lu Qingxun from the Lu Clan was one such example. His single minded focus on refining various puppets was also the ultimate obstacle he had to surpass in order to ascend to the golden immortal realm.

Seeing the soybeans transform led Zhao Tiefeng to the wrong conclusion that Lu Yun had gone in the same direction.

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“It’s not a puppet art!” Chen Xiao’s eyebrow arched as he stared at the armored warriors. “It’s some kind of summoning art. He’s summoned something to inhabit the soybeans, turning them into warriors.”

“Tsk, we’ve underestimated Lu Yun. He has more than a few tricks up his sleeve!” The Qing Clan members stared hungrily at the arena, craving the exquisite summoning art, but no one dared say anything with Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi here.

After summoning the warriors, Lu Yun grabbed a handful of talismans and scattered them. Golden calligraphy emerged and danced in the air as the characters for blade, spear, sword, halberd, hatchet, axe, hook, and fork! In the next moment, the characters turned into their corresponding weapons and landed in the warriors’ hands.

“A Weaponry Talisman!” Chen Xiao wailed and bounced onto his feet. “What- what squandering! This is even rarer than the Yu and Tai Talismans! It’s a brand new auxiliary dao that combines talismans and equipment refining! He, he, he just wasted so many of them! I can’t, I just can’t!”

The man madly hopped up and down in his frustration. Likewise, many immortals were also pulling mournful faces. An arrogant good-for-nothing like Chen Xiao cared only about the talismans, but they saw what the talismans represented. Was there another powerful faction supporting the governor?

If the Qing Clan had access to these items, Chen Xiao would’ve gotten his hands on them as well.

Were they excavated from ancient tombs? That didn’t quite make sense, either. Tombs that contained such great treasures were inordinately dangerous. A cultivator who’d just ascended to the nascent spirit realm couldn’t possibly venture into such tombs and come out with these treasures. It was more likely that a powerful faction had raided the tomb and given the treasures to Lu Yun!

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“My internal energy is still a bit unstable due to my recent ascension. So... forgive me for any offense I may offer,” Lu Yun said with some embarrassment, ignoring the looks people threw him.

“Go!”

The thirty-six warriors charged at Zhao Tiefeng with their manifested weapons, arranging themselves in a strange formation as they moved. The formation enabled every warrior to exert the power of all thirty-six!

Lu Yun activated another two Yu Talismans, and two giant characters sprang into being over his head, protecting his body. He sat down cross-legged and began refining his new mystic force.

He was no stranger to the nascent spirit realm, as his envoys' experience had provided him with a great familiarity and foundation to master it. The only thing left for him to do was to stabilize his newly acquired energy.

“Do you think two turtle shells can stop me?” Snorting, Zhao Tiefeng snaked his way through the thirty-six warriors and quickly reached Lu Yun.

Bam!

Crack!

He broke through one of the barriers with a single punch and cracked the other! Before he could throw another punch, the thirty-six warriors swarmed him and brought down a sword bearing untold power like a descending mountain. Expression tense, he hastily twisted and dodged the terrible attack.

Seizing the opening, Lu Yun activated three more Yu Talismans to shield himself.

“Little bastard!” Zhao furiously angrily manifested a sword in his open palm. “Break!!”

Hum.

Brilliant sword energy pierced through the void, threatening to cut the arena in half!

### **Chapter 150: The Method of the Great Peng**

The sword energy spanned three hundred meters and teemed with merciless killing intent. Zhao Tiefeng also wielded a ninth-rank weapon—a sword he'd refined completely and become one with. Even with his cultivation suppressed to the nascent spirit realm, he could still tap the sword's full power.

Lu Yun's Yu Talismans would surely never hold; the crowd could already see the two halves of his body on the arena floor. Expression dark, Qing Han balled his hands into fists, his palms damp with cold sweat.

“You will not harm the master!” a voice yelled. One of the armored warriors moved swiftly to defend Lu Yun with a giant shield. At that moment, it seemed like the other thirty-five warriors were superimposed upon the shield warrior. The shield in his hand gained the presence of a great mountain.

Bam!

Zhao Tiefeng's sword slammed keenly into the shield, sending shockwaves in all directions and shaking the entire arena.

Crack!

The heavy shield groaned, then scattered as dots of light.

Hum!

Being a manifestation of a talisman, the shield's decimation seemed to cause a chain effect. All thirty-six of the golden warriors turned to ashes at the same time.

Zhao Tiefeng's stroke was too powerful. Even the combined might of all thirty-six armored warriors hadn't been enough to survive it. However, defending their master to the end had allowed Lu Yun to weather the blow unscathed.

Three of the four Yu Talismans were broken, leaving only one struggling to maintain its structure in front of the governor.

"What other tricks do you have up your sleeve?" Zhao Tiefeng came up to Lu Yun and pointed gently.

Pop!

The last barrier shattered into pieces. Lu Yun opened his eyes and shook his head, his gaze calm. "No more."

"Giving up already?" Zhao Tiefeng beamed widely. "Kneel and beg for mercy. I can spare your life."

Countless immortals watched the fight play out with bated breath. Wu Tulong, Dongfang Hao, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian narrowed their eyes, a great sense of humiliation descending upon them. A celestial emperor had just anointed Lu Yun and the four of them as the Five Youth Sovereigns. They were still getting used to their new title and someone had cornered Lu Yun and demanded him to beg on his knees!

This wasn't just a degradation of Lu Yun, but a stain on all of their reputations!

It would be far easier to accept defeat if Lu Yun were facing a cultivator of his own rank, but Zhao Tiefeng was a peerless immortal. He'd taken complete advantage of the situation and moved against Lu Yun before the youth's cultivation had had time to settle.

"Hehehe, if Lu Yun kneels, the so-called Five Youth Sovereigns will become utter fools," chuckled one of the Feng immortals from Nephrite Capital.

Those who didn't think much of the five youths also waited for Lu Yun to make an ass of himself. What would the young man choose: life or dignity?

Lu Yun got to his feet.

Swoosh!

A flying sword appeared in his hand with a brilliant flash of sword light.

"You really are completely unreasonable. You want me to beg for mercy before we've even fought?" He cast a surprised glance at Zhao Tiefeng and snorted. "You think much too highly of yourself. If you want to fight, then cut the crap and fight!"

Zhao Tiefeng looked at the young man with disbelief. "You've just ascended to the nascent spirit realm and you want to fight me before your cultivation settles?"

"That's enough for someone like you." Lu Yun hadn't even bothered Violetgrave and pointed the tip of his normal longsword at Zhao Tiefeng.

The elder scowled. "Hmph, you sure like to talk tough!"

"Am I wrong?" Lu Yun affected a surprised look. "When you were my age, you were a mediocre cultivator at best. Senior brother Mo Chenfeng would be able to defeat you with one arm behind his back, let alone geniuses like senior brothers Wu and Dongfang."

Zhao Tiefeng's expression darkened. The governor's words were true; Zhao Tiefeng hadn't been a particularly talented cultivator and had only been able to reach the peerless immortal realm because of all the resources the Exalted Immortal Sect poured into him. He was a direct disciple of the sect, a core disciple of the Zhao bloodline.

"Now back in the nascent spirit realm, you're nothing but trash," Lu Yun said with a faint smile, raising his flying sword. "I can beat you without lifting a finger."

"Die!" Zhao Tiefeng couldn't be bothered with talking to Lu Yun any longer. Or rather, the longer the conversation dragged on, the more likely it was that the elder would die of anger. A minor shake of the ninth-rank sword spread rays of energy shooting at Lu Yun.

"A peerless immortal built out of countless resources is nothing but a useless piece of trash. It's said that you're more powerful than Beigong Yu, but if he were in your place, he would've long since become a dao immortal!"

Lu Yun adroitly dodged the attack with an odd series of steps. He then whirled around and committed to eighteen slashes, every single one of which turned into a small dragon and lunged at Zhao Tiefeng with fangs and claws.

The first eighteen swords of the Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons!

The governor's words enraged Zhao Tiefeng beyond reason. He'd already suffered repeated humiliation at the hands of this particular junior; there was only one goal in him taking the stage: kill Lu Yun!

"Go!" snarled Zhao Tiefeng as he made a strange hand seal. Golden light burst out of his body and flooded the entire arena.

Shriek!

A piercing cry rang out of the blanket of light and the shadow of a bird with golden wings rose from Zhao Tiefeng's body. Its presence drove the eighteen sword dragons away before they could even draw near.

It was the Great Peng Spirit, the spirit manifestation that was unique to disciples of the Exalted Immortal Sect.

Legends had it that a hundred thousand years ago, in the ancient world of immortals, the golden-winged great penguins were dragons' natural predators. Therefore, the method of the Great Peng Spirit could counter all draconic arts.

Zhao Teifeng used eighteen mighty combat arts in conjunction with his sect's signature move to instantly counter all eighteen sword dragons.

"The Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons is a sword technique of the dragon race! It so happens that my sect's Great Peng Spirit can counter anything draconic!" Zhao Tiefeng crowed with laughter as the spirit took to the air, sword-like golden feathers twirling through the skies and raining down terrible killing intent on the stage.

"The Great Peng Spirit?" Lu Yun tamped down the six agitated strands of spirit in his mind. "Then I'll counter your big bird with my vast dragon!"

Wham!

Biting sword energy coursed through him like the ocean, breaking into tall, violet waves. A sixty-meter-long silver dragon wove and tangled within their furious swells.

Vast Dragon Seaturner!