

Necropolis 1441

Chapter 1441: Sounds of a Zither

“The venerated enforcer?!” Qing Di suddenly registered a ray of sharp light behind him, one that threatened to slice him into two!

Unbidden, he gave up on his target and changed the direction of his sword, slashing out behind him.

Clang!

Two swords viciously bit into each other and a muffled feeling crushed Qing Di’s chest. He spat out blood, his eyes dimming somewhat.

“So strong!” He slid backward a hundred and fifty kilometers before stabilizing his body.

Wearing a cold sneer on his frosty face, the venerated enforcer came at Qing Di with a second move.

“I’ll help you!” Qing Ting bounded forward.

“Out of my way!” Qing Di roared back. “This is my battle!!”

Qing Ting screeched to a halt, surprised.

“The Dragonling Assembly is an occasion to test geniuses—I am one of the greatest geniuses of the realm! There is no need for me to avoid fighting with the once greatest half step kings of the realm! This is my fight!!”

His king-grade flying sword lit up correspondingly and a proud battle intent flared from his body. He clashed thirty thousand times with the venerated enforcer as he spoke, losing out on each exchange. It wasn’t just that he possessed weaker strength, but that his techniques, cultivation methods, and combat arts were also of comprehensively lower caliber.

Though Qing Di was no match for the venerated enforcer, he set his jaw and refused to back down. This was the Dragonling Assembly, this was his fight. Even if he couldn’t rival the venerated enforcer, he would never back down or admit defeat!

Qing Ting nodded and retracted her sword, watching their fight with cold eyes and preventing anyone else from interfering.

However, mobbing the two was the furthestest thing from the minds of the surrounding cultivators and arcane beasts. They quietly observed from the sides, like they had for the venerated enforcer and the Jade Dragon Duke.

Qing Di was infinitely close to Jade Dragon, but he was still a hair's breadth away from matching her. It was a minute gap that took shape as a chasm for the venerated enforcer.

Jade Dragon could return his blows and even cause him some trouble, but Qing Di could only suffer a beating when facing the venerated enforcer. The latter saw through all of Qing Di’s combat arts before he deployed them and destroyed them while they were still being crafted.

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“The venerated enforcer... is still the venerated enforcer,” sighed the previous dragon lord. “If it wasn’t for him wanting to pursue the great dao and desiring to ascend to titled kinghood at the loftiest heights possible, he would’ve reached our levels long ago.”

“Your level, not mine... I’m just a half step king,” Lu Yun mumbled.

“Ahem!” coughed the dragon lord. “Since you are also a half step king, would you be a match for the venerated enforcer if you fought him in fair combat?”

“With pure battle strength, you mean?” Lu Yun blinked.

“Yes.” The previous dragon lord nodded. “See how sword dao brims around the venerated enforcer’s movements, but he wields neither treasure nor flying sword. He utilizes only his innate force to project sword qi, and just that is sufficient to thoroughly trounce a Qing Di wielding a king-grade flying treasure.”

“Eh, that’s because I took his flying sword.” Lu Yun flipped his hand over and materialized a hazy purple flying sword—the venerated enforcer’s flying sword.

The dragon lord:

“As for whether or not I’d be a match for him... we can verify that.” Lu Yun nodded.

“Verify? How?” The dragon lord blinked. “The rules say that you cannot descend the mountain after I’ve brought you here.”

Lu Yun gathered energy from their surroundings with a beckon of his hand and formed an ancient seven string zither with classic lines. He sat down cross-legged and placed the zither on his knees, gently stroking the strings.

Twang twang twang—

Gentle zither music flowed out of the instrument in front of him.

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“I’d always thought that I was relatively on par with the venerated enforcer. It looks like my assumption was incredibly wrong,” sighed the Bloodclad Duke as he watched the fight. “My defeat at Morningstar Dusksnow’s hands was well deserved. He could take three moves from the enforcer!”

“He does indeed deserve his reputation.” Purpleclad’s expression was far from pleasant. Though he was loathe to admit it, it would be almost impossible for him to surpass the venerated enforcer.

“Qing Di is very strong too, he’s only losing because his opponent is who he is.” Li Yiran, Zhang Lingge, and others of the top one hundred found this an unwelcome discovery.

Though the venerated enforcer was once hailed the foremost powerhouse beneath titled kings, that still left a bit of room for imagination. They could daydream about defeating or surpassing him one day. But now...

He’d fought twice on the mountain—once perfectly defeating Dragonhollow’s greatest genius, the Jade Dragon Duke, and later dominating Azure Dragon City’s greatest genius, Qing Di. The latter had taken

countless Pills of Creation, which vaulted his strength to new heights, but he was still no match for the venerated enforcer.

He was far from even coming close!

“I wonder what it’d look like if the Champion Duke fought the venerated enforcer,” Li Yiran suddenly wondered. “Would he be able to put up a fight?”

“Just wait for it. Even if his so-called disciples block all of us from scaling the mountain, that doesn’t mean the end of the Dragonling Ranking battles. We still have the chance to challenge anyone on the ranking, so there’s bound to be a battle between the Immortal King and venerated enforcer at some point.

“If his name is the only one on the ranking, then he can prepare himself to suffer endless rounds of fights.”

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As conversation flew thick and fast, a pleasing zither note suddenly echoed in their ears. Everyone paused.

“Is someone playing a zither?” Qing Ting cocked her head, not understanding why the sound had come from the mountain’s peak. There should be more people than just Lu Yun at the peak, so they didn’t know who was the player.

“This zither...” Completely outmatched, Qing Di readied to retreat when the music note flowed into his ears. His mind sharpened with focus and he discovered with great shock that this melody seemed to be some sort of guidance. It was teaching him how to fight and utilize his combat arts!

“It’s the Immortal King!” Qing Di lit up and relaxed his mind, concentrating fully on the marvelous tones and following its instructions to release his potential.

The crowd immediately discovered a notable difference in his fighting style. Up until now, Qing Di had been fending off his opponent by the skin of his teeth, but he was suddenly able to counterattack the moment the zither sounded!

“Since martial grandfather wishes to test my cultivation, then I humbly make a fool out of myself.” The venerated enforcer immediately grasped what was going on and murmured inaudibly to himself. A hazy purple sword shadow descended from the skies in the next moment—his flying sword that Lu Yun had taken!

Chapter 1442: Dragonflail

The flying sword was the venerated enforcer’s signature weapon. He’d tempered it with his life and wielded it for countless years; its absence meant that his strength was reduced by at least thirty percent. Now that Lu Yun returned it, he meant for the venerated enforcer to bring out his full strength when fighting Qing Di.

Alternatively, he wanted the venerated enforcer to wholeheartedly accept the defeat to come. He could tell that his little martial grandson didn’t think much of him.

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After the venerated enforcer recovered his sword, he lifted his head and looked to the mountain's peak.

"I will challenge you in full once more after I defeat Qing Di. I will personally defeat you, even if you are my martial grandfather," murmured the venerated enforcer.

The zither's music abruptly changed from the full notes of a mild and gentle creek to sharp blades edged with wild killing intent. Qing Di was one with the melody—he was the music, and the music was he.

Lu Yun wasn't controlling the genius through the zither; he was using the instrument to guide Qing Di so that the latter could tap into his strongest potential and techniques.

This was also another kind of instruction.

Qing Di didn't feel the slightest bit uncomfortable or unwilling about the situation—he was wholly absorbed in music that held almost the same meaning as his great dao. His sword and combat arts could be fully deployed through following the instrument's notes.

Strains of music unfurled through the air in graceful serenity. Qing Di moved with them, performing a stunning dance of the sword with unparalleled poise.

Sword light began to fill the void—unavoidable and inescapable. The venerated enforcer's eyebrows rose with surprise and he took a half step back.

However, this slight step proved the start of an irreversible momentum; he had to keep retreating! Qing Di was now systematically dismantling all of his merciless attacks.

"What's going on? Qing Di's the same as he was before. His combat arts, methods, and techniques are identical—so how is he forcing the venerated enforcer back?!" gasped some of the half step kings in the crowd.

"Is the zither music ambushing the venerated enforcer at the same time?" Jade Dragon wasn't too certain of her conjecture. Though she'd audibly ventured forth that idea, she could clearly sense that the venerated enforcer was more frightening of the two, especially now that he wielded a flying sword.

If the zither really was meant as an ambush, then it would ensure that the venerated enforcer wasn't able to do anything. Therefore, the music wasn't meant for that purpose.

Though no one else understood what was taking place, the Immortal King's disciples closed their eyes to carefully listen to the marvelous tones. Apart from Qing Di, they were the other benefactors of Lu Yun's continued tutelage.

To them, the melody seemed to have been born of nature and was a harmonious whole with the world, something that helped them assess their own great dao and cultivation methods with greater clarity. After this song, their strength would collectively leap forward.

Clang!

Clang!

Clang!

Two flying swords continuously collided with each other in the void, the additional impact of various combat arts and methods detonating the innate qi of the air.

Bam!

One of the venerated enforcer's strikes shoved Qing Di back; the former took advantage of the respite to regroup and stab forward, summoning a purple dragon shadow from behind his back.

"Here it is!" Bloodclad's eyes brightened and he called out hoarsely, "Dragonrise!"

Dragonrise!

The venerated enforcer had taught it to Dusksnow Morningstar, who'd then used the technique to defeat the Bloodclad Duke. Even now, he was unable to identify the best counter to this move. If he met it in battle again, he would be defeated, again!

He finally had a chance to observe the move executed at full force!

While the venerated enforcer had deployed it before, he'd only done so casually and not to his fullest capabilities. This time, he unleashed it to kill!

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"Dragonrise!" Qing Di shouted his identification. "The Champion Duke invented your technique, but there were three hundred points of weakness when he made it. He's fixed them all, yet there's still three flaws in yours!"

"WHAT?!" General shock rippled through the crowd. The Champion Duke... the Immortal King... had invented this terrifying move??

Almost everyone thought that an unparalleled ninth step king was behind it, but the half step king Champion Duke was the creator instead??

The venerated enforcer remained unmoved and stabbed forward with indomitable momentum!

Zither music flowed like water into Qing Di's ears, trickling into his heart and melding with his dao heart. It didn't affect his mind, just gave general guidance for his cultivation realm and raising his great dao and combat arts to optimal condition.

Qing Di answered in kind. His flying sword shot out as three rays of sword light that tunneled into the weaknesses within Dragonrise.

Clang!

Clang!

Clang!

Three muffled points of impact sounded as the three rays of sword light recoiled off of the weaknesses. Changes began to occur in the venerated enforcer's attack.

The magnificently rising dragon head suddenly lowered back to the ground and dove downward. An enormous dragon tail appeared to crash down on Qing Di.

Dragonflail!

Lu Yun's move had turned into Dragonflail in the venerated enforcer's hands!

Clang!

Another collision.

Qing Di's index and middle finger were placed together and pointing at a tiny intersection of the Dragonflail move. He pierced right through it!

Hazy azure sword light extended from Qing Di's fingers and stabbed straight at the venerated enforcer's forehead, stopping one inch away from the skin.

"I yield," frowned the venerated enforcer.

"Mhmm," Qing Di nodded. "You didn't yield to me, but to the Champion Duke."

The venerated enforcer heaved a long sigh and didn't respond to that. "I'd thought that deriving Dragonflail from Dragonrise would place me higher than him, that the student had exceeded the teacher. Who would've thought that my most vaunted accomplishment would be so flimsy to him?"

Qing Di had triumphed because he'd been inspired by the Champion Duke's music. If it wasn't for the zither, he would've been defeated long ago.

"That's because you've chosen the wrong path." Qing Di listened carefully to the lingering notes. "The dragon has already lifted its head, why does it need to flail around? It lifts its head to rise into the sky and soar through the nine heavens, not to slam its tail around in the mud. The dragon is quite unwilling to struggle with its tail after it's lifted its head."

His words struck a chord with the many dragon race members present.

Now that's rather profound.

Chapter 1443: The Final Result

"You... you used music notes without any combat arts embedded in them to defeat the venerated enforcer?" The previous dragon lord looked incredulously at Lu Yun.

"Not me, Qing Di." Lu Yun shook his head. "I only pointed out what he can do. He's the one who seized victory with his own hands."

"This..." blinked the dragon lord.

"I see Qing Di as a hidden talent—he only needs to be taught how to best use his strength. If he was a rusty sword, on the other hand, he wouldn't have beaten his opponent even if I sent my great dao straight into his body."

"It looks like the rules of the Dragonling Ranking will indeed change for you. Yours will be the only name on it this time." The dragon lord changed the subject with a rueful smile, not knowing what else to say.

“What are the consequences if I’m the only one?” Lu Yun frowned slightly. He didn’t want that to happen, it was just something that his so-called disciples were doing of their own volition. With how things were progressing, he didn’t seem to be in a position to stop them.

“None,” came the answer. “It will at most elevate the Dragonling Ranking beyond the yet-to-come Soaring Dragon and True Dragon Rankings, and that will be a good thing. If you eventually ascend to titled kingship as a high level king, the Dragonling Ranking will become a goal that all Hongmeng geniuses strive for.”

Lu Yun nodded. “So what’s the deal with the Azure Dragon King?”

The dragon lord’s heart skipped a beat and he gaped at the young man.

“I just want an honest answer. You guys have lied to me twice already,” Lu Yun continued solemnly. “The azure dragon told me that the Azure Dragon King never existed, that he’s always been the disguised demon of the immortal dao.

“You just told me that the Azure Dragon King is more like a pet for the master of the Hongmeng, but you forgot a crucial detail—the first dragon in the chaos is Leize, not the Azure Dragon King.

“Leize isn’t an azure dragon. He suppresses one and caused the azure dragons to never be a part of the chaos.”

Lu Yun’s eyes swept across the previous dragon lord’s face. “You were just rolling with the punches in continuing to lie to me.”

His audience finally recovered his composure. “Is it so important to you who the Azure Dragon King is?”

“No,” Lu Yun shook his head. “But who he is will determine how much I trust all of you.”

“Ai...” sighed the dragon lord. “We wouldn’t keep it from you if you were asking about anyone or anything else, but we really can’t speak more of this when it comes to the Azure Dragon King.”

“You can’t speak further?” Lu Yun frowned.

“Where was the first time you met him?”

“In a tomb,” answered Lu Yun.

“There must be something connected to you in that tomb, and that is where the Azure Dragon King resides. Him appearing by your side is a game of cat and mouse, a show of retreating when he is advancing. Therefore, you shouldn’t ask us who he is. You should be asking yourself.

“The demon of immortal dao helped you a great deal when he killed the Azure Dragon King! If you utilize the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals to revive him, you’d just be creating trouble for yourself.

“The answer is in Mount Cloudcover. When you gain the strength to enter it, you will find answers to all that you wish to know.” The previous dragon lord fell silent after this final exposition.

Lu Yun nodded silently. The dao fruit of his future self was very possibly buried beneath that mountain as well. After this degree of explanation, there was no point in asking further. Just as he’d said, it didn’t

really matter who the Azure Dragon King was. It was much more important whether Dragonhollow Mountain had told him the truth.

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Qing Di's defeat of the venerated enforcer with aid from the zither music stunned the crowd. All candidates spread out across the mountain, entertaining no more thoughts of ascending to the peak.

Just as Lu Yun had said, Qing Di was a stunning talent himself once his edge was unsheathed. Lu Yun's music had only told him how to best utilize his own strength.

Since Jade Dragon had lost to the venerated enforcer, she didn't dare challenge Qing Di. She challenged Qing Ting instead, and was swiftly defeated in three strokes by a Qing Ting still immersed in the meaning behind the music notes.

With that, two thousand nine hundred and ninety-eight disciples of the Immortal King fanned out over the mountain. They refrained from hunting ghosts or vicious beasts, instead blocking the key routes up the mountain and forbidding other half step kings from passing.

Though the other half step kings were immensely resentful, they didn't dare clash anymore with these Immortal King disciples.

It was almost impossible to reach the peak through other ways. There were also arcane beasts among the disciples, and they weren't the sort to docilely stay put in one place. They barreled around in all directions and patrolled random spots. Anyone discovered trying to scale the mountain was swiftly mobbed and robbed of everything they owned—including the power of creation they'd collected.

The other half step kings tried working together to fight the disciples, especially the thirty-one hundred of Dragonhollow Mountain. But each time before they could fully team up, they were defeated by a joint force of Qing Ting, Qing Di, Azureclad, Crimsonclad, and Seven Slaughters. The small group employed the same tactics that Qing Ting and Lu Yun had once used against the Robber Slayers.

After a few times, the geniuses vying for a spot on the Dragonling Ranking gave up the fight and stayed at the foot of the mountain, hunting vicious beasts and ghosts to collect the power of creation.

This would likely be their only gain at this Dragonling Assembly. If they tried to force their way through the blockade, they might lose even this paltry bit of reward.

Bloodclad and Purpleclad tried challenging Azureclad and Crimsonclad. Both were defeated in decisive fashion similar to Jade Dragon's challenge of Qing Ting.

Time passed day by day. On the seventh day, the candidates discovered that minor changes had occurred in the rules. The three hundred and sixty-five spots that should've existed on the Dragonling Ranking were shrinking until there was only space enough for one person.

The Champion Duke was the only name on the Dragonling Ranking!

Thus marked the end of the Dragonling Assembly after the rules completely changed.

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“What went wrong?? Why is there only one name on the ranking?!” The various kings on the seventh floor could finally view the situation after the rules relaxed their hold over the mountain.

“Is the Champion Duke the only one who made it to the top? Or did something else happen?” The Dragonsea city lord looked around blankly.

“What is this?! Didn’t you say there would be three hundred and sixty-five names on the ranking? Why is there only one??” Discontent rippled through the assembled kings. Many of them had bet on whose children would succeed and how high they’d place. But with the dispersal of the rules, that meant everything was set into stone and the final result was exactly what they were seeing.

Chapter 1444: Hongmeng Pearl

“Tell us truly, what happened here? Why is the Immortal King the only one listed on the ranking?” General bewilderment spread at the final result. They weren’t surprised that the Immortal King had made it onto the Dragonling Ranking; they were very surprised that he was the only one on it.

As strong as he was, he couldn’t possibly dominate the competition to the point of preventing others from taking their proper place, could he?

However, no one dared raise any objections or protests. After Dragonhollow Mountain’s Scarlet Dragon King and body double for their dragon lord had been turned into stew, a true king had emerged from the faction to still wagging tongues and quiet derisive laughter. The assembled kings were swiftly cowed into respectful attention once more.

True kings had only ever existed in legends within the realm, just like the eminent rulers of the Ten Valleys of Evil. To peak ninth step kings like the Profound and Yin Yang Kings, true kings were existences that could only be gazed upon. They would never come within reach of these august personages.

Now that a true king had appeared, the Dragonling Ranking that was receiving slight criticism was immediately legitimized. No one dared raise further questions.

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The end of the Dragonling Assembly was the closing curtain on an enormously tumultuous event. However, currents still ebbed and flowed beneath the surface.

As the only name on the ranking, Lu Yun was immediately propelled to the forefront of everything. His name was more renowned than before and reverberated throughout the entire Hongmeng.

The Immortal King!

The Champion Duke!

Two names that represented the apex of two extremely different fields belonged to the same person! Employing zither music to instruct Qing Di on how to defeat the venerated enforcer was another beautiful tale to add to the legends of the land. The Immortal King’s two thousand nine hundred and ninety-eight disciples were even more stunning.

General anticipation built—what level would the Immortal King ascend to titled kingship at? Would he break the shackles that'd enslaved the Hongmeng for endless eons and reach ninth step kingship as soon as he broke through?

"It's said that the eminent ruler of Hopeless Major, the Empyrean King, was an eighth step king when she ascended. She is the Immortal King's dao partner—I wonder if he'll surpass her and become an unprecedented ninth step king with his first step?" someone murmured as they looked in Lu Yun's direction.

"Per... haps." The Night King of Ingress Blood Island frowned. "Ascending to ninth step kingship is forbidden within the Hongmeng. There have been many stunning geniuses who did so throughout time, but they all died in extremely horrific circumstances..."

"If my guess is right, the Empyrean King ascended as a ninth step king and had to shatter one of her dao rules. She ultimately made use of the Immortal King's Pills of Creations to return to her full prowess.

"The Immortal King is indeed very strong, but if he doesn't want to end up like the others, he needs to break one of his dao rules when he ascends," snorted the Night King.

"Night King, Hopeless Major is allies with your Ingress Blood Island, no?" asked a mystified seventh step king. "The ten valleys have acted in concert and jointly withstood the Immortal Region all this time, so why..."

"There is no why." The Night King cast a cool look back. "We were indeed of the same breath and branches when the ancestors of the ten valleys were still present. But since they have all passed on and the immortal dao is about to meld into the Hongmeng, there is no need for the Ten Valleys of Evil to exist anymore."

Shock rippled through the crowd.

"The ten valleys allied together only for the sake of the immortal dao. Since it is about to assimilate into the realm, the alliance is hereby defunct." The Night King cast a meaningful look at Qing Yu.

"Accordingly, the enmity between the valleys and Immortal Region is over."

A true uproar fully broke out at this declaration. Any king with the right to congregate at the seventh level of Dragonhollow Mountain was an absolute heavyweight in the Hongmeng. Apart from a few sixth step kings, most of them were seventh step.

The level of affairs that they were privy to was nothing that the lower level kings of the realm could compare to.

Enmity between the Immortal Region and the Ten Valleys of Evil, and the disappearance of the Di Clan several hundreds of million years ago, were no secrets to kings of this social circle.

"No wonder the Supplemental Dao Alliance lifted the monopoly on supplemental dao. It had nothing to do with the Immortal King, but that the two sides were no longer enemies..." murmured someone in the crowd.

Qing Yu and the little fox giggled to each other not too far away, completely unperturbed by the conversation.

“Maybe they really don’t know what all of this means for the Ten Valleys of Evil.” Lu Yun curled his lip.

“What all of this means?” Miao blinked.

“The ten ancestors might be coming back,” Lu Yun grinned. “Wanna guess who they are?”

“God’s one of them! Origin World is his!” the little fox jumped up with a whisper.

“Heh heh heh, let’s just wait and see. They want to draw lines between us now? There’ll be a reckoning coming for them soon enough,” Lu Yun cackled. “Even the will of the azure dragon is playing nice with me, though he’s lying to me. Let’s go.”

“Go?” Qing Yu and Miao blinked.

“What are we staying for? Listening to them run their mouths? They’re not going to involve us in anything.” Lu Yun spread out his hands. The azure dragon had said that his identity was no secret, including Qing Yu and the little fox’s. So although these kings wouldn’t publicly announce his identity to the world, it was inevitable that they ostracize him.

The attitude from the other nine valleys was indicative of everything, and the Dao King had likely revealed Lu Yun and Qing Yu’s true identity to them.

Just as Shenyu had said, the Dao King was just another bird who wished to soar into the sky.

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Lu Yun and the Hopeless Major delegation left without word or fanfare, but there were still some who detected their departure and joined them. Azure Dragon City, Coiling Dragon City, Blazing Phoenix Region, and their affiliated kings withdrew from Dragonhollow Mountain.

Since their juniors had drunk from the pots of dragon soup, they were tied to the Immortal King’s carriage and the Dragonhollow kings would never forgive them. The Scarlet Dragon King and body double for the dragon lord, in particular, would be returning soon since they weren’t dead.

“You guys are smart and didn’t become fence sitters,” Qing Yu looked at the Azure Dragon city lord. “But I will claim the ultimate Hongmeng treasure that you lost to me. I have long heard that your city possesses an ultimate treasure named the Hongmeng Pearl. It can transform into a world and its own order. I want it,” she said seriously in the air over the Hongmeng Sea.

“What a coincidence, I want the Hongmeng Pearl too,” sounded another voice before the city lord could respond. The dragon lord slowly materialized before everyone’s shocked eyes.

It was the dragon lord that Lu Yun had brought back from the world of immortals—the disguised demon of immortal dao.

The city lords of Azure Dragon and Coiling Dragon were taken aback. They looked at Lu Yun and Qing Yu, not sure of what to do. The dragon lord’s aura was the same as the true king that’d appeared from Dragonhollow Mountain earlier.

The dragon lord was also a true king!

Uhhh. What.

Chapter 1445: Fire Virtue

“So it’s the venerated dragon lord,” Lu Yun chortled. “Since the dragon lord has returned to his domain, what are you doing here instead of overseeing the mountain’s affairs?”

“Enough with the fool’s act, Lu Yun. You can’t possibly still be in the dark,” sneered the dragon lord. “You think I don’t know that you made a trip back to the ninth floor? That old thing has certainly revealed my identity to you.”

The Azure Dragon city lord and others’ hearts skipped a beat. Was this dragon lord a fake, too?

The Profound, Yin Yang, and Soulmask Kings had already stepped forward to stand protectively in front of Lu Yun and Qing Yu. A true king was too dangerous—the three of them were only peak ninth step kings and had yet to see the threshold of true kingship. The path ahead of them was a dead end; they stood no chance against a true king.

“Eminent one, you should go. We’ll hold him off.” The Profound King gravely regarded the dragon lord.

“There’s no need for that.” Lu Yun waved his hand. “Did you say you also want the Hongmeng Pearl?”

“The Hongmeng Pearl is left over from this realm came to be. It is a miniature Hongmeng, and I will let you go after you hand it to me,” frostily replied the dragon lord—demon of the immortal dao.

The Azure Dragon city lord frowned slightly. The Hongmeng Pearl was his greatest treasure, but its value came from it being an ultimate treasure of the realm. In his eyes, there was nothing else particularly of note about it.

“Hahahaha!!” Lu Yun threw his head back with laughter. “You will let us go? On what basis? Are you that strong?”

“Oh?” blinked the demon.

“Little fox... are you in full control of your power?” Lu Yun suddenly looked back at Miao.

“I’ve only got a little bit left to handle,” she replied after momentary thought. “But I’ll have no trouble giving him a beating.”

“What??” The kings and cultivators around them gaped with shock. There was no doubt that the Intranse King was strong since she could beguile even the head disciple of the Dao King, but she also had no problem defeating a mighty true king?

Whoosh!

An overwhelming presence barreled out of the little fox. The Hongmeng trembled when her aura flooded the void and the energy of the land was forced away, forming a perfect vacuum half a million kilometers across.

Dreamlike radiance shimmered over her body as a cool smile played upon her lips. “A true king? What a coincidence, I’m a true king too!”

Eyes wide with shock, the demon of immortal dao suddenly attempted to grab the city lord of Coiling Dragon City. “Even if you are a true king, he’s just a measly eighth step king. You can’t protect him!”

He moved so swiftly that he seemed to break through the limits of space; his hand arrived in front of the city lord almost precisely when he shifted into motion.

“Who says I’m an eighth step king!!”

Whoosh!

Azure light flared from the city lord, flinging the demon’s hand back before the latter could react.

“Since you like reaching out for others so much, you can just leave your arm behind.”

Schiiick.

Qing Yu summoned a brilliant arc of sword splendor from Quiet that bit into the demon’s arm. The demon was completely caught off guard by the Coiling Dragon city lord being a ninth step king. When had that happened?!

Qing Yu’s fast and ruthless stroke cleanly severed his arm. The little fox also sent her Mirage Sand forward as a rainbow chain, wrapping it around the demon.

“Ahhhh!!” Still reeling with surprise, the demon howled with anguish before exploding into pieces. He’d forfeited his body!

“...is he dead?” a shocked Azure Dragon city lord asked dumbly.

“Even a ninth step king can come back to life after death, to say nothing of a true king.” Lu Yun shook his head slightly. “But his arm will never be his again.”

There was an azure dragon claw in his hand—the arm of the demon of immortal dao. Since the demon was wearing the dragon lord’s skin, he was currently a dragon too. Most importantly was that since he’d left the world of immortals and come in person to the Hongmeng, he’d just attacked them with his true form.

“We need to get back to Azure Dragon City! The Hongmeng Pearl is there, if that true king...” the city lord gasped with horror.

“Don’t worry, he’s been gravely injured and it won’t be that easy for him to reach peak condition again.” Lu Yun shook his head. “When he’s recovered, Azure Dragon Region will likely have been unified under one banner.”

“Unified under one banner?” The two city lords looked at each other. Though the world understood them to be caught in a bitter feud, that was only a front to mislead Dragonhollow Mountain. They were brothers, after all, and their actual goal was to control a city each and slowly conquer Azure Dragon Region, ultimately combining their territories when they both dominated half of the region.

However, a plan was easier said than executed, especially one as complex and difficult as theirs. Azure Dragon Region had always been a fragmented domain due to Dragonhollow’s interference. They weren’t a unified whole, unlike many other regions in the Hongmeng.

Fragmented ones like Azure Dragon and Multitude Region did exist in the realm, but not in large numbers.

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Though nothing resulted from a true king blocking their way, it was still cause for stress and concern. The Coiling Dragon city lord, Blazing Phoenix king, and a couple other heavyweights from factions under the Azure Dragon and Coiling Dragon banners took their leave, no longer daring to travel with Lu Yun's group anymore.

Instead of returning to the Immortal Pagoda, Lu Yun accompanied the Azure Dragon city lord back to his city for the Hongmeng Pearl.

It was very valuable to Lu Yun as he'd been searching for a treasure that could contain the hellfire of order, from which the hell of order could be derived. Qing Yu had deduced that this would serve his needs.

His mammoth amount of wealth elicited greed and envy from others, but since his dao partner was the eminent ruler of Hopeless Major, would-be bandits kept a firm hold on their inner desires.

.....

Azure Dragon City sat on the banks of the most important body of water in the region—Azure Dragon Lake.

It was the largest lake in the entire Hongmeng and stretched on without end, resembling a sea that ran to the horizon. There were many mysteries within that even the Azure Dragon city lord had yet to fully understand.

"This is quite a lake," Lu Yun sighed with appreciation as he looked at the wide expanse of water.

"Mhmm." The city lord nodded. "There are many strange things in the lake, I'm not certain what all of them are."

"This is a tomb," Lu Yun elaborated. "One confined by water virtue. The tomb owner should be a fire virtue expert."

A tomb showing up right on schedule!

Chapter 1446: Juncture

"There's a tomb in the Azure Dragon Lake?" The Azure Dragon city lord was dumbfounded by Lu Yun's proclamation.

The art of burial and feng shui had never been lost in the Hongmeng. Powerhouses of the city lord's level were almost all feng shui masters. Thus, it was incredibly shocking to have been in such close proximity to the lake for so long, and having personally explored it himself, but never discovering there was a tomb inside it.

"No." Lu Yun shook his head. "The lake itself is the tomb."

The city lord didn't know what to say.

“The demon of the immortal dao—heh, who knows if he did it or purpose or not... compelled Miao to display her true strength. This means that whether it’s Hopeless Major or the Immortal Pagoda, both have the right to occupy a place among the top factions of the realm,” Lu Yun changed the topic.

A true king had emerged from Dragonhollow Mountain, thereby drawing back the curtain on the era of true kings. Likewise, news of the Intrace King of the Immortal Pagoda being a true king had undoubtedly spread throughout the Hongmeng.

There were certainly many people already regretting many things.

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Lu Yun successfully obtained the Hongmeng Pearl. Though it was called a pearl, it was actually a ball of qi around the size of a fist. Hazy purple energy wrapped around it—a miniature Hongmeng world.

The Azure Dragon city lord mournfully watched Lu Yun swallow and refine it with the flame of order.

“You said that you’d help us conquer Azure Dragon Region...” raised the city lord when Lu Yun expressed no further sentiments.

“Help you? Why should I help you?” asked a confused Lu Yun. “You and the Coiling Dragon city lord are both ninth step kings. Isn’t it a walk in the park for you to conquer the region?”

“But Dragonhollow Mountain...” the city lord paused.

“And what will Dragonhollow Mountain dare do?” Lu Yun snorted with laughter.

Realization struck the city lord like a bolt of lightning. Prior to the events of the Dragonling Assembly, the mountain would’ve absolutely prevented the two cities from conquering the region. Now that the Intrace King of the Immortal Pagoda had revealed her true strength, there was likely no one who dared stand in the brothers’ way.

The awakening will of the azure dragon wouldn’t become enemies with Lu Yun—his vision stretched much further.

Lu Yun and the others left Azure Dragon Region soon after obtaining the Hongmeng Pearl. Upon taking their leave of Qing Ting, Qing Di, and the Azureclad Duke, they returned to Multitude City.

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Time passed, as it always did.

The citizens of Multitude City showed proper respect to the Immortal Pagoda, afraid that the faction would suddenly want to dominate all of Multitude Region.

Though he could easily accomplish that, Lu Yun refrained from doing so.

The Immortal King was known throughout the land and his disciples a source of great awe and shock. Though they were only half step kings, they would become a force to change the layout of the realm once they ascended.

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“And where are you going now?” grumbled the little fox when she saw that Lu Yun was about to leave again.

Qing Yu had glimpsed the path to true kingship and entered seclusion to make her breakthrough—dao rule fusion. A successful attempt would make her a true king.

Everyone in the Immortal Pagoda was extraordinarily busy, apart from Lu Yun and Miao. He was the only one who had time to chat with her. But now he was planning to leave? And without her?

“To Azure Dragon Lake!” he said.

“The lake? You’re going to dig up the tomb?” Miao brightened as eagerness spread across her face.

“No no, you can’t go!” Lu Yun jumped and quickly quashed her burgeoning hope. “The fire virtue expert buried in the lake is an existence that defies order. If I refine it with the hellfire of order, that will raise the fire to the level of great perfection and it will ignite for real. I’ll be a titled king then.

“If you go and smack it to death with one hit, all of my plans will go up in smoke.”

The little fox looked at him skeptically. “Are you taking Qing Ting with you?”

“Ahem!” Lu Yun coughed awkwardly. “Qing Ting, Qing Di, and Qing Yan...”

“Fine, fine, I see now.” She curled her lip and protested no more.

“Wait, I can explain...” Tongue-tied, Lu Yun hastened to flounder out of a hole he’d suddenly found himself in.

“Nah, it’s fine.” She waved a hand and vanished on the spot.

“Does she think I’m going on a date?” Lu Yun grinned ruefully. “Qing Ting, Qing Di, and Qing Yan possess pure azure dragon bloodlines and the tomb is sealed with the ancestor dragon’s power. Only with their help will I be able to enter it...”

“Yes yes I know already, you don’t need to justify it. Yup, you can explain yourself to Little Yu when you come back!” Miao’s voice drifted out of an unknown spot.

Lu Yun nodded wryly. He’d formed certain designs on the lake after discovering it was a tomb. The flame of order in his body had instantly sensed the power from the expert that violated order.

There were currently one hundred and fifty tendrils of flame in his body—he’d reached a bottleneck. No matter how many ghost crystals he refined, even ones from high level kings, they no longer coalesced into flames of order.

He had to think of something else, and the Azure Dragon Lake might be his turning point.

.....

“What, what are you doing here?” Qing Ting started when she saw Lu Yun suddenly appear in front of her. She’d reaped tremendous gains from the Dragonling Assembly and was in seclusion to digest it all, but her friend had suddenly appeared in her meditation chamber!

The gathering was over and the Hongmeng's various factions on their way out of Dragonhollow Mountain and Azure Dragon Region. The city lords of Azure Dragon and Coiling Dragon had suddenly joined hands to sweep through the region; they seemed poised to conquer it entirely.

However, Azure Dragon was one of the strongest regions in the realm. Though the city lords were ninth step kings, the various factions of the Hongmeng wouldn't let them succeed so easily. Overt and hidden obstacles abounded in their path.

These days, Coiling Dragon City was under heavy guard. As its foremost genius, Qing Ting's meditation chamber was inaccessible to even high level kings. Thus, Lu Yun's sudden appearance was an alarming surprise.

"Ahem, don't forget that I'm a supplemental king! The formations here are the same as paper to me," Lu Yun grinned. "I'm here to ask for help from you guys."

"You guys?" Qing Ting blinked.

"You, your brother Qing Yan, and cousin Qing Di. I want to go to Azure Dragon Lake, but there's a seal from the azure dragon over it. I need your bloodlines to break it."

"Alright!" Qing Ting agreed without thinking twice. "Ah, by the way, Li Zhen is being chased by Li kings. The Li Clan has broken free from our control and formed their own faction."

"Grasshoppers at the end of autumn—they won't last long." Lu Yun shook his head when he thought of the clan.

Chapter 1447: The Li King's Blade

Li Zhen was an absolute genius who would receive special attention in any faction, even Hopeless Major. His future was bright with no limit in sight.

But in the Li Clan, he was suppressed and targeted by everyone; his potential nearly smothered in the cradle. No matter what his father had done, the blood of the clan still flowed in Li Zhen's veins. Their purposeful targeting of him illustrated how short sighted they were.

Lu Yun didn't think that such a clan would amount to anything. Having enjoyed the protection of Coiling Dragon City in the past, the Li Clan wouldn't survive for long after turning on their benefactors.

"Ah yes, who set up the formation in Coiling Dragon City?" A sudden question occurred to Lu Yun.

"The Fish King," answered a puzzled Qing Ting. "We hired a supplemental king after the monopoly was lifted. The Fish King is highly versed in formations and he reorganized the entire city's formations after the Dragonling Assembly. ...wait.

"Didn't you just say that these formations are paper to you?" She stared at Lu Yun with wide eyes.

"I'd thought that a formation grandmaster had set them up... They're pretty enough on the outside, but completely rotten inside." Lu Yun frowned. "Where's the Fish King now?"

“My father and the city lord of Azure Dragon decided to attack Crouching Dragon City before I entered closed door cultivation. The Fish King is with them,” Qing Ting responded absentmindedly, then jerked her head incredulously at Lu Yun. “You don’t mean—?”

“The Fish King?” the young man snorted coldly. “He better not do anything out of line, or he’ll be dead meat—dead fish.”

The two city lords had openly joined the Immortal Pagoda’s banner. They were now one of his and Lu Yun hadn’t really left after taking an ultimate treasure of the realm. That’d just been a show; he’d given them some lifesaving measures in return.

Boom boom boom!

Coiling Dragon City shook violently amid a series of loud explosions. A chain reaction filtered through its formations and dismantled all of them, leaving the city completely exposed to the Hongmeng.

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

“Kill!” Battle cries charged with fervor rose into the air as squadrons of cultivators rushed into the city from all directions.

Coiling Dragon City’s main forces were already attacking other cities. The only things left supporting the city were the formations that the Rain King had claimed even tenth step kings wouldn’t get through.

But now, they laid in shattered pieces!

“Destroying his city will make the Coiling Dragon city lord nothing more than a stray dog. Daydreams such as conquering Azure Dragon Region should remain just as dreams!” roared a man dressed in black who wielded a heavy black sword.

“How dare you attack Coiling Dragon City, Li King!”

Piercing dragon croons rose from the city as an azure dragon covered in feathers rushed out of it, shooting straight for the black-clad man. This man with the heavy blade was the ancestor of the Li Clan, named the Li King.

Rumor had it that the Li Clan had been known by another name many years ago, but changed it when one of their kings received the title of the Li King. It was the Li King and multiple other Li powerhouses attacking Coiling Dragon City!

The Dragonfeather King had almost turned himself into a dragon in his haste to rush out of the city. He grasped a sword that he leveled at the Li King.

“How dare trash like you attack me, Dragonfeather!” The Li King laughed uproariously and swung his blade downward. Everything it passed by was scored by heavy marks, as if its sword light was as indomitable as a mountain.

Clangggggg.

Blade and sword connected with each other. Dragonfeather's breath was knocked out of him and he spat out a mouthful of blood.

"You're a seven step king too!" Dragonfeather set his jaw and glared furiously at the Li King. Dragonfeather had purposefully held back because he'd reached seventh step kingship a long time ago and thus outstripped his opponent. But he'd actually lost to a single move!

The Li King was also demonstrating power on par with a seventh step king!

He was stronger than Dragonfeather because, in a moment of distraction, Dragonfeather barely evaded being stabbed to death.

"Complete trash!" The Li King chortled and swung his blade again, dense sword light bearing down with irresistible momentum on Dragonfeather and the city behind his back.

It wasn't a fast attack and Dragonfeather easily had enough time to avoid it, but the move was incomparably brutal. If he dodged the blow, the city behind him would bear the brunt of the stroke and be cleaved into two.

Yet, with Dragonfeather's strength, he would be grievously injured or even dead if he met it head-on!

Eyes wide with indecision, Dragonfeather stared fixedly at the terrifying sword light.

"The blade in your hand... is made from the dao rule of a high level king..." Dragonfeather shuffled backward. He was biding his time and accumulating energy; now was the time to focus on his opponent.

"That's right," the Li King responded readily. "All of the dao rules from a seventh step king were refined into my blade.

"I hacked apart a city with one stroke on a particular occasion and slaughtered all three hundred and ten million beings living inside it. Today, you will be the first king to wet this blade!"

The sword light still proceeded at a glacial pace. To ordinary kings, it came very quickly indeed, but to high level kings, this was nothing. What was agonizing about it was that Dragonfeather had no choice but to allow it to land on him!

If this stroke landed on Coiling Dragon City, more than half of the population would be decimated!

"Charge!!" Dragonfeather tried for the best response he could offer. He pointed with his fingers and split his flying sword into rays of sword light, blasting away at the black radiance from the blade.

Unfortunately, his attacks were as weak as an uncooked egg and didn't shake the blade light one bit.

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Rumbling emitted from his body as seven azure dao rules three hundred meters across materialized next to him.

“His Majesty Dragonfeather is putting everything on the line! We need to go help!” gasped Coiling Dragon heavyweights entangled with Li cultivators. They immediately shoved their opponents aside and rushed up into the sky, wanting to help their king.

And so, the fighting grew ever more harrowing and gruesome.

“Hahaha!! Scum of Coiling Dragon City, did you actually think you were our savior and master? We were just putting on an act when we bowed and scraped to you! You can all die now!!” A Li powerhouse brayed with laughter and decapitated a first step king with a smooth stroke of his longsword.

Dragonfeather’s furious attacks still couldn’t shake the blade light, and the Li King followed up with a second stroke that was even more dreadful than the first.

Chapter 1448: Seizing the Blade

The two blows combined in the air as one and redoubled their speed, coming straight down on the Dragonfeather King’s head. He could block the first stroke with his body, but it was impossible to evade or block the second. There was no way out of this other than death, and Coiling Dragon City behind him would also be annihilated by the combined strokes!

No more formations protected the city; desperation and despair dawned on the king’s face.

A cold smile played at the Li King’s lips from beginning to end. He grasped his weapon with firm hands and maintained a posture of following through his move. The culmination of his life’s work and cultivation was unleashed today!

On the other hand, Dragonfeather was no incompetent simpleton. If the Li King wanted to kill him and destroy the city, he had to utilize his full strength!

This was an ambush.

Once the Li Clan razed Coiling Dragon City, they would immediately retreat without second thought. Everyone knew to avoid provoking the Immortal King and that the Intranse King of the Immortal Pagoda was a true king. But to idly sit by and watch Azure Dragon Region be unified by another? They would never stand for that.

Even if they couldn’t change the inevitable, they would raise certain obstacles to make the Immortal King lose face. Perhaps Azure Dragon and Coiling Dragon City wouldn’t have the face to conquer the region then.

Situated on the banks of Azure Dragon Lake, Azure Dragon City was strategically located and protected by the natural fortunes of the land. Countless experts abounded within the city, and just someone like the Crippled Dragon King alone wasn’t someone that the Li King could withstand.

In contrast, it was far more cost effective to target Coiling Dragon City. That would send a warning to the two city lords and Immortal Pagoda that Azure Dragon Region wasn’t a place the pagoda could tighten its grip over.

The corners of Dragonfeather’s eyes exploded and bright red blood trickled down his cheeks. Droplets of blood flared with radiant illumination when they hit the ground and nurtured the living beings around it.

His arms were crossed in front of his chest and his flying sword in its true form as a king grade flying sword more than a meter long. It resolutely hovered in the air in front of its master, tiny fractures creeping over the fine weapon and bringing it infinitely close to shattering.

Blood sprayed out of his pores and dyed him red, but a bloody cloud appeared next to him just before Dragonfeather was about to succumb. A blood-red figure walked out of it and grasped the horrifying blade light.

The man gently clenched his hand and crushed what was an invincible attack to Dragonfeather.

Pfft!

The Li King spat out a mouthful of blood.

“Who dares?!” he screamed.

“I dare.” It was a tall and slender man dressed in clean long white robes. He wore a tiny purple crown in his hair—a seventh step king. His energy ripples denoted him as having just stepped into seventh step kingship, but he’d dismantled the Li King’s move with a single hand.

“Jin Naluo... Slaughter King!” The Li King’s pupils contracted violently and color drained from his face.

Jin Naluo was one of the most premier sixth step kings in the Hongmeng and stood at the peak of his level. An internal demon resulting from the Luminous—Lewd King labeling him as a bloodthirsty fiend had previously prevented him from breaking through.

Now that the Lewd King swung naked in front of the Immortal Pagoda’s doors, his internal demon was no more. His cultivation advanced by leaps and bounds and he’d ascended to seventh step kingship not long ago.

In addition, since he’d once carried the Bridge of Forgetfulness, he’d comprehended the strength of the fourth realm and immediately became a peak seventh step king after breaking through.

His usual form had been that of a ball of bloody light, but now there was no hint of violence to be found anywhere on his being. He seemed just like any other king—this was the level of returning to his original nature.

“How dare you poke your nose in my affairs, Jin Naluo?!” the Li King demanded frostily as he forced down his raging emotions.

“Who cares about your affairs?” blinked Jin Naluo. “When did the puny Li Clan speak with such arrogance?” He looked back at the Dragonfeather King, who was as white as a sheet. A mere Li Clan had almost destroyed Coiling Dragon City!

“Be careful, it’s very likely that Dragonhollow Mountain is backing him,” Dragonfeather gnashed his teeth.

“I see.” Jin Naluo nodded. “Go take care of those pups in the city. Leave this big fella to me.”

Dragonfeather nodded and soared back in the direction of the city.

“Not so fast!” The Li King started and summoned his black blade light once more, slashing at Dragonfeather.

Bam!

Jin Naluo kicked out his foot and broke apart the cutting light.

“Your actual skill isn’t much to talk about. If it wasn’t for the weapon in your hand, one Dragonfeather King could beat ten of trash like you,” sneered Jin Naluo. “It’s not the Dragonhollow Mountain behind you either, they wouldn’t dare anger the Immortal King. It’s the Immortal Region.”

Instead of responding, the Li King narrowed his eyes and began gathering power.

“I’ve just become a seventh step king and was looking for a suitable weapon when that little bastard called me here. But I didn’t make this trip in vain, your blade fits me very well.” Jin Naluo eyed the weapon in the Li King’s hand. “It’s mine now.”

Hummm.

A crescent of black blade light answered him.

The Li King exploded with power and brandished his blade, blossoming with sword light that formed a black tornado.

Jin Naluo warily watched his opponent and rushed forward with nothing but his bare fists.

The Li King was badly surprised by his gesture—he hadn’t thought that Jin Naluo would be so insane as to bear the brunt of his attack like this! His target hadn’t been Jin Naluo earlier, which was why he’d been taken off guard. But now that he was bringing his full strength to bear, Jin Naluo still didn’t seem to consider him a serious threat!!

The Li King roared with indignation and condensed his blade light into a huge black dragon, sweeping it down on Jin Naluo.

The Li Clan hailed from Dragonhollow Mountain and possessed the dragon bloodline in their veins as well. The Li King fully activated his and called upon the seven dao rules in his weapon, deploying them as seven dragons protectively circling around his body.

“Hahaha, that’s a fine blade alright! I can’t hurt those dao rules!” Jin Naluo roared with laughter and blasted forward with a punch, the image of a simple and ancient bridge flashing behind him as he did so.

Boooooom.

His fist and the black dragon crashed together. A black light winked in the sky and the Li King was sent hurtling backward.

“Give that here!” Jin Naluo howled and caught up to the king, reaching for his blade.

Busy slaying three sixth step kings in the city, Dragonfeather tilted his head back with shock. Jin Naluo had used only one move to defeat the Li King!

Chapter 1449: Greeting Gift

Jin Naluo's seventh dao rule was a bit fragile since it had just taken shape, but his counterblow defeated the Li King nonetheless.

This was too shocking to entertain!

When one's seventh dao rule was yet to be perfected, that meant one's true cultivation realm wasn't truly at seventh step kinghood. Thus, Jin Naluo fluctuated between sixth and seventh step. He was so infamous throughout the Hongmeng that cultivators paled at the mention of his name. At his incredible level of strength, even his peers had to call him Jin Naluo since he didn't wish for others to use his title of the Slaughter King.

However, he was nothing compared to seventh step kings—especially particularly strong seventh step kings. What he was doing now completely upended Dragonfeather's knowledge of the world.

Was this possible simply because he was a direct ally with the Immortal King?

Dragonfeather had been disgruntled that his city and Azure Dragon City had so easily fallen under the Immortal Pagoda's banner. But now, his mentality was beginning to shift.

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Up in the air, Jin Naluo grasped the hilt of the heavy blade; seven black dragons rushed out of it to tear at his body.

"The seven dao rules come from a black dragon king, and the dragon king was tortured to death!" His eyes widened with surprise. "This density of overpowering resentment... freeze!"

Color drained out of his face as the heavy blade in his hand shook. It wasn't trying to free itself from his grasp—it wanted to turn on Jin Naluo and devour him!

"Hahaha!!" The Li King threw his head back with laughter. "Idiot, you want my blade? Die!"

He took advantage of the opening to slam his palm down on Jin Naluo's forehead.

Dragonfeather suddenly appeared in front of Jin Naluo and thrust his palm out. The Li King found out to his great dismay that the Dragonfeather he'd almost killed earlier could now defeat him with one move! He had to flee for his life now!

"Jin Naluo spoke truly, you're nothing without that weapon." Dragonfeather blinked upon realizing what had happened. He turned back to Jin Naluo and didn't set off in immediate pursuit of the running king.

"Forget the Li Clan, take care of the troublemaking scum in the city first." Jin Naluo's face was almost as dark as the black dragons from the dao rules. They'd fully sunk into his body and he was being overcome by boundless resentment.

Thankfully, his Blood Sea Method was connected to the Sanguine Hell. Any other seventh step king would've already been eaten by the malicious dragons. Despite that, he was struggling immensely to hang on. The master of the seven dao rules had been much stronger than him in life!

"Then you..." Dragonfeather trailed off worriedly.

“What, you want to help me?” Jin Naluo flicked a sideways glance at him before sinking down to cross legged position in the air. He closed his eyes and said no more.

A confusing mix of anger and sadness hit the Dragonfeather King. Jin Naluo plainly didn't think much of him, but it was true, there wasn't anything he could do. He couldn't even come within thirty meters of the other king for fear of the dreadful resentment invading him and turning him into something that was neither here nor there.

After some indecision, Dragonfeather ultimately ground his teeth and returned to the city, hunting down the Li experts that'd invaded his domain. They'd all gone into hiding after the Li King left. Trying to escape the city at this point would just be courting death.

.....

Jin Naluo sat cross legged in the void, seemingly coolly composed like an old monk lost in meditation. But in reality...

“HELP ME!!” Jin Naluo's voice reverberated in Lu Yun's ear. “I'm dying!! Come save me!!”

“But I can't show myself right now.” Lu Yun spread out his hands with resignation. “If anyone learns that I'm in Azure Dragon Region, a dozen ninth step kings will pop out in the next second to kill me.”

“You had me come here to help you and now I'm dying!” Jin Naluo raged. “I'M GOING TO DIE!! You can't do this!!”

“Alright, alright,” Lu Yun sighed. “I'll teach you a portion of a certain scripture. Silently repeating it to yourself can dispel this resentment.”

He promptly taught the Scripture of Salvation to Jin Naluo. The scripture could ward off the ill will from the rotten flesh of many lives, to say nothing of the accumulated negativity of a seventh step king. [1]

Though the rotten flesh of many lives was a creation from the world of immortals and couldn't be compared to a seventh step king, resentment existed in both the world of immortals and Hongmeng. The incredible malice and bitterness that the flesh had contained absolutely outclassed what was present in the seven dao rules.

The seven dao rules had belonged to a seventh step king who'd been tortured to death, how could that compare to all those souls that'd been stripped of their life force and heart's blood?

Jin Naluo refocused his concentration after obtaining the scripture and recited it silently to himself. Yellow-orange light speckled with golden radiance rose from the back of his head and condensed into nine halos.

Whenever towering resentment from the blade touched the halos, it vanished like snowflakes in the sun.

Serenity gradually returned to Jin Naluo's mind and the blade with a violent air began to lose its black coloring. It took on a golden cast instead.

“This Scripture of Salvation is incredible.” Jin Naluo opened his eyes and gaped at the weapon in his hand. “But this isn't my dao, so... scatter!”

Hummmm.

The golden radiance building on the blade suddenly burst apart and its previous air of dark violence reappeared. This time, eerie sparkles of red shot through it.

“Now this is my dao,” Jin Naluo grinned. He jumped into the air and vanished without a trace. Lu Yun had asked him to come here for an emergency; he himself didn’t care about what happened in Coiling Dragon City. Now that he had a fine weapon in hand, it was time to go back and refine it so he could meld it with his own dao rules.

.....

The crisis of Coiling Dragon City had been resolved, but the Li kings left in the city would be a latent source of ongoing trouble. They’d come prepared and were uncommonly familiar with the city. Even Dragonfeather couldn’t find them, and they might come out to wreak havoc at any time.

“Place this formation disk beneath the Firmament Pavilion.” Lu Yun handed a formation disk to Qing Ting. “Remember, don’t let anyone else know that I’ve come. Err, don’t stare at the disk either. There’s a million and two hundred eighty thousand formations in it. You’ll get lost in them.”

He jumped with alarm when he saw Qing Ting was about to project her consciousness into the disk and quickly took it back from her.

She shook her head gently. “I’d forgotten that you’re the Immortal King, so any random formation disk you take out is a priceless treasure.”

“This is my greeting gift to Coiling Dragon City,” Lu Yun chuckled ruefully. “The Intranse King and I forged this together. Not even ten ninth step kings will be able to bring it down.”

“Not even ten ninth step kings?!” Qing Ting’s jaw dropped and she quickly ran off with it. This formation disk was very important to the city!

Chapter 1450: Becoming

Lu Yun’s greeting gift was incredibly precious. Qing Ting kept his words in mind and didn’t alert anyone to his presence. She traveled to the Firmament Pavilion alone; it stood defenseless when all of its formations were dismantled.

The Fish King’s mastery of formations was exceedingly high. He’d laid out a grand formation at the center of the city and connected all of the city’s formations to it. However, as strong as the formation looked, it was uncommonly weak. A king could easily bring it down with a wave of a hand.

Additionally, a chain reaction would ensue once the main formation went down. Every formation connected to it would be dismantled as well—something that not even Lu Yun had discovered when he first arrived.

Qing Ting smoothly found her way to the Firmament Pavilion and inserted the formation disk nine thousand meters below ground. And then...

A pillar of mystical purple-golden light shot up from the pavilion, transforming into a luminous curtain that enveloped Coiling Dragon City. The city's formations reconstructed themselves under this radiance and melded back into the city.

"What... is this?" Preoccupied with hunting down Li traitors, Dragonfeather stared tongue-tied at the grand formation that'd suddenly reappeared in the city. He couldn't make sense of this development.

Since the formation had originated from the Firmament Pavilion, that meant the trading company was behind it. But their great formation covered all of Coiling Dragon City?

As the city was currently engulfed in martial strife, a large trading company such as the Firmament Pavilion wouldn't involve themselves in the city's affairs. They would remain neutral and refuse to interfere. Therefore, they would never repair the city's broken formations no matter how much Coiling Dragon offered in payment.

Naturally, the Li Clan wasn't fool enough to provoke this third party either. But for some reason, the pavilion had stepped away from neutrality!

Not only did they utilize a stunning array to repair all of the city's formations, but they were protecting Coiling Dragon as well. Though their supplemental king was one of treasure refinement, there was no rule that said they couldn't possess king grade formations at the same time.

"The Firmament Pavilion's taken a stand?" Far off in the distance, the Li King regarded the sudden formation with an unpleasant expression. "It might not be the pavilion... Actually, it should be the Immortal Pagoda," he murmured in deep thought. "Jin Naluo is one of the pagoda's. Maybe he planted one of the pagoda's formations into the pavilion's foundations..."

"But their fucking foundation is their fucking heartland! Would they so easily let a seventh step king inside?!" He abruptly jumped up with fury. "Well, well, well Firmament Pavilion! You appear to be neutral on the surface and avoid participating in the Azure Dragon Region war, but you've actually cast your lot in with Coiling Dragon and plot against my Li Clan!"

With the revitalization of the city's formation, any Li powerhouses hidden within the city wouldn't have much longer to live.

The Li King took a deep look at the Firmament Pavilion before whirling around to leave. It didn't matter if the trading company was the one behind the formation or not. Their building's foundation was the only place in the entire city that was still suitable to set up a formation.

The Fish King's craft was so masterful that not only had he destroyed all of Coiling Dragon's formations, but he'd also wrecked any place suitable for setting up a formation. Only Firmament Pavilion had been left untouched—because they were neutral. The Fish King had destroyed only their formation and nothing further.

Based on the pavilion's usual method of operations, they would never let Coiling Dragon City plant anything in their headquarters' foundation. That would just be handing over their lives to the city. The only possible explanation was that the great formation covering the city was the pavilion's own work.

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“What, what is this?” Within the Firmament Pavilion, sixth step elder Vast King gaped at the formation soaring into the sky from their own building. He didn’t know what to say.

“Elder... who set this up?” Heilin carefully approached the elder.

“Coiling Dragon and Azure Dragon City will not win the war without the Immortal Pagoda’s help, but the pagoda cannot make a move out in the open.” The Vast King lowered his head with a soft sigh.

“Elder...” She didn’t quite understand.

“If the Immortal Pagoda does become involved, that will trigger a war of true kings. It will compel the true kings hidden within the Hongmeng—those waiting for the immortal dao to arrive—to reveal themselves and usher in the era of true kings.” He continued murmuring to himself, ignoring Heilin.

“Therefore, if we stand by the cities at this time, they will be able to win the war.”

He lowered his head, reluctant to accept his faction’s fate.

Heilin understood now. She was a core personage in the trading company and she’d made the call to sell Azuresky to Qing Ting. She was very familiar with the Firmament Pavilion’s important decisions and strategies.

“Do we just let someone manipulate us like this?” She, too, was unwilling.

“Why do you think Azure Dragon City, Coiling Dragon City, Jin Naluo, and the Trueriver Sect came under the Immortal Pagoda’s banner?” the elder responded meaningfully. “They all became the pagoda’s allies against their will! And now, it’s our turn.

“It’s a pity that we don’t have a true king to our name, or even a ninth step king. His Majesty Firmament King is just a supplemental king.

“We can’t afford to gamble. The immortal dao is nigh and undercurrents are flowing strongly in the realm. We must choose sides now, and not just us. All of the top ten trading companies in the realm must do so!

“Otherwise, we’ll be fattened sheep ripe for slaughter in the eyes of hungry wolves. They’ll swallow us whole and leave not even a bone behind!

“We can still retain our sense of self if we voluntarily join the Immortal Pagoda. If we’re taken over by the pagoda, then we will be no more.

“It’s time for His Majesty to make a decision.”

.....

“Are we really leaving Little Yin behind?” Azureclad had changed his appearance and drifted behind Lu Yun and Qing Ting. He grumbled, “Though she’s not of the azure dragon bloodline, she’s still a descendent of the vermilion bird...”

“Brother, why did I never know that you talk so much?” Qing Ting whipped her head back with a glare.

“Ahem!” Lu Yun corrected, “He’s not your brother at the moment, he’s our family servant. I’m your brother.”

They were currently disguised as two noble scions with an old servant. There was another person by their side—their guard, Jin Naluo. The Shapeshifting Talisman modified his appearance to be that of a third step king.

He was quite depressed. Lu Yun had hauled him back again before he could fully refine the heavy blade and told him that he'd escort them to Azure Dragon City. What in the heavens was Lu Yun plotting now?? With the little bastard's strength, he could get to Azure Dragon in the blink of an eye. Was there a need to travel a hundred million kilometers on foot??

Not only was this a waste of his time, but more importantly, it was a waste of Jin Naluo's time!

It feels like most of Lu Yun's allies became that way against their will...