

Necropolis 151

Chapter 151: To Soar Forty-Five Thousand Kilometers Into the Sky

“How is this possible?!” Dongfang Hao’s jaw dropped as he stared at the giant silver dragon in the arena. “Didn’t Zhao Tiefeng interrupt Lu Yun’s creation process? How was the sword technique perfected?”

His question was on everyone’s mind. The governor’s inspiration had been prematurely halted because of Zhao Ling’s forfeiture. But the next time the young man tried the technique in public, it was obviously perfected! How had Lu Yun done it?!

The crowd looked at each other, uniform expressions of befuddlement on their faces.

“How?” Wu Tulong was also stupefied. “Did he simulate the combat art in his mind just now and complete it that way?”

“I heard that Lu Yun is considered trash in Dusk Province and was almost stripped of his position by the Nephrite celestial emperor. Does Nephrite Major have a different standard for trash?” Zi Chen shook his head vigorously. “If he’s trash, what does that make us? Imbeciles?”

The four of them shifted their gazes to an equally baffled Zhao Changkong, whose back was drawn straight with tension. He shook his head with a wry smile, suggesting that he had no clue either.

“If anyone tells us again that Lu Yun is trash,” he bit out, “We will beat them into trash ourselves!”

“Have you all noticed?” Mo Qitian noted gravely, “Not only has Lu Yun completed his sword technique, he’s also refined all of his mystic force and stabilized his cultivation. It feels like he’s been a nascent spirit cultivator for centuries, or even a millennia. There are no flaws or any hints of inexperience in the way he holds himself.”

“When I first entered the nascent spirit realm, it took me three days to be comfortable with it, but it took him only a few minutes?!” Zi Chen muttered uncertainly. “Can he be a powerful cultivator who’d severed his own cultivation...?”

“Impossible!” Wu Tulong shook his head. “He was still transforming his inner energy when he first broke through. His energy hadn’t settled yet when Zhao Tiefeng challenged him. If he were an immortal who severed his own cultivation, he wouldn’t have needed any time to transform his inner energy.”

His words weighed heavily on the other three, and behind their eyes was a tremendous drive to challenge Lu Yun.

The governor had vanished from the stage. In his place was a shimmering silver dragon roiling within the ocean of sword energy, intertwining with the Great Peng Spirit in the air.

Both the bird spirit and its combat art countered draconic combat arts. All things had their natural banes, and the Great Peng Spirit was the dragons’. However, Lu Yun’s dragon manifestation from the Vast Dragon Seaturner was facing the roc head-on without losing any ground at all.

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The crowd's faces were frozen with shock. Some had been skeptical when the celestial emperor bestowed the title of youth sovereign onto Lu Yun, but these doubts occurred to no one now. The Dusk governor more than deserved the title, along with Wu Tulong and the others.

What they didn't take seriously were Lu Yun's claims of Zhao Tiefeng being trash. If resources alone were enough to turn a wastrel into a peerless immortal, then peerless immortals would be more common than mice in the world.

"How impressive that sword technique is!" Surrounded by his peers from the Lazuli Major, Mo Chenfeng stared at the arena with bright eyes. "The cerulean dragon technique is too complicated for me to understand, but the sea that dragon inhabits comes from my technique!"

Mo Chenfeng unsheathed his flying sword and began experimenting on the spot, slowly perfecting his flawed sword technique. Many other immortals followed suit with their own swords and treasures.

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"Impossible! Completely impossible! The spirit of our sect can overpower all draconic arts! More than ten thousand years ago, the Dragon King of the North Sea deployed the Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons in a fight against our sect head and still lost. So why can't I counter your attack?!" Zhao Tiefeng roared from within the ocean of swords. His body had become one with his spirit, casting a relentless barrage of peng-related combat arts.

However, no matter how valiantly he waged battle, the enormous dragon remained intact, and, in fact, continued injuring the elder.

"That's because you're too shortsighted and narrow minded," Lu Yun called out from the ocean, the burden on him lessening. "The consciousness of a great peng spans heaven and earth and soars forty-five thousand kilometers into the sky. It wishes to soar through the nine heavens and to be free of any restraint!"

His voice boomed like the rolling waves. "Your combat art manifests only the form of a great peng and not its spirit. I'll show you what a true great peng is!"

Screech!

A piercing shriek reverberated through the skies, shattering the silver dragon riding the sword waves. Something enormous had awoken and was awaiting its magnificent entrance.

Rumble!

A giant fish with a single horn on its head rose out of the frothing sword ocean.

"That's a... a kunpeng!" Some immediately recognized the creature. It was a frightening divine beast residing within the North Sea, and also Beigong Yu's true form. However, the commonly held belief was that a kunpeng was nothing more than a giant fish, unable to transform into other beings. There was only one kunpeng left in the entire world of immortals—Beigong Yu.

And he was now Lu Yun's infernum.

Giant wings unfurled from the sides of the kunpeng's body, transforming into an enormous bird. A great peng!

"The great peng rides the wind," Lu Yun chanted, his voice a distant call from the ocean of swords, "soaring forty-five thousand kilometers into the sky!"

Wham!

Sword light exploded within the ocean. The great peng made of sword energy expanded its wings and took flight, brutally slamming into Zhao Tiefeng's Great Peng Spirit.

"Impossible!" The elder's eyes widened. "The kun fish can't possibly turn into a great peng!!"

His reflexes remained on the ball. The bird image flapped its wings and dove at the one made of sword light.

"The kunpeng becomes the kun fish within the ocean, but a peng when taking wing in the sky!" Lu Yun delighted in a long peal of laughter. "No matter bird or fish, my only pursuit is freedom!"

He flickered into existence above the arena, surrounded by a billion rays of sword light. A quick hand seal directed all of the sword energy into the great roc's body. The two enormous birds clashed viciously in the air!

Wham!

Ripples traveled across the barrier of light encircling the arena, nullifying the tremendous impact. The Great Peng Spirit shattered as Zhao Tiefeng tumbled from midair. There were more broken bones in his body than intact ones.

"You—you destroyed my nascent spirit!!" A mouthful of crimson blood spewed from Zhao Tiefeng's mouth before he collapsed, eyes rolling into the back of his head.

Bam!

Lu Yun's flying sword shattered without being able to return to him. The tremendous might that had just been expressed through it wasn't something a regular sword could withstand. His clothes and hair were slightly disheveled, and his breathing was quick. The battle had taken a noticeable toll on him.

He approached his opponent and, under everyone's gaze, kicked the man off the stage.

"Who's next?" he asked slowly as his breathing calmed down.

Chapter 152: Lu Guhong of the Mist Land

The two simple words weighed heavily on everyone's heart. All eyes turned to the other four youth sovereigns hovering in midair; they were the only ones who could challenge Lu Yun now.

The world had fallen silent. All eyes were now on the youth in high spirits at the center of the Spiritrial Arena. Full of pride, Qing Han looked straight at Lu Yun and was met in turn with a bright smile. The imperial envoy quickly looked away, face flushed.

Weird, why is he blushing? A strange feeling rose from Lu Yun's heart. For a quick second there, there'd been something familiar about Qing Han, but the inklings of a thought scattered as four sources of powerful battle intent locked on him.

Wu Tulong, Dongfang Hao, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian fixed bright looks on Lu Yun, eyes blazing with the desire to fight the governor then and there.

The four of them had fought each other countless times, and knew each other like the back of their hands. Having Lu Yun join their ranks had reignited their desire to fight. This motivation differed from their earlier admiration; they now considered the young governor a true rival at their level!

"He's a handpicked youth sovereign by a celestial emperor, alright! Defeating a peerless immortal on his own! He's bound to become a dao immortal in the future!" Normalcy didn't return to the crowd for a long while.

"The Five Youth Sovereigns?" a mocking voice rang out. "You immortals of the nine majors really have no shame."

A young man with green hair descended upon the gathering on a green cloud. "I have no interest in the so-called heritage of the ancient lord... Given enough time, I will surpass the ancients."

His hair, eyebrows, and lips were all green, and there was a strangely fey aura about him as he continued, "I'm not here for that mess of a heritage, but to take down the Five Youth Sovereigns!" He manifested a spear as he spoke, the tip of which shimmered in green as it swept over Lu Yun and the other four youths.

Swoosh!

"Lü Guhong of Mist Land!" someone called out. "The one who slew an august immortal as a peak transformed spirit cultivator!"

A cultivator killing an immortal! And not a true or empyrean immortal, but an august one!

August immortals were leagues above the lower realm immortals, having refined their power and spirit to the fullest. Cultivators were nothing more than insects in their eyes, ants to be crushed in great numbers with a flip of their hands.

Lü Guhong, however, had killed an august immortal, and a powerful one at that!

His name further stoked the battle intent in the four youths' eyes. They, too, had slain immortals before, but never an august immortal.

Let's fight.

"Lü Guhong of Mist..." Lu Yun considered the green-haired young man, cocking an eyebrow. "A monster spirit from Mist Land, one of the ten lands?"

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There were nine majors, ten lands, and four immortal seas in the world of immortals. The nine majors were home to humans, the ten lands to monster spirits, and the four seas to the dragons. Each of the

dry territories were connected by the North, South, East, and West Seas, forming the geography of the entire world of immortals.

Mist was one of the ten lands.

Lü Guhong was the best genius of his land over the past ten thousand years. Even the monster spirit emperor of Mist was cultivating him as the next emperor.

Such a proud being didn't care for any heritage. He trusted only himself and believed he could forge a path to supremacy, exceeding all those who came before him.

News about the heritage had reached Mist fifteen days ago, and the land had sent representatives to fight for it. Being dismissive of the heritage, Guhong hadn't come with the delegation.

Then news spread of a human celestial emperor bestowing the title of the Five Youth Sovereigns. That naturally reached his ears, which was why he was here now.

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"Problem?" Lu Yun stood atop the Spiritrial Arena. "Then fight."

Lü Guhong shook his head slightly. "Get off the arena, then we'll fight." Contempt filtered into his gaze. "Those who reign sovereign should indomitably push themselves forward and rise above all others. There's nothing to be had in huddling in a greenhouse, under the protection of the rules."

"Hahaha!" Lu Yun laughed heartily at the words and leapt out of the arena. "That's just as well. I will kill you outside the arena and have you die with no regrets!"

The governor retaliated in kind and gave as good as he got.

Lü Guhong was a peak transformed spirit cultivator, much more powerful than Lu Yun's initial nascent spirit cultivation. In the challenger's eyes, however, there was no difference between insects and dragons.

"Hold!" Mo Qitian stepped forward. "Senior brother Lu has fought a few battles already. He must be tired. Allow me to face the top genius of Mist at this time."

"This is my turf and I am the reason for this fight." Lu Yun shook his head. "I have yet to be defeated, which means I'm still the champion of this arena. I should be the one to accept this challenge."

"Do whatever any of you wish to." Contempt colored Lü Guhong's face. "All five of you can attack me at the same time, for all I care."

Wu Tulong and the others didn't even raise an eyebrow at his provocation.

"Then we leave it in your capable hands, senior brother." Dongfang Hao moved back and stopped Mo Qitian from speaking. With a smile, he said, "Don't lose face for the human race in front of monster spirits."

After a pause, Mo Qitian inclined his head.

“You’ve just undergone a big fight,” Guhong proclaimed. “I can give you an hour to recover your stamina.”

“No need.” Lu Yun shook his head and smoothed his clothes. “I was just testing my technique on a piece of trash. That didn’t take that much of a toll on me.”

In the arms of his sect, Zhao Tiefeng had just recovered consciousness with the aid of a pill. Lu Yun’s words made his eyes roll back into his head, fainting again from anger.

“This place is too small. Fight me in the sky!” Purple light rose from Lu Yun’s body and he vanished into thin air.

Immortals and cultivators alike hurriedly took flight to keep an eye on the proceedings.

“Oh?” Lu Yun soared three thousand meters into the sky, only to find his opponent already waiting for him.

“You’re too slow.” Guhong shook his head slightly at the governor’s slow arrival. “I’ll kill you in three moves.”

Before Lu Yun could respond, the monster spirit raised his spear and attacked, moving so quickly that he became a blur of green light.

So fast! Lu Yun’s pupils contracted as purple radiance flashed before him, blocking the ferocious strike just in the nick of time. Before he could sigh in relief, another flash of green light pierced toward him from an angle where his opponent shouldn’t be.

Clink!

Violet sword energy once again blocked the attack.

Lü Guhong reappeared before Lu Yun, his eyes tinged with surprise.

He wants to kill me through speed? Lu Yun laughed inwardly. Aoxue is ten times faster than this punk! He’d undergone years of grueling boot camps with the dragon princess in hell. Lü Guhong wasn’t going to defeat him like this.

“You have one more move.” Lu Yun beamed merrily. “If you fail to kill me, I’m going to start fighting back.”

Chapter 153: Poison Fiend

Instead of making his next move, Lü Guhong stood in front of Lu Yun. “Not bad. Your senses are decent and you blocked my attacks of swiftness. But I’ll kill you with my next move.”

Lu Yun quietly considered the youth, and also refrained from action. The monster spirit struck a lazy pose, weaknesses glaringly obvious in his stance. However, Lu Yun knew that if he made a move, the young man would fight back ferociously.

“Make your strongest move.” The governor nodded slowly. “Your attacks are impressive, but not enough to kill an august immortal.”

He'd acquired Aoxue's talent through the Tome of Life and Death and sparred with her for years. At some unknown point, he'd become one of the best cultivators in the world of immortals.

Even then, he didn't think he had the ability to kill an august immortal, nor did he think Guhong could, with the way he was fighting.

Lu Yun would put him at Wu Tulong and Dongfang Hao's level, or slightly below them. If the monster spirit had managed to kill an august immortal, he must possess a special killing move like Lu Yun's Judgement of Life or Death.

Countless immortals and cultivators had taken flight to watch the two of them fight from a distance. Wu Tulong, Dongfang Hao, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian remained at the four corners of the battlefield, marking a circle roughly five kilometers in radius.

Bam!

An explosion sounded from Guhong's body as a pillar of emerald light enveloped him. He seemed to be undergoing some changes in the light, which were accompanied by a faint fragrance wafting out of the pillar.

Is he going to reveal his true form? What is he?

Monster spirits transformed to human form to facilitate cultivation, but they were at their strongest in their original forms. If Lü Guhong had slain an august immortal, he must have done so in his original form.

"That's.. a jiao, and a poisonous one at that!" Lu Yun's face clouded over. Now he recognized the fragrance.

Poison!

The characters of Lü Guhong's name had suggested a true form of some avian creature, but he was actually an enormous crocodile!

Though they shared many traits and looked similar, these scaly beings were a completely different species from dragons. The strongest among them were no lesser than a dragon, and so-called scaled dragons were a crossbreed of the two races. Since dragons were the more dominant bloodline in that genealogy, scaled dragons called themselves dragons.

Lü Guhong was the venomous kind of crocodile!

Just as Lu Yun was recovering from his shock, a snarling green figure charged out of the beam of light and lunged at him, brandishing its claws.

A Poison Fiend!

By killing others with poison and incorporating the victims' souls into it, a terrifying spirit would be born over time—a Poison Fiend!

Others might not be able to see the thing clearly, but Lu Yun could. This particular fiend had reached the immortal realm. Its poison could kill even a golden immortal, let alone an august immortal. Nerves made his hands clammy with sweat.

Whoosh!

His body burst into black flames. An immortal-realm Poison Fiend was too terrifying, even more so than the mutated poison in Qing Han's body. Without hellfire, Lu Yun wouldn't survive being in close proximity, let alone fighting it.

The poison in Qing Han's body has been suppressed by the empress' heritage, but not cured. Once the empress leaves, the poison will resurface and kill him.

Fusang Purewood is inside the Skandha Extinction Tomb and protected by the empress' dread zombie, which means it's unattainable. Qing Han won't prolong his life with an origin sphere, so that leaves this Poison Fiend for cleansing his poison. Perfect!

Lu Yun's eyes lit up.

Kill Lü Guhong and take the Poison Fiend! Turn him into my Infernum, which means whatever he possesses is mine! His mind made up, the determination to kill his opponent increased his strength by thirty percent.

Hum.

Tremendous violet sword energy spilled out of Lu Yun's body and splashed over the premises, its continuously enlarging surface area forcing the spectating cultivators to back away. Even Wu Tulong and the other three youths were no exception.

A violet ocean spanning fifteen kilometers in diameter took shape in the sky, within which sword energy and boundless killing energy were rampaging, ricocheting off of each other and the environment. A great dragon howl shook the heavens as a violet dragon broke the surface, creating waves thirty thousand meters tall.

Vast Dragon Seaturner!

The sword art was ten times more powerful than when Lu Yun had used it in the arena. The arena hadn't suppressed his cultivation, but its limited space had prevented the sword art from fully deploying. Now everyone understood why Lu Yun had dared accept Lü Guhong's challenge outside the arena.

"What happened? Why is Lu Yun suddenly so determined to kill Guhong?" Some immortals paled from the show of strength.

"Top geniuses respect each other even when they compete. They wish to validate themselves by killing the other, but they aren't so hellbent on slaughtering their opponent!"

"Does he have a history with Guhong?"

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“That’s a Poison Fiend! It’s a kind of spirit that can consume Little Yu’s poison!” Shock flashed through Chen Xiao’s eyes. “He, he wants to kill Lü Guhong, take the fiend, and cure Little Yu with it!”

“Does he know about Little Yu’s secret?” Qing Buyi asked in confusion and surprise. “But it doesn’t seem that way....”

A Poison Fiend was the first option Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao had considered to cure Qing Han, but all of their attempts to do so failed. No matter how hard they’d tried, they couldn’t create one.

Chen Xiao shook his head. He didn’t quite understand Lu Yun. Why was the young governor so driven for a friend?

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“Lü Guhong!” Lu Yun’s voice rang through the sky. “Time for you to take one of my moves and see who dies!”

Bam!

All of the vast seas of the sky were the sword dragon’s domain. In an area spanning fifteen kilometers in diameter, boundless sword energy condensed to a single point. That point rested on the violet dragon, everything at its command.

“How is he so powerful?!” Hidden within the beam of light, Guhong’s heart sank. The Poison Fiend was his trump card; not only was it incomparably strong in a physical sense, but its venom could kill even a golden immortal!

The power Lu Yun was now demonstrating, however, had thoroughly exceeded the limits of his defenses.

With a derisive glance, the violet dragon slashed at the Poison Fiend and beam of light. The world loomed large in Guhong’s vision and rose to pulverize him.

“Stop! Stop! Spare him!!” A furious yell rang out at this time and a figure rushed in to block Lu Yun’s dragon.

“Die!” Lu Yun opened his arms with a blank expression, becoming one with the violet dragon. His tremendous killing intent and sword energy devoured even the figure who’d rushed into the fray.

1. There are several ways of translating the Chinese character jiao. It’s a type of hornless Chinese dragon that’s said to be aquatic or river dwelling. They’re often referred to as flood, or scaled dragons, and sometimes translated as crocodile or kraken. I don’t call them dragons in NECRO because the author says they are a completely different species, not a derivative.

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Chapter 154: Cleaving the Heavens with One Strike

Bam!

Something seemed to wash over the sky, leaving it a deep blue without a trace of clouds or impurity. The patch of sky within a dozen kilometer radius was even bluer than the surrounding air.

There was no sign of Lü Guhong, nor the peerless immortal who didn't lift his cultivation seal in time, but no one had any doubts about their fate.

Lu Yun's attack just now had contained the absolute determination to kill. Any impediment, even from gods and immortals, would fall beneath his sword and be rendered unto dust.

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Hell.

Lu Yun lay prone on the ground, panting heavily. He'd exhausted all of his strength and mystic force with that attack. If he hadn't activated the realms of yin and yang and entered the Gates of the Abyss at the last second, he would've fallen out of the sky and been smashed to his death.

Yuying meekly placed energy-replenishing pills into Lu Yun's mouth, helping him digest them. After a long while, he exhaled all of the impurities in his body.

"It seems that hell has regained some life since I refined my nascent spirit." A smile tugged at Lu Yun's lips. Hell was still dark and oppressive, but it was much more lively than before.

While Lu Yun's envoys could come and go freely, the Infernum could only leave with his permission. They also couldn't stray too far from him. Therefore, Infernum like Zhao Dianliang, the rimesnake king, Lau Nuo, and Beigong Yu had settled down and built a small village.

"Uh, I killed a peerless immortal by accident when I took down Lü Guhong?" Lu Yun saw two men in some distance watching him with uneasy looks.

"Lü Biao greets the master!" The green-haired peerless immortal was the one who'd tried to save Lü Guhong at the last second. Both of them were now Lu Yun's Infernum after dying at his hand.

"Well, I didn't expect this." It was quite a pleasant surprise to gain a peerless immortal as his Infernum. This one would be a powerful bodyguard.

Although Lü Biao couldn't deploy his full power in Dusk Province, Lu Yun wouldn't stay there forever. After gaining the heritage of the ancient lord, he would have to make his way to the Nephrite Capital to be confirmed as the governor.

That was when the real trial would begin.

"Where's the Poison Fiend?" Lu Yun levelled a piercing gaze at Lü Guhong.

The young man hurriedly hauled out a wheel-like treasure. "Master, this is the Wheel of Poison, a ninth-rank treasure. The fiend is within the wheel."

"A ninth-rank treasure... but it's more valuable than that." Lu Yun nodded and took the wheel. "I don't want your treasure. Besides, only you can tap into its full power, I'm just borrowing it to save a friend."

“The Poison Fiend can consume all poisons in the world,” said Yuying. “We can save Sir Qing Han now.” She sighed with relief at the development. She’d continuously been studying how to cure Qing Han, but to no avail.

Between Qing Han and Lu Yun lay a bond forged through life and death. Lu Yun cared deeply about Qing Han, and had even revealed his secrets to him. Therefore, Yuying and the other envoys considered Qing Han second only to Lu Yun.

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“Is that the true power of the Vast Dragon Seaturner?” Horror flickered through Wu Tulong’s face. “I think an august immortal rushed in at the last moment and died along with Lü Guhong!”

Mo Qitian’s face paled. “So cultivators really can kill august immortals!”

“That wasn’t a regular august immortal!” Dongfang Hao’s teeth chattered. “That was monster spirit king Lü Biao, a peerless immortal with his cultivation sealed!”

“But....” Zi Chen shuddered as his gaze settled on Lu Yun, who remained quietly in midair. “Why hasn’t he consumed any energy after killing Lü Guhong? That monster spirit could rival us, and there was also a sealed peerless immortal?!”

Although Lu Yun was a little unkempt, he seemed perfectly fine. Everyone could tell that his mental strength and mystical force were still at their peak!

Was he even human?!

“Do you have any complaints, Emperor of Mist?” asked the Nephrite celestial emperor.

“Lü Biao deserved death for breaking the rules and intervening in a fight between cultivators,” echoed a lilting, female voice, sounding perfectly unruffled. “He received his just desserts when he was caught up in the aftermath. Mist Land has no complaints.”

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“Who’s next?” Lu Yun asked after the emperors fell silent.

It was the same two words. Violetgrave burst with light again, the shadow of a violet dragon coiling around him.

“Lü Guhong killed the august immortal with a forbidden method,” he remarked faintly. “He himself wasn’t all that powerful. In fact, he was no match for senior brother Wu Tulong. The top genius of Mist didn’t quite live up to his reputation.”

He hadn’t yet fought Wu Tulong and the other youths, but they’d tested each other with their presence. Thus, Lu Yun had a basic understanding of their level of power and knew that Lü Guhong fell short in comparison.

“The top genius of Mist may not have lived up to his reputation, but monster spirit king Lü Biao was no joke, even with his cultivation sealed to the level of an august immortal. Yet you slew him with a single

blow..." Dongfang Hao's eyes shone with an eager will to fight. "Not even peerless immortals will have the courage to challenge you now. It's our turn."

Although Lu Yun had killed the monster king, the will of Dongfang Hao and the others hadn't dimmed at all. To cultivate was to sail against the current. One had to brave all challenges and never cower in fear. No matter how impressive a demonstration of power the young governor had made, it wouldn't deter the top geniuses.

"Senior brother Dongfang, after you," Lu Yun said seriously.

"After you!" With an intense shout, Dongfang Hao's presence surged exponentially, fluttering his white robes and hair.

Wu Tulong and the others backed away of their own accord, clearing away a vast battlefield. Everyone watched with bated breath. Anticipation thickened as the crowd's eagerness exceeded their expectations for the match earlier!

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Swoosh!

A sword manifested in Dongfang Hao's hand. "Take this! Skyrending Sword!" His sword burst with prodigious luminescence, threatening to cut down the sky.

Immortals will fall if they dare stop me, the heavens will fall if they dare obstruct me!

Unstoppable sword aura flared from Dongfang Hao, connecting heaven and earth like a rainbow and becoming the only locus of power. The magnificent attack reached a purity that was infinitely close to the purest of dao.

The governor's expression turned grave. Dongfang Hao was significantly more than just a little stronger than Lü Guhong.

"Cleaving the skies with one stroke! Such fearsome sword aura!" exclaimed Lu Yun. He didn't dare use his Vast Dragon Seaturner, because Dongfang Hao's sword aura was too powerful. It'd cut straight through Lu Yun's sword ocean, without which the sword dragon would be a rootless duckweed, weak and vulnerable.

Hum!

Clusters of tombs manifested in Violetgrave's sword light. The will to bury heaven, earth, and all living things rippled through the blade. Lu Yun towered as the overlord of death and channeled the power of the mausoleum.

His sword aura was no match for Dongfang Hao's, so he wouldn't win no matter how impressive a sword technique he used. Therefore, he channeled Violetgrave's innate power as a ninth-rank sword to counter Dongfang Hao's sword aura.

Chapter 155: Youth Sovereign

The imposing, overlapping shadows of tombs didn't faze Dongfang Hao at all. His sword aura shone ever so brightly like a second sun in the sky and cut straight into them.

"Violetgrave's aura has morphed into a collection of tombs!" The spectating immortals marveled at the mausoleum manifested from the sword.

The environment around Dongfang Hao changed as soon as his sword aura slashed into the mausoleum. Gone were the heavens and earth, as well as the crowd. He seemed to have entered a different world.

"Where are we?" He looked around warily, holding his position in midair with his sword at the ready.

"Inside Violetgrave's sword aura." Lu Yun faded into existence. "I haven't been walking the dao of swords for very long, and the amount of knowledge I've grasped for this weapon pales in comparison to yours. I can only rely on Violetgrave's inherent power."

Lu Yun's sword aura was the boundless sword ocean. Using its presence to deploy the sword dragon was the basis of the Vast Dragon Seater technique, a self-created technique that had exceeded the caliber of the original Nineteen Cerulean Sword Dragons.

The mausoleum was Violetgrave's own power, which may have been forged by the swordsmith, or its previous master.

"It's very impressive that senior brother Lu is able to activate the aura of a ninth-rank sword!" Sword aura swirled around Dongfang Hao to defend against the purple sword energy, admiration in his eyes.

He was using a third-rank sword—the best of the inferior rank swords—which was the most he could manage. Wielding a sword over that level would only hinder, rather than empower him. For cultivators, the best weapon wasn't necessarily the one of the highest rank, but the one that best suited oneself. Being able to wield a ninth-rank sword at the core realm and activate its aura at the nascent spirit realm made Lu Yun a very rare exception.

Of course, the world of immortals was vast, and there was no shortage of great talents. There were even rarities that were born as immortals, like the people of the ancient times. Therefore, Lu Yun might be an exceptional case, but not so far out of the realm of acceptance.

Dongfang Hao's eyes gleamed ever more passionately with battle intent. Sword aura blazed to the skies again, then slashed at Lu Yun.

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Lu Yun and Dongfang Hao grappled in an intense fight within the violet light, neither gaining the upper hand. Outside the battlefield, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian faced their own opponents as well.

News of the Five Youth Sovereigns had reached all parts of the world of immortals, making its way to the ears of geniuses like Lü Guhong. In response, talented cultivators from the monster spirits of the ten lands, dragons of the four seas, and even the divine and demonic races had gathered to challenge the five youths.

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“Totally on purpose! Those nine old farts did this on purpose! Hahaha!” Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi hadn’t taken to the air. They were still in their seats and had their heads tilted up to the sky.

Chen Xiao snorted, scoffing for a brief moment. “The tournament itself wasn’t a big enough of a draw. Many geniuses in the world don’t give a damn about the ancient lord’s heritage and thus haven’t paid the province a visit. That’s why the nine came up with the Five Youth Sovereigns moniker to lure them here!

“This is a very good occasion. No matter what comes of this, the tournament will greatly benefit cultivators around the world. Many people have already recorded the battles between the young geniuses so that their own sect disciples can study the fights. What a cunning plan and execution! If the nine celestial emperors from eighty thousand years ago could’ve set aside their differences and come up with such a plan, our world would’ve long since recovered a tenth of the ancient world’s prosperity.”

“Not only that,” Qing Buyi remarked bemusedly, “but I wonder if the nine old farts already know what the buried heritage actually is. Is it really just the Sword Pogoda? Just an ancient lord’s treasured possession?”

“Let’s wait and see.” Chen Xiao exhaled deeply. “Those nine fossils picked the right person this time. Lu Yun has not only met their expectations, but exceeded them! They originally chose Wu Tulong and the other three kids, but after the governor’s sudden emergence to stardom, they added him to the lineup.

“Lu Yun is displaying all of his tricks with abandon, even treasures like the Emerald Mistfire and Formation Orb, precisely because he’s guessed the celestial emperors will support him.”

“Little Yu’s picked the right man!” Qing Buyi capered, beaming widely. “Wedding bells, wedding bells! Let’s propose a match! I’ll take Little Yu to make an offer tomorrow! He, and no other, will be my younger brother-in-law!”

“Hold on.” Chen Xiao pushed his cousin back down with a shake of his head. “Little Yu hasn’t told Lu Yun about her real identity. We can’t do that for her; we’d end up doing more harm than good. Let them sort this out themselves. Besides, the world of immortals is about to fall into chaos.”

Qing Buyi paused. “Oh?”

“In addition to the Nephrite celestial emperor, the other eight celestial emperors are entering closed door cultivation as well! The nine emperors set up this tournament to encourage exchanges between all cultivators everywhere. What do you think the nine of them want to do?

“They’re going to attempt a joint breakthrough!”

Qing Buyi trembled. Once the nine celestial emperors had all entered closed door cultivation at the same time, the world of immortals would be bound to dissolve into disarray.

.....

In the air, the intense duels between the four pairs of geniuses lasted for three full days.

Increasing numbers of cultivators arrived in Dusk Province, tightly crowding a fifteen hundred kilometer radius around Dusk City. Meanwhile, immortals retreated outside the circle and observed from afar, yielding the closer vantage points to the cultivators.

The world of immortals is only as powerful as its cultivators. Many accepted Lu Yun's words as truth over the past three days.

The eight geniuses pulled out all of their tricks to defeat their opponents, which in turn greatly benefited the audience. A good number of cultivators took to the three arenas to test their cultivation against each other, or, barring that, exchanged a few moves on the ground.

The provincial seal still hovered above the Spiritrial Arena, but almost everyone had forgotten about the one thing that could lead them to the heritage of the ancient lord.

On the fourth day, there was a sudden explosion. A bedraggled figure fell from the sky, his sword broken into pieces and a trickle of blood trickling down the corner of his mouth.

"I concede!" White hair slightly unkempt, Dongfang Hao locked his gaze on Lu Yun.

Wavering, the Dusk governor was barely keeping himself upright.

Dongfang Hao's sword aura was far too powerful for his sword ocean to buck off. Even though Lu Yun had called upon Violetgrave's sword aura, it was only enough to help him stay toe-to-toe. Moreover, Dongfang Hao's cultivation was also much higher than his.

"By your grace," Lu Yun exhaled the impurities in his body. "I only won because of the inherent might of a ninth-rank treasure."

"No." Dongfang Hao shook his head. "The ninth-rank sword is part of your strength. It's not luck that allowed you to defeat me; if we fought as cultivators of the same level, I wouldn't be your match."

"No one cares about cultivation level in a fight of life or death," Lu Yun said. "The only thing that matters to cultivators is power. Your superior cultivation is part of your strength as well!"

Dongfang Hao blinked and nodded. "Well said."

"Let us fight, Dongfang Hao, Lu Yun!" Another two cultivators came forward to challenge them.

"I have some theories to test after sparring with senior brother Lu. Let's fight!" Fueled by towering heroism, Dongfang Hao put away his broken sword and manifested a weapon created from sword aura alone.

"We fight!" Lu Yun didn't back away either. They rushed toward the two challengers in two streaks of light.

.....

"Remaining humble after victory and driven after defeat. Boldly pushing oneself to the heights of ambition and constantly seeking improvement. That is what the celestial emperors saw in the youth sovereigns."

Chapter 156: I'll Wait For You

The celestial emperors had naturally boasted absolute confidence in the five youths to personally name them the Five Youth Sovereigns of the world.

All of them were young, no one past fifty years old. In the world of immortals, cultivators and immortals alike enjoyed long lives, easily seeing several thousand years, or perhaps even dozens of millennia. One who'd yet to reach fifty truly deserved the appellation of 'young'.

The sparring between cultivators grew more intense as time went on, turning the radius of fifteen hundred kilometers around Dusk City into their private battleground.

Some fought to the death, some just exchanged moves with each other, others observed the fighting, and some simply sat down and conversed at length, sharing their knowledge.

In any case, five figures still firmly monopolized all five corners of the sky. They'd already weathered five waves of challengers, but were still standing tall. Apart from Lu Yun's victory over Dongfang Hao, the five chosen youths were undefeated thus far. They hadn't had a moment's respite to recover their stamina and energy and were only being sustained by their sheer willpower alone as they repelled the world's greatest geniuses.

Lu Yun hadn't returned to hell to recuperate, either. Just like the others, this was a tempering experience for him that deepened his understanding of the nascent spirit realm. This enlightenment didn't come from the knowledge and experience of his envoys, but belonged to him alone.

.....

"I truly underestimated him back then." In a remote corner of Dusk Province, two vague shadows floated in the sky and calmly surveyed the situation around Dusk City.

"Are you not going?" softly asked a man, the vicissitudes of life etched on his face. "You'd be the world's sixth youth sovereign if you did."

The girl next to him gently shook her head, her voice firm. "I can't expose myself yet. I have to keep growing. I have to become an immortal... a peerless immortal, a dao immortal! And when the time comes, I'll become the young master's ace, a trump card that no one knows of!"

Wayfarer smiled. "As you wish. In that case, let's head to Nephrite Capital and meet that pair of eyes."

"Alright." Reluctant to leave, Wanfeng took one last look at the dashing bold and vigorous figure in the air, then followed suit with her master and slowly faded away. "Sir, wait for me."

Boom!

Somewhere else in the sky, Lu Yun slapped his opponent down with a single palm strike and flashed a bright grin in that direction. "Aye, I'll wait for you."

.....

The five youngsters still stood in the air one month later. They were gasping for breath and marked by many injuries, but their figures remained unbending.

By now, no one stepped forth to challenge them.

From the dragons of the four seas to the genius monster spirits of the ten lands, the youth sovereigns had defeated every last of them. Apart from some genuine demon or divine prodigies who dared not set

foot in the nine majors, the youngsters had already thwarted all the rising stars of the nine majors, ten lands, and four immortal seas.

The defeated challengers might have suffered a momentary setback, but they'd nevertheless benefited in countless ways. Being able to fight to their heart's content and fully measure themselves against equally formidable peers was a unique opportunity.

"Since we've run out of challengers, it's time to determine who's the strongest among the five of us!" Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian all looked at Lu Yun at the same time, their eyes burning with unprecedented fighting spirit.

"Just give up already. It's still impossible for you to withstand his Vast Dragon Seaturner!" Dongfang Hao smiled. "My sword aura can restrain his, which is the only reason why I could fight him for three days straight. But the three of you would have to take his combat art head on. Let me remind you, it's an attack that killed a peak august immortal."

Wu Tulong blanched.

If the Vast Dragon Seaturner could slay an august immortal in a single strike, there was no need to postulate what would happen to them. Lu Yun had only used this move three times in the past month, instantly defeating his opponent each time. Now that he'd familiarized himself with the art, he'd become increasingly more proficient with it.

The other youth sovereigns all possessed their own fighting style, though, each with their own merits. Dongfang Hao's mighty sword aura happened to counter the sword sea in Lu Yun's, preventing the governor from invoking the Vast Dragon Seaturner. But the other three weren't so lucky, and would be defeated in a single move.

"The Exalted Immortal Sect's Great Peng Spirit would've restrained his art, but... hehehe, the goldspirit constitution fellow doesn't even have the courage to face him." Mo Qitian didn't forget to mock the Exalted Immortal Sect while he was at it.

Instead of challenging Lu Yun again, the goldspirit cultivator had gone on a rampage below. He'd made great progress by deploying the Great Peng Spirit, sometimes winning and sometimes losing against other supreme geniuses.

"Even Zhao Tiefeng's Great Peng Spirit turned out to be useless, so how would he dare challenge Lu Yun again?" Dongfang Hao shook his head.

"Fine, then wait for me to find a way to break your Vast Dragon Seaturner first. I'll challenge you after that." Wu Tulong retracted his spear, intending to leave. He, too, had benefited immensely from facing countless talented youths for an entire month.

"Wait a moment." Lu Yun stopped the group from dispersing. "I would like to invite everyone present to open the ancient lord's Sword Pagoda together and unearth his legacy,"

"What?" His voice had been loud enough to resound for fifteen hundred kilometers, interrupting many cultivators in the midst of dueling. They all looked at him, flabbergasted.

No one could prevail over the youth sovereigns; this title of theirs had long been acknowledged. And among them, Wu Tulong and the three others considered themselves inferior to Lu Yun. For all intents and purposes, it made the governor the highest ranking youth sovereign.

In truth, the legacy was already his for the taking, yet he'd suddenly extended an invitation for everyone to activate the legacy together.

The invitation didn't generate all that much goodwill as many were reminded of Zhao Tiefeng's previous words. Was Nephrite Major truly incapable of accessing the legacy by themselves?

"Hahahaha. You lot still harbor suspicions even at a time like this? What a bunch of fools," Crown Prince Zhao Changkong barked with laughter. "If Nephrite Major truly wished to, we could mobilize a million heavenly soldiers. Why would we resort to such despicable means and expose ourselves to public condemnation?"

This month had greatly broadened his vision. It hadn't done much for his cultivation, but his state of mind had reached a new level of enlightenment—that of an immeasurable realm infinitely close to 'emperor'.

"Indeed." Lu Yun nodded. "We would've already taken the legacy if we wanted to. No one even knows for sure if there's any danger involved. Plus, only a predestined seeker can obtain a legacy of this magnitude. Take Violetgrave, for instance: it originated from an ancient tomb in Thundergale Major, but ended up in my hands after a few rounds of various owners. Incidentally, I just so happen to be able to bring out its full might."

Thundergale's immortals had their reservations, but they couldn't object. After all, they, too, coveted the legacy.

"To study the ancients is to learn of their rise and fall. Securing their legacy, discarding the dross, studying the essence of their teachings, and corroborating the past with the present would be a wondrous occurrence for the entire immortal world," Lu Yun continued, "In three days' time, I will use the governor's seal to excavate the legacy from the ground. By then, all of you can try acquiring it by any means at your disposal."

Even the nine celestial emperors were stupefied. They'd initially thought Lu Yun would avail himself of the legacy first, then only share part of it afterward. However, the governor meant for everyone to try their luck together!

Boundless goodwill flowed from every direction, almost drowning Lu Yun. In his dantian, the palm-sized sprout of the Sal Tree of Life and Death explosively grew, reaching one foot tall and radiating an exuberant green halo that brimmed with lush vitality. His cultivation instantly reached the peak of the nascent spirit realm.

This time around, he didn't make use of the formidable energy for an immediate breakthrough. Instead, he redirected all of it to further refine his nascent spirit. He wasn't without his shortcomings, namely that his nascent spirit was still too weak.

Once Wu Tulong and the others found a way to break his sword art and Violetgrave's sword aura, they could use the formidable power of their own nascent spirits to overpower him. Now was the time for him to strengthen his own spirit with the energy provided by the sal tree's growth.

Lu Yun's figure turned into an afterimage and vanished from the crowd's line of sight, reappearing in front of Qing Han in the next moment. Under his friend's stupefied gaze, he hauled Qing Han onto his shoulder and disappeared from view.

"Is he really not aware that Little Yu is a girl?" Chen Xiao stared blankly at the now vacant spot.

"I think it's all an act so he can take advantage of my little sister!"

"Tch. Little Yu herself is willing, so what's the problem?"

Qing Buyi's eyes belched fire. "We're talking about my blood sister here!"

"Chen Xiao, Qing Buyi, you two come with me." Zhao Changkong suddenly appeared in front of them.

Chapter 157: Bullying Others to the Extreme

In a side room inside the governor manor's inner yard.

Lu Yun deployed eighteen formations with a wave of a hand, then activated the grand formation protecting the manor.

"Feinie, Yuying, Xuanxi, and Aoxue, watch over the premises. Anyone who dares intrude is to be killed without exception!" he ordered via transmission.

"Your will be done!" His four envoys were all present, and he'd even released little girl Yueshen. She hid inside a layout prepared especially for her, standing guard over the residence.

Preparations complete, he placed Qing Han on the bed and withdrew the realms of yin and yang, severing the connection between the Gates of the Abyss and hell.

"Cut off the connection between your Scroll of Shepherding Immortals and the outside world!"

Eh? Why am I acting like this? He suddenly found himself baffled. None of the string of actions had been conscious, thought-out decisions, just instinctive reactions. Whatever, who cares.

"Cut off the connection between the scroll and the outside world!" he repeated. Although puzzled by Lu Yun's demand, Qing Han obliged nonetheless.

"Now, take off your clothes." Lu Yun's expression turned stern.

"Ah? What's that supposed to mean?!" Flustered, Qing Han subconsciously covered his chest and stared, horrified. Does he know? Was it my big brother who told him, or my cousin?

Qing Han thought the truth about his gender had been exposed, that Lu Yun now wanted to seal the deal and then confront House Qin with the *fait accompli* before proposing marriage.

"Err... don't misunderstand!" Lu Yun felt a little awkward when he noticed his friend's expression. "I found a way to cure the poison inside your body!"

The disguised girl heaved a sigh of relief at the explanation. "Do I absolutely need to undress?" He looked pitifully at Lu Yun.

"You do!" Lu Yun's expression was grave.

"What about my trousers?" Qing Han was on the verge of tears.

"Off with them too!"

Qing Han clenched his jaw and fixed Lu Yun with a hard stare. He didn't mind baring his torso. Thanks to the Imperial Star, he could adjust the shape of his body and hide its womanly characteristics. But the lower half... she'd never seen a man's thing before and didn't even know where to begin.

Therefore, her lower half was still that of a woman's, unaltered in any way; everything would be revealed once her trousers were off. She'd already been tempted to confess the truth several times, but kept postponing it out of fear that Lu Yun would blow up in her face and react badly to the deception. Now, she was even more reluctant to have the truth come to light in such a manner.

She was a girl, after all, with all the modesty and coyness of one. She still clung to innocent fantasies of finding a romantic moment to tell him, rather than in such a humiliating way.

"Well, you don't need to." Lu Yun suddenly realized something and coughed awkwardly. "Just the top half will do." He tousled his head, a little peeved.

Qing Han nodded wordlessly and gently peeled off his garments, his reddening cheeks scorching hot. For some reason, Lu Yun's heart also began beating faster. He stared at his friend without blinking, fascinated by every minute gesture of Qing Han's hand.

The latter's torso was fully undressed about thirty breaths later, his slender, fair figure appearing in front of Lu Yun in all of its nakedness. His cheeks now flaming red, he lowered his eyes and was too shy to look at Lu Yun.

"I gifted you many elemental essences, so why's your body still as soft as a woman's...?" The governor looked at his friend's naked torso, subconsciously gulping. If it weren't for the flat chest, Qing Han's figure would've been identical to that of a girl's. No, in fact, the vast majority of girls would pale in comparison.

Thin shoulders; a smooth, flat belly; a waist slender enough to be embraced in one arm, and skin so fair and tender that it seemed carved from white jade....

Why did I think of hugging his waist? Huh. He carefully examined Qing Han's throat. An Adam's apple. He's a guy, there's no mistaking it.

"Are you going to heal me or not?" There was a teary tone in Qing Han's voice.

Uh, he also has a guy's voice. Lu Yun smiled wryly and forced himself to overcome the strange attraction he felt.

The Tome of Life and Death knew Qing Han was a woman. As a result, he instinctively treated his friend as a woman, under the treasure's influence. Sadly, his cultivation was still too low for him to consciously realize the truth.

“Let us begin!” With a deep breath in, a ring of green light appeared in his hand: the Wheel of Poison. As he circulated his energy, the Poison Fiend crawled out of the wheel. It was a special kind of spirit entity that was almost a living creature, but not entirely. A green, humanoid shadow with a phantasmal texture, it possessed no other features on its face save for an enormous mouth. Without thought or self-awareness of its own, it was fully under the wheel’s control.

“Is that... a Poison Fiend?” Qing Han goggled.

“Right. This was Lu Guhong’s trump card, and now that I’ve killed him, it’s mine!” Lu Yun beamed brightly.

Qing Han finally understood why the governor had been so intent on killing Lü Guhong; it had all been for his sake.

“I...” He lowered his gaze, feeling guilty for hiding the truth. The urge to confess once again struck the disguised girl, but given the circumstances right now....

“Close your eyes, don’t move. Don’t even think about resisting,” Lu Yun requested. “I’m going to start.”

“Alright.” Qing Han nodded and obediently shut his eyes.

As Lu Yun gripped the Wheel of Poison and poured his energy into it, the Poison Fiend opened its jaws wide. A monstrous suction engulfed Qing Han, drawing a black fog out of the pores on his upper body. The fog, in turn, became streams of air that the Poison Fiend tirelessly swallowed.

An expression of pain appeared on Qing Han’s face, but the longer the Poison Fiend devoured the black mist, the thinner it grew.

Dong...

The deafening toll of a bell suddenly rumbled across the land, its formidable sound waves penetrating through everything and engulfing the manor.

“Waaaaaaaah!” The Poison Fiend screeched in pain when the sound waves hit, like the bane of its existence had shown its head. Its figure instantly scattered and reversed into a green blur that scuttled back into the Wheel of Poison. The toxic fog it’d devoured moments ago made an about-turn and uncoiled back on Qing Han’s body, even more potent now that it had merged with the venom inside the Poison Fiend.

Pfft!

Qing Han opened his mouth and vomited black blood. His entire being withered as the dreadful poison circulated inside him, turning his flesh black.

“What the hell!!!” Lu Yun’s eyes went round as saucers, utter disbelief on his face. The combination of Yuying, Feinie, Xuanxi, Aoxue, and the immortal ghost Yueshen should’ve been absolutely invincible inside Dusk Province.

“How dare four lowly servants and one wild ghost stand in this seat’s way? You beg to be killed! Lu Yun, get the hell out here! You took our Qing Clan’s resources, stole our immortal weapon, yet dare give

away the ancient lord's legacy when it was already within grasp. For this impudence, you deserve a thousand deaths!"

An aged voice resonated through the sky, but Lu Yun's silent gaze remained on Qing Han.

"The poison inside him has mutated once again. Even the Poison Fiend is incapable of devouring it now," a gentle sigh sounded all of a sudden. "You may leave him in my care. I can preserve his life for the time being, while you address the matter outside."

Empress Myrtlestar's figure burrowed out of the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals. Although Qing Han had isolated the scroll from the outside world, it wasn't enough to keep the ancient empress trapped inside.

"What do I need to do to save him?" Lu Yun had regained his composure.

"Get the hell out here!!" the aged voice erupted once more.

Boom!!!

The entire manor shook violently.

"Follow your initial plan. Refine a pill using the Fusang Purewood inside my tomb and you will save his life," the empress gently offered. "However, my corpse has morphed into a dread zombie inside the tomb. In your words, it possesses the cultivation of a celestial emperor. But don't worry; he shall survive as long as he carries my Imperial Star on him."

"I understand." Lu Yun nodded. "Perhaps some still think of me as someone easily bullied, a governor without any backing, an insect of a cultivator they can crush at will."

He opened the room's door and slowly made his way outside.

Hundreds of immortals from the Qing Clan floated in the sky above the manor, led by an old man in blue robes who grasped an enormous golden bell. It'd been the vibrations from this bell that spooked the Poison Fiend and sent the poison it'd absorbed back into Qing Han.

"I was careless, and should've taken him somewhere even safer and more discreet to do the detoxification," Lu Yun murmured to himself. "But for me, what place is safer than my own manor? It's the only place in this world that I can call home."

"This is too much, simply too much! Lu Yun, you've finally come out. You owe my clan an explanation!" The old man might be an august immortal, but the power radiating from him was much stronger than Zhao Tiefeng, Beigong Yu, or Lü Biao.

A dao immortal!

This old man was an impressive dao immortal of the Qing Clan!

Chapter 158: Drawing The Sword

Ever since the death of Donglin Yuhuang, head of House Donglin, all of the visiting dao immortals had withdrawn from Dusk Province, too nervous to remain in this strange territory. As a result, all of the delegations were headed by peerless immortals.

Grudges, big and small, had always existed between different factions. Dao immortals were the cornerstones of a major faction's power, its strongest combat strength. It would be a grievous loss if one of them died to a plot in a place like Dusk Province.

Yet the Qing Clan's dao immortal had come in broad daylight to chastise the governor!

The previous free-for-all had ended not long ago, and the title of the Five Youth Sovereigns was imprinted on everyone's mind. Among them, Lu Yun was publicly recognized as number one.

However, a dao immortal had come to spoil the party before he could even catch his breath, assaulting his residence with a great treasure and turning it upside down. The title of youth sovereign was nothing but a joke to such a powerhouse. There were also many people keen to laugh at Lu Yun's expense.

The Five Youth Sovereigns had stormed unopposed through the cultivators of the entire immortal world, and had even defeated immortals. Such prowess left various factions seething with jealousy and resentment—why couldn't they have equally promising talents of their own?

By calling Lu Yun to account, the dao immortal was bound to strike a lethal blow at the prestige of the so-called Five Youth Sovereigns and cause their influence to plummet. All would know that a youth sovereign was nothing but a child that crumbled at the first blow from a true heavyweight. Lofty immortals were still the real masters of the world.

Prodigies?

Exceptional prodigies had emerged en masse after the great war, as numerous as carp in the river or grains of sand on the beach. However, only a handful had ultimately developed to peak powerhouses, while the names of most others were quickly forgotten.

Thus, it would be best for these so-called youth sovereigns to keep their heads low before maturing and refrain from provoking people they couldn't afford to offend. Otherwise, Lu Yun was a prime example of the consequences they'd suffer.

.....

Thousands of miles away from Dusk City, on a verdant mountain peak.

Zhao Changkong, Chen Xiao, and Qing Buyi sat face to face, engaged in conversation when Chen Xiao suddenly froze and looked at Dusk City.

"Was this your goal all along when you lured the two of us here?" Chen Xiao fixated the crown prince with an icy glare.

"I'm simply doing someone a favor," Zhao Changkong replied, unruffled. "I've already confirmed that it's neither the Qing Clan nor the two of you backing Lu Yun. That means there's another influence behind him, one that doesn't belong to Nephrite Major. Since my imperial father is about to go into seclusion, someone of unknown origins like Lu Yun will become a malignant tumor sooner or later. I might as well excise him as soon as possible."

The prince leisurely lifted his teacup and carefully tasted the tea inside.

Qing Buyi looked at Zhao Changkong, his tone deadly serious. "Lu Yun was in the middle of healing my younger brother Qing Han. The two of us should've gone to keep an eye on him, but you called us here and let that old fellow Qing Quan attack the manor. If something happens to my brother, you can kiss the imperial throne goodbye."

Zhao Changkong stiffened.

"The one whose leg I broke last time, then-Crown Prince Shenguang was it? He should be your younger brother. If Qing Han is injured, I'll kill that old fossil with my own hands, and Zhao Shenguang will become Nephrite Major's next celestial emperor."

Chen Xiao nodded as well. As serene as still water, he took his teacup and gently sipped from it while Zhao Changkong's expression twisted into a grimace. The current crown prince had no doubt that Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi would make good on their word.

.....

The cultivators of Dusk City were very tense, including Wu Tulong, Dong Fanghao, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian. They'd been in the middle of sharing their insights, but had now risen to their feet and stared fixedly at the several hundred Qing immortals in the air.

"For the Qing Clan to go this far, there must be someone pulling the strings. However, it's not appropriate for us to meddle in Nephrite Major's affairs." Next to the youth sovereigns, four peerless immortals gently shook their heads and held the young men in check. They were bodyguards assigned by their four respective factions to the young geniuses.

Talent needed to weather hardships and adversity before it could grow, but it also needed to be guided and protected. Although they were reluctant, Wu Tulong and the other three couldn't provide any assistance to their peer.

.....

After exiting the side room, Lu Yun looked up peacefully and observed the Qing immortals.

"Bullying?" The leading old man shook his head. "You're too insignificant for me to bully you in person. You take my clan's immortal sword and accept my clan's resources, but help outsiders in the end. Giving away a prize already within grasp? You shame our patronization of you."

"You've hurt Qing Han." Lu Yun's figure trembled slightly; he could feel Qing Han's present pain. Although Empress Myrtlestar was doing her utmost to provide intensive therapy and keep his friend alive, she couldn't dull the pain of being corroded by a thousand poisons.

A myriad of poisons were eating away at Qing Han. Not only did the longstanding rimesnake poison plague him, but so did the Poison Fiend's various toxins torment his body.

It was an agony worse than death.

Lu Yun could feel a blade twisting in his heart; remorse, self-blame, and boundless rage gave way to tranquility.

"Qing Han?" The dao immortal blinked, then smiled. "Is he going to die?"

Lu Yun stayed silent.

“That vile spawn, harbinger of misfortune, utter pestilence.... If it weren’t for Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao shielding him, those two animals, I would’ve extinguished him long ago.” The old man smirked coldly.

Lu Yun lowered his gaze, black flames now alight inside his eyes. Yuying, Feinie, Xuanxi, and Aoxue were grievously wounded. They lay on the ground, unable to move, while Yueshen and her nine bloodcorpse copies were extremely dim.

The big bell in the old man’s hand was oppressively powerful. A single attack from its fearsome toll had inflicted heavy injuries on all five women. Even Feinie’s formations had been unable to withstand its might.

“This seat demands you retract what you said in the public eye. Only someone from the Qing Clan is entitled to the ancient lord’s legacy,” the old man continued.

“Hahahahaha,” Lu Yun suddenly threw his head back in laughter. Surrounded by a misty violet radiance, his figure slowly rose in the air. Violetgrave appeared in his hand, the tip leveled at the dao immortal.

Dumbfounded, the crowd gaped at the young governor. Even his fellow youth sovereigns found it inconceivable that Lu Yun would point his weapon at a dao immortal. Although the old man’s cultivation had been sealed to a mere august immortal, he was still a dao immortal through and through!

True, Wu Tulong had once defeated one such immortal, but that was one that’d just broken through, and they were inside an eerie ancient tomb at the time. In that tomb, the dao immortal’s strength, realm, cultivation, immortal force, and spirit had all been suppressed. He’d even been deprived of his dao fruit, devolving to the level of an ordinary cultivator. Wu Tulong wouldn’t have been able to overcome him otherwise.

In comparison, the one in front of them was an established dao immortal with a long-standing reputation, one of the Qing Clan’s venerated elders. While he’d sealed himself to the august immortal realm for his visit to Dusk Province, his true strength was a hundred times above that of a Zhao Tiefeng or a Lü Biao. He was a figure the likes of which none of them could ever hope to touch.

A dao immortal was an omnipotent existence who’d plucked a dao fruit, obtained the acknowledgment of the heavens, merged their breathing with the world, and ascended to the universe.

Yet Lu Yun was drawing his sword against such a figure! Did he truly think that simply being named a youth sovereign by the celestial emperors had made him a supreme existence? He must actually be crazy.

“Violetgrave belongs to my clan. To point the Qing Clan’s sword at Qing’s dao immortal is pure insubordination.” The old man’s anger was fully roused at seeing Violetgrave’s point facing him. Despite his sealed cultivation, he was still one of the immortal world’s greatest existences.

“Since you refuse to retract your announcement, then you might as well die.” The old man suddenly jabbed a finger at Lu Yun.

Chapter 159: Divine Thunder from the Nine Heavens

The dao immortal hadn't even tapped into his own power yet; he was merely channeling the power of heaven and earth with his cultivation. That simple point contained the presence of the entire world, which barreled toward Lu Yun with terrifying momentum. Such was the power of a dao immortal.

"Do you think just that will kill me?" Unfazed, Lu Yun maintained a steady grip on his sword and kept it pointed at the dao immortal. Violet sword aura rose from his body and morphed into a blinding crescent. It wasn't Violetgrave's sword aura.

"That's my Skyrending Sword!" Dongfang Hao exclaimed. "Impossible! He's grasped the intent behind my technique!"

Wu Tulong and the other two exchanged shocked looks. Dongfang Hao had been able to restrain Lu Yun because his sword aura could cut through the governor's. Now that Lu Yun had acquired the same comprehension, Dongfang Hao would no longer be able to keep him down!

Rend the sky with a single slash!

Immortals will fall if they dare stop me, the heavens will fall if they dare obstruct me!

Following the movement of his hand, violet sword energy shot through the sky like a giant dragon soaring toward heaven.

Hum.

The unspeakably keen force of the sword cut through the harrowing might of heaven and earth.

"Take this, you lofty dao immortal!" Lu Yun growled as violet brilliance pierced through the sky, arcing straight at his opponent.

"Even the weakest technique shines." The Qing immortal sneered derisively at Lu Yun. The young governor might've slashed through the might of his point, but he'd used only one finger!

The immortal extended another finger and lightly clasped the sword light between them.

Bam!

The terrifying sword aura instantly shattered beneath the pressure. Lu Yun grunted and took three steps back.

"You deserve to be a youth sovereign for taking one finger point from me, but that's it." The dao immortal smiled and then pressed down toward Lu Yun's chest with his palm.

It wasn't a combat art, nor was it an immortal technique, but a simple palm-strike. However, it was as weighty as an entire world. The energy of the world gave way to the palm-strike, creating a vacuum of nothing but force.

It wasn't a quick attack. Everyone could see the palm slowly brush past them and inch toward Lu Yun. The governor was paralyzed in midair like an insect trapped in amber, helpless to do anything but stare at the coming attack.

“A palm, is it?” Black flame burst out of his eyes and burned away the power that restrained him. Violetgrave disappeared from his grip. He too reached out with a hand and met the giant shadow with a palm-strike of his own.

“Has he lost his mind?!” everyone screamed when they saw Lu Yun facing the horrifying attack head-on without any weapons. Wu Tulong, Dongfang Hao, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian had opened their eyes so wide their eyes could fall out of the eye sockets.

A strike from a dao immortal possessed an absolute power that couldn't be countered. Although it wasn't a combat art, the attack wasn't something a cultivator could take. In their eyes, the only way for Lu Yun to survive the attack would be to tap into the ninth-rank Violetgrave's full power. Meeting it with his physical body alone was pure suicide.

No sooner had Lu Yun extended his palm than the sky abruptly darkened. Heavy clouds gathered and clamped down over Dusk City, silver snakes of lightning crackling and snaking within while thunder howled and roiled.

“What's going on? Where did the thunderclouds come from?” Before anyone could react, a pillar of silver light crashed out of the clouds and blasted into Lu Yun. The lightning wreathing about him made him appear to be a god of thunder.

“Open!” he roared. His right palm absorbed all of the heavenly lightning in the void and compressed it to a single point.

Crackle crackle crackle.

Terrifying lightning geysered as he struck. Thunder Palmstrike! The divine lighting of the nine heavens, controlled by the might of a hand!

Bolts of lightning crackled through the sky and thunder roared, knocking into the palm shadow. Blinding light forced everyone to look away, their consciousnesses blanking momentarily.

“That's... real heavenly lightning, not a thunder art! How is this possible?!” The dao immortal shrieked disbelievingly. The lightning had broken through his palm shadow and continued streaking toward him.

He attempted to dodge out of the way, but wasn't quick enough to evade the lightning. All of his clothes were burned to a crisp and a great part of his body was charred.

True heavenly lightning was the greatest power in the world and represented heavenly judgement. Even dao immortals feared it. Of course, if he'd recovered his full cultivation, heavenly lightning at this level wouldn't even touch his hair. Nullifying it would be as easy as lifting a finger. However, with his cultivation suppressed to the august immortal realm, he had insufficient power to block the attack.

Terrible lightning morphed into a crackling ocean that rampantly surged around him.

“Bastard!!” growled the dao immortal. The shadow of a golden bell emerged from his body to shield the immortals around him, blocking the attack. The heavenly lightning might be powerful, but it didn't shake the dao immortal treasure. The Qing immortal's furious snarl could be heard all over Dusk Province.

Lu Yun had disintegrated all of his clothes, leaving him as naked as the day he was born, and cornered him to the point that he had to use a dao immortal treasure to defend himself. His dignity was likewise in complete ashes!

Even if he killed Lu Yun now, he would still be a joke in the world of immortals!

Meanwhile, Lu Yun's reputation would reach an all-time high. Even after death, the youth sovereign would be remembered and fondly talked about for generations to come.

"Diediedieeeeeee!!" Hair and beard fluttering in the wind, the dao immortal roared incessantly. Blinding golden light burst forth from the top of the bell and crushed the lightning around it. Then the bell itself viciously slammed into Lu Yun, releasing all its power. This was the most powerful attack the Qing immortal could deliver in his current state, which was sufficient enough to darken the skies and shift the clouds.

Countless immortals fled, terrified out of their minds. A full strength strike from a sealed dao immortal could level all of Dusk City!

Lu Yun's frail figure in the air didn't move an inch. Even his expression remained as calm as ever. "A dao immortal treasure? I have one as well!" He sucked in a deep breath.

Rumble.

Jade illumination floated out of his body as an enormous jade-colored door appeared out of nowhere to block the golden bell. The impact sent tremendous ripples through the air in all directions.

"The Skybearer Gates! That's the great treasure of the Lu Clan!! Why is it on you?!" shrieked the dao immortal when he saw the gates.

Chapter 160: Nothing is Impossible

The Skybearer Gates!

Lu Qishan had brought the door to Dusk Province with the goal of capturing Diexi, but ended up dying to the concerted attack from the Black Tortoise image that was formed by the juba and blackwater snake.

The black dragonguard that'd collected them at the end had also snagged the Skybearer Gates and delivered it to Qing Han. Since it belonged to the Lu Clan, the imperial envoy gave the dao-grade treasure to Lu Yun.

The gates cast a jade sheen over all of Dusk City, replacing even the blazing sun in the sky, and instantly blocked the golden bell's attack.

Within the Gates of the Abyss, Beigong Yu and Lü Biao channeled all of their energy into Lu Yun, supplying him with enough power to activate the gates, a treasure that could counter all things yin in the world.

The two dao-grade treasures came to a standstill after clashing against each other, neither able to gain the upper hand. The Qing dao immortal could only exert the power of an august immortal, while Lü Biao and Beigong Yu could call upon their full power as peerless immortals. Moreover, Beigong Yu's

cultivation was only a hair's breadth away from the dao immortal realm. They were the ones giving Lu Yun the ability to channel the true power of their side's treasure.

"How is this possible?! It's completely impossible!" Dao immortal Qing Quan looked on incredulously. "Why is Skybearer in your hand? Didn't that old monster from the Lu Clan refine it? How are you able to use it?"

Most dao-grade treasures in the world were already refined and branded by dao immortals, making it impossible for other immortals to use the treasures without their permission.

To control the gates, Lu Yun would need the permission of a Lu dao immortal. However, the governor had fallen out with his clan after humiliating the faction and killing the genius Lu Yuanhou. Thus, Qing Quan couldn't wrap his head around the unbelievable sight in front of him.

That's because the brand on the treasure has been removed, Lu Yun thought calmly.

After Empress Myrtlestar came to, she'd removed the ownership brand on the treasure with the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, turning it into an unclaimed treasure. Even if the Lu clan's dao immortal came himself, he wouldn't have a hope of taking the treasure back.

That was precisely the reason why the Lu Clan didn't dare come after Lu Yun again. They didn't even have the courage to demand the clan's ultimate treasure back. Only the top heavyweights of the world would be able to remove the brand. They'd just recovered from a calamity and didn't dare provoke such a powerful being at the moment.

Lu Yun was having a very rough time. The power of two peerless immortals was flowing into his body through the realms of yin and yang, which he was in turn sending into Skybearer. If he didn't have a daily regime of refining his constitution with connate elemental power, he would've broken under the pressure. Even so, strands of bloody mist furled out of his pores and stained his clothes, collecting into droplets of blood and dripping onto the ground.

"You've reached your limit, haven't you?" Qing Quan regained his calm and manifested clothes with his inner energy. "Then shatter!"

He swallowed a pill that increased his power by thirty percent, increasing the golden bell's size by a similar amount and firmly suppressing Skybearer, even threatening to take it away.

Wham!!

An incredible explosion of sound rang out as a snow-white path emerged beneath Lu Yun's feet. It expanded forward and slammed right into Skybearer and the golden bell, eliciting dramatic trembles from both dao-grade treasures.

Pah!

Qing Quan threw up a mouthful of blood and his clothes disintegrated yet again. The collision caught the immortals behind him, flinging them backward.

"The Path of Ingress!!" screamed the dao immortal, his expression colored by fear. That was the most important treasure of the Nephrite Court! Neither him, nor any of the onlookers had expected Lu Yun to bring it out. Was the celestial emperor truly the governor's patron?

Qing Quan was starting to regret his actions now. He'd reached an agreement with Zhao Changkong that the crown prince would help the Qing Clan gain the heritage of the ancient lord, as long as Qing Quan killed Lu Yun and gained the Formation Orb for the prince.

This was why he'd shown up and openly threatened Lu Yun with a frankly laughable excuse. Zhao Changkong would soon assume the celestial throne. His every word and action represented the Nephrite Court, so Qing Quan had no reason to turn him down. However, Lu Yun had the Path of Ingress!

Zhao Changkong would never give the treasure to Lu Yun. It must have been the celestial emperor.

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"Those three pieces of trash are still making trouble for me even after death!" Enraged, Zhao Changkong made a hand seal to collect the replica of the Path of Ingress. Before the seal could shoot out from the verdant hilltop, however, Chen Xiao's chilling voice sounded in the air.

"We're keeping you company here instead of intervening in the Dusk City battle out of respect for your rules. If you dare violate them, I will immediately kill you."

Zhao Changkong trembled, the seal in his hand dissipating. This was Dusk Province. He'd sealed his cultivation before coming in, and wasn't powerful enough to ignore the restriction here even if his cultivation weren't sealed.

More than a dozen years ago, Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao had gone on a rampage and slaughtered numerous subsidiary houses of the Qing Clan. At that time, Zhao Changkong had wanted to arrest them to do the clan a favor, but his father stopped him.

"Don't provoke those two devils, or even I won't be able to save you," he'd said.

The crown prince was already starting to grasp the reins of power in Nephrite Major and would soon become the celestial emperor. How dare these two warn of preventing his ascension and even threaten to kill him?! It instilled an inexplicable fear in his heart.

What a pity that Wayfarer was unwilling to come to the province....

He ground his teeth, making plans to deal with the two irreverent men. He had no choice other than to stay put for now, but he transmitted a message to Qing Quan to assure the immortal that his concerns were unfounded.

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The Path of Ingress sent the Qing dao immortal flying.

The tremendous counterforce left Lu Yun bleeding from his seven orifices. However, he ignored his injuries and sent out a winged golden coin with a wave of his hand. "Fall!"

The hole at the center of the coin exerted great suction force on the golden bell.

"That's the Treasurefall Coin! It's Hongchen's!" Qing Quan yelled furiously, his eyes widened. "Why is it in your hand?! Where is he?! It can only collect treasures up to the ninth-rank, how naive of you to try it

on my Arcane Golden Bell.” Paying no mind to his nakedness, Qing Quan extended his arms and poured all his power into the golden bell, blocking both the Skybearer Gates and the Path of Ingress.

“Die!” Receiving Zhao Changkong’s message had left him with no further reservations. He abandoned the bell and attacked Lu Yun himself.

“Nothing is impossible.” Lu Yun was at his limits, but his lips curved into a mocking smile.

Buzz!

The coin hummed and landed on the Skybearer Gates, becoming one with it.

Rumble!

The gates opened wide and swallowed the sparkling bell with the assistance of the Path of Ingress. But at the same time, Qing Quan arrived next to Lu Yun and smashed down with a punch at the young governor’s head.