

## Necropolis 161

### Chapter 161: The Origin of the Restriction

Hum.

The moment Qing Quan's fist aura neared Lu Yun, seven glittering stars appeared in the air. They arranged themselves in the shape of the Big Dipper, painting the provincial capital's skies a deep silver.

"What in the heavens?!" the immortal yelped. The stars connected as a hybrid of combat art and formation, blasting him with astral energy. He only had a moment for a quick howl of pain before his body flew off into the distance like a ragdoll, so far it couldn't be seen anymore.

"Who are you and how dare you attack a venerated elder of the Qing Clan?!" The other immortals of Qing Quan's clan began panicking over whether the elder was alive or dead. They loudly berated the airborne girl in boy's clothes, but didn't dare step forward.

"Like I said: I am Mo Yi, Prefect of Duskwater and under the Dusk governor's command." The cross-dressed girl reached toward the seven stars, which wrapped around her wrist in the form of a scintillating bracelet.

Sharp breaths could be heard below her. Mo Yi was an august immortal through and through, no matter how they looked at her. There was no evidence her cultivation was sealed, yet she'd incapacitated a dao immortal in the blink of an eye!

The crowd collectively gulped hard. Wasn't Dusk Province the most backwater and destitute of all Nephrite's territories? How come there were so many heaven-defying outliers here?

First was Lu Yun, victor over numerous cultivators to become first among the youth sovereigns, even killing a sealed peerless immortal in the process and fighting a sealed dao immortal afterward.

Then there was this Duskwater Prefect, who'd gone one step further and defeated a sealed dao immortal in one blow. What kind of countryside provincials were these?!

"You go too far, Prefect of Duskwater!" a dissenting voice hectored. "Why did you interfere in a fair fight between Immortal Sovereign Qing Quan and the Dusk governor?"

"Is that so?" Mo Yi cast a sidelong glance at the person who spoke, but didn't bother responding. She stood quietly before Lu Yun, interposing herself between him and any potential dangers, remnants of silvery starlight still clinging to her form. The rest of the crowd could only watch as the grievously injured Lu Yun dragged the Qing Clan's dao-grade treasure, the Arcane Golden Bell, into the Skybearer Gates.

The erstwhile speaker from the Qing Clan reddened. A fair fight between a dao immortal and a cultivator? A joke like that was utterly priceless, anywhere, anytime.

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"Daggone it, that woman's vicious!" In a different corner in the province, Li Youcai's blubber quivered in fleshy fear. "If it wasn't for her respecting the court's rules, I would've been chopped liver a long, long time ago!" In this moment, he finally realized the true foolishness of his past actions and how often he'd flirted with death.

“Thank goodness the governor stopped me. If that woman had lost her patience with me....” Li Youcai trembled again and a stream of goodwill rushed from him into the faraway Lu Yun. Though he was the prefect, he’d readily given the seal up to Mo Yi after recent affairs. She’d accepted it, as well as his post, without ceremony or reservation.

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An indeterminate period of time later, the Skybearer Gates finally swallowed the bell whole. The Treasurefall Coin returned from the gates to Lu Yun’s hand.

The young man breathed a long sigh of relief. Although he’d obtained another dao-grade treasure, he wasn’t happy at all. Qing Han still suffered from the torment of poisons within him.

“I need to go to the Skandha Extinction Tomb immediately. I need that Fusang Purewood!” He looked to the north with resolution, in the direction of the Skandha Range.

“How is Little Han?” a lazy voice echoed by his ear. It was Lu Yun’s first time seeing Chen Xiao in person. A young man of perhaps twenty-three, Chen Xiao radiated an aura of lackadaisical lethargy and didn’t look like he cared about anything.

“This is all my fault,” Lu Yun sounded a bit overcome.

“The poison mixture is acting up, eh?” Chen Xiao glanced toward the governor’s manor, his face darkening.

“Yeah.” Lu Yun continued staring to the north.

“Can you save him?” After examining the younger man closely, Chen Xiao grew thoughtful.

“Yup,” Lu Yun nodded. “There’s a Fusang Purewood inside the tomb at the heart of the Skandha Range, it has the power to save Qing Han.”

Relaxed ease draped over Chen Xiao once more. “I can go get it.”

Lu Yun shook his head again. “The Skandha Extinction Tomb is full of mysteries and there’s an emperor-grade dread zombie there. Let me go with you, I can solve the puzzles inside.”

“A dread zombie? Emperor-grade?” Chen Xiao inclined his head. “Stay here and take care of my cousin, I’ll be fine by myself. Oh, but give me Violetgrave.”

Lu Yun blinked, then did as requested. His friend’s cousin shot into the sky with incredible speed, leaving only an afterimage behind him.

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On a peak some distance from Dusk City.

“My little brother’s suffering from the mixture of poison inside him right now. In a way, it’s a good trial for him, but you can forget about becoming emperor.” Upon the scenic peak, Qing Buyi faced down Zhao Changkong with a cold stare.

The crown prince's face purpled with anger. "You think you can stop me from claiming my rightful place?" He wasn't afraid of Qing Buyi alone. He directed a look of pure venom at the Qing elder, but didn't want to fight here. It would be much too easy to trigger Dusk Province's restriction.

"Yeah, I can. The pair of eyes you freed from the Water Altar won't save you. Someone's already dealing with it," Qing Buyi coolly shot back.

Upset irritation brewed in Zhao Changkong.

"We will abdicate Our position in eighteen days time. The eleventh prince, Zhao Shengguang, shall inherit the throne as the new celestial emperor," the Nephrite emperor's voice suddenly echoed through the major.

All of Nephrite Major resonated with the command and flowers of qi blossomed in the skies before drifting to the ground and dissipating.

A rain of heavenly flowers, a marvel that appeared only to mark imperial succession!

The current emperor's declaration was worth its weight in gold and had received recognition from the land he ruled. It was now recorded as law in the heavenly dao. Unless Zhao Shengguang died, all would come to pass as the emperor decreed. Even the issuer couldn't change the fact anymore.

"W-what... what just happened?!" Zhao Changkong had considered the throne as good as his. Why had his father taken it away from him at the last second?!

"Do you want to know why?" In contrast, Qing Buyi was the picture of ease and serenity.

"Tell me! What's the meaning of this?!" Zhao Changkong screamed madly into the air. "I don't believe it. There's no way that you two... you two crooks... could change my imperial father's mind!"

"The Nephrite emperor chose Lu Yun to be your advisor, but you conspired with Qing Quan to backstab him... well, Zhao Fengyang is more than a little disappointed."

"Ridiculous! Absolutely ridiculous!" Zhao Changkong continued roaring. "My imperial father would never abandon me for a gnat of a cultivator!"

Qing Buyi sighed with some indifference. "Here's a more convincing reason then: Chen Xiao said to the emperor just now that if you become emperor, he will turn the capital upside down and exterminate your clan. I wouldn't doubt him, if I were you. He's a bit crazy sometimes, but he always follows through on his promises.

"Oh yeah, let me tell you one more thing." Qing Buyi slowly lowered his mouth to Zhao Changkong's ear. "Chen Xiao was the one who let the restriction in here in the first place."

## **Chapter 162: Buried in the Sword**

Zhao Changkong's pupils dilated and he stared at Qing Buyi, unsure of what to say. The thing that'd appeared in Dusk Province's ancient tomb a thousand years ago was too powerful for even the emperor to handle. It'd been listed as a taboo as a last resort.

Qing Buyi's sudden revelation was, therefore, utterly incomprehensible to the prince.

“The twenty-four facets’ imperial courts have a far more tenuous rule over the world than their ancient predecessors.” Qing Buyi straightened himself, placing both hands behind his back. “People like us have no love for the endless chaos of the near past, which is why we begrudgingly follow Nephrite Major’s rules for the moment. Chen Xiao and I aren’t nearly as nice as Duskwater’s Mo Yi, though, and we won’t put up with being wronged.

“Your conspiracy with Qing Quan made my little brother suffer, so I disallowed you from becoming the celestial emperor. If Zhao Fengyang hadn’t listened, I would’ve helped Chen Xiao exterminate your clan.” Qing Buyi patted Zhao Changkong on the shoulder. “You should feel lucky that what you did can be fixed. Otherwise, you’d already be a corpse.”

His aura began increasing in intensity as he spoke, shifting from the peak of august to golden, then arcane, then peerless immortal, until he finally stopped at peak peerless immortal level. There were signs that he would break through even that, but the skies remained completely calm. The eyes that had slain Dongling Yuhuang didn’t appear.

Zhao Changkong finally believed Qing Buyi’s words.

“You must be thinking that the eyes only show up for dao immortals, right?” Qing Buyi laughed.

Pop!

His cultivation reached the dao immortal realm, but everything remained just as peaceful as before; there was no restriction anywhere in sight.

Zhao Changkong took a step back. Qing Buyi, the Qing Clan’s eldest son, the dandy famous for mischief and skullduggery in Nephrite Major... was a dao immortal!

“If you’re still wondering whether Chen Xiao and I can follow through on our threat, don’t. The world is a vast place far beyond your imagination, and the current laws are quite fragile. They’re far from enough to keep all of us in line.” Qing Buyi gently patted Zhao Changkong’s cheek, then gradually disappeared into nothingness.

Left alone, the despondent prince stood in place for a very long while. Qing Buyi hadn’t killed him only because he was the current emperor’s son. Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao were still following the rules, fragile as they were.

“Is all this really worth it? Just for an accursed spirit root...?” he murmured to himself.

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The mixture of virulent toxins inside Qing Han’s body inflicted anguish beyond imagining. The youth lay completely still in bed, almost like he’d sunk into a coma. Empress Myrtlestar had used a certain method to put his consciousness to sleep, or the inhuman suffering would’ve crushed his mind in an instant.

“Do not blame yourself. You have already done very well.” Myrtlestar cast a violet haze over Qing Han’s body, covering and protecting it. “The suffering he is going through is immensely torturous, but it is a trial that may prove beneficial in the end. Qing Han has a great deal of unrefined connate elemental energy within him, which the ravaging poisons will help him refine and absorb. The result will strengthen his body, and, in fact, he might even obtain an immortal constitution because of this.”

“Mm.” Lu Yun nodded a little.

“Someone is coming.” Myrtlestar turned into a purple wisp and took refuge in the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals. The formations Lu Yun had set up hadn’t managed to stop the person that was approaching: a tall, broad-shouldered youth who walked with a powerful stride.

“So you’re Lu Yun, eh?” Qing Buyi asked, looking the other up and down. Though he’d seen the young governor during the tournament, it was the first time they’d come face-to-face.

“Yeah.” Lu Yun nodded.

“I’m Qing Han’s big brother, Qing Buyi,” came the reply. “You’ve done very well. Chen Xiao and I very much approve.”

“You... very much approve?” Lu Yun was thoroughly confused. “Of what?”

“Ahem.” Realizing his slip of the tongue, Qing Buyi cleared his throat before rectifying the mistake. “We approve of what you’ve done for my little brother, of course.”

“Qing Han is my friend. We’ve gone through a lot of difficulties together in the ancient tombs and he’s even saved my life before. Whatever I do for him is well-deserved, so why should your approval matter?” Lu Yun’s bewilderment didn’t lessen a single bit. How were Qing Han’s relatives factoring into all of this? He was friends with Qing Han, not them.

He’d heard of Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao’s names before and knew of their influence in the major, but hadn’t given much other thought to the pair. His friendship with Qing Han was a private matter, not an exercise in climbing the social ladder. He’d joked about hugging his friend’s thigh before, but that’s all that it was. Qing Buyi’s words sat uncomfortably with him. The two primary reasons for his accomplishments thus far were the power of the Tome of Life and Death and his own diligence.

“It matters, because... I’m Qing Yu’s big brother as well!” Qing Buyi shot back an irate glare. “Don’t you want to see her?”

“Ah.” The governor nodded. “That can wait until Qing Han’s cured.”

“Hmm?” Qing Buyi raised an eyebrow. “Qing Han’s more important to you than Qing Yu?”

Lu Yun raised his head, staring straight into the other man’s eyes. “Who’s more important to you?”

“Er...” The question stumped Qing Buyi. To him, Qing Han and Qing Yu were one and the same—but Lu Yun didn’t know that!

“I’ve only met Qing Yu a handful of times, and never in person. I’m attracted to her, but I don’t know if my impression of her is right.” Lu Yun spoke his mind in front of his friend’s brother. “My friendship with Qing Han is built from adversity after life-threatening adversity. He treats me truly, so I should absolutely return the favor. Therefore, in my eyes, Qing Han is more important.”

“Good!” Qing Buyi roared with laughter, clapping heartily. “I’m relieved to hear those words.”

“Why are you relieved to hear them? I really don’t get it.” Lu Yun opened his eyes wide.

“Nothing! You’re free to get some rest, I’ll take over from here.” Qing Buyi’s approval came as a major head-scratcher to Lu Yun, even as he headed out of the room.

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Chen Xiao returned the next day with tattered clothes and an extremely bedraggled appearance. However, he carried a tree-shaped coffin on his back. The Fusang Purewood! He’d really managed to bring it back!

“Here.” Qing Han’s cousin tossed Violetgrave back to Lu Yun.

“So... heavy!” The incredible weight in the young man’s hands nearly caused him to fall face first into the ground.

Violetgrave was a thousand times heavier than before; he could only barely lift it up with his full strength.

“The dread zombie was too strong. I couldn’t do much to it, so I buried it inside Violetgrave.” Chen Xiao took a few deep breaths to restore himself. “You work on curing Qing Han’s poison. Qing Buyi and I will watch over you.”

“You buried the dread zombie inside Violetgrave?” Lu Yun’s eyes were the size of dinner plates. Were the tombs and graves inside Violetgrave real and functional, rather than manifestations of sword aura? Recovering from his surprise, he shook his head slightly. “The Fusang Purewood is the main ingredient, but we’ll need two more things to fully cure Qing Han.

“First, the Skydragon Pearl buried deep in the tombs of the North Sea dragons and second, a fruit from the Ancient Tree of Life at the heart of the Endless Desert, which is in the western reaches of Nephrite Major.”

### **Chapter 163: The Sugato Sword**

Chen Xiao’s brow creased faintly. Both the tombs of the North Sea dragons and the Ancient Tree of Life in the Endless Desert were things of legend. Gone with the wind in the ashes of the two supreme factions, the Skydragon Pearl and fruit of the ancient tree were long buried in the graveyard of history. Though not at the level of a Fusang Purewood, the two items had still been among the greatest treasures of the immortal world.

“I can find the dragon tombs!” Lu Yun resolutely declared, not shying away from Chen Xiao’s gaze in the least. “With the Fusang Purewood now in our hands, we can ease Qing Han’s pain. But to thoroughly cleanse the poisons from his body, we need to gather all three items.”

“Alright.” Chen Xiao nodded gently. “Leave the Ancient Tree of Life to me; you head to the North Sea and secure the Skydragon Pearl. But that’s not urgent at the moment. Let’s alleviate Little Han’s condition first.”

He and Qing Buyi took up positions outside in case someone else were to interrupt a second time. As for Empress Myrtlestar, she’d concealed herself with an unknown art and made her presence impossible to sense unless someone were to step directly into the room.

Lu Yun himself didn’t know how to use the Fusang Purewood to help his friend, but the empress did.

“So the sword in your hand is Violetgrave!” She cast a shocked look at Lu Yun when she reappeared.

“You know of it?” Lu Yun blinked.

The empress nodded. “‘Tis a sword that also appeared in my era. It was wielded by a matchless genius, but mentioned in documents even more ancient. This weapon is indeed capable of burying my corpse.”

“Is it a sword, or a mausoleum?” Lu Yun asked in astonishment. The empress hailed from a distant past that predated the present by at least a million years.

“I am not certain either, but I once looked into this item. Civilizations from many different eras are buried inside its sword aura. In all probability, it also includes our ruined world from a hundred thousand years ago,” the empress softly voiced her thoughts.

To Lu Yun, her explanation seemed straight out of One Thousand and One Nights. Civilizations from countless eras, all buried inside a ninth-rank immortal-grade sword?

It was a little too hard to swallow. It would’ve been easier to accept if it was another existence like the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals or the Enneawyrms Coffinbearers, but a ninth-rank weapon?

That being said, the mausoleum inside its sword aura was still rather hazy, and he couldn’t yet clearly discern the identity of those buried inside.

“What about hell? Have you ever heard of it?” he asked, suddenly struck by an idea.

The empress blinked, then shook her head. “I know of the Firmament Ruins, a place that imprisons an unparalleled immortal dynasty’s greatest felons. But I have never heard of this... hell.”

So not even Empress Myrtlestar knew about the netherworld! For a supreme powerhouse from a million years ago to never have heard of it, all tales of hell must’ve disappeared from the immortal world before even her time.

It was so unthinkable that Lu Yun wondered if something had erased all traces of hell from the collective consciousness. However, the existence buried in the Enneawyrms Coffinbearers had uttered the word “hell”, which implied it was even more ancient than Empress Myrtlestar!

“No worries, let’s handle Qing Han’s current poison first,” he quickly changed the subject and firmly pushed these thoughts to the back of his mind.

“It is not yet time.” Empress Myrtlestar shook her head. “The connate elemental essences on him are doing their utmost to withstand the poisons. We must wait for one side to overpower the other before we can proceed.”

“You mean that... the connate elemental essences can also resist the poisons in his body?” Lu Yun stared, wide-eyed.

“Indeed.” The empress inclined her head. “The divine sunfire on the Fusang Purewood is also a type of connate fire, hence why it can... eh!” Before she could finish, Lu Yun extended his hand and clutched at the southern sky.

Whoosh!

A ball of extremely pure fire essence landed between his fingers.

“Is that enough?” He looked at the empress.

She stared at the ball of elemental energy, flabbergasted. Such power should’ve been the exclusive domain of the four sacred beasts, or the legendary divine spirits of the four cardinal directions!

Yet a cultivator who’d stepped into the nascent spirit realm not too long ago had summoned a ball of fire essence with incredible ease! Didn’t that violate every principle of the universe?

No, in the here and now, the universe itself seemed within his grasp!

“Not enough?” With a slight frown, Lu Yun clutched southward again and grabbed an even bigger ball of essence.

“Stop, that shall suffice!” Empress Myrtlestar waved her hand to completely seal off the room with a flash of violet light.

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“Is he starting?” Drinking wine somewhere in the manor, Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi’s hands stilled as they looked toward the room.

“What powerful strength. How unexpected that not even the two of us can see what’s happening inside! The kid does indeed have a few tricks up his sleeve,” Qing Buyi tutted.

“Why does it feel similar to an energy I’ve also sensed from Little Yu?” Chen Xiao tilted his head to the side. “It’s probably from something else the kid gave her. Is he really unaware that Qing Han and Qing Yu are one and the same?”

“After you left yesterday, he told me that Qing Han occupies a greater place in his heart than Qing Yu. He doesn’t even know if he really likes Little Yu.” Qing Buyi happily sipped a mouthful of wine and wobbled his head. “The kid isn’t wrong. He’s yet to see her real self and doesn’t even know who Little Yu is, so any talk of genuine sentiment would be pure gibberish! He likes Little Yu because Qing Han is Little Yu. His feelings for Qing Han are true, so his feelings for Little Yu are also genuine.”

“Tsk.” Chen Xiao pursed his lips and stayed silent.

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“From now on, never ever expose this power of yours in front of outsiders!” Empress Myrtlestar’s expression was extremely grave. “The power of the five connate elements is not the domain of cultivators or immortals! This is an innate ability belonging to the four sacred beasts and the divine spirits of the four cardinal directions! You shall never know a moment of respite if the descendants of the cardinal spirits were to learn of your existence.”

It hadn’t been long since the empress’ obsession had fused with the fragment of her soul, so she didn’t have the time to spare to constantly keep an eye on the outside world. Only now did she realize where the elemental energy surrounding Qing Han had originated.

Lu Yun froze, then nodded. “Got it. Is this much fire essence enough?”



"It is." The empress nodded gently. "Leave the rest to me. You should rest and prepare for the ancient legacy.

"The lord who fell in Dusk Province is named 'Lord Sugato', the greatest lord serving under Emperor Polaris. There's a treasure inside his Sword Pagoda called the Philosopher's Jewel. It would be immensely useful in restoring my physical body, so I hope you can help me secure it."

"Alright," he agreed.

Empress Myrtlestar had been buried in the province a hundred thousand years ago, ample time for her obsession to gain its own self-awareness. Given that, it was no surprise that she knew of everything that had transpired in Dusk Province and was aware of the ancient lord's identity.

"You can use Lord Sugato's legacy to buy hearts and sell favors, but you ought to keep the Sword Pagoda itself. It's a peerless immortal-grade item called the Sugato Sword, and it once destroyed a connate treasure. It is worthy of being labeled 'ultimate of all'. Your Violetgrave is much too uncanny, and devoured all of its previous owners. In comparison, the Sugato Sword is more suitable as your personal weapon."

#### **Chapter 164: Another Tomb, Again**

Empress Myrtlestar suppressed the poison rampaging through Qing Han's body and alleviated his suffering while Lu Yun stood watch at her side, digesting what he'd learned from the battles over the past month. It wasn't that he didn't trust her; he simply cared too much about Qing Han, but didn't even understand why that was so.

"It is done." After an indiscernible period of time, a slightly fainter image of Empress Myrtlestar straightened her back as color gradually returned to Qing Han's cheeks.

"The Fusang Purewood is a rare natural spirit root," the empress wearily explained. "I have planted it in the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals to slowly replenish Qing Han's life force. You must find the other two treasures as soon as possible, so that I can fully cleanse him of the poison."

"My deepest thanks, Your Majesty!" Lu Yun clasped his hands and bowed deeply.

"No need for that." Empress Myrtlestar waved a dismissive hand. "If I cannot return to life, Qing Han will inherit my legacy. I have long since viewed him as my disciple."

"I thought you'd pick a female disciple," Lu Yun scratched his head.

Empress Myrtlestar smiled. Since Qing Han hadn't told Lu Yun the truth, she wasn't going to exceed the limits of propriety and inform him herself.

"Remember to acquire the Philosopher's Jewel for me," she reminded gravely. "It's my last chance to rebuild a physical body and come back to life."

"What about your corpse?" Lu Yun recalled the dread zombie within Violetgrave.

"Destroy it, if you can, or it'll wreak havoc in the world sooner or later." She returned to a violet shadow and entered the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals with the now-Fusang sapling.

Although Qing Han's poison had been suppressed, he remained soundly asleep. Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao sighed in relief when they saw the disguised girl's condition settling down.

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Two days flew by.

On this day, Lu Yun honored his promise and unearthed the heritage of Lord Sugato with the Dusk Seal. An ocean of people thronged in all of the available space, both inside and outside of Dusk Province.

The governor had proclaimed that the heritage was fair game, and all were welcome to the province to vie for it. The blanket announcement even included those who'd previously been prohibited from entering, such as the Lu Clan from Nephrite Major and House Dongling from Aureate Major.

With their patriarch slain on Dusk soil, House Dongling wasn't going to invite humiliation by entering the province. On the other hand, the Lu Clan considered Lu Yun having openly used Skybearer to battle the Qing dao immortal as a chance for reconciliation.

Thus, they set aside their hard feelings and sent a delegation as well. Lu Yun was one of the youth sovereigns appointed by the celestial emperor, so if he was willing to forgive them and return to the embrace of the clan, it would greatly benefit the entire clan.

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Fifteen kilometers outside the southern gate of Dusk City.

The ancient lord's heritage site having finally been revealed, it was shortly to be unearthed from the site of the reselection tournament. The Nephrite celestial emperor had purposefully chosen this spot to lay down the Coretrial Arena.

Lu Yun hovered in the air, having donned black official's robes but looking a bit worn-down. He'd been keeping an eye on Qing Han over the past two days, even neglecting to bother with the captured treasure that'd taken form as an old man.

If he hadn't promised to unearth the ancient lord's heritage today, he would've already dived into the North Sea with Aoxue and the others to raid the ancient dragon tombs.

The crowd looked at Lu Yun with a hint of awe. Even Wu Tulong, Dongfang Hao, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian had nothing but respect for him. Three days ago, their exhaustion from month-long battles and Dongfang Hao's words had discouraged them from challenging Lu Yun. Lacking an actual assessment through fighting, they'd remained reluctant to approve of Lu Yun. Now, however, they wholeheartedly believed that the governor deserved to be the top youth sovereign.

He'd fought a dao immortal, and he'd fought well!

Although he'd been defeated and almost died at Qing Quan's hand, even needing rescue in the end, he'd still taken the Arcane Golden Bell from the dao immortal. That'd caused quite a stir in the world of immortals, propelling him to worldwide fame in merely three days. His name was on everyone's lips; even the other four youth sovereigns paled in comparison. And he was still a nascent spirit cultivator!

Once he ascended to the transformed spirit realm and reached peak strength for cultivators, not even the dao immortal would be his match in the province. He was the unequivocal champion of Dusk. Many cultivators viewed him with admiration, considering him their role model and lifetime goal.

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Hum.

The Dusk Seal burst into golden light before Lu Yun, drawing upon the power of the entire province and demanding its convergence. The very earth trembled.

Rumble.

The land beneath Lu Yun's feet cracked and yawned open, sending an enormous fracture splintering in all directions. Something big seemed to be emerging from the earth.

"Oh?" Frowning, Lu Yun stopped his hand gestures. "What's this?"

With a wave of his hand, the seal returned to him and the power of the land around them quieted down.

"What's going on? Why did you stop?" The onlookers were befuddled by the sudden change in behavior.

"There's something else down there!" Lu Yun inhaled deeply with confusion.

"Something else? What thing?" A handful of heavyweights—officials from the Nephrite Court—flew out to inspect the fissure, but came back empty-handed. No one wanted to be left out of unearthing the ancient heritage, so not only had Nephrite Major sent representatives, but so had all of the top factions of the other majors as well.

"It's an ancient tomb!" Lu Yun identified breathlessly. "There's a tomb beneath us!" He looked up at the figureheads around him. "Isn't it said that no one buried the ancient lord after his death? Why would there be a tomb here?"

"What?!" His words got a reaction out of everyone.

An ancient tomb?

According to records acquired by the Nephrite Major, the ancient lord had indeed passed on from the world in the Dusk Province. Both his body and his treasured heritage had been covered by dirt. There was no mention of a proper burial, yet here the tomb was.

"You aren't pulling our leg, are you, Governor? Our cultivation may be sealed to the august immortal realm, but we're still peerless immortals at our core. None of us sense a tomb." The representative of the Mo Clan from Lazuli Major frowned. There was a trace of doubt in his voice, but he wasn't going to disrespect Lu Yun, at least not in this province.

"Give me some room."

The immortals near him backed away as Lu Yun waved a hand to activate the provincial seal again, drawing upon the power of heaven and earth.

Rumble.

Cracks on the ground continued expanding in all directions, opening up a giant hole spanning three hundred meters in radius. Eerie, ancient, thick with the energy of decay.

“It really is the presence of an ancient tomb!” exclaimed one of the officials from the Nephrite court. “How is this possible? According to the records, the ancient lord wasn’t buried after his death at the beginning of the great war! Why is there a tomb here?”

“What’s going on?!” Disbelief colored the officials’ faces. They didn’t know if the records were wrong, or if someone—or something—had set up a tomb for the ancient lord afterward. Immortals from the other majors looked on uncertainly. They didn’t know what the real truth was here.

“Where did the ancient tombs of the world even come from?” The question suddenly occurred to Lu Yun. “Almost no immortals survived the great war a hundred thousand years ago, and even the path of immortal dao was severed as a result. Who buried those who fell in the war?”

Befuddled looks rippled through the crowd. No one had any answers, as the ancient tombs had always been a mystery.

### **Chapter 165: Unable to Remain Buried**

Where had the ancient tombs in the world of immortals come from?

Who built the tombs for the immortals fallen in battle?

Survivors of the immortal war?

The tombs didn’t accommodate just one or two people, but whole sects, aristocracies, or even an entire dynasty in some cases. Neatly laid out with burial goods, chambers, and all sorts of secondary structures, these tombs forested the world. Such proliferation went beyond the limits of human capability.

If the mighty powerhouses of the ancient era yet survived in the present day, how could their cultivation path have ever been severed? What need would there be for contemporary immortals to fumble around on the dao of immortals?

The slew of tombs in the world had always been one of the modern world’s greatest mysteries. No one knew who’d built them, and many simply chose to push the question to the back of their minds as time went on.

In modern times, advancement of the dao was laborious and ponderous. Scrabbling around in the dark, one could only explore tombs and excavate the remains of that ancient civilization to further the world’s enlightenment.

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“Perhaps like all of the dead ancients, someone quietly buried the lord here after his passing.” The crowd sighed softly. They thought the legacy would be theirs for the taking, but it’d turned out to be an ancient tomb!

Ancient lords weren't commonplace, but their tombs could be found in various parts of the world. Many factions had attempted to explore such tombs, only to lose several dao immortals in the process and end up with very little to show for it. As a result of their past experiences, many now contemplated whether to give up and readied to withdraw.

"Wait, if the tomb is truly inaccessible, the nine celestial emperors wouldn't have used it to gather all of the cultivators in the world." Inspiration dawned on Lu Yun. He immediately took to the air, forming a series of hand seals as he invoked the provincial seal.

"Lu Yun, what are you doing?!" The crowd turned pale with fright at his actions. Was he trying to forcibly pry open the tomb with the power of the land? If that actually worked, all of the tombs in the world would've long been explored by now.

"Stop, stop at once! Ancient tombs of this level are always protected by horrifying formations. If you try forcing it open with the power of the land, you'll set terrifying phenomena in motion that'll wreak untold havoc!" Ashen-faced, a peerless immortal of the Nephrite court hastily urged him to desist.

"The ancient tomb is the ancient tomb, and the legacy is the legacy!" Lu Yun suddenly proclaimed loud and clear. "The celestial emperors wouldn't swindle us. If they say we can obtain the legacy, then we definitely can! I command you, open!!!"

Rumble!!!

A tremendous explosion reverberated across the province, as though the earth itself was turning over. Fissure upon enormous fissure snaked in a radius of fifteen hundred kilometers around Dusk City. Rays of primal light pierced through the cavernous opening beneath the governor's feet, emitting a keen sword aura that spilled out with enough momentum to carve the land to pieces.

Hummm.

A pillar of bronze radiance hurtled to the sky, bringing with it the imprint of a pagoda that slowly expanded beneath the heavens. The imprint brought a strange power with it, one that merged with the power of the land to shape a bronze pagoda.

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"A tomb may bury a man, but it cannot hold back an incomparable man-made treasure like the Sugato Sword." Empress Myrtlestar's faint sigh traveled from the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals. "Born of nature, connate treasures abide by the heavenly dao. But the strongest weapons forged by man all inherit the will of their creators. They possess an unyielding spirit that defies the natural order.

"Even a hundred thousand years later, the sharp edges of the sword long for the light of day. It will not remain buried forever! No tomb can fetter the sharpest intent of the world."

The tomb could contain Lord Sugato's corpse, but couldn't restrain his greatest treasure, the Sugato Sword; nor could it restrain the will behind it. To be buried was synonymous with death, the end of it all, whereas the sword was the number one manmade weapon of the ancient world, and possibly the strongest treasure ever crafted. It could shatter treasures born from the world itself, thus embodying man's determination to conquer nature and be the master of his own fate.

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“The legacy, the ancient lord’s legacy! I-it really did come out!” The assembled immortals gaped in amazement. The governor had unearthed the Sword Pagoda by forcing it with the power of the land! Towering at three thousand meters tall, the pagoda loomed over the assembled crowd like a massive mountain.

“The legacy of the ancient Lord Sugato has returned to the world. Whoever desires can make an attempt for themselves. Climb all nine hundred and ninety-nine floors to earn the ancient lord’s approval and obtain his full inheritance.”

This information surfaced in Lu Yun’s mind the moment the pagoda appeared. Nine hundred and ninety nine floors, each three meters tall and containing one part of Lord Sugato’s legacy. Only one mighty enough to ascend to the top could acquire the legacy in its entirety.

The pagoda wasn’t the Sugato Sword, per se, but an inheritance tower that Lord Sugato had forged from the quintessence of his power and cultivation before his death. With the help of the sword’s all-piercing might, it’d risen to the dome of the sky and displayed itself to the world. Nevertheless, the sword itself was still inside the tomb. The tomb may not have been able to contain the sharpness of the sword’s intent, but it could suppress the sword’s material existence.

Obtain the Sugato Sword, retrieve the Philosopher’s Jewel for the empress, then seek the Skydragon Pearl in the North Sea for Qing Han! His plan set, Lu Yun jumped down and dove under the inheritance pagoda into the tomb.

“The legacy is right in front of us, so why’s Lu Yun headed for the tomb?” His behavior baffled those present.

“This pagoda isn’t Lord Sugato’s signature treasure, just the instrument of his legacy. Lu Yun must be after that supreme weapon, instead!”

The understanding gave some people pause. “It’s all due to the weapon’s keen edge that the inheritance pagoda reappeared among us. Which means... not even the ancient tomb can stifle the ancient lord’s most precious treasure!”

“Treasures and legacy, everyone can try his luck at them... Lu Yun gave up the legacy because his goal is the lord’s real treasure!”

“Cultivators of the Immortal Martial School are to proceed to the inheritance pagoda at once! You will vie for the ancient lord’s legacy. The school’s immortals are to follow me to the tomb! We will not possibly give up on a weapon that not even an ancient tomb can bury!”

“That’s right. This supreme treasure must be ours! Since Lu Yun is bold enough to go after it, how can noble immortals like us be outdone?” Many realized the stakes at play and fired off orders for the inheritance tower before diving into the tomb themselves. If even Lu Yun had gone in, what was there for immortals to be afraid of?

## **Chapter 166: A Giant Hand**

“The sky cannot dwarf it, and the earth cannot bury it!” Wu Tulong looked at the inheritance tower, eyes gleaming brightly. “One fine Sword Pagoda indeed!”

He wasn’t referring to the tower itself, but rather the sharpness exuding from it, the edge that belonged to the matchless treasure sealed inside the tomb: the Sugato Sword!

“Lu Yun’s already gone down to lay hands on it.” Mo Qitian shook his head gently. “If we don’t want to be left in the dust....”

“We need to obtain that treasure, or at least prevent Lu Yun from doing so!” Dongfang Hao took in a deep breath. “He’s a madman who grasped my sword intent after fighting me for only three days. If he gets his hands on the treasure and comprehends the sharpness of the tower, we won’t stand a chance against him.”

His own interests also lay with the unyielding sharpness that enveloped the tower.

“Let’s go!” The four youths looked at each other and, disregarding the four protectors behind them, dashed toward the tomb’s entrance.

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After the Sugato Sword’s intent had pierced the ancient tomb, a dense tomb aura leaked out and permeated the air. Quite a few immortals in Lu Yun’s vicinity jumped into the hole shortly after him, but—

Boom.

An enormous explosion erupted from the cavity as a hand close to three hundred meters wide reached out and shooed everyone away. A thick arm probed out shortly afterwards, as if a giant was about to crawl out from underground. The land shook, enormous fissures snaking in every direction. Even Dusk City, fifteen kilometers away, was impacted, its walls quaking and swaying.

“What on earth is that?!” Likewise repelled by the big hand, Lu Yun crashed to a heap on the ground and stared, aghast. The giant arm was a rotten affair of gory flesh and mishmash skin. He could smell the putrid stench wafting from it, even from this far away.

“A zombie!” Solemnity crossed his face as he came to his senses. The ancient lord’s tomb couldn’t contain the Sugato Sword; it could only seal it in the tomb’s outer regions. As long as he could enter the tomb, it would be easy enough to locate the treasure and lay claim to it. Alas, he hadn’t expected such a strange zombie to appear and swat him away like a fly.

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“What an enormous zombie!” The other immortals who’d been sent flying were also flabbergasted.

“Sure enough, the tomb of every ancient lord is protected by this level of foul creature. It seems there’s little hope for us this time as well.” Many immortals contemplated beating a hasty retreat when they saw that the zombie was about to break out of the ground.

Just like other tombs that housed ancient lords across the world of immortals, it would be very difficult to explore this one without losing numerous dao immortals in the process. And in a special place like

Dusk Province, not even dao immortals in the flesh could call upon the full extent of their powers. Therefore, this tomb was basically impossible to explore.

“It looks like the supreme treasure is unattainable. Not only that, I think we can even forget about the legacy, no matter how close at hand it seems. The zombie will certainly destroy Dusk City with its emergence, and it’ll drag the tower back inside the tomb, too!”

Many noticed the giant hand struggling in the direction of the inheritance tower, as if to yank it back underground. Its efforts might be futile, for now, but the monster would certainly succeed once it crawled out of the hole in the ground. Dusk City would just be collateral damage.

“What a pity, what a great pity! We went through enormous pains to finally see the ancient legacy, only to run into an invincible monster!”

“Dusk Province truly is a forsaken place. Even the treasures in plain sight are out of reach!”

More than a thousand immortals had rushed into the cavity, but they’d all been swatted right back out. If not for the zombie being hobbled by limited space and unable to fully unleash its strength, they would all be dead by now, Lu Yun included.

“I can’t let it emerge, otherwise Dusk City is completely done for.” An unsettled Lu Yun watched the giant arm continue to stretch out. That simple arm was already close to three hundred meters in diameter. How much bigger must the body be? Once it came aboveground, the earth around it would sink, destroying at least half of the city in the process.

The governor took a deep breath and once again rose in the air.

“What’s he doing now?!” Whether they’d stayed behind to watch on the sidelines or were about to leave, the immortals couldn’t help but gawk at the governor’s soaring figure.

“Is he going to face this gruesome monster all by himself?”

“He’s gone mad, he’s absolutely gone mad!”

“Maybe he thinks that since he’s already faced a dao immortal, a zombie won’t be an issue either.”

“Then that’s not madness, but sheer stupidity!”

“In Dusk Province, dao immortals have no choice but to seal their strength and cultivation to the august immortal realm! At most, that makes them august immortals with a dao immortal’s knowledge. The power they wield here is a far cry from the true power of a dao immortal. In comparison, a zombie like this isn’t affected by the province’s restriction. It can fully use its strength as it pleases!”

“Save Lu Yun! We must save him no matter the cost!” A peerless immortal of the Lu Clan declared resolutely as he gazed at the governor’s figure in midair. “He’s the one hope of reviving our clan. He must survive, even if we must sacrifice our lives!”

“B-but...” A few immortals around him hesitated.

“Relationships can be mended. Nothing is impossible, as long as we’re willing to acknowledge our mistakes and apologize. Our clan was almost exterminated a hundred years ago. Out of the one hundred



and eight subsidiary houses from our most glorious era, only thirty-something are left. And even they are beleaguered on all sides.

“Compared to revitalizing the clan, what does losing some face matter? Not to mention, Lu Qishan, Lu Qingxun, and their clique acted on their own with that puppet idea. Other branches like ours protested most vehemently against their actions!”

Hummm.

In the midst of their discussion, a jade-colored gate appeared in the air: The Skybearer Gates!

It could restrain all things evil. Even Diexi the zombie king had once been firmly constrained. The moment the gates appeared, a jade brilliance pressed down with the potent force of a towering mountain and locked the giant hand in place.

Roar!

A hoarse scream emitted from beneath the ground, followed by a series of deafening beats, like something was banging on a large drum. The ground’s shaking increased in intensity as the giant zombie struggled desperately.

“Oh, feck.” Lu Yun’s expression faltered. He’d forgotten an important issue. Skybearer could indeed quell all things evil, but only the zombie’s arm had ventured outside the tomb and the rest of it was still inside. As a result, the gates could only hold back the arm. It couldn’t penetrate the tomb to restrain the zombie itself!

The land itself buckled under the monster’s relentless struggles. Quake upon quake rocked the terrain, shaking all of Dusk City fifteen kilometers away and cracking its walls from the stress.

Hummm.

At this moment, an overwhelming power materialized between heaven and earth, stabilizing this corner of the world and pulsing a burst of rich energy that shielded a Dusk City on the verge of collapse.

“Hm?” With a start, Lu Yun subconsciously looked behind him and saw eighteen immortals arranged in a grand formation that sealed off the area in its entirety. An imposing-looking young man with an unusual presence appeared at the governor’s side. Formidable immortal force emanated from his figure, alleviating the pressure on Lu Yun.

“Lu Qingyi of the Lu Clan greets the Governor of Dusk.” The young man raised his hands in a cupped fist salute.

“Lu Clan? Lu Qingyi?” Lu Yun’s eyes shone. “Come, take control of Skybearer while I deal with this zombie.” He immediately relinquished control of the gates.

### **Chapter 167: To Strike Out Boldly Despite Ten Million Foes**

A bemused Lu Qingyi took control of Skybearer. As a Lu Clan ultimate treasure, the blood of numerous clan dao immortals had nurtured it so that it could easily be commanded by immortals with the Lu bloodline. Being a peerless immortal and one of the clan’s core members, Lu Qingyi could naturally wield the gates’ power.

He erased the personal brand on Skybearer, but didn't disperse the power of our clan's bloodline, Lu Qingyi realized with a start. Although Lu Yun had publicly slapped the clan's face, he hadn't burned every bridge. On the other hand, Lu Qingyi was at a loss to understand why the governor trusted him enough to hand over Skybearer just like that.

If their roles were reversed, Lu Qingyi never would've trusted Lu Yun so readily. But the peerless immortal didn't dwell on his doubts and quickly refocused his mind. In his hands, Skybearer could deploy even greater power, since he was more familiar with the treasure than Lu Yun.

In no time at all, he incapacitated the giant arm against the ground. However, that further enraged the zombie inside the tomb. The land within a few dozen kilometers heaved and bulged, as if the monster would break out at any second.

Eyes widening with alarm, the eighteen Lu immortals were about to switch to another formation, when—

"Stay where you are for now." A young girl clad in black strode out of the void. Looking slightly haggard, her voice sang like an exultation of skylarks. "The 'Mountain-Toppling Formation' isn't to be used like this. Reposition yourselves according to my instructions."

The girl lifted her hand and etched a few formation runes in the air that dropped down to merge with the grand formation that was held by the eighteen immortals. An image of a vast mountain instantly emerged above the formation.

Delight plain on their faces, the Lu immortals hastened to alter the formation according to Feinie's directions.

"Rend—" With a furious shout from Lu Qingyi, Skybearer's gates cracked open. The jade brilliance became almost tangible as it ruthlessly pushed against the ground, gradually stilling the earth's tremors and preventing the land from rupturing.

However, those assembled could sense an even more fearsome energy brewing beneath. As soon as it erupted, it was bound to upend the earth in a radius of several hundred kilometers.

Thick thunderclouds converged from every direction, darkening the land as silver lightning bolts snaked across the sky with frenzied roars.

"It's that move again! Lu Yun's summoned the divine lightning of the nine heavens!!" some of the gathered immortals screamed in shock. Three days ago, it'd been this move that enabled Lu Yun to withstand Qing Quan's palm strike and shred the dao immortal's clothes, delivering him as the world's latest laughingstock.

The governor was calling upon the divine lightning once again! Divine lightning of the nine heavens was born of all things in nature, and shockingly, it was at the beck and call of a measly cultivator!

Boom.

Endless lightning collated into a silver pillar of light that crashed violently onto Lu Yun, ultimately condensing into a ball in his hand.

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“It must be a lightning mastery art. Legends speak of a god of thunder and virtue in an ancient immortal dynasty. He wielded lightning in its every facet; even the tribulation of cultivators fell under his jurisdiction.

“Allegedly, the lesser lightning deities under his command could employ a special art to control the divine lightning of the nine heavens. Could this Lu Yun have excavated the divine tomb of a lightning deity and gained a similar ability?”

To control divine lightning was an eye raising ability, but still within the bounds of plausibility. Some contemporary powerhouses could also command the divine lightning of the nine heavens, thanks to special methods, to say nothing of the ancient deities that’d wielded the lightning to protect the immortal dynasty’s authority.

The Qing immortals shifted uneasily at the appearance of the lightning. This lightning had blasted the dignity of one of their dao immortals to utter smithereens. Venerated Elder Qing Hao had returned to the clan and secluded himself behind closed doors. He likely wouldn’t set foot outside for several centuries to come—or even several millennia—until his embarrassment abated. By association, the Qing immortals had also become objects of ridicule.

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Lu Yun grasped the divine lightning in his hand as a blinding, infinite road appeared at his feet, leading straight underground: the Path of Ingress! Nephrite Major’s greatest treasure, it was a fearsome item that could pierce through any barrier and overcome all formations. He set foot on the path and instantly vanished from sight.

Many immortal dignitaries from Nephrite Major immediately rose to their feet and formed a defensive circle around the treasure. Though it was just a replica, if an immortal from another major were to obtain it, they could use it to spy upon the Path’s secrets and negate Nephrite Major’s greatest trump card.

“He’s going to enter the tomb and face the zombie head-on!” Many gasped when they saw Lu Yun’s figure disappear on the Path of Ingress. “Boldness is born from ability indeed. No wonder he’s first among the youth sovereigns!”

Previously, some had felt Lu Yun’s confrontation with the Qing dao immortal to be the mere recklessness of youth. But his actions now in challenging the ominous zombie face to face couldn’t be anything but true self-assurance born from genuine skill. Without sufficient strength, who would desire to throw their lives away?

“He is a greater man than me!” Dejection flashed across Wu Tulong’s face. “At the very least, I don’t have the courage to rush into the belly of the beast and face that monster.”

The other three youth sovereigns also looked downcast. They’d initially thought they weren’t far behind Lu Yun. Dongfang Hao, in particular, had fought Lu Yun for three days and three nights, only losing by one move.

Although the governor had faced a dao immortal and could summon divine lightning, the four youngsters firmly believed they could still overtake him. But here and now, they finally understood where the difference between them lay: courage.

Lu Yun feared nothing and no one, be it dao immortal or invincible zombie. He ceaselessly forged onward, never cowering. Even ten million foes couldn't bend his will.

"I may be inferior, but it doesn't mean I'll simply give up. At least, I'll surpass the three of you and become the world's second best!" Mo Qitian suddenly smiled.

"Second best... hahahaha!" Dongfang Hao laughed heartily. "Being first is the only goal worth pursuing! Even if I can't be first, I'm going to breathe down Lu Yun's neck and have him sitting on pins and needles!"

"He who laughs last, laughs best! He might be the greatest youth sovereign at the moment, but that doesn't mean he'll necessarily be stronger than us once we're all immortals! He may be ahead of us as a cultivator, but when it comes to the boundless dao of immortals, I will be number one!" Zi Chen proclaimed loud and clear.

"You'll have the three of us to contend with!"

To remain unyielding in the face of myriad obstacles and shout back at the world at the top of one's lungs, such was to be a youth sovereign.

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Meanwhile, Lu Yun journeyed along the Path of Ingress and reached the underground, finally catching a complete glance of the zombie. It was a scarlet zombie, its mass of flesh and blood a half-rotten, partially decayed mess. A full three thousand meters in height, it presently lay on the ground inside the tomb.

Scarlet eyes latched onto Lu Yun's frame the moment he entered the tomb, crimson flashes within its bottomless irises bathing the space in bloody light.

"It's not the tomb that's suppressing the Sugato Sword, but the Sugato Sword that's suppressing this zombie.... Or to be more exact, this bloodcorpse!" He inhaled deeply.

### **Chapter 168: Invincible**

It was the Sugato Sword that was reigning in the giant bloodcorpse, keeping it suppressed beneath the ground. Since the immortal ghost, Yueshen, had nine bloodcorpses at her command, that afforded Lu Yun a glimpse into their true nature.

They were a zombie variant that could transform themselves into streaks of crimson light and possessed a strange, cursed power. Their unique constitution allowed them to reform with just a small amount of fresh blood, even after being completely scattered.

In other words, bloodcorpses were close to invincible.

Radiating a blindingly sharp energy, the Sugato Sword firmly suppressed the crimson zombie, cutting into its flesh and leaving behind open wounds.

“It hasn’t finished its transformation into a bloodcorpse!” Lu Yun frowned when he noticed the creature’s condition. Though it struggled with all its might, the greater its efforts, the sharper the sword energy cutting into it became. The zombie’s crimson light surged and slammed into the ground, attempting to break it open.

“The Sugato Sword can’t keep it suppressed for long. The thing will break free sooner or later!” Lu Yun’s face darkened. So the sword was also preventing the bloodcorpse from completing its transformation. That meant it would be next to impossible for him to acquire the weapon.

This thing will be a harbinger of disaster if it’s allowed to escape. Let’s try the dispelling properties of the Thunder Palmstrike! Situated on the Path of Ingress, Lu Yun dodged a few crimson flashes and countered with a palm at the bloodcorpse’s head.

Crackle.

Dazzling lightning burst out of his palm, squarely hitting the bloodcorpse.

Snarl!

The bloodcorpse roared with pain and anger, redoubling its efforts against the Sugato Sword, which remained steady as ever, like a giant mountain. Lu Yun’s attack hadn’t been terribly effective.

“Oh?” Some new knowledge traveled back after his attack. “So if the inheritance pagoda is broken, the bloodcorpse will be able to break free of the Sugato Sword!”

What prevented the bloodcorpse’s final transformation wasn’t the weapon itself, but the sharpness of the sword energy. The pagoda was created from the sword’s edge and Lord Sugato’s power, denoting a close link between pagoda and sword. Smashing the pagoda would allow the bloodcorpse to break free.

“Of course! That explains it!” His expression shifted unsteadily. “No wonder the provincial seal is required to unearth the ancient lord’s heritage. No wonder knowledge about the Sword Pagoda and this bloodcorpse came to me!”

There’d originally been no inheritance pagoda underground in Dusk Province. The moment Lu Yun channeled the power of the land into the ancient lord’s tomb, the keenness of the sword activated the remnants of Lord Sugato’s power, which combined with the power of the land to hurtle out of the tomb as the inheritance pagoda.

Given that Lu Yun had long since refined the provincial seal and wielded the province’s power, that meant the pagoda was well within his grasp. In fact, he could collect the pagoda with a thought and slowly refine the ancient lord’s heritage, bypassing the nine hundred and ninety-nine floors altogether.

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Berserk lightning continued to smite the bloodcorpse. The bloody figure’s flailing grew increasingly violent, with even the giant hand it’d extended gradually breaking free of Skybearer’s restraint.

“Again!!” Lu Yun raised his hand high.

Bam!

His attack pierced straight through the earth above his head. Endless lightning converged from all directions with a roar and fell into his grasp.

“Die!” he screamed. “Die, die, die!”

Crackling lightning flooded the tomb, an ocean of thunder that submerged the bloodcorpse, but didn’t drown out its struggles.

There were different levels of heavenly lightning. The kind that Lu Yun’s Thunder Palmstrike channeled was the weakest among them. It was more than enough to kill regular immortals, but ineffective when facing a bloodcorpse as powerful as this one.

He could deliver great injuries again and again, but couldn’t disperse its crimson light. The Sugato Sword had suppressed the bloodcorpse for at least a hundred thousand years, but the weapon merely prevented it from completing its transformation and was seemingly incapable of killing it.

Bloodcorpses were almost impossible to kill, and this particular one was a true peerless immortal, one step away from dao immortal! Unlike a peerless immortal with a sealed cultivation, a real peerless immortal could kill Lu Yun with a snap of its fingers.

The governor summoned divine lightning nine more times. Every instance ripped open wounds and left patches of charred flesh on the bloodcorpse, but the creature continuously healed itself with a crimson light that looked like a sword aura.

Lu Yun huffed and puffed atop the Path of Ingress, his energy reserves running low.

“It’s not invincible as long as it hasn’t finished turning into a true bloodcorpse! I must refine the Sugato Sword to take it down! Only that sword energy can kill this monster!” He looked toward the weapon. The Path of Ingress cut a shining path through the surging, crimson light of the bloodcorpse. “If I can’t take it with me, I’ll just refine it from here!”

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The immortals outside the city were dumbfounded.

Nine instances of divine lightning had slammed into the cavity in the ground and completely broken open the earth around it. If Feinie hadn’t led the eighteen Lu immortals in protecting the city, it would’ve sunk underground.

No one knew what was happening in the tomb, and no one dared enter at the moment. The battle underground was far too intense. With their cultivations sealed, they wouldn’t even be Lu Yun’s match, let alone the giant zombie.

The enormous hand continued scrabbling in the dirt, almost breaking free of Skybearer. Blood trickled down from the corner of Lu Qingyi’s mouth, but he clenched his jaw and kept the hand suppressed.

“Put your treasure away,” called out a lilting, ethereal voice. “I will handle it.”

A girl dressed in grey robes slowly descended from the sky. A trace of crimson light flickered in and out of existence within her pupils.

“You are....” Lu Qingyi looked at her with appreciation.

“Diexi, a zombie king nurtured by an ancient tomb,” she replied frankly. “Some say I am an evil creature that will bring unceasing calamity to the world of immortals, but Lu Yun says I am an ordinary human, just like him.”

“Diexi, protector of the North Sea coast and bulwark against millions of monster spirits!” Lu Qingyi snapped to attention. “Miss Deixi saved hundreds of millions in Dusk Province by heading off the invaders. You are a major benefactor of Nephrite Major, not an evil creature!”

Diexi beamed widely at Lu Qingyi. “Put the Skybearer Gates away. Lu Yun says that everything in the world has its natural bane, and Skybearer happens to be my counter. I will take care of the hand.”

Lu Qingyi bowed to the girl and withdrew the treasure. As soon as the gates dissipated, the hand shot out and grabbed at the pagoda.

“I am a zombie king, the ruler of all undead!” Diexi howled to the sky. “You are not a true bloodcorpse yet, so you must kneel to me!”

She opened her eyes to fix her gaze at a certain point in the distance. Where her eyes passed, an ocean of blood emerged, with countless bodies floating in it.

Bam!

The ocean slammed into the arm.

### **Chapter 169: Lu Yun’s Sword Intent**

In an explosion of crimson light, a scene of blood and corpses appeared in general view and an overpoweringly baleful aura enveloped the entire area. After struggling a few times more, the giant arm gave up the fight.

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“How many lives were consumed to manifest such a powerful sea of blood and corpses? The legendary zombie king is indeed the embodiment of evil!”

Many immortals fell back, retreating from the gruesome ocean peppered with floating corpses. Diexi was an arcane immortal, while the humans present were at most august immortals. No one even dared draw close to her crimson light.

“The embodiment of evil?” someone else sneered in protest. “The one you label the embodiment of evil is doing her utmost to hold back a zombie that can lay waste to the world and our people! You mouth righteous words of justice and heroism, but you cower in the corner like the lily-livered rat you are. You don’t even have the guts to draw close to this monster!”

Visibly ashamed, the one who’d spoken earlier didn’t say anything else.

Diexi had suppressed the fearsome arm, thanks to her vista of carnage, but the tremors underground became all the more intense in response. It sounded like another hand had taken up the cause, battering away in an attempt to force another hole through the earth.

The Sugato Sword could physically restrain the bloodcorpse and prevent it from transforming, but it couldn't freeze the harrowing creature's limbs. Now that one of its arms was suppressed by the zombie king, it immediately switched its efforts to breaking its other arm out and grabbing the inheritance tower.

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Meanwhile, Lu Yun arrived in front of the Sugato Sword.

Surrounded by a keen, boundless light, it looked a full three hundred meters tall and more than a hundred meters wide. But in fact, the Sugato Sword was only a meter long. Exquisitely crafted from top to bottom, its details daintily sculpted, it resembled a pagoda of glazed, colored glass.

"I must traverse this dense array of spectral light to make it mine!" He withdrew the Path of Ingress, noting how the icy edge of the sword light shredded the bloodcorpse's crimson light wherever it drew close. "One must pass the pagoda's trial and scale all 999 floors in order to obtain Lord Sugato's full legacy. Likewise, this array of light is also a trial! Only by passing its layers will one earn the right to become the Sugato Sword's master!"

It was because of this realization that he'd dispelled the Path of Ingress at his feet; not even the path could pierce through this terrifying radiance. Lu Yun could only rely on his own sword intent to break through and obtain the magnificent pagoda's approval.

As though it had sensed Lu Yun's intentions, the bloodcorpse's eyes suddenly landed on him. Its free arm stopped bombarding the ground and reached for the governor instead.

If someone could control the Sugato Sword and release its true sharpness, they would be able to exterminate the not-yet-fully-evolved bloodcorpse. With a hazy self-awareness of its own, the bloodcorpse was no longer a creature driven by instinct alone.

Lu Yun frowned. An arc of violet light arose beside him and carried him away, barely avoiding yet another attack.

Roooooar!!!

The bloodcorpse bawled in pain as its hand had ventured too close to the light and was decimated to mincemeat by the Sugato Sword. However, crimson radiance immediately flashed around its broken wrist; a new hand grew in place of the destroyed one and resumed its attack on the governor.

Lu Yun's expression hardened. Riding Violetgrave's sword light, he ducked and dodged around the Sugato Sword. Each time, the bloodcorpse's hand ended up hacked to pieces by the Sugato Sword, only to grow back and resume the offensive.

He slowly ran out of stamina. The dread zombie buried inside Violetgrave was already making the sword incomparably heavy to lift. In fact, it was almost too heavy for him to wield in his current condition.

Just as the governor decided to return to hell and devise another plan, a voice suddenly reverberated in his mind. "This won't do. If you continue like this, you'll be killed sooner or later."



“Who is this?!” Lu Yun’s mind shook and he subconsciously scanned the surroundings. “Is this Lord Sugato?” He was only in the tomb’s outer regions, some distance away from the deepest parts where Lord Sugato’s corpse should be buried.

“I am not Lord Sugato.” Malicious mischief suddenly seeped into the voice. “I am inside your sword.”

“Inside my sword..., The dread zombie born from Empress Myrtlestar’s corpse?!” Lu Yun’s figure trembled. He dodged to the side and avoided another strike from the bloodcorpse, but the monster’s crimson light swept over him and sent him flying. It invaded his insides and gleefully wreaked havoc on his life force before a tongue of hellfire erupted forth to incinerate it.

Lu Yun blanched.

“Ho, so you have a way to dissolve this crimson light. No wonder you were confident enough to venture inside this place all by yourself.” The eerie voice once again echoed in his mind. “Even so, the bloodcorpse will still end up killing you before long. Release me, and I will deal with it.”

The voice grew increasingly enticing, as if trying to bewitch Lu Yun. “If I act in person, I’ll flatten this trivial peerless immortal zombie in no time.”

Two flames erupted in Lu Yun’s eyes as he suppressed the temptation to release the dread zombie. “Yueshen, block this bloodcorpse!”

Soon after, Yueshen walked out from the Gates of the Abyss, her nine bloodcorpse incarnations in tow.

Sensing an aura similar to its own, the yet-to-be-fully-evolved bloodcorpse immediately calmed down, its scarlet eyes fixated on the nine bloody figures floating in the air. Meanwhile, Lu Yun brandished Violetgrave and charged straight into the Sugato Sword’s array of cutting light.

“It seems that you’ve been beguiled by that obsession and aren’t willing to trust me.” The voice sighed gently, its uncanny tone now dripping with flirtatiousness. “Please release your humble servant. Your slave shall fulfill your every wish and command.”

Lu Yun felt a ball of fire rise from his abdomen, his base, primitive desires aroused by the coquettish voice.

“Quit it with your glamour art!” Hellfire ignited once again inside of him, its icy aura cooling off this most instinctive desire common to all living creatures.

In front of him, a legion of light beams descended upon him to hew through his body, hack through his will, and churn everything that was him to nothingness, but he held his head high and refused to shy away, welcoming them with open arms instead. At the same time, an irresistible sword intent began coalescing around him.

A sword in hand was a sword in the heart, and a sword in the heart was a sword in one’s will.

Three convictions burst forth from his sword intent and spread in every direction, ever indomitable, ever unyielding, and ever steadfast. But there was an even grander belief that stood supreme over them all: freedom.

To follow one's own free will without constraints or worries, to rove about the world, drinking in its splendor and vastness. Never to bend, never to waver, never to surrender, all to pursue the freedom the heart yearned for.

Boom!

The Sugato Sword trembled when Lu Yun's sword intent emerged, as if resonating with it. The sky could not conceal its sharpness, the earth could not bury its edge. It, too, longed for freedom.

Buzz.

In the next moment, the sword dispelled its cutting light and spun around on itself, landing in Lu Yun's hand.

Roar!

A deafening snarl sounded at exactly the same moment as an intense scarlet light exploded from the bloodcorpse. Its freedom recovered, the final step of its transformation was finally complete!

### **Chapter 170: Sacred Land of Immortal Dao**

The bloodcorpse instantly shrank to regular human size, severing the arm it'd extended aboveground. It slowly rose into the air, transforming into a smear of crimson light with blood-red eyes that stared fixedly at Lu Yun.

Sugato Sword dragging in his hand, swirls of brilliant sword energy rotated around the governor as he leveled a grave gaze on the bloodcorpse.

"Dead! You're dead!" the dread zombie within Violetgrave crowed excitedly. "The bloodcorpse is invincible once it completes its transformation. It will rival a peak aether dao immortal that even regular ones won't be able to match.

"Doomed, you're doomed! No one will be able to save you! Once you're dead, Violetgrave will be unclaimed and it will bury me no more!"

Previously, it'd attempted to seduce Lu Yun into releasing it due to worries that the human would depart on the Path of Ingress. Now that the bloodcorpse had matured, there was no chance for the human to get away.

Lu Yun ignored its words and continued to stare at the bloodcorpse that was surrounded by Yueshen's nine bodies.

Roar.

Without making a move against Lu Yun, the dao immortal bloodcorpse growled and vanished in a flash of crimson shadow.

"What? What's going on? Why didn't it eat you?!" The dread zombie panicked. It'd been waiting for the bloodcorpse to devour Lu Yun and thereby release it from Violetgrave to the wonderful world outside.

However, the bloodcorpse that was supposed to crave blood above all else and rampage through living beings in a frenzied slaughter... well, it'd left after a single growl. How could the dread zombie not lose its calm?

"I have an agreement with the restriction," Lu Yun sighed in relief. "As long as I govern Dusk, there will be no evil spirits stirring up trouble within the province. Bloodcorpses are also a kind of evil spirit."

The bloodcorpse hadn't journeyed to other places in the world of immortals to wreak havoc, but instead entered the ancient tomb at the center of the province to serve the restriction.

"The same applies to you," Lu Yun remarked faintly. "If you dare start anything in the province, you'll be swiftly dealt with."

The dread zombie quieted down. Having yet to recover its full strength, it was only a peak dao immortal at the moment, which put it at the same level as the celestial emperors.

A few days ago, a strange young man had barged into the Eastern Extinction Tomb and dragged it out of the emperor coffin, burying it in the sword called Violetgrave. The world of immortals might be weaker now than what it'd been a hundred thousand years ago, but it was also a much stranger place. There was an ancient tomb above emperor realm in a destitute province!

Not celestial emperor realm, but immortal emperor!

Sovereign over all immortals and once the most powerful beings in this world, Empress Myrtlestar counted amongst their numbers. Buried within the Dusk Tomb, however, was someone even more powerful. That level of cultivation had been unthinkable even back in Myrtlestar's time, a hundred thousand years ago.

While the Dusk Tomb housed a great being more powerful than immortal emperors of old, the restriction reigning over all of Dusk Province was much weaker. Even the celestial emperor had said that he would wipe out the restriction, if it weren't for the Dusk Tomb.

It was through utilizing the tomb that the restriction, appearing out of nowhere a thousand years ago, had gained real dominance over the province. However, Lu Yun had an agreement with it, so the restriction would quell any unrest before it started—foreign evil spirits being no exception either.

When Lu Yun had called upon his own sword intent just now to win over the Sugato Sword, pointers from the restriction had illuminated the way. It'd been that mysterious entity who'd summoned the bloodcorpse as well.

If the bloodcorpse dared disobey, the restriction would descend upon the area and kill the offender. As for the dread zombie, it, too, was under the same threat. Although it could rival a celestial emperor, the restriction seemed to hold sway over all evil spirits, including its kind.

"Lord Sugato...." Lu Yun lowered his head and looked at the tomb underground. "Forget about him for now. I need to go to the North Sea first and get the Skydragon Pearl for Qing Han!"

The tomb of the ancient lord would undoubtedly be teeming with all sorts of dangers. Buried here was a powerful being who'd ascended beyond the dao immortal realm. Lu Yun wasn't actually completely

confident that he'd be able to raid the tomb. Most importantly, that wasn't his priority. He had to first locate the Skydragon Pearl!

.....

The group outside gasped with shock when Lu Yun emerged on the Path of Ingress. Calm once again reigned below ground, and the governor had exited the tomb safe and sound. Plainly, the zombie must be dead.

"Did... did you kill the monster?!" Wu Tulong leapt into the air with shock.

"No." Lu Yun shook his head. "It's left the ancient lord's tomb."

"What?!" Panic percolated through the gathering.

The zombie's arm had pulsed with the power of a peerless immortal; that was why the immortals hadn't dare come any closer. Although they were peerless immortals as well, their cultivations being sealed meant they would be marching to their deaths if they faced the zombie.

"Do you know what you've done, Lu Yun?!" one of the immortals demanded in rage. "A killing spree is inevitable when a zombie of the peerless immortal realm is out in the wild! You have wronged our entire world!"

"The heritage of the ancient lord is important, but we would rather give it up than have a vicious monster like that on the loose!" Fingers waggled and curses hurtled, as if Lu Yun was the enemy of all humanity.

"What about the Sugato Sword?" someone else asked. "Do you have it?"

Ardent looks shone a spotlight on Lu Yun. This was a weapon that neither heaven could conceal nor earth bury, and it was no hyperbole to call it the greatest treasure in the world. Even connate grade treasures ended up dusty and forgotten in ancient tombs, waiting to be unearthed by immortals.

The Sugato Sword, in comparison, had shot out of the tomb once bathed in the power of the land. It was a weapon that tempted the most apathetic heart.

"I have indeed acquired the sword." Lu Yun nodded slightly beneath the scrutiny of so many immortals.

The keen sword energy atop the pagoda had disappeared, as had the soaring energy from underground. Even if Lu Yun didn't admit to it, people would come to the conclusion themselves. Thus, it was better to tell the truth outright.

"The bloodcorpse hasn't moved to any other place," Lu Yun said, changing the subject. "I have an agreement with the restriction in Dusk Province. As long as I'm the governor, there will be no evil spirits running rampant through the land. Being a kind of evil spirit, the zombie was whisked away by the restriction."

Incredulous surprise prompted quick inhalations in the crowd. Lu Yun had become all the more mysterious in their eyes.

“My previous words remain valid. The inheritance pagoda will remain here outside Dusk City. The first to ascend all nine hundred and ninety-nine floors and gain Sugato Lord’s approval will become his inheritor.”

Contrary to earning more goodwill for that announcement, seeds of concern flourished in many hearts. The ancient lord had exceeded dao immortal realm! How gargantuan was the trial ahead of them?

On the other hand, even if one failed to gain the full heritage, the attempt would grant the challenger great benefits. This was a fortuitous opportunity that’d been made available to all. More importantly, the restriction here made Dusk Province a unique case. Even dao immortals had to seal their cultivation before entering. Immortals with keen foresight could already see the formation of a sacred land for immortal dao.

“One more thing,” Wu Tulong piped up. “Dongfang Hao, Zi Chen, Mo Qitian, and I will attain immortality in three years. If anyone still remains unconvinced by our title of the Five Youth Sovereigns, they may challenge us three years from now.” He turned to Lu Yun. “What say you, senior brother Lu?”

They were only missing Lu Yun for an unanimous accord.

“Alright,” agreed Lu Yun. “In three years, my four senior brothers and I will be here to accept challenges from young talents around the world!”

Cultivators broke out in raucous cheering at that announcement. The tournament that’d ended three days previously had provided untold inspiration and gains. Unfortunately, no factions in modern times dared hold such an event on their own, lest it lead to thorny conflicts and endless trouble.

After today, there would be no more such opportunities in the short term. Thankfully, the Five Youth Sovereigns had just promised them another tournament. No one would object, and the grand occasion three years from now was sure to attract even more participation.

“The youth sovereigns will ascend to immortality in three years, so that means there will be a new generation of youth sovereigns after their meeting.”

“Why don’t we name the next tournament the Sovereign Meet? We will meet the new youth sovereigns after a tournament to determine the best and brightest of the young!”

“Agreed!”

“Then there will be a Sovereign Meet every three years in the Dusk Province. Not only for cultivators to validate their cultivation, but also to motivate them to become the best!”

“Let’s establish a ranking that includes all of the young geniuses. Anyone with a place on the list will be bestowed treasures and opportunities from the nine majors as a reward and motivator!”

“As it should be!”

“Count the monster spirits of the ten lands in!”

“And the dragons of the four seas.”

“As the Dusk governor put it, the world of immortals is only as powerful as its cultivators!” A spirited din arose from immortals engaged in lively discussions.

“This momentum cannot be deterred.... With the start of the Sovereign Meet, this impoverished province will become the sacred land of immortal dao!”

Many exclaimed with emotion, expressions shifting unsteadily.

However, they knew that even without the tournament, Lord Sugato’s inheritance pagoda alone would be enough to put Dusk Province on the map and attract the attention of all the immortals in the world.

Moreover, the restriction in the province enforced good behavior on even visiting dao immortals. No schemes or plots would find any traction here. Cultivators and low-level immortals with great potential would be free to spread their wings.