

Necropolis 1621

Chapter 1621: Quiet Sovereign King

Lu Yun didn't know where the Curse King or Poison King came from, nor did he know what kind of faction supported them. In the thirty-three loops, his future self had seen only what he was capable of seeing. Anything that was too great to be comprehended was a blank void in his eyes—such as the Curse King's background and his primary body.

By now, he'd dismissed many of the things he'd witnessed in the cycles. A lot of what he'd previously believed without a doubt were false.

The original Hongmeng had been an unequivocal titan as it'd ruled over all of the known expanses. Many personages alive during that period had exceeded sequence and entered another level entirely. Though it'd ultimately perished in the hands of its own people, that meant the Curse King and Poison King's faction would've also suffered devastating blows.

Otherwise, they would be able to easily crush the tiny Central Hongmeng with domineering strength. What need was there for such complicated plots and schemes?

Lu Yun shook his head and put all thought out of his mind. Right now, his primary focus was on how to grow stronger, not intangible and potential enemies. Without sufficient strength, he would be a mantis trying to stop a chariot when the enemy came.

Countless pairs of eyes would set themselves upon the now empty Eastern Cluster. It'd once been a barren locale because order was sealed away here and supplemental dao forbidden from disseminating. The cluster's combat arts and cultivation methods were far weaker than any other planes.

With all of its denizens gone, it was a massive slice of cake. And after setting the fugitive Jian Juexian here, even sequence experts would think twice before moving in on the cluster.

There were also certain unknown guardians in the Central Hongmeng.

Lu Yun took a deep look at it, but didn't plan on paying a visit. The struggle for the Hongmeng Tower had reached its peak and it was up to the little fox whether she triumphed in the end. Not even Qing Yu could help her.

"But the Luminaries want to destroy the Sword Clan..." Lu Yun turned to a new problem.

If everything had been as before, he would've immediately taken Quiet to the Sword Clan. Though the Quiet Sovereign King had died, his will still lingered in his sword form. Taking the sword back would incite some changes—it might extrapolate the strength of a sequence expert from the sword so that the clan could defy the Luminaries.

But after meeting Yueyi and learning of her faction's ideals, Lu Yun's mindset had changed. A vaunted Nihil World Sovereign had been executed because he'd slaughtered three billion innocents!

Perhaps... the Luminaries' path wasn't incorrect.

"What say you?" Lu Yun looked down at the sword in his hand. He'd left the Eastern Cluster and returned to the Star Sect.

Qing Yu was still in the sect and the assembly's derivation of formula dao marched on in full force. Lu Yun's own comprehension of formula dao improved at every second as well.

"Although you're dead, a trace of your will still remains..." He suddenly called upon the Tome of Life and Death and fully released its power, shoving it into Quiet.

A hazy white glow blossomed from Lu Yun's body; he was as if a blazing sun—endlessly irradiating the boundless fourth realm with his radiance. The luminescence quickly faded away, leaving behind a young man in white robes standing in front of him.

His white hair ruffled by persistent sword qi around him, the young man was just an image. He didn't have a corporeal body, and a melancholic look peered out of his eyes.

The Quiet Sovereign King.

"You've resurrected me." The sovereign king's hesitant gaze landed on Lu Yun after a long moment.

"I didn't—I only awoke your will." Lu Yun shook his head. "You weren't completely dead in the first place. What do you have to say about the Luminaries?"

"The Luminaries?" The sovereign king's eyes shone brightly when he heard the name, he then sighed dejectedly. "The Sky Sovereign is the greatest powerhouse of the era. He's accessed nine levels of sequence—there is no one in the known expanses who is his opponent.

"If he wants my sword dao, just give it to him."

"Nine levels of sequence?" Lu Yun jumped with shock. By now, he knew that there were further delineations when it came to sequence experts. There were nine levels in total, with the ninth being the highest level.

Such a heavyweight would stand among the apex even in the original Hongmeng. Lu Yun had never thought that the main leader of the Luminaries would be at such heights! Even Yun Zhongzi had only accessed seven levels in his peak.

"Yes, nine levels of sequence," the sovereign king smiled ruefully. "I am just an insignificant character who's accessed one level of sequence. How can I fight him? If he wants sword dao to complete his ideals, let him have it."

Lu Yun nodded silently. "It wasn't the Sky Sovereign King who killed you, was it?"

"Only the Sun Sovereign King fought me. Just him alone was enough to erase me down to a trace of my will." The Quiet Sovereign King nodded, weariness coloring his thoughts. Since he hadn't fully resurrected, conversing with Lu Yun for long periods of time was difficult and taxing on the mind.

The sovereign king's condition improved after Lu Yun sent a karmic fruit into his image.

"It took a great deal of effort and fortune for us connate divine swords to manifest tangible forms and become a complete faction. We cannot be razed on a whim. If they want sword dao, give it to them." Anxiety appeared on the sovereign king's face. "But for as long as we exist, the sword dao of the Boundless Regions will concentrate on us in an unnatural manner. Other beings won't be able to train in it even if they want to."

“There’s a solution to everything, don’t panic.” Lu Yun nodded reassuringly. “Return to Quiet for now. I’ll take you back to the Star Sect and see if we can find a way to resolve this.”

The Quiet Sovereign King faded out of sight and Lu Yun vanished with a shake of his body. Another figure slowly coalesced where he’d just been.

It was a man in white robes with an enormous sun depicted between his brows—the Sun Sovereign King.

“So this is your little martial forefather, the Immortal King of the Central Hongmeng?” the sovereign king asked with surprise.

“Yes. If it wasn’t for him, I would’ve probably died to the Poison King.” Yueyi appeared as well. She’d sent the big-headed doll and overlord of Ice to the Luminaries. Only there could their safety be assured.

The overlord was the greatest genius of their time. He’d invented the method of nothing and accessed sequence despite being a Nihil World Sovereign. To some powerhouses, these kinds of shortcuts were worthy of only a sneer. But to Yueyi, it was a miracle.

“Then, let us postpone the plan to exterminate the Sword Clan. Let’s see what this Immortal King has up his sleeve to release sword dao from the faction,” the Sun Sovereign King pronounced.

Chapter 1622: Re-cultivation

If Lu Yun couldn’t find a way to release sword dao, the Luminaries would recommence their plan to eliminate the Sword Clan to take their dao.

The source of sword dao in the Hongmeng—Sword Ingress Island—had capitulated to the Luminaries. The Sword Clan, however, was different. Even if they surrendered, they would still be the masters of sword dao in the fourth realm.

.....

When Lu Yun returned to the Star Sect, he was stunned by what he saw.

He’d been gone for less than a month, but an incredible amount of change had taken place in the sect since then. The mountains that’d belonged to the various Nihil World Sovereigns had been razed and replaced with structures that looked like schools.

Indeed, the schools of Earth.

In one short month, the Star Sect had opened its doors to the entire World Plane and recruited all of its denizens as disciples. The new disciples learned formula dao and all sorts of combat arts.

“So they’re using this kind of method to propagate formula dao... No wonder my command of it advanced so rapidly in one month. I could even use the Tome of Life and Death to awaken the Quiet Sovereign King’s will.” Lu Yun found it too incredible to believe.

The various Nihil World Sovereigns on Divine Alchemist Mountain were still deep in the midst of discussions and experimentation. Some had started refining various formula dao treasures—creating not supplemental dao products, but formula dao.

Though formula dao wasn't mainstream in the fourth realm yet, it had at least taken root in the World Star.

These days, there were more than Star Sect Nihil World Sovereigns on the mountain. Some Nihil World Sovereigns close to the sect—the Cicada Sovereign of Abstruse Plane, for example—were also present. Qing Yu had returned to her real appearance and left Lu Yun's abode, taking up residence in the center of Divine Alchemist Mountain and explaining the mysteries of formula dao to these august personages.

"Didn't I want to propagate formula dao in the fourth realm so it could establish itself here? Meh..." Lu Yun grumbled.

In the world of immortals, Qing Yu had been the Dao Sovereign and made the immortal dao whole. She'd also completed formula dao so it would be a great dao unto itself. Lu Yun had always been the sort to start things off and then forget about it. But even if he'd seen things through, Qing Yu still would've done a better job than him. She was far more conscientious in these sorts of matters.

"Little Yu is the Dao Sovereign, alright!" A smile crossed Lu Yun's face.

"What kind of great dao is this?" The Quiet Sovereign King manifested out of his sword and stared tongue-tied at the World Star. "This great dao encompasses all of supplemental dao, like an ocean incorporating a hundred rivers. This, this dao..."

"This was the formula dao I used to derive your existence. It enabled me to use other methods to awaken your will." Lu Yun glanced at him. "It will require the use of formula dao to release sword dao from your clan."

The sovereign king's eyes brightened. "I've trained in supplemental dao as well—I was once number four on the Profound Pagoda Hero Ranking. I think I can contribute to the discussions and help them derive this 'formula dao'."

"That would be wonderful! Ah Zhi is too lazy and exerts herself only to the point of opening a door of sequence to protect Divine Alchemist Mountain. If a sequence expert like you joins them, that will surely promote double the results with half the effort." Lu Yun brightened to hear the sovereign king's words and quickly took out a few karmic fruits to fashion a body for him.

"Ah Zhi? The Star Sovereign King?" The Quiet Sovereign King shuddered when he heard Lu Yun mention Ah Zhi's name. He glanced at the sleepy-eyed figure at the summit. "The Star Sovereign King practices the Dream Sutra and must cultivate in her dreams at every second, so as to capture that fleeting hint of destiny."

"If my guess is correct, her primary body should be in a dream. To her, dreams are reality."

"You seem to hold her in high regard?" Lu Yun tilted his head at the sovereign king.

"The Star Sovereign King was one of the greatest geniuses of our time. Though she accessed sequence after me, she was many, many times stronger than me. A sequence expert enlightened me and helped me recover my memories and sense of self, but Ah Zhi didn't have the benefit of help. She recovered her memories of sequence by herself."

“She... recovered her memories by... herself?” Lu Yun’s eyes widened. His memories had been tampered with as well—anyone with the potential to access sequence had their memories and knowledge altered by a certain existence. He’d recovered the true version of events thanks to the Tome of Life and Death, but Ah Zhi had done it on her own?

Just how brilliant was she?

It wasn’t just any regular genius who could manage the feat. Jian Zhuxian, greatest of Ingress Sword Island, had jumbled memories and a despondent morale. He didn’t have any confidence in himself to access sequence.

“That’s right, the Star Sovereign King was the strongest genius of our time, so many people wanted to kill her,” the sovereign king nodded. “The Luminaries also asked her to join them. Though she’d yet to access sequence, she rejected them and relied only on her own strength. She was strong enough to open the door on her own and kill her would-be murderers in her dreams. With that complete, she then founded the Star Sect.”

No wonder Fuxi and the others look to her... Lu Yun nodded. If his guess was correct, Ah Zhi’s primary body was somewhere in the world of immortals instead of cultivating in a dream.

When the Quiet Sovereign King saw that the young man remained quiet, he leapt to Divine Alchemist Mountain with Quiet by his side and sat down to listen to Qing Yu. His primary purpose for this trip was to find a way to release sword dao and protect the Sword Clan.

“Where’s my mind wandered off to now?” Lu Yun cocked his head. The Tome of Life and Death would always project the cultivation level of a Nihil World Sovereign. He couldn’t take another step forward until he manifested all six hellfires at the same time.

At the same time, his true cultivation level needed to continuously improve so that his strength could do the same. He could now understand the existence of sequence, but he didn’t have a hope of accessing it.

“Do I need to give up the strength of a Nihil World Sovereign and re-cultivate?” Lu Yun sat down cross-legged and mused over his path while he watched Qing Yu at the mountain’s peak.

“That’s right, you need to relinquish the strength of a Nihil World Sovereign and retrain your true self.” A fragrant wind burrowed into Lu Yun’s nose before a soft body hugged him from behind.

Qing Yu had stopped lecturing at some point so she could greet her beloved.

“When your true cultivation level reaches World Manifest, you’ll have the right to stand on your own two feet in the fourth realm. You can give up the strength of a Nihil World Sovereign then and cultivate from scratch,” she whispered in his ear.

“Alright,” Lu Yun nodded. “Formula dao has taken root in the World Star and is slowly growing. I need to create a small offshoot of formula dao and connect it to the formula dao of the World Star.”

“Eh? Little Yu, your strength has reached the fourth realm...” He suddenly brightened.

“Ah Zhi... took me into a dream and borrowed the dream’s strength to enhance my cultivation,” Qing Yu chuckled ruefully. “And then, she gave me the seat of the sect leader and went off to take a nap.”

Lu Yun:

Chapter 1623: The Dao of Dao

“So you’re the sect leader now?” Lu Yun’s jaw dropped.

“Yep,” Qing Yu nodded.

“And you’re the one behind... all of the schools here?” Lu Yun pressed on.

“Yep,” Qing Yu nodded again. “It’s just the Dao Academy of the world of immortals. Didn’t you create that by copying the schools of the ancestral planet?”

“I feel like I’ve been leaving all of my work for others to do. I should’ve been the one to oversee this,” Lu Yun chuckled ruefully.

“You don’t need to worry about these trivial tasks,” Qing Yu shook her head. “You’re the true master of both the immortal dao and formula dao. I’m just running some errands for you, you have more important things to accomplish.”

Lu Yun continued chuckling wryly; he knew that his beloved was consoling him. He’d run off to the chaos before concluding matters in the world of immortals. Thankfully, his exploits there had been met with a good end. The final chaos tribulation had been a great shuffle that resulted in the six sacred palaces forming a sacred land of immortal dao.

When he arrived in the Hongmeng, he ultimately left untouched the remaining plans that the potentates and fourth realm powerhouses had crafted and ran off to the fourth realm. Qing Yu, the little fox, the Yama Kings, and their subordinates had had to deal with the aftermath.

He’d always been the one to start things off and then... leave it to someone else to finish.

But when viewed from another perspective, if his personal touch was needed for everything and anything, what was the point of him creating factions and recruiting subordinates? Were they to just simply develop and prosper in peace beneath his protection? What difference was there between them and pigs in a pen then?

Lu Yun could create a great dao, but perfecting it wasn’t one of his strengths.

Unbidden, he pulled Qing Yu into his embrace.

“Formula dao seems to have developed many branches,” Lu Yun remarked with surprise when he noted the changes.

“The collective wisdom of the fourth realm is far greater than that of the world of immortals and chaos,” Qing Yu smiled. “Particularly that of the Nihil World Sovereigns. The countless inner worlds they’ve fashioned also give birth to an endless quantity of living beings. Their combined intelligence is the equivalent of infinite worlds of immortals.

“Formula dao has improved in a qualitative way during the short month you were gone. If it wasn’t immortal dao already assimilating its roots, I’d suspect that it would also absorb immortal dao if it keeps developing in this vein.”

Formula dao had been divided into three major categories during Lu Yun's absence—formula calculation, formula refinement, and formula cultivation.

Formula calculation was as its name indicated, the use of basic formulas to derive and further theorize everything about existence.

Formula refinement was the summation of calculation, the practical application of theory in actual refinement.

Formula cultivation was the process of cultivating formula dao—cultivating soul force. Soul force was now sifted into even finer categories. Apart from units of measurement and levels, grandmaster was divided into more exact levels.

After Lu Yun's return, a fourth branch of formula destiny and a fifth of formula truth also appeared. Formula destiny was employed in the pursuit of determining fate, so that one could avoid danger and seek out opportunity. It had come to be after Qing Yu added certain ideals from the Dragonquake Scripture to formula dao.

Formula truth studied dao and truth—the trajectory of all things in existence, order, and law. The five elements and six orders of the highest degree, for instance, the laws of many worlds, and the rules by which the sun set and moon rose were all within the purview of this branch.

Within formula dao, these last two were the most complicated.

Lu Yun rubbed his forehead as he listened to Qing Yu's explanations.

"No wonder I feel like my thoughts are a bit of a mess, but this is a good thing," he chuckled ruefully.

"It's all a result of the 'mathematics' from the ancestral planet that you showed everyone." Qing Yu pinched his cheeks. "There are so many different schools of thought in mathematics—geometry, algebra, functions... Even theory can be divided into infinite types, to say nothing of calculation methods.

"Formula dao is similar to mathematics. If there comes a day when there are just as many divisions in formula dao as there is in math, then I think that will be when formula dao truly reaches great perfection. Everything in the known, unknown expanses, and even vaster worlds will be easily analyzed and derived by formula dao."

Lu Yun felt a headache set in the more passionate Qing Yu became.

"Alright, alright, I'll stop," Qing Yu giggled when the lost expression deepened in her dao partner's eyes. "You don't need to learn any of this, just sit back and enjoy the fruits of their labor."

Lu Yun bobbed his head rapidly. Not only did he not need to learn all this, but he didn't need to join the complicated discussions around them either.

"Do you know that many people's dao right now is wrong?" Qing Yu's face suddenly took on an inscrutable cast and her voice adopted an ethereal tone.

"Many people follow the development trends of existence to return to their origins, thereby attempting to derive the origin of dao," she murmured. "Once they find it, they set foot on it without looking back.

Take the dao of fire as an example, many use the various flames in existence to derive the primitive dao of fire. They travel down this path without hesitation, but don't you think this is an erroneous decision?"

Lu Yun frowned slightly.

"It's similar to how formula dao is now. Formula dao was once simply used to analyze combat arts. That's the easiest way to pick it up. The heart of fire dao is fire, burning fire. That is its primitive and most simple meaning.

"The truly complicated is what the primitive dao gives rise to. The entanglement of countless great daos giving rise to everything we see in existence... that is what we should be seeking. It's similar to how the most primitive formula dao gave rise to formula calculation, formula refinement, formula cultivation, formula destiny, formula truth.

"The most simple of formula dao is the basic formulas—those are the core formulas of the great dao. Formula dao illustrates these in the easiest manner and then combines the basic formulas in a variety of ways, employing an array of calculations to determine more advanced formulas. That is truth.

"Using the most primitive dao as the origin point and attempting to walk forward from it makes the journey increasingly difficult. Hence, what one achieves is also increasingly brilliant."

"I see." An explosion went off in Lu Yun's thoughts as he took another step forward and reached World Manifest. "The primitive great dao is actually very complicated. In math, one plus one is a simple equation, so simple that it's basic common knowledge. But if one wishes to prove it? It's still a very tough task."

He ruffled Qing Yu's hair with a smile. "I know what you mean—that whenever we can understand and derive the truth behind the most basic orders and formulas, that is when we will stand at the apex of reincarnation and end these infinite loops."

"Infinite loops, huh? If it wasn't for Mo Yi telling me about those, I would still be in the dark." Qing Yu suddenly glared ferociously at Lu Yun.

He smiled sheepishly and ducked his head.

Chapter 1624: The Sword Clan's Peril

When it came to formula dao, Lu Yun didn't need to know too much about it. He just needed to be able to use its results, such as utilizing advanced formulas to derive and theorize other matters.

The course of its development, however, would give him great inspiration.

After he listened to Qing Yu's speech, he ascended from the true nihil level and broke through to World Manifest. At this level, he could seal off the Nihil World Sovereign cultivation that the Tome of Life and Death had given him and display his true strength when traveling throughout the fourth realm.

What the treasure had given him wouldn't change, but neither would it help him access sequence. That final step was up to him alone.

The fourth realm and Hongmeng differed from the world of immortals in that there was no singular great dao that dominated everything. In these two realms, a plethora of daos flourished side by side and intersected with each other.

In the world of immortals, the appearance of formula dao had immediately been absorbed by immortal dao. Beings only needed to cultivate immortal dao to see formula dao. Initiation into immortal dao was to access the methods of all.

The fourth realm was vastly different. If the newly born formula dao wished to take root, it needed to be taught and voluntarily cultivated by various living beings. Only then would it start to develop into a true dao in this vast realm.

.....

In front of the Argent Snow tablet in Soul Dominion.

“There you are, junior brother Feng!” A familiar voice called out to Lu Yun as soon as the latter appeared at this location.

“So it’s senior brother Sword Thirteen. ...have you been waiting here for me?” Lu Yun asked blankly since it seemed like the chubby youngster had been waiting for a long time. It’d been a hundred years since he last entered Soul Dominion, a significant period of time to Lu Yun.

“Hahaha, nope.” Sword Thirteen was his usual stout, chubby self. His jowls quivered every time he spoke. “This is a happy coincidence, I just arrived myself.”

“You seem to be in good spirits, have something joyous happened?” Lu Yun raised his brow with a smile.

“Heh, it’s not a secret. The Luminaries wanted to destroy the Sword Clan to take our sword dao, but our crisis has been defused.” Sword Thirteen brimmed with joy. The past one hundred years had been a period of turmoil and anguish. He woke up every day deathly afraid that the Luminaries would suddenly barge in and destroy the clan. Though Sword Thirteen possessed enough strength to kill a Nihil World Sovereign, he was a Void World King at the end of the day and couldn’t decisively change the situation.

Even Sword First, the strongest of the clan, was on tenterhooks whenever he dealt with the Luminaries.

“Defused?” Lu Yun raised a brow. The Quiet Sovereign King had gone to Divine Alchemist Mountain to cultivate formula dao and determine how best to release sword dao from his clan.

Since the Sword Clan’s crisis was over, that meant he’d successfully resolved the problem. Sword dao should be percolating through the fourth realm even as they spoke.

The daos and legacies in the Hongmeng came from the original Hongmeng; the Sword Clan’s sword dao was the first of its kind to be native to the fourth realm in the new epoch. A complete sword dao encompassing the fourth realm and Hongmeng was possible only when the two were combined.

Sword dao was different from formula dao in that formula dao was a brand new dao—there were no traces of it in the fourth realm. Hints of the former, however, were already present in the Boundless Planes. Now that it was no longer concentrated on the Sword Clan, it could diffuse through the realm.

There were those who previously wanted to cultivate sword dao in the fourth realm, but it'd never been possible. The root cause of that was due to sword dao being held in the hands of the Sword Clan.

Now that it'd been freed and extended throughout the realm, the clan's possibility of extinction was thus dissolved.

"Well, actually, the Sword Clan's crisis isn't over." Lu Yun shook his head at seeing Sword Thirteen's unbridled delight.

"Huh?" The youngster's eyebrows raised and he looked at Lu Yun with confusion.

"You Sword Clan members are the physical manifestations of connate divine swords, aren't you? It will be difficult for new members to come into existence after you've lost sword dao," Lu Yun explained.

Sword Thirteen blinked and his expression slowly froze.

Though the Sword Clan had evolved to the point of becoming true life forms with all of life's associated qualities, they found it very difficult to naturally extend their bloodlines. Most of them were born from the Divine Sword Mountain in the center of clan grounds—the mountain was the convergence of sword dao.

As opposed to saying that the Sword Clan were physical manifestations of connate swords, it would be more accurate to say that they were born from sword dao. With the dispersal of sword dao from the mountain, there would be no more new members in the future.

"And," Lu Yun continued. "I've heard a bit about matters between the Luminaries and the Sword Clan. Apparently, they don't want sword dao for themselves, but for sword dao to be freed of the clan's confines and blossom in the Boundless Planes..."

"Yes, that's what their emissary said." Sword Thirteen nodded absentmindedly, still wrapped up in the matter of new clan members.

"Once sword dao is popular throughout the planes, everyone will be able to cultivate it, whether they are Nihil World Sovereigns or sequence experts." Lu Yun paused. "One needs a sword in order to cultivate sword dao..."

"Wait, speak no more!" The sweat of cold fear beaded and slid down Sword Thirteen's face; he was ghastly pale. Though this was just a soul force replica, it fully displayed his current emotions.

One needed a sword in order to cultivate sword dao.

The Sword Clan were physical manifestations of connate swords from sword dao itself. They possessed no sequence experts, so they would be hunted down if others wanted to practice sword dao!

Since sword dao was yet to flourish, no weapons refiner could make swords. All of the swords in the realm were with the Sword Clan. Although they were still a preeminent faction of the realm, their spines were curved after prolonged suppression from the Luminaries. Once sword dao rose in full, they would become prey.

"Do you have a way to resolve this, junior brother Feng?" Sword Thirteen took a deep breath and looked ardently at Lu Yun.

“Why do you think sword dao is no longer exclusive to the Sword Clan?” Lu Yun smiled. “The Quiet Sovereign King is still alive and he’s among the Star Sect. The only way forward for the Sword Clan is to join the Star Sect.”

“What?!” Sword Thirteen went slack jawed. The Quiet Sovereign King... wasn’t dead? Rumors had run rampant a while ago that the Quiet Sovereign King had died and was wielded by a Nihil World Sovereign. Could it be...

“All senior brother needs to do is to make a visit to see if this is true or not,” Lu Yun chuckled. “Alright, I’m going in to train now.”

He strode forward into Argent Snow’s trial domain.

Sword Thirteen’s expression flickered rapidly as he stared in the direction where Lu Yun had disappeared in. He suddenly whirled around and returned to the Hall of Soul Dominion, leaving the locale.

Chapter 1625: The Three Thousandth Person

“Oh? You’re finally here again.” The spirit of Argent Snow looked at Lu Yun with surprise when the young man manifested at the end of the first domain.

“You still remember me?” Lu Yun looked back, startled.

“My memories aren’t scrambled, why wouldn’t I remember you?” The spirit looked wordlessly at the candidate. “Well? Have you grasped the ultimate peak of the first domain yet?” he yawned lazily.

“Just about.” Lu Yun nodded and took out Argent Snow.

The surroundings changed around them—a wandering stone path appeared beneath Lu Yun’s feet and snowflakes drifted down. The autumn breeze, falling leaves, and a lonesome goose formed the picture of late autumn.

Autumn was yet to depart, but snow had arrived.

First snowfall.

This was the ultimate peak of the first domain that Lu Yun had grasped—a painting of autumn snowfall.

The spirit’s expression froze when faced with the scroll. Snow in autumn was indeed the first snowfall. He melted away in the picture and turned to ash.

Lu Yun stepped forward with Argent Snow in hand, advancing into the twenty-eighth floor, twenty-ninth, thirtieth... He blew through all of them with unstoppable momentum and didn’t experience any resistance whatsoever.

“How... how is this possible, he...” The spirit appeared again and again, but died each time before he had a chance to make a move. He didn’t even know what killed him.

The autumn breeze? Falling leaves? Drifting snow? Or the winding stone path beneath Lu Yun’s feet?

“I actually have another Diagram of Autumn Snowfall, but it should’ve been one of Glorious Snowdrift. It appeared before the one of snow in autumn—quite an interesting aberration.” Lu Yun stopped at the eighty-first level. He’d merely opened the scroll and easily reached this level without expending any effort at all.

The spirit stood in front of him with a rueful chuckle. “I see now... You can make it to the three hundredth and sixty-fifth level with this painting alone.”

“Are there only three hundred and sixty-five levels?” Lu Yun blinked.

“Three hundred and sixty-five is the number of a great cycle. Soul Dominion exists as the foundation of the known and unknown, and the perfection of truth and logic,” the spirit responded. “Thus, three hundred and sixty-five levels is the most perfect number for the first domain. Any further will place you in the Domain of Glorious Snowdrift.”

Peak First Snowfall was naturally Glorious Snowdrift. Having understood the implications, Lu Yun continued forward with Argent Snow.

“How many have ever reached that level of great perfection?” he asked as he strolled along. The path beneath his feet stretched to the end of said perfection.

“Jian Xue reached it, once.” [1] Melancholy crept in when the spirit spoke of the founder of the Snowsword School. He still blamed himself for the mighty personage’s demise.

“Apart from him, everyone in the top ten of the Argent Snow Hero Ranking all reached that level,” he continued after taking a moment to collect himself. “But they fought their way through each level. You’re the first one to pave a road and walk through them.”

By now, Lu Yun stood at the three hundred and sixty-fifth level and strode right through it.

.....

At the same time, within Soul Dominion.

“Look! Something’s happening to the Argent Snow Hero Ranking!”

“The three thousandth name... Mo Wusheng of the Luminaries has been replaced by... Feng Feifan of the Star Sect!”

“Wasn’t Feng Feifan the one who failed the first level more than two hundred times? It’s only been a hundred years, but he’s suddenly made it onto the ranking!”

It’d been eons since the order of names had changed on the ranking. Even if it was a lowly three thousandth place, their placement was unshakeable. The names would not change unless their owner died.

But now, the three thousandth person had suddenly vanished—replaced by some guy who’d failed his first try more than two hundred times.

One hundred years wasn’t a long time; it easily passed by in the blink of an eye. But during this eye blink, that complete and utter failure had made it onto the Hero Ranking!

“What’s going on? Is Mo Wusheng dead?” Speculation ran rampant.

“I’m still alive.” A young man in gray robes lifted his head and glared murderously at the name that’d replaced his own.

Feng Feifan.

“Feng Feifan of the Star Sect. The Great Brahma died because of him, and now he’s taken my ranking.” He glowered at the name.

The Hero Ranking wasn’t just a compilation of names. After all this time, it’d become a source of faith and honor. It represented their status in the fourth realm.

“Though he’s replaced me, that doesn’t mean I’m out of options,” Mo Wusheng murmured. “If I challenge him and win, I’ll take my placement back.”

The order of the Hero Ranking was a reflection of the rules of Soul Dominion. Many were those who didn’t accept the outcome. If one rejected the results, one could issue a challenge. That was also part of the Soul Dominion rules.

There were no Nihil World Sovereigns, Void World Kings, or World Manifests here. Everyone was a World Manifest supplemental grandmaster. Their soul force was similar and their replicas equally strong.

The only difference was in their understanding and usage of soul weapons. Battle was the only barometer with which to measure everyone by.

.....

“You’ll be in the Domain of Glorious Snowdrift if you take another step forward. Do you want to continue?” the spirit asked Lu Yun with a smile.

“No... I’m not confident of making it to the end of that domain for the moment.” Lu Yun shook his head.

The spirit:

“What if you fight your way through?” he asked instead.

“I can, but that’s such a waste of time. It’s faster just to walk through.” Lu Yun first nodded, then shook his head.

The spirit raked him with a heartfelt eye roll and huffed, “Someone has issued an official challenge to you.”

“Oh?” Lu Yun blinked. “A challenge?”

“Yes, and to you,” nodded the spirit. “Because you made it to the end of the first domain in one fell swoop, the rules of Soul Dominion have determined you to be the three thousandth name on the Hero Ranking. The previous candidate, Mo Wusheng, has issued a challenge to regain his placement.

“You can refuse, but that is the equivalent of conceding defeat in the Soul Dominion,” the spirit cackled softly.

“Though I’ve walked to the end of the first domain, I still don’t have the strength to be placed on the Argent Snow ranking... You did this on purpose!” Lu Yun looked angrily at the smiling spirit.

“Indeed, I did.” The spirit broke out in open laughter. “I hit you two hundred and thirty times, so you smacked me on the head with a stick. You killed me three hundred some times just now, so I should have some revenge, no?”

“Go on, answer the challenge. Ah, one more thing, the twenty-four thousand names on the Hero Ranking can enter Soul Dominion at any time through their soul weapon. This holds true anywhere in the fourth realm and Hongmeng. You do not need to make use of a Hall of Soul Dominion.

“If you wish, you can build your own.”

Lu Yun brightened at the revelation.

1. Jian is the character for sword, Xue is the character for snow. 雪

Chapter 1626: Ultimate Peak, Snow in June

If it wasn’t for the spirit’s last words, Lu Yun wouldn’t be the slightest bit interested in the Hero Rankings of the Soul Dominion. Whether one was strong or weak was best known by oneself.

But if one was on the Hero Ranking, then Halls of Soul Dominion were no longer needed to access further training. Building one’s own hall was even possible! That greatly tempted Lu Yun.

He wanted to build a massive hall in the world of immortals!

Though the world of immortals didn’t train soul force or practice soul weapons, Soul Dominion was a marvelous place of many uses. It would be exceedingly beneficial for immortals to come here and bask in the cultivation levels of the fourth realm.

.....

“Alright, I’ll be off then.” Lu Yun left the Argent Snow domain.

“Just how strong is that kid? It seems a bit untoward to only put him at three thousand,” the spirit mumbled. “He’s only the seventh person ever to be strong enough to join the ranking when progressing through the first domain.”

.....

“You’re Feng Feifan?” Mo Wusheng coolly demanded of the young man who presented himself—he didn’t seem that old.

“Yes,” Lu Yun nodded. “You’re from the Luminaries?”

“Hmph!” Mo Wusheng snorted and released brilliant splendor from his Argent Snow.

The two meeting in combat immediately raised a disturbance in Soul Dominion. Some candidates who weren’t currently in the trial domain dropped everything and entered to watch the fight.

Though there'd been fights over the Hero Rankings before, few were those that were like the one today. Previous battles had been those not on the ranking versus those who had a placement. Those were heavily one-sided and over almost as soon as they began.

But this time, Feng Feifan had unexpectedly shot to the top and knocked Mo Wusheng off his pedestal. This meant their level of strength was similar and it'd be highly beneficial to observe their fight, especially those who also trained with Argent Snow.

.....

The rules of Soul Dominion challenges were particularly grave. A large square platform had been raised in front of the Argent Snow tablet. Each side running three hundred meters wide, Lu Yun and Mo Wusheng were lifted into the air.

"It really is junior brother Feng!" Star Sect members rushed to the scene when they received word. Jaws dropped at the sight of Lu Yun on the platform and they gaped at the last name on the Argent Snow Hero Ranking. They had no idea what to make of the situation.

Xing Wuliang stared dumbly at Lu Yun, at a complete loss for words.

"That's martial uncle Feng! He was a Nihil World Sovereign a long time ago!" Xing Lingkong corrected.

"Don't even think of making excuses for yourself," Xing Lan sneered. "Who in the sect doesn't know that junior brother Feng's Nihil World Sovereign strength is borrowed from elsewhere? His true cultivation level is only in the World Manifest level, so it's not an embarrassment to lose to him."

Xing Lingkong fell sheepishly silent.

"Junior brother Feifan's brought back the entire Argent Snow heritage to the sect, so how has your training gone?" Xing Lan asked.

"I..." Xing Lingkong flushed and didn't dare answer. Though he'd made it past the eighty-first level of the third domain, he hadn't made it to the ultimate peak yet. Failure to reach great perfection meant that he didn't have the right to be listed on the ranking.

"It's a good thing that junior brother made it into the ranking, or the younger generation of the Star Sect would be done for. I'm the only one in the sect beneath Nihil World Sovereign who's on the Hero Rankings! It wasn't my intention to take your position as head disciple that day, but I had to do so because you fell far short of expectations!" Xing Lan barely resisted the urge to slap Xing Lingkong as she lectured him.

"You're in for a beating when we get back!" She turned her gaze back to the platform while Xing Lingkong grimaced ruefully.

.....

Lu Yun looked at Mo Wusheng—his opponent was a young man roughly seventeen years old. Dressed in gray linen robes, he seemed incredibly ordinary. No one would take a second glance at him if he was thrown into a crowd.

Yet, such a typical young man as he was someone on the Argent Snow Hero Ranking.

Mo Wusheng's Argent Snow sparkled with silver radiance, but snowflakes didn't answer his call. Instead, a faint silver halo enveloped everything.

"What?!" Lu Yun gasped and spun on his heel, throwing himself to the side.

Whoosh.

Whoosh.

Whoosh.

Silver threads flashed out of the halo as soon as he dodged, twisting and stabbing at Lu Yun. Though he evaded their first attack, they doggedly kept up the chase.

"An aberration! This is Argent Snow's mutated attack! So he's grasped this level too!" Lu Yun flashed in and out of sight. He raised up his Argent Snow, fending off the silver threads. They were Mo Wusheng's attack from his soul weapon—mutated snowflakes from Argent Snow!

The gossamer threads were as sharp as sword qi, nearly invisible in the silver radiance. Even Lu Yun found it difficult to track their movement and he was almost pierced through multiple times.

"I need to counterattack or the threads will just continue to grow in number. I won't stand a chance once the area is completely sealed off!" Lu Yun brandished the short stick in his hand and deployed his power of Argent Snow. The aberration that he'd comprehended was the same as this world of silver light!

When advancing through the levels of the first domain, he'd used the regular Diagram of Autumn Snowfall. He was now going to try the other one that he'd formed.

A picture scroll slowly unfurled over the platform. Blue skies, white clouds, willow trees welcoming the breeze. Lush branches waved in the air as a hundred types of flowers bloomed in unison, competing with each other in beauty and fragrance.

It was a scene of early summer in June.

The clouds in the cerulean sky suddenly shifted into dense thunderclouds. Snowflakes as large as a seat cushion made of grass flurried through the air, interweaving with the sight of early summer.

Craaaaaaack.

The glorious snowfall severed the silver threads like it was also tangible sword qi.

"What is this??" Mo Wusheng hastily backed away with furious swishes of his Argent Snow. The silver radiance seemed to be like ink while his soul weapon the brush—he was trying to draw a landscape of the ultimate domain.

Unfortunately for him, Lu Yun's scroll was already fully unfurled. A deep sense of suffering, a grievous wrong done with no hope of vengeance bloomed from his vivid vista. There seemed to be a woman weeping with immeasurable sorrow in the sublime panorama.

A blizzard in June, a drought of three years, blood splattering across white cloth... [1]

Lu Yun combined many Earth stories and allusions into his Argent Snow. A heavy snowfall in June was both the first snowfall and a glorious snowdrift.

The ultimate peak of the aberration—a blizzard in June.

Caught in the ultimate expression of the first domain, Mo Wusheng's movements slowed as he was faced with an overwhelming despair, wretchedness, and misery. Tears formed at the corner of his eyes.

Pfff!

His body disintegrated into ash amidst the blizzard.

"An attack of emotion? Emotions can kill?" His voice slowly faded away among the drifting snowflakes.

Chapter 1627: The Fourth Domain

"Argent Snow can be used like that?" The crowd found Mo Wusheng's mysterious death quite incredible. They had all felt the despair and bitterness from the picture of snowfall in June, but what they saw wasn't Lu Yun's attack killing Mo Wusheng, but the latter dying of a broken heart and dissolving in the scroll.

Such was the power of emotions. When they were magnified to the utmost, whether great joy or sorrow, they could harm and kill.

Mo Wusheng had died to his own emotions. If this hadn't been the Soul Dominion in which all life and death was fake, he would be well and truly dead.

Lu Yun slowly rolled up his scroll and frowned slightly, deep in thought. He wasn't contemplating the strange silver light from his opponent—that was Mo Wusheng's dao. As mighty as it was, it had nothing to do with Lu Yun. He was poring over his own dao—his Diagram of June Snowfall.

"This June Snowfall is less than my Diagram of Autumn Snowfall. If I'd used that picture, I would've crushed Mo Wusheng without needing to do anything myself." He finally had a clear picture of his strength.

Deploying June Snowfall could also propel him to the ultimate peak of the second domain, but it wouldn't do so in as simple a manner as its predecessor.

"The power of emotions? Well, that was indeed the strength of emotions, but not quite. Mo Wusheng was courting death, so it wasn't me who killed him. His will is weak, so weak that he was affected by the emotions in my scroll and defeated himself.

"If I run into someone with a strong will, the vengeful sorrows of June Snowfall won't have an effect on them. The entire scroll would be useless.

"So no, I can't be driving my opponents to death, I need to be killing them. What good would my Diagram of June Snowfall be for then? A suicide trap?"

The platform beneath his feet disassembled with a boom as he thought over the uses of his weapon. Mo Wusheng had failed his challenge, so he was still the three thousandth name on the Argent Snow Hero Ranking.

“Eh?” Lu Yun suddenly realized that his soul force had formed a connection with the Argent Snow tablet in front of him. It wasn’t very strong, but it would allow his primary body to build a bridge with Soul Dominion—a bridge that would permit passage for soul force.

Not only that, he further discovered that he seemed to have... the ability to refine Argent Snow?

I can refine Argent Snow?!

Lu Yun didn’t know how the eight soul weapons had come to be. No one had ever spoken of this mystery. A piece of information had appeared in his mind after he refined it—that there were nine million sticks of Argent Snow in all of the known and unknown expanses.

But now he discovered that he could collect the rules emanating from the Argent Snow tablet and refine his own??

“Yes, as strong as the soul weapon is, it’s not indestructible. There are nine million sticks of it, but some have been destroyed after all these years. Thus, there needs to be someone who can make more!”

He took a brief stock of his strength. If Mo Wusheng represented the three thousandth person on the ranking, then Lu Yun was able to kill one hundred of him at once if he used his full strength!

When he’d said before that he wasn’t strong enough to be listed on the Hero Ranking, that’d been a reflection of what he’d exhibited before he passed through the first domain.

After he received Jian Zhuxian’s heritage and further speculated upon it, the ultimate domain that he’d cultivated encompassed more than the Diagrams of Autumn Snowfall and June Snowfall. His true killing move could absolutely help him to great perfection of the Domain of Eventide Snow.

But he’d still need to fight his way through, not walk through it. Anything that wasn’t a casual stroll through the trials was a failure in his eyes, which was why he didn’t try it.

“Being able to refine Argent Snow means that the rules in Soul Dominion approve of me. Tsk tsk tsk, Jian Zhuxian and Sword First can’t refine Argent Snow, but I can. So in the spirit’s eyes, I’m stronger than either of them,” Lu Yun basked in pride for a bit.

“You’re amazing, junior brother Feifan!” Xing Wuliang, Xing Lingkong, and Xing Lan chorused in unison.

“What did you call me?” Lu Yun looked sideways at Xing Wuliang. “I’ll give you another chance.”

“...senior... brother... Feifan...” Xing Wuliang said haltingly.

“That’s more like it. I’m stronger than both you and Xing Lingkong, so you two need to call me senior brother. That’s the rules of the sect, after all.” Lu Yun wagged his finger at them.

Xing Wuliang didn’t know whether to laugh or cry, whereas Xing Lingkong was ready to burst into tears.

He’d been the vaunted head disciple of the sect, then suffered a defeat at Xing Lan’s hands, then watched inner disciple Feng Feifan vault onto the Hero Ranking. With the latter crushing previously-three-thousandth Mo Wusheng, it would seem that Xing Lingkong’s status had decreased once more.

I’m third in the sect now, aren’t I?

In addition, Xing Wuliang had gotten ahold of some ridiculous luck and made it to the twenty-eighth level of Lunar Pivot. In other words, he was now studying the ultimate peak of the first domain.

It wouldn't be long before Xing Lingkong became the fourth greatest in the sect.

"Thank goodness that junior brother Feifan... ahem, senior brother... got the complete heritage of Argent Snow from Ingress Sword Island. It's not impossible for me to reach the ultimate peak as well," Xing Lingkong kept comforting himself.

Feng Feifan was renowned throughout Soul Dominion after this fight—not only for making it onto the Hero Ranking, but for how he used his soul weapon. Many were awestruck after watching a recorded image of that fight.

So soul weapons could also be used in this manner!

Not only could the weapons absorb one's great dao, but they could also make use of other ways to attack and combine those as part of the weapon's ultimate peak.

Instead of departing the training grounds after defending his ranking, Lu Yun spent a long time training in Soul Dominion. He repeatedly fought the spirit of Argent Snow and honed his ultimate domain again and again. Three years later, he finally completed the first three domains of Argent Snow. He'd reached great perfection in Domain of Glorious Snowdrift and Eventide Snow!

However the fourth domain remained out of reach.

It didn't exist like the other three; it required personal contemplation from the weapon's wielder and the pioneering of a new path.

Lu Yun was now one hundred and one on the Hero Ranking. Put in another fashion, everyone in the top one hundred had found entry to the fourth domain.

"The fourth domain of the soul weapons isn't just a reflection of your great dao and all of existence—you need to combine it with reality to complete it," the spirit chuckled when he saw Lu Yun's pinched face. "You won't find any new conclusions if you continue to train here. It's time to go out and hone yourself in the endless world outside."

Lu Yun glanced at the spirit. "I'd thought you were treating me with special attention. To think that you do this for everyone..."

When Xing Lingkong set foot into the ultimate domain and retained his position as the third greatest disciple in the sect, Lu Yun discovered that the spirit treated all candidates like his students. He taught them personally, whether they were Lu Yun or Jian Xue.

"You are an Argent Snow cultivator and so are the others. Of course you must be treated equally. The other seven think the same way, so we can't favor someone more than we do the others," the spirit smiled. "Perhaps living beings have their own selfish desires, but rules are fair because we are a fixed existence."

Chapter 1628: An Invitation From the Luminaries

Lu Yun had improved by leaps and bounds under the spirit's tutelage. All of the Star Sect disciples were the same way. Apart from Lu Yun, the one who progressed the fastest wasn't Xing Lingkong or Xing Wuliang, but Xing Lan.

Xing Lan... the stunning genius who could sit with the Nihil World Sovereigns and discuss formula dao. She'd been ranked number nine hundred and ninety-eight on the Serene Annex Hero Ranking before. Three years later, she was number one hundred and eight—practically the same as Lu Yun.

Serene Annex cultivators, however, were much stronger than Argent Snow cultivators. The top one hundred and seven had all entered the fourth domain. Lu Yun didn't know if Xing Lan's first three domains were on the level of great perfection, but she wasn't far from the fourth.

.....

"The top ten on the Argent Snow ranking have reached great perfection in at least one domain. Perhaps someone's like me and reached it in all three." Lu Yun rubbed his nose. "Though I haven't comprehended the fourth domain yet, I'm still confident of triumphing over those who haven't reached great perfection in the first three."

"Triumph?" snorted the Argent Snow spirit. "You're just a mere World Manifest, who are you triumphing over? The top ten of the Hero Ranking are all Nihil World Sovereigns. In fact, so is all of the top one hundred, apart from Sword Thirteen who's a Void World King. Who do you think you're beating?"

Lu Yun opened his mouth and closed it again. He'd sealed away the cultivation level that the Tome of Life and Death had bestowed upon him. Though it was his, it couldn't access sequence. That would be up to his true cultivation level, not something from the book.

Though increases in his true level would also enhance his strength as a Nihil World Sovereign, that would only put Lu Yun on the same path as other world sovereigns. He would cultivate and cultivate until one day, he'd go poof and truly become nothing.

if a Nihil World Sovereign failed to access sequence and conduct its power into their body, their final end would be to meld into the void. All traces and evidence that they'd ever existed would completely vanish.

Who knew how many Nihil World Sovereigns had consigned themselves to the void since the dawn of the new epoch through their own cultivation? They hadn't known any better.

"Alright, time for you to head out. You can come back in whenever you grasp the fourth domain. Don't try to challenge the top one hundred or provoke Sword Thirteen. If you do, I can guarantee you'll find life very difficult in the Boundless Planes," the spirit issued a solemn reminder.

Lu Yun nodded, he knew the truth of this as well. The Argent Snow Hero Ranking not only recorded his Feng Feifan name and background, but also his true cultivation level—minor World Manifest.

That a minor World Manifest was one hundred and one on the Hero Ranking was ludicrous enough. It'd almost incited an uproar across the entire fourth realm. If he dared place in the top one hundred with his current cultivation level, then even sequence experts would make their move.

They would either recruit Lu Yun or... destroy him.

Lu Yun bowed to the spirit of Argent Snow and exited Soul Dominion. After gaining a place on the Hero Ranking, candidates no longer needed to access the realm through a Hall of Soul Dominion.

The current Star Sect abounded with geniuses; it was vastly different compared to the lazy faction from before. Under Qing Yu's command, the rules had been changed so that Nihil World Sovereigns didn't dare be as lackadaisical as they were before. Senior brothers and sisters still beat up their juniors, but a notable difference was the emergence of Nihil World Sovereigns from their residences and becoming the heads of various dao schools. They taught the younger generation with a great deal of effort and care.

Formula dao was now a mainstay of the Star Sect, and some Nihil World Sovereigns on friendly terms with the sect were also its students.

But apart from the Sword Clan, the sect refused admittance to any other sect or clan. Qing Yu's goal was to propagate formula dao through the fourth realm—not to use it to expand the Star Sect.

The Luminaries would march on the sect if it began to expand, but the Star Sect was no match for that faction. Even though the Moon Sovereign King was Lu Yun's martial grand disciple, she'd lived countless eons and her adventures in the Hongmeng were just a small portion of her memories.

While she might acknowledge her martial grandfather, she would never give up her ideals for Lu Yun. The Luminaries would destroy anything that stood in their path.

Lu Yun briefly visited Qing Yu when he returned to the sect and continued not handling any affairs. He changed his appearance again to head into the vast fourth realm by himself. He wasn't a lofty Nihil World Sovereign this time, but a diligent minor World Manifest.

No one noticed his departure from the World Plane. He was just one of many Star Sect disciples going to and fro from the World Plane. They were all armed with formula dao and drifted through the planes like dandelion seeds, seeding the rest of the realm with formula dao. He was one of them now.

"The Star Sect has studied formula dao for a hundred years and now focuses on sharing it with the rest of the realm. This is Little Yu's idea. Customary thinking would see her cement formula dao's roots in the Star Sect before allowing it to spread outward. But that would make the sect a thorn in some people's sides and attract hostility from all sides.

"However, since the sect has only studied it for a hundred years, that makes for shallow foundations. If formula dao does become a major dao that traverses the fourth realm, people will see its tiny origins. As for the Luminaries... Oh hey, speak of the devil." A gray-robed Mo Wusheng had appeared in front of Lu Yun at some point during the latter's mumblings.

"Long time no see, Feng Feifan." Mo Wusheng no longer wished to determine superiority over Feng Feifan. Though he could crush the other with one hand, Feng Feifan was far ahead of him when it came to Argent Snow.

A tongue-tied Lu Yun stared at Mo Wusheng. He could see through the Shapeshifting death art?? He'd identified a disguised Feng Feifan without hesitation!

Ah, no, wait, he didn't see through my death art. It's Yueyi.

The Shapeshifting death art wasn't without its flaws. Though it was from the Tome of Life and Death, Lu Yun's cultivation level was too low. Minor World Manifests couldn't hoodwink sequence experts; Yueyi had seen through him with a glance at the Eastern Cluster.

Nihil World Sovereigns couldn't see through it, but sequence experts could easily pierce through his death art.

"What do you want?" Lu Yun operated the death art again and returned to being Feng Feifan.

"So it is you!" Mo Wusheng jumped with shock. He was a premier Nihil World Sovereign and had been skeptical when the Moon Sovereign King told him this unassuming young man was Feng Feifan. He doubted the world sovereign no longer.

"The Luminaries invite you for a visit!" He recomposed himself and gestured invitingly at Lu Yun.

Chapter 1629: Blank Paper and a Hole

"Oh," Lu Yun nodded. "Okay then, let's go."

"Huh?" Mo Wusheng was tensed for a sudden fight. What did he mean, "let's go"? Feng Feifan was willing to go with him, just like that?

There were more than a few among the Luminaries blamed Lu Yun for the Great Brahma's death. They wanted nothing more than to skin him alive, rip him to pieces, and dice him to minced meat to feed the pigs. General fury only heightened after they learned that he was just a minor World Manifest.

"Are you really going back with me?" Mo Wusheng asked dumbly.

"You're a Nihil World Sovereign and I'm a World Manifest. Is it possible for me to ignore your wishes when you've come in person?" Lu Yun spread out his hands. "Do I have a choice?"

"You can try resisting, you know," Mo Wusheng said solemnly.

"Really?" Lu Yun blinked.

"Really," nodded Mo Wusheng.

"Then I shall. ...I'm not going!" Lu Yun exerted Boundless Step and vanished on the spot.

"Kekekekekeke!! Not going? A pathetic World Manifest dares run away from a Nihil World Sovereign?" Mo Wusheng cackled and chased Lu Yun in the direction he'd disappeared in. "It would be so boring if you just followed me back. Now that you're putting up a fight, I have the perfect excuse to beat you up and then drag you back with me!"

Roaring with laughter, Mo Wusheng threw himself in pursuit. Three days later, he plopped down in the void and stared dully at the dried soybean in his hand.

"Where'd he go? Where is he? Why did Feng Feifan turn into a strange bean? Or is he the physical manifestation of a bean spirit?" Mo Wusheng floundered for answers.

.....

“Psht.” Lu Yun yawned lazily in a corner of the fourth realm—where he’d first bumped into Mo Wusheng three days ago. “I resisted, just like you said I could. Whose fault is it that you can’t catch me?”

“Stop hiding, grand disciple. I know you’re around,” he announced with a lazy look at the void around him.

“Martial grandfather is indeed martial grandfather. I feel that you still have the right to be my martial grandfather even after I’ve recovered my true self.” Draped in moonlight, Yueyi floated up to Lu Yun and dimpled, “Greetings to martial grandfather.”

“Do you really recognize me as your martial grandfather?” Lu Yun could clearly sense Yueyi’s emotions since she wasn’t concealing them. She sincerely meant her use of “martial grandfather”.

“Yes,” she nodded. “I hadn’t wanted to at first, but when I saw that formula dao comes from martial grandfather, my hesitations went away.”

Her words made perfect sense—teachers conveyed dao, taught knowledge, and resolved confusion.

Yueyi would never forget her master Lu Qing as he’d raised her in another life and taught her everything he knew. Such was the gratitude for a lifetime’s worth of nurturing and tutelage, a sentiment that didn’t extend to Lu Yun. Given her status and identity, her karmic relationship with Lu Qing was the limits of her obligations. She didn’t need to acknowledge a martial grandfather.

But with the appearance of formula dao, it showed that Lu Yun was indeed worthy of his placement in the martial hierarchy.

Lu Yun smiled and nodded. “You are correct, I am indeed qualified to be your martial forefather. Do you need me because you have questions about formula dao?”

Yueyi nodded. “However, this is no place to hold a conversation. Come with me to Mount Astronomia.”

She waved her hand and changed the scene around them. Mount Astronomia was the Luminaries headquarters. It was where the sun and moon rose in the known expanses, and where they set.

The intersection of the sun and moon through their orbits marked one day in the known expanses. Three hundred and sixty-five intersections marked a grand cycle—one year.

Lu Yun had never made it to Mount Astronomia at any point in his thirty-three loops. With his visit, he realized that the sun and moon of the fourth realm were the same as the ones in the chaos sea. Or rather, they were a projection of the latter.

The sun and moon of the second realm were projected into the fourth realm to become their sun and moon. Their orbits and intersections reflected the orbits and intersections in the second realm.

At the same time, the sun and moon of the chaos sea were the ones of the original Hongmeng. They followed the rules of the sun and moon from the original Hongmeng and impacted the rest of existence. This had held true since ancient times.

As for Mount Astronomia, it was vastly different from the fertile lands of plentiful dao that Lu Yun had envisioned. The rules here had withered and great dao shrunk away—it was more barren than the Eastern Cluster.

Anyone cultivating here would find progress a hundred times harder than in the outside world.

On one side of the mountain were the known expanses. The other side was an endless darkness—not even the radiance of the celestial bodies penetrated the land. They were the unknown expanses!

Far from being a towering landmass, Mount Astronomia was a little smaller than the Central Hongmeng. It couldn't contain the true bodies of powerful Nihil World Sovereigns.

"Is the mountain suppressing the endless darkness?" Lu Yun frowned.

"Yes, the darkness is the reason for the erosion of order in the known expanses. If it is allowed to expand, order in the known expanses will wither. Once order withers, the known and unknown expanses will no longer exist," Yueyi explained.

"Is it not the unknown expanses?" Lu Yun paused.

"It is, and it isn't." Yueyi frowned ferociously. "The unknown expanses are a very strange place..."

She waved a hand and summoned a blank sheet of paper in front of them. She randomly poked more than twenty holes in it.

"Who knows whether it's the holes or paper that we exist in," she murmured.

"What do you mean?"

"Some places don't have order, so their rules and laws are chaotic beyond measure. They cannot form a great dao, so naturally, there is no life to be found in them. Some places have order, life can exist there. Just like this piece of paper, I don't know if we exist in the paper or in the holes.

"We label places without order as places of darkness. Light cannot spread through them. What is termed as the unknown expanses is segregated from the darkness and cannot be reached by ordinary life forms. Everything about them is unknown, and to us, the darkness is also part of the unknown.

"The darkness that these places release have continuously corroded the order of the known expanses. Our order grows thin because of them." Helplessness tinged Yueyi's emotions. "But I don't know whether we exist in one of the few holes of the paper, or if we are on the paper itself."

She looked at Lu Yun.

"I don't know if our existence is the foundation of all existence, or an accident that should've never come to be."

Chapter 1630: Mount Astronomia

Someone on Yueyi's level counted as one of the strongest existences in the new epoch. She suppressed the darkness from Mount Astronomia, safeguarded order, and held fast to her ideals. In the current age, she was infinitely close to dao.

There was very little in the known expanses that could avoid her all-knowing gaze. Apart from maintaining order and keeping the darkness at bay, she also possessed her own aspirations toward dao.

But when she touched upon the core of the world and began to analyze, to understand it, confusion and doubt of herself and her dao set in.

The stronger one was, the more intensely this happened.

She was now completely uncertain whether she strove so hard for the sake of the truth of this world, or an overlooked hole outside this truth.

.....

“Let me tell you a story,” Lu Yun smiled at her. “But this isn’t the place to talk, take me into the mountain.”

“Will do.” Yueyi nodded and composed herself, silently bringing him into Mount Astronomia.

Being the Luminaries headquarters, there was a large sum of mighty Nihil World Sovereigns in residence. Their sole purpose was to protect the mountain and constantly beat back the darkness.

The Great Brahma’s death had made Lu Yun public enemy number one because in these world sovereigns’ eyes, the Great Brahma’s merits for suppressing the darkness outweighed his crimes. He shouldn’t have been executed, but they couldn’t question the Sun Sovereign King or Bai Hongtian. They could only assign blame to Lu Yun.

Yueyi lived in a humble residence. There was nothing else apart from a seat cushion, a bookcase, and a vanity with a bronze mirror. Despite that, any of these furnishings would incite an instant riot if they appeared in the outside world. These were treasures refined by a sequence expert!

The helpless and lost look had faded from her eyes. Everything was buried back in the depths of her heart.

“What story is martial grandfather going to tell me?” She waved another seat cushion into existence and sat down in front of Lu Yun. She knew that whatever he said would be relevant to the blank sheet of paper and black holes that she’d brought up earlier.

“It’s not really a story, but my life experiences.” Lu Yun sprawled onto his cushion. “Come now, be at ease.”

Yueyi grinned ruefully and imitated his posture.

“I cultivated the mistress’ method of three lives,” Lu Yun began solemnly.

Yueyi nodded and elaborated for him, “The mistress traveled through space and time from the original Hongmeng, not because she was afraid of death, but because she was searching for a way to suppress order. That the original Hongmeng had fallen was fact, there was no point to her remaining further.

“Martial grandfather, you’re not going to tell me that she’s not from the original Hongmeng, are you? That her being from an even more expansive world will encourage me?” Yueyi finished with a chuckle.

Lu Yun shook his head. “I don’t know where she comes from or where she wants to go, but I do know that she died thirty-three times for me.”

“What?” Yueyi’s eyes widened.

“In practicing the method of three lives, I coalesced dao fruit selves of the past, present, and future. My future self went to the end of the future, the time of the great devastation.

“He adapted to the situation and knew that the river of time was available in the past, present, and future. He traveled up the river, following it to the start of time...”

Lu Yun described his encounters of the thirty-three loops and how he’d verified through the Imperial Seal that the so-called thirty-three reincarnation cycles and great devastations were simple repeats of the same cycle.

“Um...” Yueyi rocked back on her heels with shock, not knowing what to say.

“Someone succeeded in suppressing order during those loops, fixing the orders of the vast fourth realm into one place. Unfortunately, the great devastation still arrived,” Lu Yun smiled at her.

Yueyi knew about the great devastation—many powerhouses of the original Hongmeng had foretold it. It would be the end of their time, the end of all order, rules, and laws. Everything would start over from the beginning.

But a repeat of thirty-three loops was a harsh blow to Yueyi’s understanding of the world.

“Thus, is it that important whether we live in the paper or the holes?” Lu Yun rose to his feet. “I don’t care about either of them. I just want to break free of destiny and shake off these endless cycles.”

Destiny!

Everything about existence had been decided beforehand. All things would proceed as predetermined, without end, without rest. Such was destiny.

Ah Zhi had entered the primordial past through her Dream Sutra and seen the fates of all beings. In reality, what she’d seen were traces of those inexhaustible reincarnation cycles. That was the nebulous destiny.

“If you understand, you will understand. if you don’t, it will be up to you whether you lose yourself in the paper and holes or drift sluggishly through reincarnation.” Lu Yun smiled gently at his martial disciple.

“Martial grandfather, did you see me? What about my ending?” After staring off into space for a long time, Yueyi suddenly felt like an enormous burden had been lifted off her shoulders.

She didn’t doubt Lu Yun’s word and also understood why he’d told her this. Whether it was the paper or holes, or the reincarnation that her martial grandfather had endured, none of that should be what she focused on. She should be looking to her own heart.

“You were too big for me to see,” Lu Yun shook his head smilingly. “I could only see people and things that had formed karmic relationships with me. But I believe that no matter what your destiny was before, it’s already changed now.”

In the thirty-three loops, Lu Yun had been preoccupied with fighting the potentates of the Hongmeng and the Curse King’s replica. When did he ever have the chance to travel to the fourth realm and form

karmic ties with Yueyi? Once she'd recovered herself with help from the Dragonquake Scripture, she'd naturally returned to Mount Astronomia and continued to be the Moon Sovereign King.

As for what would happen to the mountain and sovereign king—Lu Yun had no idea. His future self had been so tiny that he hadn't been able to see many things. Such were the restrictions he'd operated within.

"Was there formula dao in the thirty-three loops?" Yueyi asked.

"Yes... but it never reached the fourth realm." Lu Yun understood what she meant. Formula dao had been a small dao in those loops. As marvelous as it was, no fourth realm experts had contributed to its development and Lu Yun had never comprehended basic and advanced formulas...

So that made formula dao another aberration.

"Then I would request martial grandfather to hold classes on the mountain and explain formula dao to those of the Luminaries!" Yueyi bowed the proper gesture of a disciple to a teacher.

"I can do that," Lu Yun smiled. "But I think this isn't the best name for the faction... Perhaps you can change it to Allpeople in the future."

Yueyi blinked; though she didn't understand what he meant, she still nodded.

"Can I meet the Sky Sovereign King?" Lu Yun asked. He'd suddenly thought of the tremendous heavyweight who'd accessed nine levels of sequence.

"The Sky Sovereign King... has become one with the mountain," Yueyi sighed. "If not for that, we would not be able to hold the darkness back."