

## Necropolis 261

### Chapter 261: The Dao Flower Blooms

Lu Yun had regained control over Dusk Province, but in a way that could only be considered treason.

The nine celestial emperors had abdicated, and a new era was coming. No one had expected Lu Yun, who made it a habit of clapping accusations of high crime on others, to commit treason himself a mere year after the Nephrite emperor had taken his leave.

It was a time of great turbulence in the world of immortals, and all eyes were on Dusk Province. Nephrite Court wasn't the only concerned party; many geniuses and immortals from major factions all over the world yet remained in Dusk as well.

The heavenly army of the Nephrite Court marched to the border between Outré and Dusk, posturing threateningly at the rebellious province. North of Dusk Province, the weapon of war set up in the seaside stronghold was aimed at Dusk City, ready to raze it to the ground. However, no one dared make a move without careful consideration. If war were to break out, Nephrite Major would fall into chaos and opportunists would gather to exploit the situation.

"The emperor emeritus personally saved Lu Yun from the emperor of the North Sea, but he commits treason as soon as the throne was handed over. Is that how he repays the old emperor's support?!" The Feng Clan wasted no time in levying dire accusations against Lu Yun.

"He's a textbook example of an ingrate that doesn't know how to write the characters for filial piety! Though he's a Lu, he made use of his official authority to kill his own kin. He's a snake who eats his own kind!"

The Yue, Zhu, and Qing Clans loudly raised their voices in public censure as well.

"We Qings gave our fullest support to Lu Yun before the Dusk tournament, enabling him to become what he is today. But he turned on us and sent his servant to blockade our paradise entrance!"

"And that bastard Qing Han! Born with an accursed spirit root that'd bring calamity to his family, he would've been smothered in the crib in any other clan, but we fostered him to adulthood! Not only does he not express gratitude, the ungrateful brat allies with Lu Yun against us! Even animals are more loyal than him!"

"Lu Yun is a serial murderer who slaughtered many dao immortals outside Xiankan. He has undermined the foundations of the world itself! This is a sin he cannot make amends for!"

"Lu Yun is colluding with the fiends of the Skandha Range to plague the world..."

In a few short days, many major clans in Nephrite Major voiced their grievances of the young governor. The province stank of fear, and cultivators and mortals alike were eager to flee. Then, the Jin Clan stoked the fires with an even more serious accusation.

"That so-called inheritance tower is nothing but a hoax! There was such a tower in the Mauve Peace Paradise of our clan, but Lu Yun detonated it and killed many of our clansmen!"

"He deserves death a thousand times over for committing homicide with such a lure!"

The entire world erupted into an uproar as the last accusation made many major factions turn on Lu Yun. So he could not only manipulate the tower, but also detonate it?

Horror traveled down their spines with pinpricks of frost. Although an inheritance tower presented many opportunities to enhance one's strength, it was an awful feeling to have someone else control your fate.

Meanwhile, Dusk City remained peaceful and Lu Yun didn't respond at all. It was as if he couldn't hear any of the clamor from the outside world. The rumors could be heard all over the cities, streets, and alleyways of Dusk Province. He wasn't oblivious to the mutterings, but didn't deem them worthy of a response.

He also didn't stop cultivators and immortals from entering the province. Foreigners still entered the province via ways other than the transportation formation. Dusk bordered Outré Province, and thus the latter was a way into Dusk.

At the same time, there were still reasonable people in the world.

"Didn't Mauve Peace Paradise belong to the Lu Clan in the first place? The tower was theirs as well, wasn't it?"

"Apparently the Jin ancestor attacked the Lu patriarch and almost killed him to take over the paradise."

"Then it's only natural that Lu Yun wouldn't let his enemies benefit from the tower after he returned."

"How foolish of the Jin Clan to use a tower that Lu Yun left behind!"

The criticism quite enraged the Jin Clan. Not long thereafter, their troops marched into Outré Province as well, in preparation of an invasion of Dusk Province. The number of soldiers gathered at the border totaled ten million, and an enormous stronghold was under construction. Patently, the Nephrite court was setting up another weapon of war.

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"It's time." It was the seventh day since Lu Yun's return.

Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian smiled at Lu Yun's words. The Dao Flower was ready to bloom fully.

"Do we need to wait a little longer?" Qing Han knew Lu Yun wanted to set people up.

"There's no need." The young man shook his head. "The Dao Flower is too important to do anything else with it. The sooner it blooms, the sooner cultivators may return to the rightful dao."

The current path of cultivation was missing a realm. All previously-ascended immortals would have a difficult future ahead of them, due to their poor foundation. Many geniuses who would've been talented enough to ascend to dao immortal realm would have their cultivation stopped short, unable to become one with the world and pluck their dao fruit.

Such was the result of not experiencing the void realm.

"Let us begin." A smile tugged at Qing Han's lips.

“Alright!” Excitement rippled through Wu Tulong and the others. Finally, the Dao Flower would bloom in the outside world. They formed a triangle around Qing Han, while Lu Yun stood near them as their guardian.

Hum.

An enormous beam of light shot into the sky, and the entire world seemed to shift.

The time had come.

In every world, be it night or day, cultivators of all races opened their eyes and looked up at the sky; even those who were awoken from their slumber did the same. A snow-white flower was blooming overhead in the skies. Heavenly melodies wreathed around it, and the great dao of the world resonated with it.

“What’s that?” murmured many cultivators.

“It’s a Dao Flower! The fabled Dao Flower said to embody the great dao has blossomed! What’s going on?” Ancient beings from ancient worlds shot to their feet.

Being the center of the blooming flower, the world of immortals felt the ripples most keenly.

“The path of cultivation is severed in the middle. Once the flower blooms, the path will be whole again!” Cultivators and immortals alike looked on in shock.

“The void realm! That’s the name of the missing realm!”

“How... how is that possible?!” Many were skeptical, but the flower had imprinted an undeniable truth into everyone’s mind. Numerous cultivators sensed the insertion of a realm after the spirit realm.

“Wait, there’s more coming from the flower!”

“Lu Shenhui of the Lu Clan from Nephrite Major discovered the missing realm. He risked his life to guide Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, Mo Qitian, Lu Yun, and Dongfang Hao into a land of great danger to repair the path of cultivation, resurrecting the Dao Flower.”

“Lu Shenhui and Dongfang Hao sacrificed themselves for the great dao.”

“Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian worked together to repair the path and restore the void realm, while Lu Yun protected them with his life...”

“The Jin Clan attacked with a weapon of war to stop the Dao Flower from blooming....”

“The Feng Clan attempted to destroy the flower with ten thousand formations....”

“It’s coming from Dusk Province!”

“The Dao Flower is blooming in Dusk Province!!” a few people shouted in disbelief.

**Chapter 262: Where Emperors Rest**

As the Dao Flower bloomed, it unleashed a tremendous wave of ideology and engraved it into the minds of all cultivators. Only when the names of Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, Mo Qitian, and Lu Yun appeared did people comprehend with shock that the flower was blooming in Dusk Province!

The development floored the Feng and Jin Clans, and all of the other factions that had attacked Lu Yun and his companions.

“Impossible, impossible!” Jin Shikong shrieked in unhinged tones, rejecting what he was learning with every fiber of his being. “They’re demons that crawled out from the Blood Sea! They can’t be the escort of the Dao Flower....”

He’d been the one to give the order to blast Lu Yun.

Likewise, the Jin and Feng Clans fell into despair. It was too serious a crime to have attacked the Dao Flower and obstructed the repair of the path of cultivation! After today, the two clans would become public enemies in the world of immortals and many of the other worlds.

By now, the Dao Flower had bloomed and shared its knowledge with everyone. Peak nascent realm cultivators, one step away from ascending to immortality, let out discreet sighs of relief.

The qi, core, and spirit realms trained a cultivator to temper their own body, while the void realm trained them to understand heaven and earth. Cultivators were to become one with the heavenly dao, to perceive, unravel, and return to the void until they reached an understanding and integrated with the world. Then they would bound to immortality.

That realm had a direct impact on one’s progression through the dao immortal realm. With the experience of the void realm, plucking a dao fruit at peak peerless immortal wouldn’t be such a dangerous task. Even if one were to fail, they’d be able to easily retreat, unscathed by the repercussions of the world.

“Back in Xiankan, Lu Yun asked the mysterious expert to not allow Wanfeng to ascend to immortality. Is this the reason why?” Someone recalled what the young man had said back then.

Do not ascend to immortality!

“Did he already know then that the path of cultivation was incomplete?”

“No wonder he and the other youth sovereigns departed Xiankan and missed even the Nephrite Celestial Emperor’s coronation!”

“The coronation was nothing compared to repairing the path of cultivation!”

“They were missing for a year and three months. Did they repair the path during that period of time?”

“Lu Shenhou of the Lu Clan and youth sovereign Dongfang Hao sacrificed themselves for the restoration of the path....” The two names evoked many mournful sighs. Meanwhile, the Mo Clan, Immortal Martial School, and Zi Clan jubilated that their geniuses had contributed to such a great feat. Such glory to their factions and to their ancestors! It would even further improve their standing in the world.

“Hao’er sacrificed himself for the world. He is also a hero, and all living beings in the world of immortals must never forget about him!”

“Lu Shenhou was the first to discover that the path of cultivation was severed! I pity the Lu Clan, who’ve been imprisoned by the Nephrite Court! Has the court really been taken over by demons that stand against the immortal dao?”

“Oh dear, that poor Qing Clan branded Qing Han a traitor and kicked him out. I wonder what they’re thinking now.” Many lamented the loss of Lu Shenhou and Dongfang Hao, and even more laughed at the Qing Clan.

“Why didn’t they previously announce it to the world if they already knew the truth about the path of cultivation?!”

At the same time, there were questioning voices as well, mostly from those who had ascended to immortality while Qing Han and the others were repairing the path of cultivation, or from those whose youths had made the ascension and thus missed out on the void realm.

“Would you believe it if someone told you before this that the path of cultivation was missing a realm?”

“This concerns everyone in the entire world! Qing Han and the others were attacked by the Jin and Feng Clan as soon as they returned with the Dao Flower. If the news had gotten out beforehand, the path would’ve never been successfully restored!”

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The Dao Flower was still blooming, and the path of cultivation it carried slowly integrated into the great heavenly dao.

“They can’t succeed... can’t let them succeed....” muttered Jin Shikong as he stared at the blooming flower on the border of Outré Province. He would be persona non grata in the entire world once the flower finished blooming, and the Jin Clan would never recover from these circumstances.

“Soldiers!” he yelled crazily. “Activate the weapon of war and blow that flower to pieces!”

That only resulted in cold, chilling stares being directed at him from those around him.

“The Dao Flower will benefit all cultivators and even the future of the world of immortals, milord,” his second in command remarked coldly. “Are you sure you should destroy it?”

Even some of the Feng immortals were shooting murderous gazes at Jin Shikong.

“We’re done for....” Jin Shikong fell into deep despair. He knew his clan would be made a scapegoat to quell the world’s fury.

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The flower’s blooming was a prolonged process. Some time was required for both the flower’s strength and the cultivation path it contained to integrate back into the world.

“Well now, those little fellows have done something big... they’ve repaired the path of cultivation.” Wayfarer looked up at the flower with empty eyes. “However, restoring the path will put them under attack by that tribe. I wonder if they’ll be able to survive it.

“In my gradually recovering memories, I recall that more than a hundred genius cultivators once set foot on the path and attempted to repair it. However, all of them died at the hands of that tribe....”

Within the ancient tomb at the center of Dusk Province.

The celestial emperor from the Blood Sea that bore a heavenly mandate had been devoured by the Dusk restriction and become its thrall.

“Good, good, good!” The enormous zombie that was the Dusk restriction threw its head back and roared, impure tears trickling down from its eyes. “The Dao Flower is restored and the path of cultivation is mended,” it growled with an edge of insanity. “What a great feat! What great merit! Anyone who dares make a move against those little fellows in this resting place for emperors will meet their end at my hands, even if it’s the last of me!”

Mo Yi looked at the sky with a faint smile.

“So the path of cultivation was incomplete,” Mo Yi muttered with her head cocked. “Shall I sever my cultivation again and retread the path to immortality?”

The giant zombie shuddered. “That girl is more unsettling than Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi...”

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Deep within the Endless Desert, three glowing cocoons swung on the top of a behemoth tree.

“My dearest brother, when are you gonna break these damn things?” Zhao Shengguang whined. “I’m in a rush to go back to my throne!”

“Shut up! You wanna be the Nephrite Celestial Emperor?” Qing Buyi huffed, trapped within another cocoon. “Don’t even think about it. Once Mo Yi presents that thing as a tribute to the Dusk restriction at the resting place for emperors, that bastard Zhao Changkong will take the throne back.”

Zhao Shengguang sniffed, wanting to cry.

“Zhao Changkong is also an incompetent bastard, but he at least looks the part of a celestial emperor. If you’re put in charge of Nephrite Major, it’ll quickly become the greatest warehouse in the world.”

Zhao Shengguang was a thorough good-for-nothing who frequented brothels, and even owned a good number of them in Xiankan. Silent all this while, Chen Xiao focused his efforts on fighting the cocoon trapping him.

“Little Han has restored the path of cultivation and was in charge of the overall framework at that!” Qing Buyi suddenly widened his eyes with great pleasure. “Hahaha! That’s wonderful! He’s gonna be a dao sovereign after restoring the path! We’ll all latch onto his thigh in the future.”

“We have to make sure he survives, first,” Chen Xiao said coolly. “Without the fruit of the Ancient Tree of Life, his poison will soon kill the Fusang Purewood and turn it into a tree of great poison, which means he’ll die! So stop fooling around and break these damn cocoons, we need to get the tree’s fruit!”

Qing Buyi shuddered.

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Dusk Province.

Lu Yun rose to his feet and took flight. Four blood-stained white paths slowly emerged from four directions, unfurling at the feet of Qing Han and the other three youth sovereigns.

Four black-furred monsters wielding giant axes appeared on each of the paths. At the same time, terrifying tribulation clouds loomed overhead and black lightning crackled violently within.

### **Chapter 263: Diabolical Tribulation of World Refinement**

“That’s not heavenly lightning!” Lu Yun frowned.

In the sky, black lightning crackled, thick with the intent of death. A sense of decay and corruption enveloped all of Dusk Province and despair weighed heavily on everyone’s chest.

There was a goal within that lightning to destroy everything within reach, and all living creatures shuddered in response.

This was the final obstacle before the Dao Flower could fully bloom and the restored path of cultivation be integrated back into the world. If they succeeded, every cultivator would be able to ascend to the void realm, the last segment of the cultivation path.

If they failed, all of their efforts would go up in literal smoke.

“Good, fantastic!” Jin Shikong crowed with laughter. “Strike! Strike down Lu Yun and those four!” He’d lost all resemblance of sanity at this point.

Once the tribulation destroyed the Dao Flower and the hairy monsters took Qing Han and the others, it would be as if the void realm had never existed at all. Everything would go back to the way it was. Then, it wouldn’t matter at all what the Jin Clan had done, or that Jin Shikong had attacked Lu Yun with a weapon of war.

At this moment, no one even spared him a glance. The Feng Clan, too, was waffling between whether they wanted the flower to bloom or be destroyed and didn’t dare show their true feelings, regardless. Their dilemma arose from the fact that Feng Wuhui had attacked the Dao Flower and almost crushed it with ten thousand formations. They were spared public hostility simply because they were one of the top clans in the world, and possessed powerful immortals among their ranks.

“Prepare the weapon of war!” shouted a dao immortal from the Nephrite Court. They were on the border of Outré Province, so he didn’t have to suppress his cultivation.

Hope sparked in Jin Shikong’s eyes, but was quickly snuffed out when the immortal ordered, “Aim for the tribulation clouds and scatter them!”

“Understood!” several heavenly soldiers roared in response.

Rumble.

A formation took shape, forming a battle image to supply the weapon with power.

Bam!

An enormous beam of light pierced the sky and slammed into the patch of clouds over Dusk City, clearing the sky for a moment.

“That did it!” cheered many cultivators.

“That’s not gonna work,” Lu Yun muttered, hovering in the air and looking at the gloomy sky. As he expected, more black clouds gathered immediately after, renewing the atmosphere of decay and corruption.

The crowd looked on in dismay, and the dao immortal who’d ordered the attack froze.

Crackle!

A strand of black lightning broke out of the thunderclouds and struck at the Dao Flower. Fear radiated from the four blood-stained paths when the bolt snaked to the ground. The void realm monsters greatly feared the tribulation and its power of decay.

Lu Yun lifted his hand and activated the Thunder Palmstrike, attempting to absorb the lightning, but scowled when he realized that he couldn’t.

“Then I’ll take it head on!”

Hum.

With a wave of his hand, he had Feinie set up a defensive formation to shield the Dao Flower and his companions underneath it.

Bam!

The black lightning smashed into the formation with great ferocity and shattered it, despite it being personally set up by Feinie. A second, third, and even more formations emerged overhead, but formations that had previously endured even shots from a weapon of war cracked like eggshells in face of the tribulation.

It took only an instant for a strand of black lightning to pierce through multiple layers of formations and crash into the flower.

Bam!

Their local patch of sky trembled as an ugly scar snaked through the flower. Blood seeped out from the mouths of Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian, evidence of their great injuries.

Then came the second lightning strike.

“Open!” Lu Yun shot into the air and shielded the Dao Flower with his own body, manifesting an enormous sword shadow and slashing at the black lightning with the energy of the Sugato Sword.

At the same time, he flicked out a soybean and summoned a golden-armored soldier. Wielding a Weaponry Talisman, the soldier stood guard above the Dao Flower.



“The Diabolical Tribulation of World Refinement!!” the soldier screamed when he saw the dark tribulation clouds. “This is a tribulation of the great dao and all living souls! Oh, my master, how did you attract such a malicious tribulation?!”

Scared witless, the soldier trembled like a leaf as he peered at the sky in disbelief.

“The Diabolical Tribulation of World Refinement?” Lu Yun frowned.

Bam!

Black lightning shattered Lu Yun’s sword aura and smote the bean soldier, reducing him to ashes with an agonized cry. But to his surprise, the bolt of black lightning disappeared as well.

“Hmm?” Lu Yun perked up. The soldier’s body was destroyed, but his soul had returned to where it came from and the lightning strike had scattered! Is sacrificing a life enough to offset a lightning strike?

His heart raced with the possibilities. Under the principles of the Tome of Life and Death, the bean soldiers could be considered dead after their bodies were destroyed.

“It can’t be that simple.” Lu Yun frowned. The name alone suggested that this particular tribulation wouldn’t disperse after simply feeding it a life.

Is it something to do with the summoned bean soldiers? Lu Yun’s eyes lit up. Another bolt of black lightning announced its presence with a roar. He flicked out a soybean without hesitation.

Hum!

After a flash of golden light, the bean morphed into a golden-armored warrior.

“The Diabolical Formation... why is it me again?!” The bean soldier only had time for a sorrowful yelp before he was disintegrated by black lightning again.

Lu Yun’s mind was firmly fixed on the soldier, his consciousness further strengthened by the Tome of Life and Death. An almost indiscernible pulse of power unleashed from the soldier at the moment of its death and was destroyed by the lightning. It was the mysterious power that had protected the soldier’s soul as it returned to its origin.

Is that the reason why the bean soldier can ensure mutual destruction with the lightning? Lu Yun perked up. As soon as the next bolt came, he cast another soybean.

“Another one?!” the same soldier whined. Lu Yun had apparently summoned the same spirit again.

Hum.

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“Heavens, why is it me again....”

Bam!

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Bam!

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“Why is it always me suffering...!” The noble soldier was ready to burst into snivelling tears.

Bam!

The last of the lightning destroyed the bean soldier and returned him to his dimension. That was the thirty-sixth bolt. After that, the tribulation clouds slowly dispersed.

#### **Chapter 264: Weapon of Dao**

Other than the first of the thirty-six black lightning strikes, the rest had all been blocked by the same unfortunate bean soldier, summoned thirty-five times.

With the tribulation over, the sky cleared and countless living souls rejoiced to still be living. The Dao Flower burst into brilliant splendor, slowly healing the scar on it left by the first strike.

Lu Yun’s expression remained tight as he looked at the four white paths. Four hairy monsters with glinting greataxes stalked toward his four friends. With the tribulation resolved, they were free to move against those who would restore the path of cultivation. They didn’t immediately launch an attack, but instead waited for the moment the flower finished blooming.

Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian were currently one with the Dao Flower, so the four monsters wouldn’t be their match in this state. They had to wait for the humans to return to themselves after the flower bloomed. That would be when the humans would be at their most vulnerable. The flower’s tribulation was over, and the trial for its bearers had arrived.

Lu Yun stood on guard with Sugato Sword raised, warily eyeing the new enemies. He suddenly suddenly cast a soybean with his right hand, which morphed into a soldier in golden armor after a flash of light.

Hum.

“Gods above and demons below, mercy, I beg, mercy!” wailed the bean soldier as he latched onto Lu Yun’s leg and hugged it tightly. Evidently, he’d summoned the same spirit again.

“Enough, the tribulation is over.” Lu Yun kicked him away.

With a shudder, the soldier looked up and found the sky clear of any tribulation clouds. He scrambled to his feet and wore a visage of nonchalance, but a quiver of fear remained in his eyes. Patently, being struck down thirty-four times in a row had been quite traumatizing.

“Do you know them?” Lu Yun pointed at the four monsters on the blood-stained paths. Since the bean soldier had recognized the tribulation before, he might know about the monsters as well.

Lu Yun had summoned bean soldiers to fight against the monsters when Qing Han and the others first restored the path of cultivation. All thirty-six soldiers had been slaughtered as easily as one would slice through a block of tofu.

“They....” Fear crept up on the soldier as he gazed at the four figures. “They should be gold colored,” he blurted out. “Why are they black?!”

“Gold? Black?” Lu Yun frowned. “What exactly are they?”

Bam!

Just as the soldier opened his mouth to answer, his body abruptly exploded and his soul returned from whence it came.

“Can it not be spoken of?” Lu Yun rose higher into the sky and stopped at the intersection of the four white paths, waiting for the approaching monsters. To the others, the monsters were nothing but illusions. Visible, but untouchable. Even if Mo Yi were to come back, she wouldn’t be able to do anything but watch.

Lu Yun was the guardian the Dao Flower had chosen. He alone could defend Qing Han and the others against the oncoming onslaught of violence. A tremendous power brooded at the end of the paths. If Lu Yun dared use the power of the corpse puppet, the lurking terror would immediately rush through the paths and destroy everything. Whatever it was, it’d noticed that Lu Yun had used the power of a celestial emperor to kill the hairy monster last time.

Finally, the Dao Flower had completely bloomed and been assimilated into the world. Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian slowly separated from it.

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

Murderous howls accompanied by ancient intent rushed out of the white path. The four hairy monsters grew quickly in size and expanded into giants reaching three hundred meters tall, their axes scaling with their bodies.

“What manner of monster is that...” All eyes were on the four giants, on the images projected by the Dao Flower to the rest of the world and realms beyond. Everyone could see what was happening in Dusk Province and were unsettlingly quelled by the monsters, immortals included. What terrible creatures they were!

They ignored Qing Han and the others and rushed Lu Yun.

“Die!” One of the hairy monsters swung as it let loose with a battle cry, a black light sparkling through the air in a mysterious trajectory that terminated at Lu Yun.

“This isn’t the spiritual world. They’re in the real world this time!” Lu Yun took in a deep breath and pushed the Sugato Sword to its limit, shoving its sword intent outward to fill the void with an ocean of sword energy.

Rumble!

The axe hit the ocean squarely, but this time, Lu Yun’s sword aura was sturdier than before and actually blocked the tremendous swing. Every strand of sword energy in the ocean shifted along the mysterious trajectory. Although he hadn’t yet mastered the greatest simplicity of dao and removed all other

meaning behind his movement, it was enough for the eight million strands of sword energy to collectively block the great dao attack.

“Kill!!!” The other three monsters roared at the same time, their axes whistling through the air.

“Hahaha, perfect timing. I’ll use you four to improve my sword technique!”

Rumble!

Waters of the sword ocean churned turbulently as an enormous cerulean dragon soared into the air. It seemed slow and clumsy, but it still managed to block the concerted attacks of the three monsters. However, blood trickled down from Lu Yun’s mouth from the tremendous backlash.

Within hell, countless recovery pills burned and supplied replenishing qi through the Gates of the Abyss. Following the trajectory of the dao took too great a toll on him, so he’d arranged beforehand for Yuying to refine pills throughout this encounter to help him recover.

“Die!” the first monster growled and menaced forward to take another swing.

“Hahaha, I don’t think I will!” Lu Yun threw his head back with laughter.

Bam!

A giant kun fish broke the surface of the sword ocean and morphed into a great peng, meeting the coming axe head on.

Bam!

The great peng shattered, dealing another harsh blow to Lu Yun. He flew backward from the collision and smashed into a giant mountain.

The hairy monster staggered back half a step, its attack stopped short.

“Kill him!” it commanded with a growl, sending the other three lunging at Lu Yun.

“You have to get through me first before touching the Dusk governor!” An august immortal suddenly rushed out of the Dusk City with an upraised sword that blazed with blinding sword energy.

“The governor risks his life to defend the Dao Flower and the path of cultivation. As immortals, how can we just stand by and do nothing!?”

More than a hundred figures took flight to attack the four monsters, but what happened next took everyone aback. All their attacks passed through the monsters, finding no purchase. It was as if the monsters were illusions that didn’t even exist!

“What’s going on?!” yelled one of the august immortals. “Why is this happening?!”

Shockwaves from Lu Yun’s battle with the hairy monsters rippled powerfully through Dusk City. If it weren’t for Feinie’s defensive formations, the newly-built city would’ve been destroyed. And yet, the attacks from the hundred immortals didn’t even touch the monsters.

Thud!

An errant axe swing cut the immortal in half.

“How dare false immortals attack us? Die!”

Shifting their attention to the immortals, the hairy monsters raised their axes high. However, a slight tremor in the air preceded a pair of giant eyes slowly opening in the sky. The eyes gazed down coldly at the four interlopers

Hum.

In an instant, the hundred some immortals were teleported somewhere else.

“It’s the Dusk restriction!”

“Why is it here? Is it here to protect the Dao Flower?”

“It just saved more than a hundred immortals...” The restriction’s emergence elicited a clamor of surprise and incomprehension. It was known for taking lives, but here it was, saving people instead.

“Are you going to move against us, you old undead thing?!” roared one of the hairy monsters, pointing its axe at the sky. It was speaking in an ancient language, but its meaning was clear.

“Grrr!” Four blood-stained paths trembled with agitation as something big slowly awakened.

“Don’t intervene,” Lu Yun yelled as he rushed out of the mountain. “I’ll take care of them!”

The giant eyes darted around in a gesture that resembled a nod, then turned gold.

Bam!

The eyes exploded as three characters flashed through the sky—golden immortals prohibited!

“I’ve burned the power of the restriction to bring out the weapon of dao buried within Violetgrave,” the Dusk restriction echoed in Lu Yun’s head. “That is the most I can do for you.”

Something heavy weighted down his left hand—a black greataxe. Its design was archaic and ornate, with strange patterns etched into the pitch-black weapon, turning the air around it the same dark color.

It was the axe Lu Yun had picked up after killing the hairy monster back in the tomb. He thought it’d been left behind in the spiritual world, but it’d actually been buried in Violetgrave instead.

The weapon of dao!

That was what the Dusk restriction called it.

“How dare a mortal gnat like you touch a dao weapon?! Die!!” Enraged by the axe Lu Yun wielded, the four hairy monsters rushed at him with reckless abandon.

“Dao weapon?” Lu Yun inhaled deeply and swung the axe. Its dull light seemed crude and devoid of spirit, but it followed a perfect trajectory. The greatest truth of dao was pure simplicity!

## **Chapter 265: The Bloody Truth**

This time, Lu Yun made a perfect swing embodying the greatest simplicity of dao!

It came across as unassuming and powerless, as crude as a forester chopping wood. If that were the case, however, then everything in the world would be his firewood!

All of his internal energy was focused on the axe, leaving him drained and exhausted. He was expending energy far too quickly for the recovery pills burning in hell to replenish.

Bam!

A blow from the enormous, clumsy black axe flung the four hairy monsters away despite their three-hundred-meter tall bodies. Lu Yun sagged weakly on the ground as well.

“The ultimate simplicity of dao originates from the dao weapon, rather than being a realm the hairy monsters have reached!” Lu Yun stared at the black axe in his hand, his chest heaving violently. It’d taken all the pills he had in hell, and a hundred breaths, for him to recover fully.

“My strength is only enough for a single swing!” He rose into the air with the greataxe. “Once I ascend to the void realm and become one with the world, I’ll be able to tap into the endless supply of energy from the land and make these swings one after another!”

The four hairy monsters were void realm cultivators, which was why they could wield the dao weapons without resting.

“I thought you’d reached the peak of ultimate dao and became unrivaled among your peers, but you’re just relying on the weapons!” A scoff tugged at Lu Yun’s lips.

To find simplicity in dao was a terrifyingly tremendous height to reach. Returning complicated combat arts and techniques to their purest origins and following the original trajectory of the dao would allow one to strike down anything in the world. Lu Yun couldn’t reach that height yet, even with the help of the Tome of Life and Death. It would be mind blowing if the hairy monsters could do that.

Howling, the four monsters brutally came at Lu Yun with their axes.

Hum.

Violetgrave manifested and shielded Lu Yun with a tidal wave of sword energy, like the stars guarding the moon.

Clang!

A piercing sword hum rang throughout the vicinity. This time, he seized the initiative rather than waiting for them to approach. Vast Dragon Seaturner and Peng of Kun slashed at two of the hairy monsters from tricky angles.

Lu Yun had attacked with the dao weapon before, so he knew how to disrupt the simplicity of ultimate dao. Although the four monsters were void realm cultivators, they possessed a grave weakness: they could only attack with their axes!

“Roooooaar!” Growling, one of the hairy monsters swung its axe awkwardly to meet the cerulean dragon. However, Lu Yun had sent it in such an unorthodox manner that the monster had to change the way it swung its axe, thus disrupting that marvelous trajectory.

Bam!

Another enormous monster hurtled backward, black blood splattering everywhere. Meanwhile, the first monster didn't face the cerulean dragon head-on, but twisted its body to dodge the slash instead. However, the sword energy still left an ugly wound on its body.

"Stop!"

Lu Yun ignored the other monsters and targeted the one that'd been thrown off its feet. It was severely injured, with a large gash running from its shoulder to its lower abdomen, almost bisected by Lu Yun's attack. Lu Yun slashed at its right arm—the hand holding a black greataxe—with Violetgrave.

"No!!" The other three monsters panicked. Lu Yun had already gotten one dao weapon, he mustn't get his hand on another!

"Stop him!" they spoke in a clunky language as they sprang at Lu Yun.

"And here I thought you were actually strong. You're nothing but trash that relies on your weapons." Lu Yun cut through the monster's right arm with a single slash before the other three could reach him.

Thud!

Another dao weapon fell into his hand. Sword energy flared into the air and formed a sparkling stream of stars, cutting the monster into pieces.

"We need to leave!" The other three monsters immediately retreated toward the four blood-stained paths.

"Stop them!" Qing Han suddenly yelled, "if you let them go, cultivators will have to face them when ascending to the void realm! You must kill them, Lu Yun, and destroy the four bloodied paths!" He was too weak to move at the moment. All of his strength had been drained by the Dao Flower. "Without destroying the paths, there will be more hairy monsters like them!"

"Got it!" Qing Han's words prompted Lu Yun to act and he quickly rushed after the three monsters in a flash of light.

The assembled crowd shuddered when they heard Qing Han. If Lu Yun didn't kill the monsters and destroy the paths, all of them would have to face those terrible monsters themselves when they ascended to the void realm. They'd all seen what the creatures were capable of; one of them had killed an immortal with an offhanded swing!

It was only a true immortal, but to regular cultivators, true immortals were superiors they could never rival. Since the monsters could kill immortals, cultivators wouldn't stand a chance against them upon setting foot in the void realm!

"The path of cultivation was severed, and those monsters appeared when it was restored. Did past celestial emperors and peak dao immortals face similar monsters when they attempted to ascend to that fabled realm?" The question suddenly came to everyone.

It'd been a hundred thousand years since the ancient war of immortals. Since then, no immortals or divines from this world or any other had ascended beyond dao immortal realm. All celestial emperors who attempted the breakthrough died a terrible death, with no exception.

Qing Han's words had revealed an ugly, bloody truth. The celestial emperors had been killed by hairy monsters that were more powerful than these ones!

"If Lu Yun fails to kill them, the path of cultivation will remain severed," someone muttered. "Worse, we won't be able to even become immortals...."

"No, we just can't enter the void realm. We can still skip it and become immortals that way."

"Hopefully he'll succeed in killing the monsters and shattering those paths!"

.....

"Kill!" Lu Yun growled as he made three three sword strokes.

Vast Dragon Seaturner!

Peng of Kun!

Starstream Stroke!

Three enormous sword shadows simultaneously reached the three monsters with the goal of causing certain death.

"Roaaaar!!" The long-haired monsters snarled and whirled around, swinging their weapons to meet Lu Yun's three slashes. With the trajectory of the ultimate dao disrupted, they could only rely on their own strength.

Quickly covered in open wounds and dyed crimson with blood, they would've died from the sally if it weren't for their weapons protecting them.

"Again!!" Lu Yun thoroughly let loose and unleashed both Violetgrave and the Sugato Sword. A giant pagoda soared into the sky and exploded with hundreds of millions of strands of sword energy, enveloping all of Dusk City in an ocean of sword qi.

"Down!!" He shifted targets to the four paths, instead of the three monsters. As long as the paths remained, there'd be more of them. Thus, higher priority should be assigned to the paths!

Bam!

Vast Dragon Seaturner, Peng of Kun, and Starstream Stroke slammed into the bloodied paths, severing the monsters' escape routes.

Great rumbles rang through the world. Lu Yun's chest heaved violently as blood streaked down his chin, injured by the recoil from the three paths. They trembled uncontrollably and began to crack.

The three monsters visibly despaired. Paths dyed red by the blood of generations of geniuses of all worlds were falling apart.



“Break!!” growled Lu Yun as he sent out three more sword shadows with a brilliant flare from Violetgrave and the Sugato Sword.

“Grrrraw!!” The three monsters lost their minds and attacked Lu Yun’s strokes with reckless abandon.

The paths were supreme treasures that even celestial emperors would have trouble destroying. However, as the guardian of the Dao Flower, Lu Yun and his attacks were imbued with its power.

That was enough to destroy the paths.

“Die!!” Lu Yun’s eyes widened and blazed with hellfire; the Tome of Life and Death bursting into a black haze as well. Wreathed in a cacophony of wails from vicious ghosts and the pained cries of immortals and gods, layers of chilling wind whipped up around him. Both were then suppressed by the multicolored glow radiating from the six paths of his nascent spirit. They, too, circulated madly in his Purple Manor.

“Hell....” The three hairy monsters stared at Lu Yun’s nascent spirit with deep despair. “Hell has been restored....”

Boom!

Imbued with the power of the Dao Flower and hellfire, three sword shadows rammed into the three blood-stained paths. The earth shook and skies trembled; it seemed the very world would deteriorate!

All three paths shattered and vanished into thin air, and it seemed like some sort of road to this world was severed. The three hairy monsters disintegrated as well.

“Lu Yun!!” Qing Han shouted. “There’s another path!”

Lu Yun spun around to face the fourth white path. Something at the end of the path was chanting an ancient litany to retrieve it. It blurred, and the portal leading to this dimension began closing.

“Gahhhh!” Lu Yun slashed out another stroke.

Bam!

In his exhaustion, the slash only managed to shake the path. The Sugato Sword and Violetgrave clattered to the ground. Lu Yun looked on with angry frustration, but he was bleeding out of every pore and all his meridians and bones cracked. He couldn’t move a muscle; there was nothing more he could do.

The white path blurred and gradually vanished, and wretchedness settled heavily on everyone’s heart. They’d failed. It had all been for nothing.

If the fourth path was retrieved, it would descend again when a cultivator was ascending to the void realm!

Lu Yun had been able to destroy the other three paths only with the power of the Dao Flower. Next time, even he, Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Mo Qitian, and Zi Chen together wouldn’t be able to even shake the path!

The void realm had been restored, but no one would be able to survive it.

“Kekekeke...” a peal of sinister cackling traveled from the faint shadow of the path and reverberated in everyone's hearts—chilling, malicious, and hateful.

Clang!

Suddenly, a penetrating sword hum whistled through the sky. An enormous sword shadow with a vast presence and great power descended from the sky to slam into the white path.

Rumble!

That slash... destroyed the last path.

On the border of Dusk Province, a figure cast a cool glance at the capital before disappearing.

### **Chapter 266: The Jiangchen Clan**

The sudden turn of events prompted sighs of relief from the crowd.

“That’s the aura of the Sword of Chaos.... It’s found its wielder,” Lu Yun muttered at the sight of dissipating energy before losing consciousness. He’d completely exhausted himself in a prolonged fight against four opponents. He wouldn’t have been their match, if it weren’t for the help from the Dao Flower.

Although Lu Yun had disrupted monsters’ great dao, the dao weapons in their hands remained extremely dangerous. Any moment of carelessness would end in his death, so he’d pushed himself to the limit with every strike. Even with his inner energy exhausted, he’d persisted, finally overcoming the monsters and three of the bloodstained paths.

Up in the air, the Dao Flower had finished blooming. Immortal melodies descended and reached every world. Now restored, the void realm bridged the gap in the severed path of cultivation, settling back in perfectly. The pristine path gradually faded into the world, along with the fully-bloomed Dao Flower.

Radiating white brilliance, Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian sat cross-legged in the air and entered a strange trance. Violetgrave, the Sugato Sword, and four black axes lay quiet on the ground.

Although most cultivators were staring at the disappearing Dao Flower and path of cultivation, many were also drawn to the six great weapons. The black axes seemed archaic, but they belonged to the hairy monsters. Many had seen what they were capable of in the great struggle that had ended only moments prior. Lu Yun had gone from not being the monsters’ match to overpowering them after picking up one of the axes, so there must be some powerful heritage in it.

Violetgrave might be a ninth-rank treasure, but it could rival the black axes. That was proof enough that the sword couldn’t be a regular treasure. As for the Sugato Sword, known as the greatest man-made treasure in the world, it could cut through even connate-grade treasures.

At this moment, all of them laid still on the ground and Lu Yun was completely insensate.

Swoosh!

An immortal bound to Lu Yun’s side and grabbed at the Sugato Sword. A sudden hum was his only warning before he was thrown back, and a faint, crimson figure slowly emerged in midair.

“It’s Aoxue!” Immortals who were going to make a dash for the treasures grimaced.

Aoxue had earned her fame and shaken the world by blockading the Qing paradise entrance for a month and defeating all august immortals of the clan. However, no one connected her to the dragon princess from ten thousand years ago. With her blood dragon constitution concealed by the Tome of Life and Death, she seemed perfectly human. Her presence alone was enough to deter the immortals.

In Dusk Province, high-level immortals had to keep their cultivation sealed, so they didn’t have the confidence to face Aoxue in such a state.

“How dare you get in my way, Aoxue?!” Bouncing back to his feet, the person Aoxue had sent flying was only an empyrean immortal. Aureate sparkles around him suggested that some treasure had protected him from any real damage and also indicated his impressive background. Ordinary treasures wouldn’t have offered so much defense against one of the dragon princess’ blows.

Aoxue frostily stood guard by Lu Yun’s side without a word. Lu Yun had used up all their healing and qi replenishing pills, so he’d have to rely on himself to recover.

“How shameless can someone be!” loudly cursed a hotheaded immortal. “Lu Yun has just fought off otherworldly monsters and shattered those strange, bloodstained paths for the good of all. Now that he’s unconscious from the severity of his injuries, someone wants to steal his treasures?!”

“Hmph!” the empyrean immortal huffed. “It’s my transgression for trying to take his treasures. I apologize!” But a sneer tugged at his lips next. “Those four axes, however, are unclaimed. Therefore, it’s none of your business if I take them, is it, Aoxue?”

He strode toward one of the axes as he spoke.

“They dropped after Lu Yun killed—” Criticism abruptly cut off when a thick light barrier exploded into place around the empyrean immortal’s body.

“That’s the ninth-rank Cauldron of Invincible Constitution! He’s from the Jiangchen Clan of the Enlightened Major!” Numerous immortals froze when they recognized the treasure. Those who wanted to protect Lu Yun and those who wanted the axes for themselves changed their minds.

One of the top clans in the world of immortals, the Jiangchen Clan was known for their overbearing style and vengeful nature. Anyone who dared offend one of their own would face retaliation from the entire clan, no matter who it was!

The Cauldron of Invincible Constitution was an ancient treasure that the clan had unearthed from an ancient tomb. It was said that an ancient combat art heritage was stored in the treasure, and some immortals in the clan had become invincible after learning it.

The smirking empyrean immortal obviously hailed from the Jiangchen Clan, since he wielded the cauldron. The clan might not be a match for the Qing and Feng Clans, but their insanely vengeful nature made many major factions unwilling to get on their bad side.

Most in the world of immortals believed that feuds between youths should stay between youths. The Qing Clan had followed that unspoken rule when Aoxue blocked their entrance and had only sent out

angust immortals to fight her. If the same had happened to the Jiangchen Clan, their dao immortal wouldn't have hesitated to smash her.

Such was the way of this clan.

"These four axes belong to the Jiangchen Clan now." With a prideful smile, the empyrean immortal reached out for the axes.

Bam!

Blinding, dark crimson light flashed through the air and hurtled him back. A tall, slender, and aloof girl strode in from a distance.

"Who is it?!" yelled the empyrean immortal. The treasure keeping him protected manifested threateningly over his head.

"What a coincidence, I want the axes too." The girl looked about eighteen and was clad in a black dress that accentuated her curves and tall, lithe figure. Crimson hair cascaded down her shoulders and her scarlet lips quirked slightly upward, bestowing upon her a devilish appeal. She bent down to pick up an axe and stood by Lu Yun's side.

"How dare you!" The empyrean immortal struggled to his feet, face dark as coal, but didn't dare make a move. The stunning girl was obviously another follower of Lu Yun's, and was no less powerful than Aoxue.

It was Huangqing; she'd come after disguising her true form as a blood phoenix.

"You didn't do anything when the long-haired monsters were around, but now you have the audacity to fight for the treasures?" Faint blue rippled through the air to admit a blue-haired girl treading an illusory water surface. She too picked up an axe.

It was Xuanxi. She manifested a talisman with light rippling over its surface and attached it to Lu Yun, which gathered water energy from all over the world to heal him. Then Yuying and Feinie each appeared and picked up an axe, standing guard by Lu Yun's side.

The empyrean immortal's eyes blazed with fury, while onlookers watched with appreciative glints in their eyes. All five of Lu Yun's envoys were stunning enough to topple a country, their beauty rare even among the many fairies in the world of immortals. The man was damn lucky to have such beautiful guardians!

"He's been labeled a traitor in Nephrite Major. If I kill him now...." The Jiangchen empyrean immortal licked his lips. "Men, capture Lu Yun and his five maids!"

### **Chapter 267: Only Dead Idols Are Worshipped**

Even those of the Jiangchen Clan were shocked by their empyrean immortal's orders. Lu Yun had singlehandedly ensured the Dao Flower's bloom just now by resisting a heavenly tribulation, slaying the long-haired monsters, and destroying the bloodstained white paths. His feats benefited all of life and humanity. How dare the empyrean immortal want to capture him?

“Heh heh heh....” The immortal naturally noticed the expressions of his surrounding peers, to which a hateful grimace spread over his face. “Lu Yun and those four up there? You think they’re doing a favor for everyone, for all cultivators in the world? What about us immortals? With the path repaired, there’s a new void realm... once cultivators ascend to immortality from the void realm, they’ll be far stronger than us older immortals.”

The void realm offered an opportunity to peek into, understand, and even fuse oneself with heaven and earth. In a sense, it refined the self more closely as a part of creation!

This wasn’t something that current immortals had experienced. So when contemporary cultivators became immortals, they would indubitably be far stronger than their senior brethren. It was very much possible that even the brightest immortal geniuses would be no match for the new stock!

His words drained the blood from the others’ faces. The cultivation path was repaired, but they were all already immortals! They hadn’t experienced the void realm themselves! When their juniors attained immortality, they would inevitably be washed away by the new tide!

A metaphorical bucket of icy water doused their hearts, and when they next looked at Lu Yun, they did so with hatred burning in their eyes. The amazement and joy from the Dao Flower’s bloom had utterly vanished. No one wanted to be eliminated by the times; the gathered audience collectively snapped awake to the full implications of the situation.

“And it’s not just that.” The Jiangchen empyrean immortal smirked evilly. “Those four monsters left behind four black axes. They’re sure to contain their race’s secrets! The nine celestial emperors are trying to break past dao immortal realm right now, so I’m sure more of those monsters will come.... The axes—including the one Lu Yun’s holding—should be handed over to Their Majesties!” The immortal grew continuously more excited, finally concluding in the end that Lu Yun was a villain hellbent on destroying the world.

“Li Wushang, are you speaking on behalf of yourself or your clan?” A stylish youth in high spirits and dressed in silks stepped forward out of the crowd. “Tsk tsk. When we fought last year in Dusk Province, you were just transformed spirit realm. It’s been barely eighteen months, and now you’re part of the Jiangchen clan? And an empyrean immortal too, hmm? Such marvelous achievements!”

Disdain curled at the corner of his mouth. “Come to think of it, Li Wushang, aren’t you from the Sword Scrutiny Sect in Enlightened Major? Found new masters, have you? I suppose you’ve changed your surname too. Well? Are you sowing strife here for your own gain, or for your clan?” The youth pressed forward with every word.

“Mo Chenfeng!” Li Wushang colored when he saw who the newcomer was. He’d been in attendance during the great tournament in Dusk Province, and the other youth had been his opponent. Both geniuses were proud and talented, but Li Wushang had lost by a hair’s breadth.

Back then, Mo Chenfeng had developed a friendly appreciation for Li Wushang. It perplexed him all the more that he now found his erstwhile opponent utterly transformed. The fact that Li Wushang had borrowed outside power to become an immortal especially upset him!

“Enough prattling. Go, seize these wretches!” Unwilling to be dragged into an argument, Li Wushang called for backup.

“Yes, sir!” The Jiangchen immortals charged forward without hesitation. Nearly a hundred of them rushed Lu Yun and the others.

“Young master, come back!” The immortals behind Mo Chenfeng paled, scrambling to their young master’s aid. The hundred or so Jiangchen immortals had all sealed their cultivation to empyrean immortal realm, but when they fully exerted themselves, they were far stronger than their ordinary peers. Not having expected such a decisive attack, Mo Chenfeng flew backward in a hasty retreat.

Boom!

Nine crimson shadows flashed through the sky before melding into the void. A great fiendish shadow loomed into the sky—the Great Formation of Heavenly Fiends!

Feinie and Yueshen had laid down the formation a long time ago, ready to invoke it for Lu Yun’s protection. There were too many immortals gathered here. Though their master’s envoys were exceedingly strong, they couldn’t deal with so many enemies on their own.

The Jiangchen clan’s immortals weren’t the only ones who meant them harm. Most present were mixed up in the chaos, attitudes riled up and sword lights criss-crossing in the air. The despair of looming invalidation and elimination provoked them to the brink of instinctive madness. Lu Yun was the culprit behind all of this!

Boom!

The enormous shadow delivered a punch that shattered the storm of oncoming sword shadows into tiny pieces.

“I’ve been waiting for you!” A bizarre grin crept across Li Wushang’s face. “The cultivation path? Those treasures? What do they have to do with me? The only thing I want is the Great Formation of Heavenly Fiends!”

Rumble...

A new noise filled the air as a fortress ship of white bone soared into existence from the void, black sails flying upon its masts. It was so enormous that the nearby Dusk capital was dwarfed by comparison. Spectral air radiated from the ship, its calcified plating oozing an otherworldly strangeness. A great shadow was cast over the entire region.

“Oh, no!” Feinie paled suddenly. The crimson fiend that the Great Formation had summoned was breaking free of her control! Before she could react, the fiendish shadow rushed out of the formation in a frenzy toward the bone ship.

In the span of a single breath, the Great Formation of Heavenly Fiends that’d cut a bloody swath through Xiankan was broken. The shadow itself was absorbed into the ship without a trace. A new crimson swirl rippled upon the black-sailed ship, and the ghostly aura it exuded was muddled with pungent blood.

Li Wushang had already landed upon the bow of his ship, his Cauldron of Invincible Constitution manifested overhead once more.

“Dusk Sacred Land? The world of immortals needs no sacred lands. I didn’t have an excuse to deal with you before... but if you’re so noble as to defend the Dao Flower, you can martyr yourself for the dao!

“The world doesn’t need living heroes. Only dead idols endure throughout history... including those four in the air!” His voice wasn’t loud, but it jolted everyone awake. The world of immortals didn’t need living heroes, and it certainly didn’t need dao sovereigns to boss it around! Only inanimate idols were worthy of worship.

### **Chapter 268: White Bone Fortress Ship**

Only dead idols were worshipped; the world didn’t need living heroes.

Everyone understood that logic. Indeed, the first impulse for most upon seeing Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian was to kill them. It was fine to repair the cultivation path, but those who did so... had to die!

Anyone who contributed at all was entirely unnecessary for the rest of the world. However, no one had previously dared consider the taboo of attacking Qing Han and the others, nor had they fathomed killing Lu Yun, the guardian who’d exhausted himself to protect the Dao Flower and the cultivation path.

The appearance of the Jiangchen clan stoked a surge of hostility through the crowd that swelled to new heights. Everyone wanted to slay Lu Yun in the chaos.

.....

The bone fortress ship smashed through the Great Formation of Heavenly Fiends and gravely injured the nine bloodcorpses. They faded into faint shadows and returned to Yueshen’s grasp. Yuying, Feinie, Xuanxi, Aoxue, and Huangqing fought the immortals with fervent recklessness.

Lu Yun was still insensate from his wounds. Though he was rapidly recovering under Xuanxi’s talismans, he wasn’t awake just yet. Because he was unconscious, the Gates of the Abyss couldn’t open to release the Infernum within.

The envoys were alone in their struggle.

“Wait. There’s something strange about these axes!” Aoxue had picked up Lu Yun’s axe, but when she tried to lunge forward with a simple chop, she realized that doing so would cost all of her peak august immortal energy.

She retracted her movement before the attack was fully formed. “It’s not as the young master thought. Void realm alone isn’t enough to use this dao weapon,” she transmitted into her four colleagues’ minds, preventing them from using the treasures they held.

Aoxue was an unparalleled fighter, capable of perfect control over all of her methods and arts. She could even retract a chop with the dao weapon after setting it in motion! That wouldn’t be the case for the others.

If they tried to make use of the dao weapons, their energies would be instantly discharged. After all, when Lu Yun had used the axe, it’d cost all the pills they’d held.

“These dao weapons clearly have something to do with those hairy monsters. If anyone else tried to use them forcibly, their cultivation foundations would be broken!” The draconic envoy’s reminder sobered up her fellow envoys and they hastily stowed their black axes.

Feinie took out the Formation Orb and began wrapping the group in layer upon layer of defensive formations.

Rumble...

The enormous bone ship didn't stop after it'd crashed through the Great Formation of Heavenly Fiends, but merely rippled with scarlet energy as it continued charging in their direction. Many immortals who weren't quick enough to get out of the way were crushed as collateral damage.

For the first time, the five envoys felt a hint of despair dawn in their hearts. Dense light from the Formation Orb was being deformed by the bone ship as it proceeded forward bit by bit!

"That bone fortress ship has the power to counter formations!" Feinie yelled. "Unless I erase my brand of ownership from the Formation Orb and unleash its full power, I can't possibly hope to stop it!"

Crack!

As she said this, the final defensive formation crumpled. Golden light flared from her body.

"Piss off!" Feinie yelled angrily. She unsealed her cultivation and unleashed every bit of power she had left in a single, resolute punch. The bone ship quavered violently, then came to a halt!

However, the commensurate damage to Feinie was equally great. Although she'd stopped the ship cold as a golden immortal, she herself drifted away as dust in return.

Rumble...

Without skipping a beat, the bone ship then creaked back into motion toward its intended target.

"Heh heh heh... how dare a mere golden immortal block my bone ship?" Li Wushang sneered with scorn. His fortress ship of bone was like a city in the sky with terrifying strength. Even peerless immortals would be hard-pressed to do more than delay his vessel, much less a golden immortal!

"Ram them! Ram them all to death!" he roared ferociously, directing his rage against Lu Yun and his remaining four maids.

Boom!

Another fierce tremor rocked the hurtling ship, much greater in magnitude this time. The impact sent Li Wushang's ship skittering across the sky. An absurdly luxurious fortress ship materialized from the void, interposing itself between the bone ship and its would-be target. Though the ship was many times smaller than its adversary, it glowed with a similar aura of power and splendor.

A girl stood at the ship's bow, her slightly fragile form wrapped in a white robe. Her unsheathed blade and long, black tresses danced in the wind. It was Lu Qingshuang.

Before Lu Yun had returned to Dusk Province, he'd handed his ship over for Lu Qingshuang to helm. In the midst of the bone ship's rampage, she arrived in the nick of time.

Alas, the collision broke a multitude of the formations shielding the ship, leaving only the ninth-rank treasures holding on for dear life. Despite its small victory, the fortress ship was no match for its skeletal peer.



“That’s the Ling Clan’s flagship... excellent!” Li Wushang cackled with joy. “It will provide the fuel for my bone ship to grow stronger with!”

The Cauldron of Invincible Constitution over his head flared with radiance as the entire ship began trembling. A moment later, the bone ship’s bow split apart like a ravenous maw, biting toward Lu Yun’s fortress ship.

“That fortress ship is a living thing?” The other immortals were spooked by the prospect. The ship had to be at least fifty kilometers long! Like a terrifying monster, it’d opened its jaws in an attempt to snap up its prey. Such a thing was beyond their comprehension. The Jiangchen Clan... was more than qualified to stir up trouble.

Hum.

Suddenly, a pillar of white light pierced the bone ship out of the blue.

Boom!!

The ship quaked and creaked like a beast in pain before the entire vessel was sent flying. A weapon of war!

Someone had used one of those treasures to blast the bone fortress ship out of way. But shockingly, the ship was entirely unharmed from the impact!

“How dare you lay a hand upon me, Nephrite court!” Li Wushang roared in anger. A corner of the skin on his face had torn away, revealing rotten flesh beneath... he was almost like a zombie.

The general in the seaside citadel’s garrison was stunned—he hadn’t fired his weapon. His compatriot on Outré Province’s borders was similarly flabbergasted; he wasn’t responsible for the attack, either.

Boom!!

A second pillar blasted into the bone ship, not far behind the first.

### **Chapter 269: Return of the Corpse Refiners**

This time, everyone heard the skeletal fortress ship scream like a wounded animal. Hearts pounding, countless immortals stopped what they were doing and stared at the ship, struck dumb with shock.

The weapon had connected with great ferocity and left great damage in its wake. Crimson ripples spread through the air as the ship careened into Dusk City.

Hum!

Tremendous sword energy discharged from the inheritance tower at the center of the city and kept the ship outside.

Thud!

The vessel crash-landed on the ground, filling the air with dust.

“Graaaw!” Giant maw yawning open, the ship of white bones shrieked with a fury that resonated in everyone’s heart.

Bam!

Before it could recover, a third beam of light pummeled its body. This time the attack caused true damage, scattering bones in all directions. Half of the ship was shattered by the light beam. The skeletal ship roared, as did Li Wushang from on top of the bow.

The Cauldron of Invincible Constitution above his head was pushed to its limit, almost fully morphing into lines of strange runes and circling around his body. Tattered and torn, his skin covered him like ragged clothes, and rotten gray flesh clung to his bones like jelly.

By this point, the cauldron was fully disassembled into golden runes that filled the air, desperately repairing Li Wushang's deteriorating body. A thick stench of decay emanated from his body, and corpsewater-like blood dripped from his moldering flesh.

"Protect the young lord!" Immortals of the Jiangchen Clan made a mad dash for their young master when they saw his injuries and fell into formation to block the fourth shot from the weapon.

Bam!

The blast barreled forward with enough momentum to destroy heaven and earth. Even the inheritance tower in Dusk City trembled, releasing brilliant splendor to protect the city. The beam of light blew a hole from one side of the fortress ship to the other, finally rendering it immobile. Everyone stared with dread at the living ship of fifty kilometers in length.

"It took four hits from the weapon of war to immobilize the ship... what manner of monster is it?! Where did the Jiangchen Clan find such a twisted thing?!" It was too terrifying to put into words. It'd taken four hits from the weapon to subdue the ship, and Li Wushang, at the helm, was still alive!

Four hits from a weapon of war should've obliterated even an arcane dao immortal!

"Hot damn, I didn't expect to have a chance to fire a weapon of war one day!" Li Youcai laughed heartily, quite pleased with the turn of events.

This was the one that Lu Yun had brought back from the banks of the Blood Sea. The former governor had moved the stronghold and its terrain to the crater left after the collapse of Myriad Formation Summit. The new city stood on top of the burial mound, which, although destroyed, still contained a good number of tunnels with terrible corpse flies residing within, including the tunnel Lu Yun had dug to raid the burial mound.

If the flies flew out, it would be a great disaster for Dusk Province. It was the perfect solution to seal the great crater with an enormous city that spanned twenty-five hundred kilometers in radius.

Established on top of the ruins of Truewater, the city was bequeathed the same name. Li Youcai was appointed the city lord and put in charge of the weapon of war.

Excitement and surprise gripped him after taking four shots with the weapon of war and finally shooting down the skeletal fortress ship. The fortress ship's defensive power had exceeded even that of arcane dao immortals!

Yuying and the others allowed themselves surreptitious sighs of relief. Shooting down the fortress ship would send an unspoken warning and intimidate all immortals of Dusk.

“Kill Li Wushang!” exclaimed Yuying. Aoxue and Huangqing rushed out in twin crimson blurs and attacked the man atop the skeletal ship.

“Hahaha! You want to kill me?” Li Wushang burst into laughter. Now completely in its golden rune form, his cauldron entered his spirit and beams of golden light quickly restored his tattered body. In the blink of an eye, he grew into a golden giant roughly three hundred meters in height.

Bam! Bam!

Li Wushang swung out with a punch at each woman. Golden runes danced around him while both Aoxue and Huangqing trembled before they were thrown backward, blood seeping from their mouths from that singular counterattack.

The crowd goggled with shock.

Aoxue was a peak august immortal. When she’d blockaded the Qing entrance for a month, no august immortals of the Qing Clan, or clans friendly with them, had proven able to defeat her.

She was fighting alongside a woman who could rival her, yet Li Wushang managed to knock them away with a single move. The man was only an empyrean immortal!

Crack crack crack!

Sounds of broken bones being reconnected emitted from the skeletal ship beneath Li Wushang’s feet. Next, the vessel that’d been cleanly penetrated by the weapon of war gradually rose into the air. Its giant skeletal wings slowly unfurled and it extended its giant mouth.

“Grrrrr!!” Beastly howls rang through the area.

“You can that try again, fucking fatty.” Li Wushang’s voice was dreadfully chilling, devoid of any human emotions and like that of a ghost crawled out from the deepest hell.

Far off in the distance, Li Youcai shuddered. He felt a chilling malice locking onto him, attempting to freeze his body and soul.

“So I will!” he growled through the cold. “Blast both the skeletal ship and the golden bastard on the ship into pieces! You piece of shit, don’t think I won’t attack you just because we share the same surname!”

Bam!

An enormous image of the Black Tortoise and three hundred million premium immortal crystals fueled the weapon of war. Endless power from the land converged into a white beam of light and spewed out of the treasure.

Waging war was an exercise in consuming wealth. Lu Yun hadn’t had much of these immortal crystals to begin with, but the Feng Clan had earned plenty for him in the year they ruled over Dusk Province, charging a hundred thousand crystals for every visit to the inheritance tower. Those crystals were now all Lu Yun’s.

Li Wushang’s expression froze. He hadn’t expected the fat guy from five thousand kilometers out to not only survive the vicious aura he’d released, but remain wholly unaffected. He had no idea about Li

Youcai's unique constitution, which had allowed him to remain hale and hearty even after being possessed by an immortal ghost. Mere killing intent wouldn't do anything to the fatty.

The white beam of light from the weapon of war tore into the skeletal ship's open mouth.

Bam!

The ship was again pierced through, and ugly cracks splintered throughout the vessel.

Bam!

The enormous ship once again plummeted from the sky and crashed into the ground. Li Youcai belly-laughed with satisfaction. "I'm not gonna pull my punches even if you're another Li!"

However, he didn't keep attacking. Five shots from the weapon of war had burned through billions of crystals. There wasn't that much more left in Truewater City. Moreover, Dusk City was right behind the ship. If he took another shot, the city might end up razed to the ground instead.

Li Wushang struggled out of the ship, cocooned in golden runes that focused on repairing his deteriorating body.

"He's still alive!" Sharp inhalations sounded from onlookers. Five shots from the weapon of war later, neither the ship nor Li Wushang had been annihilated! Finally, someone noticed something amiss about the man. Li Wushang wasn't human!

"He's a zombie!" exclaimed Mo Chenfeng. "Li Wushang has become a zombie! And the ship is a zombie too!"

"Jiangchen Wushang of Truespirit Major's Corpse Refiners, at your service."

Hum!

'Li Wushang' soared into the sky, his enormous body blazing with golden light. A young man with a devilish smile appeared over his head. The Cauldron of Invincible Constitution reverted to its original form and fell into the youth's hand. Dressed in grey, the young man had both a handsome and feminine face. The deviant smile tugging at his lips wreathed him in eerie disquiet.

"Li Wushang, Jiangchen Wushang... We're both Wushang, so it was destined that our paths would cross. He was one of the geniuses who'd emerged from the Dusk tournament and found great favor in my eyes, so I couldn't resist refining him into a zombie."

His words sent shudders down everyone's spine. He'd refined a living person into a zombie!

The Corpse Refiners!

Over the past year, their disciples had appeared to challenge geniuses all over the world and taken many lives. What they all had in common was that all of them were accompanied by a zombie!

Folks had originally thought that the zombies were unearthed from some ancient tombs, but Jiangchen Wushuang's reveal of the ugly truth made their hearts burn with incandescent fury. Corpse refiners' zombies came from living victims. What was even worse was that if Li Wushang hadn't been gravely injured, the other immortals wouldn't have sensed anything wrong about him!

He seemed just like any one of them.

“Mo Chenfeng...” Jiangchen Wushang turned to Mo Chenfeng with a fey smile. “Li Wushang has become my battle zombie. Now, it’s your turn. I’ve come for you this time, Mo Chenfeng. Be mine to command!”

Swoosh!

Li Wushang abruptly shrank and punched out at Mo Chenfeng.

“Bastard!” The august immortal standing guard by Mo Chenfeng’s side raised his hands and rained down a barrage of a dozen combat arts at Li Wushang.

Bam!

The immortal threw up a mouthful of blood and his body shattered like porcelain.

“Third uncle!” Mo Chenfeng cried out with dismay. Without hesitation, he attacked with his sword, but he realized with a start that the man before him was an illusion.

Meanwhile, Jiangchen Wushang and Li Wushang suddenly appeared beside Lu Yun and attacked in unison. Lu Yun was his real target!

### **Chapter 270: Bag of Corpse Refinement**

“Hahaha, the top youth sovereign of the world of immortals is mine!” Bloodlust glinted in Jiangchen Wushang’s eyes. His goal had always been to refine Lu Yun into a battle zombie! Everything he’d done so far was for this moment!

“Dammit!” Yuying and the other three envoys had allowed themselves a short reprieve for recovery when Jiangchen Wushang fought the Mo Clan, but the man and his zombie’s sudden shift to Lu Yun caught them off guard.

“Grawl!” The skeletal ship struggled upright again, despite the heavy beating it’d taken. Six thick femur bones erupted from the bilge to prop its giant body up.

Whoosh!

Throwing restraint out of the window, Yuying unleashed a fire art with the Emerald Mistfire, directing a giant fire dragon at Li Wushang and Jiangchen Wushang.

Hum!

With a shake of his hand, Jiangchen Wushang manifested a grayish-yellow sack over his head; it reeked of a pungent, rotting smell and saw corpse energy spiralling around it. Energy from the sack doused the fierce dragon formed by the Emerald Mistfire!

Dispersion of her art hit her like a thunderbolt. Somehow, the corruption spread to Yuying as well, and patches of her body seemed to fester, taking on the same hue as a zombie.

“What, what is this?!” Yuying couldn’t believe what was happening. The Emerald Mistfire was among the top fires of the world of immortals, and its fire arts had never failed her before. But that strange sack had put out the fire and was now attempting to turn her!

Fortunately, her immortal fires burned away the strange power as soon as it burrowed into her body. Still, it didn’t change the fact that Jiangchen Wushang had broken through her defenses for a moment.

Meanwhile, Xuanxi had reverted to her mermaid self and brought down a great river from the sky. The Dusk River!

Tall black waves crashed into Li Wushang. As the Dusk river god, she could redeploy the river as she saw fit, as long as she remained in Dusk Province. Frothy dark waters churned into a vortex and trapped Li Wushang, preventing him from approaching Lu Yun.

Bam!

Bam!

Two collisions sounded in quick succession as Jiangchen Wushang blasted Huangqing and Aoxue away, the Cauldron of Invincible Constitution circling around him in the form of golden runes.

The dragon and phoenix snarled and shrieked, crimson ripples emanating from their bodies, a sign that their true form was about to manifest. However, this was the precise moment in which the skeletal monster, transformed from the fortress ship, charged up to them and stomped them underfoot, interrupting their flow of power.

Hum.

The grayish-yellow sack hovered in midair, generating a suction force to devour Lu Yun’s body. It was the Bag of Corpse Refinement, one of the greatest treasures of the Corpse Refiners. Once swallowed by the sack, a living being would be refined into a zombie—one that retained its consciousness, but unconditionally obeyed the owner of the bag.

Lu Yun’s four envoys struggled with all of their might, but Li Wushang and the white skeletal ship unleashed their full strength to stop them. Aoxue and Huangqing were pinned down by the ship, while Xuanxi was manipulating the Dusk River against Li Wushang. Yuying was too busy fighting the corruption in her body to do anything else. They could only watch as the sack sucked Lu Yun in.

“Wow, look at the big yum-yum!!” An excited voice filled with delight traveled in on the air, quickly followed by a giant head bouncing through the void and flinging itself toward the skeletal ship.

Crunch!

A three-hundred-meter-tall head bit into one of the ship’s legs, resulting in a sound that numbed one’s teeth. It was Ge Long.

“What a tough snack! My poor teeth!” the head wailed and flew away in retreat. The skeletal ship teemed with yin energy, marking it as a great delicacy for Ge Long. However, it was far too sturdy, and the old servant had ended up breaking his teeth on it.

Jiangchen Wushang tensed; Lu Yun had disappeared from the sack at some point.

Bam!

A terrifying power suddenly slammed into his abdomen and scattered the golden runes surrounding him. With a cry of pain, he staggered backward.

Bam!

The same terrifying might reappeared, this time smashing him in the back. He slammed into the ground, creating a human-shaped crater.

“Who is it?!” he snarled, looking around with wide eyes, but spotted no one. He couldn’t find anything with his consciousness, either! Fear snaked up from his heart at the bizarre development; this was rather eerie.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Powerful strikes landed all over his body, hammering him further into the ground. Blood welled from his mouth as he resisted with all of the strength in his body, but he couldn’t fend off the attacks no matter how hard he tried.

He couldn’t even see his attacker.

He attempted to channel the Cauldron of Invincible Constitution, but his inner energy was scattered whenever he gathered some.

“Rrraw!!!” The zombified Li Wushang broke free of the Dusk River and rushed to his master, emitting powerful howls.

Xuanxi threw up a mouthful of blood. Li Wushang had broken through the river with raw power alone!

Rattle rattle rattle!

A black chain flew through the sky before Li Wushang could draw close, the shackle at the end clamping onto him. He snarled and struggled, but to no avail. The chain pulled a faint soul out of the zombie’s body, immediately halting its movements. The soul looked just like Li Wushang, and he bore a smile of immense relief. Finally, he could be at peace.

Swoosh!

The soul disappeared, and Li Wushang’s giant body keeled over lifelessly.

“How is that possible?! That chain....” Jiangchen Wushang struggled to wrap his mind around what he’d just witnessed, his face overtaken with disbelief. Had his strongest battle zombie really been taken down so easily?

Bam!

A giant foot dropped down from the sky and smashed him with a stomp, interrupting his train of thought.

“Nothing is impossible,” Lu Yun said coolly. A trace of black fire was dissipating from his new three-hundred-meter-tall body. It was the first display of his new death art: Size Manipulation!

When he'd absorbed the goodwill received for guarding the Dao Flower, it propelled him to refined spirit realm. It'd also completely healed him and granted him a new death art. With that, he could change his size at will, altering his body to be the tiniest particle of dust, so small that even the consciousness couldn't detect him, or to tower like a giant and rear into the sky.

That was how Lu Yun had caught Jiangchen Wushang off guard and attacked the man out of left field. The man was too powerful. Though he was only a peak transformed spirit cultivator, he could beat back both Huangqing and Aoxue at the same time. It was clear that he was stronger than Lu Yun and would come out ahead in a direct toe-to-toe confrontation.

"Give that here!" He quickly shrunk to his regular size, a foot still on Jiangchen Wushang's back to pin his opponent down. Reaching down, he yanked the golden cauldron from Jiangchen Wushang's body, accompanied by a loud rumble of thunder.

"Ahhhh!" Jiangchen Wushang flailed desperately, trying to stop Lu Yun from taking the cauldron from him, but the circulation of his inner energy was disrupted by the foot pinning him down. He couldn't break free. He could only watch as Lu Yun extracted the treasure from his body.

Hum.

The hovering Bag of Corpse Refinement shot out a beam of corrupting light, and the skeletal fortress ship started moving as well. Its giant hull scuttled toward Lu Yun, trying to save its master, but—

Wham!

The heavily damaged ship trembled and hurtled backward. Under Lu Qingshuang's steering, her fortress ship had knocked the skeletal ship away. At the same time, a black and white orb shimmering with gray radiance slammed into the sack. It was the Formation Orb!

Lu Yun's ascension had called upon the power of the Tome of Life and Death. Not only had Ge Long been resurrected, but so had the recently fallen Feinie. She unleashed the orb's power in a vicious swipe at the sack.

Boom!

The sack fell to the ground, leaking corpse energy everywhere.

"Waugh waugh waugh!!" Piercing howls and guttural screams came from the sack as nearly a thousand zombies crawled out and lunged at Lu Yun, hands curved into claws and teeth bared.

"Young master!"

"Miss!"

"My disciple!" Eyes shot open so wide that their corners threatened to split. The newly-revealed zombies were all genius cultivators who'd recently gone missing from Dusk Province! Many were top geniuses who'd earned great fame during the governor reselection tournament!

With the path of cultivation restored, it was only a matter of time before these people would've entered the void realm. Many had thought it was Lu Yun who'd imprisoned the geniuses, since rumors flew thick in recent times that the young governor was arresting cultivators left and right.



Now the truth was revealed! They'd all been refined into zombies!

"Corpse Refiners!" shrieked an old man. "The Jiangchen Clan! The Soaring Wing Sect will not permit you to coexist beneath the same sky!!"

"I'll kill you!!" A mass of enraged, howling immortals charged the Jiangchen immortals with reckless abandon.