

Necropolis 351

Chapter 351: Love Rival

"Hmph!" Situ Zong harrumphed, then pointed the Black Emperor on his shoulder straight at the person who'd just spoken, who instantly fled in terror, unwilling to dwell on the question.

The relationship between the Star Demon Sect and Lu Yun? Well, he was standing right there beside the young lord, wasn't he? There was nothing to be afraid of. The five forefathers would surely agree with his decision.

"Come!" With one hand on his compass and the other tugging Qing Han along, Lu Yun strode off toward the half-open door.

Situ Zong's hands were similarly occupied; he kept a tight grip on both the Black Emperor and his disciple, making sure to keep up with the young lords.

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"There's no need for further argument. The Cosmic Skycarver has returned," a soft-spoken, bookish voice remarked from beyond the door. "That sword is the key to obtaining this sea of stars."

Lu Yun traded a furtive glance with Qing Han, and both youths slid to a concordant halt. It was better not to go in just yet. Lu Yun carefully put away the luopan in his hands, extinguishing its aureate rays.

"S-second brother? What's he doing here?" Qing Han was bewildered by the discovery.

"Who? Your second brother?" Lu Yun blinked.

"My second elder brother, Qing Yunhe! The one that Jiangchen Wushang pretended to be that time!" Qing Han shook his head.

The Qing Yunhe he remembered was a thoroughly lackadaisical sibling. Lacking the unpredictable ferocity of Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao, he didn't seem to have a care in the world. He seemed almost like a mortal scholar content with a life of leisure, instead.

So why in the world was he here? And vying over the Cosmic Skycarver and the Cosmic Sea, to boot. This wasn't the kind of reality Qing Han could believe in.

He couldn't remember a single instance of his second brother ever arguing with anyone... or fighting, for that matter. He didn't seem like a cultivator at all. Certainly, Qing Yunhe was the last person he would expect to show up.

"Friends outside the door, please come on in. The Cosmic Skycarver is not a treasure you can hope to possess." another voice cut through the silence.

Qing Han became as white as a sheet as soon as he heard the voice. "Donglin Taihuang!"

That nightmarish name hung like a perpetual specter over his heart. The Donglin scion was the reason he couldn't be himself.

Qing Han had seen him many, many times. Every year, he visited the Qing Clan to see if a woman with a cosmic constitution had been born yet. He was a dao immortal, but exactly which realm he was at was a mystery.

“Donglin Taihuang?” Lu Yun’s pupils contracted. He instinctively probed Donglin Biying inside hell, but the ghostly woman was just as surprised as he.

Although Donglin Biying was fairly important in her clan as the result of her cultivation, there was an insurmountable gap between Donglin Taihuang and herself. She was more than ten thousand years old, while Donglin Taihuang had cultivated for less than a hundred.

Even among immortals, attaining dao immortality was a sign of unparalleled genius. In a sense, Donglin Biying and her kinsman lived in different worlds.

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“Let’s take a look inside.” Lu Yun led the way into the chamber. “Ah...” He drew a sharp breath at the environment that awaited them.

Rather than another part of the tomb, they had entered a field of stars. A sparkling river of infinite light stretched out in every direction, illuminating the boundless realm of night with a liberal smattering of celestial radiance.

At the heart of the starfield was a silver scroll, the very same scroll responsible for dyeing the heart of the tomb in its selfsame shade. Three figures were lined up beside it.

One of them, dressed in a scholar’s cap and robe, was Qing Yunhe. An air of casual luxury wrapped itself around him, and the bamboo scroll in his hand only served to accentuate his bearing of a rich dandy.

Another was a sharp youth, twenty or so years of age. His entire person was keen and his presence was like that of an unsheathed blade, as if he and his sword were one and the same.

The last person was obscured in an intense veil of starlight, and it was impossible to discern his figure or features. By process of elimination, this had to be Donglin Taihuang! A dao immortal less than a century old, the pride of his clan.

“Qing Han?” Qing Yunhe’s brows knitted as soon as he saw his younger brother. How could Qing Han be the Skycarver’s bearer?! “Why are you here... dammit! Those old things....”

His eyes squinted a little in cold displeasure. The rest of his clan had to be privy to the fact Qing Han was here, but no one had told him. The whole reason he was pursuing the Cosmic Skycarver and the sea of stars was for his brother’s sake. What a twist of fate that Qing Han had gotten his hands on it before him!

“You? You have the Cosmic Skycarver.” Enshrouded in starlight, Donglin Taihuang enunciated in a cold and emotionless tone, “Give it to me, and I will consider letting you go.”

“Situ,” Lu Yun tilted his head toward the old man behind him.

Situ Zong understood his meaning immediately. Tossing his disciple neatly behind him, he pointed the barrel of Black Emperor at Donglin Taihuang.

“Oh?” Donglin Taihuang sneered. “You dare attack me?”

Like many others, he knew Lu Yun owned something akin to a war treasure. And like many others, he wanted it for himself.

Derision flashed through his starlight-laced eyes—

Boom!

A pillar of white light blasted forth from the Black Emperor.

“Bastard!” The foremost genius of the Donglin Clan was furious. Starlight burst forth around him, intercepting the Black Emperor’s beam at the last fraction of a second.

“What a madman!” Qing Yunhe and the sword-like youth were thoroughly unnerved by the potency and suddenness of the attack. They darted off in two separate directions, unwilling to be caught in the crossfire.

There was an impromptu period of silence.

The starlight around Donglin Taihuang disappeared, revealing the form of a middle-aged man roughly forty years old. Short and stout, he had a half-bald head and a sizable beard.

His features were ... rather ordinary, honestly. All in all, he looked very different from how Lu Yun had imagined his enemy would appear.

The other two immortals were similarly shocked. This was their first time seeing the notable Donglin scion in person as well. When Donglin Taihuang traveled the world, he always did so with a cloak of starlight around him.

The world was a place of many mysteries, alright.

“Again!” Snickering, Lu Yun ordered the firing of another blast. The Black Emperor unleashed a second shot toward his target.

Love rival!

Whatever he looked like, Donglin Taihuang was his rival!

So there was no need to hold back here; he wasn’t going to stop until the other was dead.

Chapter 352: An Origin Dao Blow

It was because of Donglin Taihuang that Qing Yu was forced to hide herself from the world; the sight of the man made Lu Yun’s blood boil with fury. There was no way he could hold back his anger at all.

If not for the tiny shred of reason he had left, he would’ve immediately called upon the last use of the celestial emperor’s corpse puppet and smacked the odious man to death. Still, he had no plans of letting Donglin Taihuang go.

The Black Emperor fired an uninterrupted volley of energy blasts at the Donglin genius.

“Are you crazy, man? Stop, stop!” Qing Yunhe roared with panic as he danced around the space, attempting to avoid becoming collateral damage.

He didn’t know what the strange cannon was, but he could feel its threatening lethality against dao immortals. It was potentially even more vicious than a weapon of war!

If the cannon were deployed at maximum power, Donglin Taihuang stood a good chance of losing his life.

Who was Donglin Taihuang?

The brightest genius of the Donglin Clan—nay, the entire world!

His entire clan held him up as its dearest treasure. The first ever natural-born immortal in contemporary times, he was above even Yue Longsha and Zhu Yan. He had reached the arcane dao immortal realm at less than a hundred years of age. If he was to die here, the Donglin Clan would go on an unmitigated rampage!

Considering their tyrannical arrogance, they would absolutely kill everyone who’d entered the dragon tomb. Even the majors’ imperial courts weren’t deterrent enough.

Boom—

Boom—

Boom—

Ray after ray of white light exploded from the barrel of the Black Emperor, tracking Donglin Taihuang’s movements and trying to score a fatal hit.

However, the Donglin scion seemed to have a strange power protecting him. Though the weapon inflicted grave injuries and pummelled mouthfuls of blood out of him, it didn’t endanger his life in the least.

Meanwhile, the recoil from the cannon also caused Situ Zong to stagger backwards. Fresh blood welling out of his mouth bore testament to his injuries as well. If he hadn’t refined the connate-grade Pelagic Orb, the tremendous recoil of the cannon would’ve already shattered his veins, meridians, and spirit—and even expelled his dao fruit.

“I understand why young lord Qing Han told me to refine the orb now. Not to kill our enemies, but to save my life!” Situ Zong chuckled ruefully. After refining the Pelagic Orb, he’d begun uninterrupted service as Lu Yun’s trusty limber. Wherever Lu Yun pointed, he aimed.

“Thirty percent won’t do, huh? Let’s go with one hundred then!” Lu Yun didn’t care about what Situ Zong thought. Intently focused on Donglin Taihuang’s stocky form, he flared with murderous determination.

“Don’t get too excited!” Qing Yunhe and the youth with the sword aura hurriedly came up to him. They’d seen enough already; although Situ Zong carried the Black Emperor, Lu Yun was the real man behind the trigger.

“The fabric of space here can’t possibly survive the force of these blows. A few more shots and you’ll tear this place apart! All of us will die!” Qing Han’s brother spoke in a curt, decisive tone. He was very worried that Lu Yun would do something unwittingly suicidal.

“All of us will die?” Lu Yun blinked, then grinned widely. “Perfect. Death is just what I ordered!”

Rumble!

A vicious contortion of space heralded the entrance of an inky-black ship slowly gliding out from the aether.

The Divine Glory!

Wrapped in black smoke all over, the boat looked like a ghost ship from hell.

After plundering the North Sea Dragon Palace, Lu Yun and his envoys used many of the materials he’d acquired to upgrade the ship once more. After its latest round of refurbishment, the Divine Glory was about as good as a fortress ship could possibly get.

“Get on!” Lu Yun beckoned. Qing Han and Situ Yun were instantly sucked up by the ship, where Situ Zong noted a weapons notch and plopped the Black Emperor into it with a sigh of relief.

Qing Yunhe and the other youth traded knowing looks before leaping onboard.

“Die, all of you!” Donglin Taihuang’s clothes were in tatters. His face, not particularly fair in the first place, was as black as soot. Without the Black Emperor’s suppressive firepower, he finally had an opportunity to counterattack.

Starlight lit up his body once more. “Cosmic Sea, to me!”

Splash...

The incongruous sound of waves lapping against a shore was followed by an inexorable tide of stars. Spinning into motion, they began hurtling toward the Divine Glory with incredible force.

“The Cosmic Sea! He must’ve already refined it and was just here waiting for the Cosmic Skycarver to come back!” the unknown third youth yelped.

In the Cosmic Sea, heavenly bodies were as numerous as water drops in the sea. Their collective energy struck fear into even this master swordsman from the Dark North Sword Sect.

The scroll woven of starlight was already within Donglin Taihuang’s grasp.

“Power of the sea of stars, huh?” Lu Yun murmured, watching the stars’ trajectory as they hurtled toward the ship. His eyes turned purest white.

Ten billion immortal crystals were converted into energy and crammed into the Black Emperor in the blink of an eye. The inky-black ship turned white as milk.

Boom!

For an instant, the starfield was completely replaced by blinding white.

After who knew how long, the handful of people inside the chamber slowly recovered their sight.

The starfield—or rather, the room in the tomb that had held the Cosmic Skycarver and Cosmic Sea—was completely destroyed. The fabric of space all around them had been torn to bits, and the blast would've done the same to any trespassing immortal.

The dragon tomb was located in the North Sea, which wasn't a complete facet, per se. Planes of existence here weren't as stable as the nine majors, ten lands, and four immortal seas. A single beam from the Black Emperor at maximum output had been enough to shatter the integrity of the space.

By now, the Cosmic Sea had reverted back into a silvery scroll and floated calmly at the center of the broken void.

"That was... an origin dao blow," Qing Yunhe murmured, entranced by the performance of the Black Emperor. The cannon glowed with a reddish light, still cooling down from its earlier exertion.

He'd just personally witnessed the power of ten billion immortal crystals. Evidently, they were worth a single origin dao attack!

"Too bad he got away." Qing Han waved a hand, summoning the scroll that was the Cosmic Sea to him with the power of the Cosmic Skycarver.

"He got away from that? Damn, he's a rich kid for sure." Lu Yun was mildly disappointed.

Killing Donglin Taihuang would've solved half of his problems, but what could he do now? The guy probably had all kinds of treasures designed to save his life. Even his arcane dao immortality didn't mean he was safe everywhere.

The present world was far more dangerous than the ancient world, with celestial emperors prone to dying at any moment. People like Donglin Taihuang and the Deaf Prince indubitably carried around the collective aid of their clans, at least in treasure form.

"After that attack at full power, the Black Emperor will be out of commission for a bit... its core overheated. At least a week, huh..." Lu Yun sighed as he examined the cannon.

Chapter 353: Supplemental Paths as King

"Canghai Chengfeng, are you still going to fight for the Cosmic Sea and the Cosmic Skycarver?" Qing Yunhe turned to the sharp young man with a smile.

Canghai Chengfeng paused. "Well, yes, why wouldn't I? Lu Yun just said it'll be another seven days before he can use that weapon again."

His eyes burned with an eagerness to fight when he looked at Qing Yunhe, the only one here who could stop him.

"And you believed him?" Qing Han muttered before Qing Yunhe could answer.

Rumble!

From atop the Divine Glory came the sound of gears turning. Eighteen black cannons rose from the sides of the ship, locked on Canghai Chengfeng.

He froze and grumbled sheepishly, “Fine, fine, I give up....”

The cannons shifted back to their original state.

“The young lord is the young lord, alright, creating eighteen weapons of such power!” Worshipful awe shone in Situ Zong’s and Situ Yun’s eyes.

“Lu Yun!” Qing Yunhe spoke up with a frown. “Your current cultivation is lacking. It’ll hinder your progress if you rely too much on other items. Two years ago, you were the top sovereign of the world of immortals, but now, many have ascended to the void realm before you.”

“And what’s that gonna do?” Lu Yun turned to him with a surprised look.

Qing Yunhe held himself with an uncommon bearing and there was an air of scholarly grace to him. His words were intended as sage advice for Lu Yun.

However, the recipient quite disagreed.

“Do you think they’re better than me just because they’ve ascended to the void realm?” Lu Yun shook his head. “The void realm is just that—a realm. Their combat arts and techniques have yet to catch up with their cultivation.”

Qing Yunhe and Canghai Chengfeng paused bemusedly. They’d already witnessed what was powerful about the void realm. It allowed a cultivator to become one with the world and draw upon the power of heaven and earth. Even dao immortals had trouble achieving that.

Once void realm cultivators ascended to immortality, they were sure to overtake immortals who’d ascended over the past hundred thousand years since the great war.

However, Lu Yun had come back with such an unexpected response.

“The immortal dao has wilted since the ancient times, and combat arts and dao techniques have declined to an unprecedented low. Truly powerful combat arts have all but disappeared, their legacies lost to history. Those we’ve excavated from the ancient tombs are merely the tip of an iceberg.

“Compared to the ancient times, the combat arts we deploy now are those of a dying era. An arcane dao immortal from the ancient times would be able to diffuse the Black Emperor’s blast in more than a hundred ways and kill me with the backlash in the process, but Donglin Taihuang had to make use of defensive treasures to flee with his life.

“Immortals of the present and ancient times possess the same cultivation realms and similar methods, but there exists a large gap between the two eras’ combat arts and understanding of the dao.”

Qing Yunhe and Canghai Chengfeng stared dumbly at Lu Yun, at a loss for words.

“Since immortals and cultivators have lost so much in terms of combat arts and understanding of the dao, but we still have to defend against enemies, shouldn’t then the supplemental paths reign as king?” Lu Yun put his hands behind his back. “I have at my disposal powerful weapons, treasures, talismans, and pills. What’s so different between them and my combat arts? They all come from my hands!”

Supplemental paths as king!

The declaration stunned Qing Yunhe, Canghai Chengfeng, and the two members of the Star Demon Sect.

“If everyone relies on supplemental paths, who’s going to cultivate combat arts and probe their understanding of the heavenly law? How will those two aspects of cultivation recover to their peaks then? It won’t take long before all combat arts and methods disappear from the immortal dao.” The deep frown on Canghai Chengfeng’s face made his disapproval clear.

“Ha.” Lu Yun sniffed. “If you can’t even survive in the world of immortals, how are you going to restore combat arts and techniques to their former glory?”

Canghai Chengfeng was rendered speechless.

“Do you know what most geniuses in the world are doing?” Lu Yun said seriously. “Excavating burial mounds and raiding tombs, then ending up dead!!

“It’s a mainstream belief that only by raiding tombs can one make any progress! However, you immortals know nothing about tomb raiding. You’re all marching to your deaths by barging into tombs and charging around like a bull in a china shop.

“I always thought the present would naturally trump the past. What was lost in history was that that had been eliminated by the times. Surely, one day, the world of immortals would recover to its peak condition from the ancient times.

“Now I understand how wrong I was,” Lu Yun mused faintly. “Our civilization is deteriorating. The ancient tombs have stunted the development of the world of immortals.”

More than eighty percent of the current crop of immortals were dead set on excavating ancient tombs and empowering themselves with ancient heritages, then rinsing and repeating elsewhere. Sooner or later, they’d meet an untimely demise in their adventuring, and the same fate would befall all immortals until everyone died.

There was no time to think about anything else.

The Dusk Tournament organized by the nine celestial emperors was an attempt at changing conventional thought, and that change would start with cultivators.

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Within the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, Empress Myrtlestar and the Azure Dragon King fell into a pensive silence.

That was what had happened in the ancient times as well. Their civilization might seem to have been a golden age compared to contemporary society, but to the immortals of the time, their grasp of dao was much weaker than what it’d been in the previous era.

There seemed to be an invisible force weakening immortal dao further and further in ever more mysterious ways, until one day, it would cease to exist.

“If modern immortals won’t change their minds, we’ll need a different solution—supplemental paths as king! Give people enough resources to protect themselves with. Make it possible for them to safely excavate treasures from ancient tombs, and enable them to raid all the tombs in the world!”

“You...” Canghai Chengfeng gaped at Lu Yun; he couldn’t find any further counterarguments to refute the youth sovereign.

“Sure, I’m dependent on forces other than my own, but I still managed to send the top genius of House Donglin fleeing with his tail between his legs. From now on, my name will invoke fear in his heart. Who’s to say that isn’t part of my strength?” Lu Yun turned to Qing Yunhe, who also had no comeback for him other than a wry smile.

“You don’t have to worry about combat arts and techniques, either. There will be another Sovereign Meet in a year from now, which will provide us a spark. And sparks are what start fires.” Lu Yun wasn’t an ambitious man, but he needed the full capabilities of his old tomb raiding sect if he wanted to raid all the tombs in the world. That would also mean that his sect would gain supremacy.

Supplemental paths as king....

He was one of the greatest masters of the supplemental paths in the world of immortals!

Chapter 354: A Hundred and Eight Thousand Flying Swords

“Our young lord has the heart of a grandmaster. You mundane men won’t understand his vision and frame of mind,” Situ Zong tutted proudly when the two arcane dao immortals, Qing Yunhe and Canghai Chengfeng, finally fell silent.

“Young lord?” Both arcane dao immortals turned to Situ Zong in surprise.

They knew Situ Zong was a dao immortal of the Star Demon Sect, the most powerful demon sect in the world of immortals. So why would he call Lu Yun his young lord?

Situ Zong huffed and didn’t say anything, while Situ Yun puffed his chest out like a rooster who’d just won a fight. He stroked his Principal Nineheavens Talisman, fully confident in Lu Yun’s words.

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The Divine Glory sailed through layers of spatial fragments, ferrying them out of the tattered space and back to the dragon tomb. Lu Yun stowed the ship with a wave of his hand, and they entered a tunnel in the tomb.

“Hm?” He turned to Qing Yunhe and Canghai Chengfeng in surprise. “Why are you two still following me?”

“I’m here to protect my little brother,” Qing Yunhe answered in an obvious tone, glancing at Qing Han.

Canghai Chengfeng shrugged and stayed close to Lu Yun, making it clear that he wasn’t going anywhere either.

“What are you going to do if we run into someone from the Qing Clan?” Lu Yun didn’t spare Canghai Chengfeng a glance. He’d already asked Canghai Chengkong, and it turned out that this arcane dao immortal was his younger brother. There was a decent age gap between them, but they were sons of the same mother.

Canghai Chengfeng had plucked five arcane dao fruits, which made him an elite among arcane dao immortals.

Qing Yunhe frowned slightly and nodded. "You're right. I'll only expose Qing Han and give those scumbags an opening to hurt him if I stay. We'll take our leave, then."

He was here to locate the Cosmic Skycarver and Cosmic Sea for Qing Han. Since his brother had acquired both, there was no reason for him to stay. The clan ancestor must've done something to him before letting him enter the tomb, so if he stayed with Qing Han, he might become a threat to his brother.

"Let's go!" Qing Yunhe grabbed Canghai Chengfeng and shifted in another direction.

"I'm not going!" Canghai Chengfeng struggled and latched onto the walls. "I'm staying with Lu Yun to see how he's going to make the supplemental paths king! I'm not going! Let me go... I'm staying here!"

In the end, Qing Yunhe unleashed great power and swept Canghai Chengfeng away with him. There seemed to be a great force hidden within him, making him much more powerful than he seemed.

"Carry this. Let's go." Lu Yun took down one of the eighteen ancillary cannons and handed it to Situ Zong.

"Hm? This one is much lighter than the earlier one." After a brief pause, Situ Zong shouldered the cannon without any complaints. Meanwhile, Situ Yun resigned himself to the fate of being carried around like a chick by his master.

"Take this, Lu Yun! The painting will definitely help you improve your sword dao! Supplemental paths as king? Ha, what a crock of bullshit!" Qing Han happily shoved the scroll that radiated starlight into Lu Yun's hands. The Cosmic Skycarver had suppressed the power of the Cosmic Sea and turned it into a silver scroll painting.

Lu Yun smiled wryly. Qing Han knew him too well; it was impossible to hide anything from him. Although he'd given a glorious speech, he didn't intend at all to give up on improving his combat arts or dao comprehension. He'd spelled it out himself: the elites of the ancient times could use combat arts to defeat any products of the supplemental paths.

Situ Zong and Situ Yun gaped.

"Tsk, if supplemental paths are to be king, only Lu Yun's can do so," Qing Han smugly announced in a pleased tone. "Do you think anyone else is able to tear down the layouts in a tomb?"

Realization dawning, Situ Yun touched the talisman Lu Yun had gifted him, his lips curving into a smile as well. "No one else may reign supreme with supplemental paths other than our young lord!"

"Yun'er is right," Situ Zong said, recalling the Treasure Refining Talisman Lu Yun had given him. "The young lord can create talismans that have long been lost to history. No other talisman masters in the world can rival him."

Lu Yun ignored the conversation and returned to hell. Only there could he refine the Cosmic Sea without wasting any time.

Hum.

As soon as he entered hell, however, the scroll suddenly unfurled and transformed into a sea of stars, filling the entire sky of the netherworld.

“There are... stars in hell?” Countless Infernum and other ghostly existences stared at the firmament overhead in shock.

Yueshen and Ruyi were stunned as well, the latter mumbling at the stars scattered across the sky.

“That’s the Cosmic Sea! Lu Yun somehow got it in here!”

The Enneawyrms Coffinbearers and Nine-Phoenix Casket remained where they’d always been, straight in the center of hell, facing the patch of endless darkness within the netherworld’s depths.

“I... didn’t expect the Sea of Stars to be incorporated into hell without needing any refinement.” Lu Yun was caught by surprise as well. He tried to draw on its power and found that the Cosmic Sea had become part of the netherworld itself. He could tap into its full power here.

However, he couldn’t channel hell’s power in the world outside. In other words, the Cosmic Sea wouldn’t be of any help in the world outside.

“Well, that’s fine. I was only going to use it to improve my sword aura, anyway.” He rushed into the sea of stars. Amplified by the power of hell, his consciousness expanded and spread through the entire sea, feeling out the intent of the starry sky and teasing out the orbit of every star.

Then with a single thought, the Sugato Sword, which had become one with Lu Yun, emerged and took a position on top of his head, drawing in the intent of the Cosmic Sea and assimilating it.

After an indiscernible amount of time, inspiration abruptly struck him. The Sugato Sword disintegrated into strands of starlight and encircled him.

Splash!

Lu Yun’s sword aura emerged again, but this time, the ocean made of sword energy had turned into endless starlight.

“Cosmic Sea... Cosmic Sea... From now on, my sword aura is named the Cosmic Sword Ocean! Vast Dragon Seaturner!” Lu Yun boomed.

The sword ocean beside him flared with blinding light and rose into tall waves. A sword dragon comprised of sparkling starlight emerged from the waves and lunged at the darkness in the depths of hell.

Bam!

It seemed to have hit something, marked by a dramatic tremor passing through hell. Demonic howls rang from the abyss, seemingly declaring their intention to rush out and start trouble.

“Peng of Kun!” Lu Yun made a second slash, ignoring the angry howls.

An enormous kun-fish transformed into a peng-bird and slashed through the abyss. The enraged clamor grew ever fiercer, and even the very earth of the netherworld began cracking.

“Starstream Stroke!” This was the most powerful sword technique he’d created thus far.

The Cosmic Sword Ocean converged to form a river of stars and rushed into the darkness, eliciting terrible cries. He seemed to have hurt a mysterious monster lurking there.

A pair of eyes suddenly snapped open, glaring at Lu Yun with fiery rage.

“The fourth slash....” Lu Yun kept his eyes closed. Endless starlight created by the Sugato Sword gathered around him and transformed into one hundred and eight thousand flying swords.

“Endless... Cosmic... Ocean!”

Bam!

The swords arranged themselves according to the constellations within the Cosmic Sea, turning into an ocean of sharp starlight that transcended space and enveloped the pale eyes.

Fear flashed through their gaze, and they quickly closed.

Thud!

A humanoid being dressed in a battle robe, upon which was written the character that meant pawn, toppled to the ground before Lu Yun and turned into a ghostly soldier. Anyone killed by Lu Yun would become his Infernum!

Black chains and shackles remained on the Infernum; he was one of the prisoners kept in the abyss of hell.

Swoosh!

Violet fire burst forth and ignited the soldier, reducing him to ashes before he could even scream.

“What the...?” Lu Yun waved a hand, reassembling the flying swords back into the Sugato Sword and catching it. His brows knit together, and frustration flashed through his eyes. That Infernum had possessed the power of a celestial emperor, but the violet fire had killed him.

“Are these pawns not enemies, but the former servants of hell? Did they betray hell under the influence of some power?” A random speculation suddenly struck him.

The slight ripple of energy coming from the Tome of Life and Death proved his theory right.

“They were once ghostly servants and bear the rules of the old hell. That’s why the fire that destroyed hell won’t allow them to return. If I want to restore the netherworld, I have to tame the purple fire.

“It looks like I’m a far cry from restoring hell and becoming the true overlord of life and death. I need a hundred and eight thousand flying swords to mimic the constellations and tap into the true power of my fourth sword technique—Endless Cosmic Ocean. However, I can’t transform Sugato Sword into that many flying swords in the outside world, due to my lacking cultivation. So, hmm... I need more flying swords.

“Good thing I’m loaded... Huangqing, help me refine a hundred and eight thousand spirit-grade flying swords.” This was the best that Lu Yun could do at the moment. If he wished to manipulate immortal-grade swords, he would have to first ascend to immortality.

Chapter 355: The Dragon on Lu Yun's Back

The starlight at the heart of the skydragon tomb faded away, eliciting sighs from many immortals. Disappointment surfaced on their faces at the return of normality. This was the concluding sign that the treasure had been claimed.

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"Wait a second, there's something else here!" Lu Yun and Qing Han both said at the same time, with Qing Han continuing, "The North Sea emperor and House Donglin didn't block the way for the Cosmic Sea alone!"

Donglin Taihuang had been present in the room with the Cosmic Sea, but there hadn't been a representative of the North Sea court there. The main forces of the two factions were away fighting for something else—their true target.

They'd set up checkpoints at the entrance to the heart of the tomb to prevent too many immortals from entering and causing unnecessary trouble. It was just a coincidence that the Cosmic Sea had emerged and cast silver starlight all over the area, misleading the immortals who'd entered later.

"That treasure is more valuable than the Cosmic Sea!" Lu Yun extended his fingers to allow a winged coin to rise into the air from his palm.

The Treasurefall Coin.

A rankless treasure that could be used to seek and steal treasures.

Swoosh!

It vanished in a streak of gold.

"The fabled Treasurefall Coin!" Situ Yun, dancing in his position of being carried by his master, shouted in excitement. "After it!"

Situ Zong kicked his disciple in the rear and hectored harshly, "After it? We're at the heart of the tomb where dangers abound. A careless step may kill us, and you want to go after the coin?"

Situ Yun hunched in on himself and swallowed his next words.

"He's right," Lu Yun said. "We're too close to the heart of the dragon nest. Most dragons that died back in the day have turned into immortal ghosts. We must be careful."

He took out a handful of Principal Nineheavens Talismans and stuck seventeen to Qing Han before handing the rest to Situ Zong. Situ Zong hurriedly attached a few to himself and Situ Yun.

"Strange." Situ Yun frowned and shook his left hand. "My hand feels a bit cool, and what's that fragrance? It's so strong."

He shook his head slightly, his words making Lu Yun and Qing Han freeze.

"Water Ghost Grasp?!" Qing Han blurted out.

“It can’t be!” Lu Yun was shocked as well. He hurriedly activated the Spectral Eye and looked to Situ Yun’s left, hackles raising when he saw a chimera of a dragon head and human body standing on Situ Zong’s left, holding onto Situ Yun’s left hand.

It had two dragon heads! It was a two-headed zombie, the worst kind of zombie in the tomb!

However, the presence of a dragon head suggested that the monster was no immortal ghost, which feared hellfire and would never approach Situ Zong or Situ Yun, not with those talismans attached to them.

“Grudge corpses,” Lu Yun muttered.

Qing Han felt a tension spread through his scalp. He’d seen grudge corpses before. He and Lu Yun had almost died at the hand of a grudge corpse back in the Skandha Extinction Tomb. They were offshoots of zombies, somewhat of a mix of zombies and ghosts. They weren’t immortal ghosts, but something even more terrifying.

“What—what are you seeing, young lord?” Situ Zong quickly reacted by knocking his disciple out with a slap to the back of his head.

“Don’t worry, it’s not an immortal ghost. No immortal ghost would dare draw close to my Principal Nineheavens Talismans.” Lu Yun stared at the two-headed zombie with narrowed eyes, taking out a black donkey’s hoof.

It swiveled to Lu Yun with venom in its golden-red eyes, slowly loosening its grasp on Situ Yun’s hand and fading from Lu Yun’s sight.

All things in the world had their natural banes.

Hellfire could counter immortal ghosts, but not zombies, but black donkey’s hooves could repel the latter. The hoof couldn’t tangibly hurt the zombie, but it inspired an innate hatred and distaste. Moreover, grudge corpses were sentient.

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“That was a terrible grudge corpse.” Lu Yun exhaled deeply once the grudge corpse left, but his pupils contracted violently when water seeped from Situ Yun’s hand. Another hand was slowly holding onto him.

“The grudge corpse shattered the talismans on Situ Yun. This is the real Water Ghost Grasp.” Lu Yun sucked in a breath and pointed lightly in the air, sending a hundred and eight Principal Nineheavens Talismans to Situ Yun.

“Don’t move!” Qing Han screamed. “There’s a dragon on your back!”

Swoosh!

Suddenly bathed in silver, the disguised girl manifested the Cosmic Skycarver. The shadows of the Fusang Purewood, Moon Osmanthus, and Embittered Bamboo emerged behind him.

“Don’t do anything reckless!” Lu Yun hurriedly stopped Qing Han from making a move and manifested Violetgrave.

“It’s not an immortal ghost,” Lu Yun whispered. “They don’t dare come near me.”

Tilting his head, he tilted his head to look over his shoulder. A shimmering, golden dragon lay on his back with its head resting on his shoulder.

When the two-headed zombie left and the Water Ghost Grasp had emerged, he’d relaxed before quickly tensing up—creating an opening when he wasn’t as focused on himself.

The dragon had seized that moment of distraction to occupy his back.

“The immortal ghosts were spirits that emerged to nurture this young dragon’s soul. It’s no regular dragon,” Lu Yun spoke softly so as to not alert the baby dragon.

“Then it...” Qing Han stared at the faintly golden dragon and didn’t allow himself to relax.

Situ Zong aimed the cannon he was carrying at the dragon as well, but then shifted it away since the dragon was on Lu Yun’s back.

“If you can all see it, that means it’s alive.” Lu Yun lightly stroked the sleepy dragon.

The Water Ghost Grasp had disappeared. Both the layout and the two-headed zombie had emerged to put the dragon on his back.

“Its soul and spirit remain, but they’re shattered. The monsters know that I’m the only person in the world who can save it. That’s why they went to such lengths to put it on my back.

“So... Qing Han,” he muttered. “Kill it.”

Chapter 356: Kill the Dragon

Kill it!

Qing Han barely hesitated before he raised the Cosmic Skycarver and slashed at the half-asleep baby dragon.

An almost physical consciousness descended upon them with great might, interrupting the attack and paralyzing them like insects trapped in amber. They couldn’t even move a muscle. A pair of eyes that sparkled like the stars opened up in the void and leveled a cold glare at Lu Yun and Qing Han.

“Aooo...” The dragon laying on Lu Yun’s shoulder crooned in babyish tones and opened sluggish eyes, throwing the silver eyes a tired glance before laying back down on the human’s shoulder.

“So it is you.” Violet radiance rose from Qing Han and formed a beautiful figure that stood protectively before the two youngsters. Empress Myrtlestar slowly rose into the air to approach the faintly silver eyes.

“Myrtlestar...” The powerful consciousness in the air rippled with the name. “Wasn’t your soul scattered? How did you regather your soul again?”

The wave of consciousness gradually took shape and clarified into a full set of thoughts; the pair of eyes gazed upon Empress Myrtlestar with startlement.

“Dragon Empress,” identified Myrtlestar.

“She is dead,” the consciousness rippled again. “I am nothing but a strand of her lingering obsession, here to protect the last of the dragons.”

“You can’t protect it like this,” said Lu Yun. His body burst into black flames as he rose into the air before the eyes.

“Impossible!” The eyes goggled in disbelief.

They were no regular eyes, but a powerful treasure. Even origin dao immortals would be suppressed in the face of their might, let alone a mere cultivator. And yet... this cultivator had managed to take flight under the pressure of the eyes!

“This is the dragon nest, the ancestral land of the dragons. Someone turned it into a tomb, which lays an even more vicious curse on your race than that of the Skandha Extinction Tomb. It’s a miracle that the dragons haven’t completely died out yet.”

The sinister evils of the Skandha Extinction Tomb were common knowledge, but few could see through how malicious this skydragon tomb was.

Enneaworm Coffinbearers!

That must be the reason why the dragons had survived to this day.

Lu Yun wasn’t certain what exactly the Enneaworm Coffinbearers was, and he couldn’t explain why the thought would come to him.

Both Empress Myrtlestar and the Dragon Empress fell silent.

“If my guess is right, there should also be a curse at the heart of the skydragon tomb. The remnants of the draconic imperial family have almost died out, and only by dispelling the curse may the budding shoots of your race grow.”

“I will go with you and suppress the curse,” Empress Myrtlestar spoke up suddenly. “The Dragon Emperor was a good friend of mine. He came to our rescue when my tribe was struck by misfortune. I must pay him back, or I will never fully return to life.”

She was yet a fragment of a soul. Though she’d found shelter in the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, she had yet to be resurrected.

“Alright.”

The silver eyes looked at her gratefully. Empress Myrtlestar wasn’t what she had once been, but even her incomplete soul would be capable of doing things no regular human could imagine.

The Cosmic Skycarver and the Cosmic Sea were the Dragon Empress’ personal treasures, and Empress Myrtlestar hadn’t expected her to die in the dragon nest as well. After her death, her lingering obsession had attached itself to the silver eyes and released the two cosmic treasures.

“But... you cannot kill the baby dragon!” the empress transmitted violently. “It may draw upon the power of your soul, but it won’t do you any actual harm...”

“I’m not going to kill it.” Lu Yun raised his hands in a placating gesture. “What I said just now was just to lure you out.”

The silver eyes looked meaningfully at Lu Yun before fading from the air. With its departure came a relaxation of the pressure in the air. Situ Zong collapsed to the ground, unable to lift even a finger.

“Hand me the Big Dipper Starstone, Qing Han,” said Empress Myrtlestar.

Due to the protection of the Imperial Star, Qing Han had been exempted from the Dragon Empress’ might. He nodded and opened his hand, sending a shining starstone to Empress Myrtlestar.

The Big Dipper ruled over death and was the most vicious constellation in the sky. The starstone born from it contained great killing power as well. Qing Han couldn’t tap into its full power, but that didn’t mean Empress Myrtlestar couldn’t.

“Be careful. I can tell there’s an even worse power nurtured in the dragon tomb. If you have any more tricks up your sleeve, you should use them.” As she spoke, her figure faded into the starlight of the starstone and disappeared.

Lu Yun allowed himself a sigh of relief only after her departure. He then set up a grand formation with a thousand and eighty formation stones to isolate the area from the outside world.

“Young lord...” Situ Zong struggled to get up, but he had absolutely no strength left in him.

“Sleep for a while.” Lu Yun placed a pill in his mouth, one refined by Su Xiaoxiao herself. It wasn’t as potent as the Far-Reaching Captivating Fragrance, but it was something Situ Zong couldn’t resist at the moment. In no time at all, he started snoring.

“Seal off the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, Qing Han... completely!” Lu Yun’s expression was stern.

Qing Han took out the scroll and shut it off in the middle of an Azure Dragon King sigh, then cut himself off from the Imperial Star to prevent Empress Myrtlestar from using it as a secondary pair of eyes.

“Kill... this dragon,” Lu Yun said as he reached behind him to grab the sleepy dragon.

The Dragon Empress could sense something unusual about Lu Yun’s soul, which was why she wanted the young dragon to draw upon the power of his soul to make its own whole again.

However, Lu Yun didn’t want a parasite attached to him. The empress had said it wouldn’t do him any harm, but souls were the core of all humans. Having a leech feeding off of his was bound to have some lasting effects.

“Really?” Qing Han asked after a pause.

“Do it!”

Thud!

With a shake of his hand, a flash of sword energy shot out of Qing Han's Cosmic Skycarver like a beam starlight and cut the dragon's head off.

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"AHHHHHHHHH!!!! I will kill you all!!" At the heart of the tomb, the Dragon Empress's consciousness burst into a desolate howl, reverberating through the entire tomb.

Countless immortals were alerted.

Chapter 357: Resurrection

Oppressive killing intent weighed heavily on everyone's chest. Eighty percent of all immortals in the tomb lost their mobility and many more were crawling on the ground, shaking in fear.

"What... what's going on here?!" Beigong Xuan blanched hard. A natural helplessness rose from his heart; this was a power he couldn't resist!

He'd once met a celestial emperor in person, but even their presence didn't compare. This power exceeded the celestial emperors'! Were there such beings in the world of immortals?

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A storm brewed on the surface of the North Sea as an arcane dao immortal from the Zhu Clan roared with rage. His body crashed onto the water's surface and stilled after a few twitches.

"Granduncle!" Zhu Yan threw herself to his side and bawled.

"If you'd just come with me, none of this would've happened." A young man in his twenties dressed in black and gold robes stood over the ocean, holding the head of another Zhu aether dao immortal.

Hatred flooded Zhu Yan's big black eyes, glaring deadly at the young man who dared reach out with his left hand and grab at her.

Hum.

Suddenly, seven blinding stars exploded out of the air, circling the young girl.

Bam!

The young man staggered back, rebuffed by the ring of cosmic brilliance.

"Who is it?!" The young man looked up with a glower, seeing a woman dressed in men's clothes approaching Zhu Yan with graceful steps. "...Mo Yi!"

The youth, also an arcane dao immortal, recognized the newcomer immediately. The day she'd ascended to the void realm, the Dao Flower had shown her image to everyone in the world.

"Aether, aether dao immortal?! How are you improving so quickly?!" Momentarily dumbfounded by her cultivation level, the youth quickly recovered. "So what if you've ascended to the aether dao immortal realm in an unusually short time? You're just an ant when facing the arcane dao realm!"

Greed flashed through his face; Mo Yi was an unrivalled genius who'd invented the void method! Her reputation exceeded those of Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian. After all, Qing Han and the sovereign youths had only shown the way to the void realm, but Mo Yi had singlehandedly forged a path to the new realm, benefiting all cultivators in the world.

Capturing her would place her void realm method in his hands, enabling the cultivators of an entire sect or faction to ascend to the void realm.

"You aren't from Truespirit Major, and you're not a disciple of the Corpse Refiners," Mo Yi looked lazily at the youth. "Who are you?"

The other stilled.

"That's not important, though." Mo Yi extended a hand. "Brightstar... Snowrend."

Wham!

The silver starlight drifting around them shattered into sharp, sword-like snowflakes. Color rapidly drained from the youth's face.

Thud!

His body fell bonelessly into the ocean and slowly sank underwater.

"With your natural-born immortal constitution, you're more of a target than even void realm cultivators," Mo Yi calmly turned to Zhu Yan. "You shouldn't be running around like this."

"I..." Zhu Yan lowered her head and clung tightly onto the body of her dead granduncle, her expression lost and forlorn.

"Come with me," Mo Yi offered, looking in another direction. "There are more than a few people who're after you. If you stay in the North Sea, it's only a matter of time before you're captured."

Zhu Yan nodded.

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Once Zhu Yan departed with Mo Yi, a pale figure leapt out of the ocean.

"She saw me..." an arcane dao immortal from the Corpse Refiners gasped, panting heavily. "Terrifying, utterly terrifying! That man possessed at least six arcane dao fruit, but she killed him with only one move!"

"Thankfully, he made a move before I did, or I'd be the one dead! Who was he, though? Since when was there such an elite in the world of immortals?"

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Skydragon Tomb, North Sea.

The terrifying killing intent disappeared as abruptly as it emerged.

"It's, it's alive again... What's going on?" Shock flashed across the pair of faint silver eyes. She had clearly felt the young dragon's death, but after less than the span of a breath, the dragon had come back to life with its broken soul completely restored.

"That kid is quite resourceful." Empress Myrtlestar formed from the starlight of the Big Dipper Starstone. "However, the only person in the world that he trusts is Qing Han. I wanted to see what he was going to do, but Qing Han stopped me."

It was obvious from the smile on her face that she didn't mind the secrecy. In fact, she was happy for Qing Han and Lu Yun. Too much secrecy would pull someone down, sooner or later. Lu Yun had many secrets, but he was willing to share them with Qing Han. It was a demonstration of trust, but also a way to share his burdens.

In her time, Empress Myrtlestar had needed someone to confide in as well, but she'd never found such a person. Loneliness had cast a pall over her heart until it finally grew so heavy that it halted her progress at peak emperor realm.

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"This..." Qing Han gaped at the lively dragon, unable to believe what her eyes were telling her. She'd just killed it, but it'd immediately come back to life right after!

Lu Yun stuffed the medicine he'd used to knock Situ Zong out into the dragon's mouth. Its eyes rolled backward in its skull before falling into deep slumber. He then placed the dragon, only three feet long, on his shoulder.

"I can resurrect those who have died in the ancient tombs and make them my subordinates," Lu Yun slowly repeated what he'd once told Qing Han. "Yuying, Feinie, Xuanxi, Aoxue, Huangqing, and Su Xiaoxiao all became my followers that way.

"Similarly, I can resurrect those who've died in less than seven days. They will come back to life as their own being, rather than as my subordinate."

Qing Han worried his lip between his teeth. This time, he didn't destroy his own memories, but instead looked intently at Lu Yun with bright eyes.

"I'd originally wanted to save you this way." Lu Yun smiled wryly. "But then I found out that the poison in your body would remain even after you came back to life."

Resurrection had once been a method he didn't even dare think about, but now, he had nothing to fear. Despite his lacking cultivation, his wings were slowly filling out and he'd grasped many great forces in his hands. When he'd said, "supplemental paths as king," it hadn't been a complete fabrication.

That was why he dared use his death art to resurrect the young dragon.

"Xing Mou needs a companion," Qing Han said, changing the subject considerably. "This little dragon will make a good friend."

Lu Yun nodded with a wry smile. Little girl Xing Mou had remained under Feinie's protection, along with the fox. She hadn't entered the tomb with them.

“Let’s go. The Treasurefall Coin found what we’re looking for. This North Sea really is a treasure trove!” A delighted smile tugged at Lu Yun’s lips; he knew what that thing was now. There was only one item that would compel both the elites of House Donglin and Beigong Xuan to give up on the connate-grade Cosmic Sea.

Chapter 358: Fire Parasol Tree

It could only be a connate-grade spirit root, or a treasure similar to such a spirit root. Only a living treasure like a connate spirit root, or something like it, would entice the absolute powerhouses deep in the depths of the tomb to forfeit such a connate treasure as the Cosmic Sea.

The North Sea was the most heavily damaged of the four seas, as this had been the last zone of survival for the ancient dragons. Toward the end of the great immortal war, the dragons of the East, West, and South Seas had all fallen. Their survivors had fled to the North Sea, where they’d bitterly clung on with everything they had.

The North Sea was the guardian of the final draconic remnants, but its defenses were broken in the final battle, leaving the North Sea in tatters.

However, though this ocean was broken and marred, all kinds of supreme treasures bounded in its depths. There was the connate spirit root Moon Osmanthus in the Dragon Palace treasury, and another similar treasure in the skydragon tomb.

Back in the ancient times, dragons were viewed as the foremost fat cats in the world of immortals, and the North Sea was where they’d concentrated all of their final wealth. Thus, endless experts from all over the world had streamed to the marine faction when the skydragon tomb opened.

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Situ Zong gradually regained consciousness after taking the antidote, and though he didn’t know what had just happened, he didn’t ask. He continued carrying his disciple with one hand and shouldering the cannon with the other, aping every single one of Lu Yun’s footsteps and following closely behind the pair.

The passages far inside the tomb were dusky and narrow, unlike the hallways of a tomb. They were in fact the tunnels of a dragon nest, and everything had been built according to the needs of dragons.

When they’d resided in this nest, they hadn’t taken on human form. All of them remained in dragon form, so the heart of the tomb wasn’t suitable for human exploration.

“Situ, turn into a dragon,” Lu Yun suddenly said. “Someone else is going to take the treasure if we don’t hurry!”

Without waiting for a response, he took out a Shapeshifting Talisman and stuck it to Situ Zong.

Shortly thereafter, a long dragon howl emitted from the immortal’s mouth. His body elongated, transformed, and elongated again. At the end, an enormous, azure dragon roughly three hundred meters long stood before Lu Yun.

“This....” Situ Zong’s mouth dropped in shock. He really was a dragon!

And it wasn't an illusion; he was a bonafide dragon, inside and out! A dragon's bones, blood, flesh... even his immortal energy was now draconic strength!

More importantly, he realized that communicating with the Pelagic Orb was smoother than before!

In the ancient times, this orb had been a treasure of the skydragons. Being refined from a dragon and with Situ Zong's true form being a water dragon, he immediately received the approval of the Pelagic Orb, thereby deepening their bond.

"It's just a combat art talisman, there's no need to make a big deal out of it," explained Lu Yun when he saw Situ Zong's expression. "My cultivation isn't high enough yet, so the talisman will be effective for only four hours. You'll revert to a human body then, so we need to get going, now!"

He grabbed the prone Situ Yun on the ground and hopped onto the back of the water dragon with Qing Han. Situ Zong reached out with two foreclaws and clenched them around the cannon before hurtling forward with a twist of his body.

Indeed, his speed as a dragon was five times higher than what it'd been when he was a human. There was a strange power within the dragon nest that kept a constant pressure on the immortals within. But now that he was in dragon form, this intangible suppression had completely disappeared.

Situ Zong quickly vanished into the void.

"Young lord!" his hoarse voice suddenly rang out. "There's a power attacking me and trying to turn me into a zombie!"

"What!?" Lu Yun's expression shifted drastically. "Stop!"

Situ Zong churned to a stop, revealing that half of his large body was already rotten and giving time for the putrid scent of decaying flesh to catch up to them.

Lu Yun and Qing Han were horrified, while the recently-awakened Situ Yun was likewise also terrified.

With a wave of his hand, Lu Yun deactivated the Shapeshifting Talisman and reverted Situ Zong to human form. A hazy air current disengaged from his body, nullifying his half-zombie state.

Seething, Lu Yun finally noticed at this time that Aoxue and the Scaled-Dragon King had been grievously injured a while ago and were trapped somewhere in the tomb. If it weren't for Xue Daozi and Beigong Yu throwing everything they had to protect the injured pair, Aoxue and the Scaled-Dragon King would've died a long time ago.

Aoxue was a blood dragon, which meant that she was unable to resist this terrifying curse. There was no exception made for her being Lu Yun's envoy. Meanwhile, there was a complete draconic bloodline within the Scaled-Dragon King, which created similar openings for the curse.

This North Sea skydragon tomb... is such a vicious setup! It means to lure all of the draconic experts in the world here and wipe them out! Lu Yun's heart quailed.

The opening of the skydragon tomb was no coincidence!

He brought Aoxue and the others back into hell with a quick shift of his thoughts. The last hopes of the dragon race that the dragon empress was safeguarding... are probably...

The dragon empress had fallen, leaving only a strand of obsession powering the silver eyes to protect the remaining children of her race deep within the dragon nest. But now it seemed that those she looked after... were more likely already dead than not.

"It's that curse! If teacher and the dragon empress can suppress that curse together, then there might still be a chance left!" Qing Han hurriedly postulated.

"What's dead is dead. They can't be brought back to life even if the curse vanishes." Lu Yun shook his head and petted the baby dragon snoring on his shoulder. "It... is probably the last living dragon here."

This baby dragon likely possessed an extraordinary identity for it to be able to resist the tomb's curse.

"Mhmm." Qing Han nodded. "So this means that none of the draconic experts that travel here this time will make it out alive."

"Let's go." Lu Yun waved a hand.

Heart still in his throat, Situ Zong kept patting himself all over and double checking his condition. Finally assured that all was well, he heaved a small sigh of relief.

Before long, the area in front of the group opened up and an enormous ocean of fire and layers of heat waves crashed into view. An enormous tree of flames towered in front of them with several tall and stocky figures engaging in mighty combat beneath its branches, plainly fighting over it.

"Fusang Purewood... no, wait, this isn't it. This is the ultimate treasure of the phoenixes, the divine Fire Parasol Tree! It's not a spirit root, but half spirit root, half divine weapon!" Lu Yun instantly recognized it from Huangqing's memories.

The Fire Parasol Tree!

Legend had it that the ancestor of the phoenixes, the Nine-Headed Divine Phoenix himself, had been born on this tree.

"But shouldn't this be in the depths of a phoenix nest? What's it doing in a dragon nest??" Lu Yun's mind grappled with these new ramifications and failed to do so.

Whirr!!

A large formation abruptly lit up and trapped them all within. There were some other immortals already inside, and even an arcane dao immortal.

"The Blithe Entrapment Formation!" shrieked Situ Zong. "This is a formation of the Witherdew court!"

Chapter 359: Saving People

"So the Witherdew celestial emperor has come...." Situ Zong went as white as a sheet as helplessness subsumed him.

Two years ago, after the tournament in Dusk, the nine celestial emperors had abdicated their thrones, including the Witherdew celestial emperor. The celestial emperor Situ Zong was referring to was his successor. The new celestial emperor hadn't yet reached origin dao immortal, but he was still a powerful arcane dao immortal.

The Star Demon Sect was based in Witherdew Major, and had clashed with the major for nearly twenty thousand years. The former celestial emperor had shown some mercy to them, but his successor violently cut them down as soon as he took the throne.

The new administration had delivered many blows to the Star Demon Sect, and the celestial emperor had even personally taken to the field to deal with the senior council of the sect.

The Blithe Entrapment Formation was Witherdew Major's greatest treasure, akin to the Ingress Path of Nephrite Major. The formation signaled that the Witherdew celestial emperor himself had descended upon the tomb!

"Witherdew Celestial Emperor huh... I wonder if he's the real deal." Lu Yun paused. "The formation is a bit troublesome, though."

The 'entrapment' part of the Blithe Entrapment Formation meant trapping and slaughtering. In other words, the formation was also a killing formation!

Corpses littered the ground within the formation. More than a thousand immortals had been executed, and some had even been churned into meat paste. Survivors were taking shelter behind the protection of dao immortals of their sects, but the dao immortals could only hold their ground for so long, even with the aid of powerful treasures; they themselves couldn't counter the terrible formation.

With a single thought, Lu Yun deployed a magnificent white path to protect himself and his companions before the power of the formation could harm them.

The Ingress Path alleviated the pressure they were under. Upon a second thought, Lu Yun waved a hand, extending the path until it reached the arcane dao immortal among the survivors.

"It's the Ingress Path!" The sudden emergence of the white path ignited hope in many expressions, while the arcane dao immortal blinked at the sudden development.

"Lu Yun?" He frowned at Lu Yun in incomprehension.

"Senior, are you from the Xiangliu Clan of the East Sea?" Lu Yun shouted. "I'm good friends with your eldest prince, Xiangliu Hongzhen."

Grasping the situation, the arcane dao immortal relaxed his brows.

"Ah, stay behind me then, young friend." Lu Yun had surely extended the Ingress Path to him to seek his protection.

He didn't know about the friendship between Lu Yun and the Deaf Prince, but the alliance of profligates had caused no end of trouble on Levitating Island and ended up destroying Myriad Returns Market as the cherry on top. Rumors had placed Lu Yun by Xiangliu Hongzhen's side, and the prince had always idolized the youth sovereign. It made sense for them to become friends.

Strange. Didn't Lu Yun betray the Nephrite court and appoint himself the Dusk Lord? Why would Zhao Changkong give him the Ingress Path? This bit confused the arcane dao immortal. And the man beside him seems to be an aether dao immortal from the Star Demon Sect...

"Please set foot on the Ingress Path, senior. This junior will guide you to safety." Instead of entering the arcane dao immortal's sphere of protection, Lu Yun remained on the path and created an opening.

The arcane dao immortal and the other immortals from the East Sea gaped at him.

Guide them to safety?

The Ingress Path was the most valued treasure of Nephrite Major and could be used to break formations. However, the arcane dao immortal could tell this particular path was merely an imitation.

Nephrite Celestial Emperor Zhao Changkong might be able to escape from the Blithe Entrapment Formation with the real Ingress Path, but wouldn't Lu Yun only be courting death by forcing his way out with an imitation?

"Don't worry, senior." Lu Yun read the arcane dao immortal's expression. He soothed with a smile, "Trust me. It's not in my nature to court death."

The arcane dao immortal then recalled that Lu Yun was said to be a formation grandmaster. After a brief hesitation, he led the surviving dozen immortals onto the Ingress Path with some lingering doubts.

The Blithe Entrapment Formation contained a vicious strength that not only trapped, but killed. As soon as victims entered, they would barely be able to move a muscle. It would be all they could do to counter the formation's power and keep themselves alive.

If Lu Yun didn't give them a hand, they'd soon buckle under the pressure.

Once the Witherdew Celestial Emperor collected the Fire Parasol Tree, he would certainly push the formation to its maximum and kill them all. The new celestial emperor was no merciful monarch, and had killed countless people since his succession.

As soon as the immortals walked onto the Ingress Path, they felt a great pressure lift from their shoulders.

"This old man is Xiangliu Ting. You have my deepest gratitude, young friend!" Xiangliu Ting cupped his hands at Lu Yun and swallowed a pill before sitting down cross-legged to recover his almost exhausted energy.

"There's no need for pleasantries, senior." Lu Yun smiled. He could sense the traces of goodwill coming from the East Sea immortals.

"Lu Yun, young friend Lu Yun. Please help!"

"Take us with you, Dusk Lord!"

"I will never forget your kindness if you save me, Dusk Lord!" a clamor of desperate cries ensued.

There were still hundreds of struggling immortals, protected by roughly a dozen dao immortals, in the formation. However, these dao immortals were far less powerful than Xiangliu Ting. The pallor of death loomed over their faces; they wouldn't be able to last for much longer.

After some deliberation, Lu Yun waved a hand and bifurcated the Ingress Path multiple times to collect the immortals. Feinie and Huangqing had remade the imitation with the Formation Orb, and although it couldn't yet match the original, it was still tremendously powerful.

More importantly, Lu Yun had spotted the weaknesses of the formation and now stood in one of them. He couldn't break the formation itself, but he could poke a hole in the feng shui layout the formation had created.

"Good thing there aren't any ungrateful sorts here," he sighed with relief when he felt the goodwill streaming from those he'd rescued. Their gratitude meant they didn't hold any malicious thoughts toward him, and it wouldn't do him any harm to save them.

Thousands of immortals had died here. The formation had even claimed some arcane dao immortals in their moments of carelessness. It was at this time that Lu Yun had descended upon them and saved them from impending doom like a savior from the heavens. Of course they weren't going to do anything untoward or start any trouble.

"Sit tight, everyone. We're getting out of here." Black light flared in Lu Yun's eyes. The structure of the formation deteriorated and turned into a feng shui layout in his view.

Chapter 360: Deterring with Military Might

"Thirty-six hundred and fifty feng shui layouts born out of the grand influence over the world—the highest possible feng shui rank!" Lu Yun's brows bunched slightly together.

If there were 3,650 feng shui layouts here, that meant that the Blithe Entrapment Formation itself was a combination of the same number of formations. Every single one of the formations was rooted to a formation disk, and each of them were individual pieces of a complete grand formation.

That was what had given rise to the feng shui layouts here. Formations and layouts were two sides of the same coin, but feng shui layouts were more complicated.

Still, there was no feng shui layout in the world that Lu Yun couldn't deal with. He was the greatest commandant ever to be found in his sect—not only in terms of his ability in raiding tombs, but also his talent in the dao of feng shui. In fact, he'd exceeded even the sect forefather with his knowledge of feng shui.

Although Lu Yun couldn't destroy the powerful feng shui layouts, he could identify their weaknesses and escape.

"There." In a thousandth of a second, he saw a tiny crack within the layers of layouts. "Let's go!"

Hum.

The Ingress Path transformed into a ray of white light and disappeared. When it reemerged, they'd already reached a clearing outside the Blithe Entrapment Formation. The sinister chill of the formation was suddenly replaced by waves of intense heat.

“We’re really out!” Xiangliu Ting blurted out, his eyes wide.

“Silence!” snapped Lu Yun. “Recover your inner energy at once.”

He warily scanned their surroundings. A chaotic fight was in full swing here as immortals from various factions were fighting each other to the death.

Under the canopy of the Fire Parasol Tree, three tremendous figures clashed with great ferocity in the air. It was Beigong Xuan, the Witherdew celestial emperor, and an elite from House Donglin!

The three were uniformly eight-fruit arcane dao immortals, which made them almost unrivalled in the world of immortals. While the immortals below fought just as hard, they still fell short compared to the three in the sky. Even so, they hadn’t given up yet.

This was the legendary Fire Parasol Tree!

Both a connate-grade treasure and a connate spirit root, it could only be described as a connate supreme treasure. Something like this inspired the worst kind of greed in everyone, compelling them to vie for it with no concern for their lives.

The Witherdew celestial emperor had even gone to the lengths of using his formation scroll to set up a Blithe Entrapment Formation, so as to stop later powerhouses from entering the competition over the tree.

Cultivation and strength alone weren’t enough to claim a supreme connate-grade treasure like the Fire Parasol Tree; luck and fate played even more important roles. Whoever acquired the treasure was fated to own it, which was why even the presence of three supreme elites wasn’t enough to deter the immortals from risking their lives for the tree.

Unlike the Fusang Purewood, which had connate flames sprouting from its branches as leaves, the Fire Parasol Tree was a three-hundred-meter-tall tree with lush, green leaves. Brimming with great vitality, the tree itself was enveloped in a bright yellow flame. Symbiotically dependent with each other, flame and tree combined to form a single entity.

Neither could survive without the other.

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The sudden arrival of Lu Yun and the others made the immortals’ blood boil, and many pivoted straight to charging at their new competition for the treasure.

“Situ,” commanded Lu Yun.

Without missing a beat, Situ Zong aimed the cannon on his back at the incoming immortals.

Bam!

A pillar of white light spewed out of the cannon and disintegrated more than a hundred immortals with a single hit.

“A weapon of war!!” someone screamed and fled in the opposite direction. Rarely did anyone see a weapon of war in action, but the immortals here were no stranger to its power.

“Lu Yun!!” Beigong Xuan growled in fury from the sky above. Black sword energy flared from his body and slashed viciously at Lu Yun.

Bam!

The elite of House Donglin and the Witherdew celestial emperor trembled, knocked back by Beigong Xuan’s sudden outburst.

They both came to a halt with unspoken agreement; they’d all heard about Lu Yun and his feats. The celestial emperor looked down darkly. The Blithe Entrapment Formation was one of his major’s greatest weapons, yet Lu Yun showing up here meant he’d broken out of it.

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Tremendous sword energy pierced through air and touched the top of Lu Yun’s head in an instant. Beigong Xuan’s full power could threaten heaven and earth!

Bam!

Bam!

Bam!

.....

Seventeen beams of light shot out from around Lu Yun, meeting the powerful sword slash head-on.

Bam!

Crack crack crack!

Layers of formations had emerged out of the blue at some point, and were now shattering in successive fashion beneath the powerful shockwaves created by the meeting of seventeen light beams and sword energy. When the last of the formations broke, the remaining shockwaves had been reduced to a gentle wind that stroked Lu Yun’s face and lifted a strand of his long hair.

“What?!” Beigong Xuan gawked at the seventeen people suddenly appearing by Lu Yun’s side. Each of them shouldered a giant cannon!

Including the one on Situ Zong’s shoulders, that made for eighteen cannons in total, and they were all aimed squarely at Beigong Xuan.

All movement halted involuntarily as everyone stared at the incredible scene. A mere cultivator with powerful treasures had held his ground against an eight-fruit arcane dao immortal!

“Supplemental paths as king, they really do rule all.... The young lord wasn’t completely twisting things for his own purpose earlier! Since combat arts and dao techniques have declined, it’s time for supplemental paths to take center stage!” Situ Zong stared dumbly at Lu Yun, overwhelmed with awe by the young man. Only in this moment did he wholeheartedly submit to his young lord!

Qing Yunhe and Canghai Chengkong, who’d been lurking in the dark since their arrival, gaped at the unbelievable outcome.

“That kid’s breaking all the rules... he really wants to topple the current order of the world of immortals!” Qing Yunhe said, dumbfounded. Canghai Chengkong’s mouth went dry.

“He... actually knows where to draw the line!” muttered the Witherdew celestial emperor. “He could’ve easily shattered the Blithe Entrapment Formation with the eighteen weapons of war to escape....”

He felt a chill spread through his scalp. If his formation was broken, everyone would go after him. After all, he’d yet to reach the peak of the realm and become a true celestial emperor.

“Do you want to end this here, Beigong Xuan?”

Thud!

Another giant cannon appeared in Lu Yun’s hands.

The Black Emperor!

Its presence made everyone’s heart quail. They could tell that the Black Emperor was much more powerful than the other ‘weapons of war’. But what they didn’t know was that the Black Emperor was still in a state of cooldown.

It’d only been a day since Lu Yun had made a fully powered attack with the cannon; it needed six more days to cool down.

Thinking of his control over time, Lu Yun had originally returned to hell with the Black Emperor and waited for seven days, but that hadn’t worked. The weapon had been refined with Divine Seaward Iron and blessed with a special power. It needed seven days in the world of immortals before it could be used again.

Still, the threat of nineteen weapons of war was enough to intimidate the immortals here and keep them from putting a toe out of place. Not even Beigong Xuan dared make a move.

Meanwhile, Lu Yun’s heart was bleeding for his loss. He’d used up tens of billions of immortal crystals with the concerted attacks of the seventeen cannons earlier! Even with all the riches he’d recently acquired, he couldn’t go on like this.

The imitations, including the Black Emperor, devoured crystals like the worst gluttons. In fact, they used up more crystals than real weapons of war.

I need to make another raid! The dragon palace is headquarters of only the North Sea court, but the North Sea monster spirits must have their own territory. They didn’t always reside in these waters, after all. Or perhaps I should go after the territory of the blackwater snakes.... Lu Yun’s mind raced with devious plans.

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“Lu Yun!” Beigong Xuan bit out angrily with venom in his eyes, but he stayed his hands. “Do you want to make all immortals in the world your enemies?”

“All immortals? No, I only consider the immortals of the North Sea court my enemies! Members of the court, you better get out of here or I’ll kill you all!” Lu Yun scoffed. “I don’t care if anyone else wants the

Fire Parasol Tree, but I will not tolerate the presence of any monster spirit immortals from the North Sea court!

“In three breaths, Situ, exterminate any North Sea monster spirits who haven’t yet left!”

Situ Zong aimed the cannon on his shoulder at a dao immortal of the North Sea court. White light lit up the mouth of the cannon in preparation for an attack.

Bam!

In the next second, the aether dao immortal was rendered into ashes.

“It hasn’t been three breaths!” a monster immortal screamed in terror.

“Time’s up,” Lu Yun huffed. “Kill them!”

“We go!” roared Beigong Xuan. With a wave of his sleeve, he took all his people with him and made a speedy escape.

“You’re just going to let them go?” the Azure Dragon King transmitted curiously from the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals.

Lu Yun shrugged. “What else can I do? Are you able to defeat him?”

The dragon king looked sour. He could easily deal with initial arcane dao immortals in his current state, but fighting a powerhouse like Beigong Xuan would once again shatter the body he’d just restored. The realization filled him with incredible frustration. At his peak, he would’ve been able to kill ten thousand arcane immortals like Beigong Xuan with a single puff.

“The seventeen lesser cannons have reached their limit. Another use will destroy them all! Eighteen of these precioues were all I could craft with the resources I had,” sighed Lu Yun.

Just now, the seventeen cannons had used up three billion crystals to deliver a full-powered attack. They were at their melting point, and needed to cool down like the Black Emperor. Using them again in short succession would utterly destroy the weapons, or Lu Yun would’ve already blasted Beigong Xuan to hell.

The Azure Dragon King fell silent.

“Alright, y’all may continue then.” With a wave of his hand, Lu Yun ordered the Infernum carrying the cannons back to hell. He sat down on the ground and looked over his shoulder at the immortals gaping at him.

“What are you waiting for?” he grumbled. “Hurry and recover your internal energy, or do you not want the Fire Parasol Tree?”