

Necropolis 361

Chapter 361.1: Sect Head

The immortals who Lu Yun had saved from the Blithe Entrapment Formation broke out of their stunned stupor and sat down cross-legged to recover their inner energy.

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“He’s just putting up a front. I’ll bet he has nothing left after scaring away that wuss Beigong Xuan.” The Witherdew celestial emperor paused when he saw Lu Yun’s next moves. The seventeen lesser cannons were melting. Some had even cracked and were close to shattering.

“However, Lu Yun extended an olive branch in not destroying the formation. It would seem that he isn’t willing to erupt in open hostilities between us. I, Tuoba Jie, have a penchant for killing, but I’m not an unreasonable man.” This was a tall and slender man with fair and clean cut looks, but a beastly bloodlust twinkled in his eyes. He eagerly shifted his gaze to the arcane dao immortal of House Donglin.

“Let us continue, Donglin E.”

Swoosh!

The celestial emperor brandished his sword and advanced on the Donglin dao immortal.

Donglin E had been prepared to go after Lu Yun and settle the feud between the Dusk lord and House Donglin, but Tuoba Jie’s sudden attack caught him off guard and forced him to devote his attention to defense.

Meanwhile, numerous other Donglin immortals were converging on Lu Yun.

“Those seventeen cannons can’t be used, but no one said anything about the one Situ’s carrying. Why do you guys never learn?” Lu Yun shook his head with disappointment.

Bam!

White light shot out of the cannon on Situ Zong’s shoulder and decimated the aether dao immortal closest to him. The Donglin immortals shuddered and hurriedly back away.

Donglin E glared so hard that the corners of his eyes threatened to split. Rage translated into enraged roars as he attempted to lunge at Lu Yun, but was blocked by the Witherdew celestial emperor every time.

“We are your opponent, Donglin E!” Tuoba Jie laughed heartily. “Wuss, blast a few more of those Donglin wimps to pieces and I’ll kill old man Donglin E. We can split the treasures here!”

Lu Yun turned to Tuoba Jie in surprise. “Who’re you talking about, wuss?”

“Who are We... piss off, milksop. You’re the wuss here!!” Tuoba Jie cursed loudly, almost having fallen for Lu Yun’s verbal trick.

Lu Yun shrugged and had Situ Zong aim the cannon at the celestial emperor.

“What are you doing?!” Tuoba Jie’s expression twisted. What the hell was Lu Yun thinking?!

“The Star Demon Sect is mine.” Lu Yun pointed at himself. “You made it suffer great losses, so I’m getting payback!”

“What? You’re saying you’re the sect head of the Star Demon Sect?!” His claim stunned the crowd into stillness.

The Star Demon Sect had suddenly emerged twenty thousand years ago and had since grown to become the most powerful demon sect in the world of immortals. But suddenly it was... Lu Yun’s? He was the sect head?

The sect was shrouded in mystery and its inner structure unusually complicated. Many factions in the world of immortals had attempted to infiltrate the sect, but to no avail. Almost everyone entering the sect ended up wholeheartedly devoted to it, cutting themselves off from their original factions. Quite a few even became counterspies and sold their old factions out.

One thing was confirmed, though, and that was that no one knew who the sect head was. But here Lu Yun was, claiming to own the sect!

Situ Zong was caught by surprise as well. He hadn’t expected that Lu Yun would publicly spell out his relationship with the Star Demon Sect.

If the young lord becomes our sect head, then we’ll.... Situ Zong’s eyes lit up. Supplemental paths as king!

Dusk Province was emerging as the sacred land of both immortal dao and supplemental paths. Thus, Lu Yun needed to exert his dominance!

Since the Star Demon Sect had volunteered themselves, there was no reason for him to turn them away. Even if the sect didn’t end up as his, he needed the boost of reputation.

The Lu and the Chen Clans were effectively destroyed, and the Skandha Range too loosely-organized a faction to properly support him. As for the Panorama Pavilion, it consisted of only a group of merchants, and merchants pursued nothing but profit.

Thus, the Star Demon Sect was his only option.

Situ Zong quickly called upon his nascent spirit to transmit Lu Yun’s declaration back to the Star Demon Sect, sending a ripple of shock through its members. The five heavyweights that led the sect were overjoyed.

“Finally, the seat that has been empty for twenty thousand years will be filled!” A magnificent figure burst into delighted laughter.

“I always thought our sect head would be the Divine Willow,” rang out a woman’s lilting voice, “but it turns out to be our young lord!”

The five heavyweights had established the Star Demon Sect under mysterious instructions, but the faction had never possessed a single, ultimate leader.

“Announce it to the world at once that Lu Yun of Dusk Province is our sect head!” rasped a hoarse voice.

“Wouldn’t that be unwise, First Sovereign?” the woman said hesitantly. “We’re notorious in the world of immortals. With the young lord’s limited cultivation, he won’t be able to deal with the many enemies the declaration will make for him.

“Besides... disciples who don’t know the truth of the matter won’t accept him.”

“Does the young lord... sect head lack for enemies in the world?” asked the hoarse voice. “He wishes to borrow the sect’s influence, and with him as our sect head, the wandering cultivators of the Skandha Range will flock to us in due time as well.

“If you’re worried about the punks, we’ll let the sect head deal with them when he returns. The young lord was handpicked by the will of the demon sovereign...”

The dim space they were speaking in abruptly lit up, illuminating a gargantuan altar, on which sat four giant coffin-statues in the place of worship. There were the Enneaworm Coffinbearers, the Nine-Phoenix Casket, and two other obscured statues.

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Reactions took the world of immortals by storm. After suddenly declaring that Dusk Lord Lu Yun was head of the Star Demon Sect, the infamous faction fell dead silent.

Factions and sects who had beef with Lu Yun made no comment, and the enemies of the Star Demon Sect kept mum as well.

In the Skandha Range, hearty chortles resounded. The desolate willow’s black, jade-like branches swept through the mountain and isolated it, beginning a surprise house cleaning. Executions were on the docket for the many spies that’d managed to infiltrate the faction.

“Pass down my orders,” said the desolate willow. “The Skandha Range will henceforth consolidate into the Star Demon Sect and serve Lu Yun, our sect head!”

Chapter 361.2: Sect Head

Receiving word of the latest developments in the world from their subordinates, Tuoba Jie and Donglin E stared at Lu Yun in incomprehension. What was going on here? As soon as Lu Yun declared the Star Demon Sect to be his, the sect confirmed him as its head!

Is he a bastard son of those five old freaks, or a disciple the five of them have raised together?

Tuoba Jie was deep in thought.

Donglin E brooded, his eyes shifting rapidly back and forth.

“The Star Demon Sect must be trying to gain a foothold in Dusk Province,” he scoffed. He wasn’t the only one to come to the conclusion; this was the pet theory that Tuoba Jie had settled on as well.

“Then let them,” Lu Yun said with a casual expression, but he glanced at the Fire Parasol Tree every once in a while. “There’s only a handful of people in Dusk, so I’m in great need of manpower.”

Most of Lu Yun's subordinates were Envoys of Samsara or Infernum. Dusk Province might be the sacred land of immortal dao, but to his followers, it was no match for hell. If Lu Yun hadn't ordered Yuying to govern the province for him, she would've long ago returned to hell to cultivate.

Dusk Province needed more people!

If the Star Demon Sect was willing to settle down in the province, Lu Yun would immediately leave all governing responsibilities to them and happily step back to be nothing more than a figurehead.

He'd never wanted anything from Dusk Province, other than to use it to promote his tomb raiding sect. It would save him a lot of time and effort if he could transform the Star Demon Sect into his instead.

Lu Yun greatly valued his freedom, and didn't want to be tied down by any sort of obligations he hadn't chosen for himself.

"Alright!" He shot to his feet and patted imaginary dust off his clothes. Then, he took a step to the side and completely shielded Qing Han. Many appeared to have Lu Yun in their sights, but their attention was actually on Qing Han, the youth Dao Sovereign appointed by the Dao Flower itself.

Qing Yunhe and Canghai Chengfeng exchanged a bewildered look; their disoriented minds couldn't grasp how things had panned out. When did Lu Yun even become the head of the Star Demon Sect?

"As head of the Star Demon Sect," Lu Yun pointed at himself, "I have certain status and authority. As for real strength...."

He glanced at Situ Zong, who quickly straightened his back and aimed the cannon at the two immortals in the sky.

"Do I have the right to hold a conversation with you two now?" Lu Yun asked, craning his neck at the two men.

"Right?" Donglin E sneered. "You're nothing but an ant that I can crush with a simple step."

"Oh?" Seventeen figures emerged next to Lu Yun again. There were still eighteen cannons resting on their shoulders.

"The taboo treasures you've refined to imitate weapons of war were pushed to the limit earlier," snorted Donglin E. "They can't be used again." His lips froze mid-curl.

Eighteen cannons had lit up at the same time, gathering terrifying immortal energy that pulsed with an equally frightening aura.

"Get the hell out of here with your people. Or you may kill me now, but end up severely injured by my weapons and breathing your last here in the dragon tomb." Lu Yun's expression was defiant as he tipped his head up. "Even if you're so lucky as to escape the tomb, my clan's ancestor and the Star Demon Sect will be waiting for you."

Whoosh!

Donglin E broke out into a cold sweat—he couldn't take the bet. These taboo treasures might not be able to kill him, but they could severely injure him, which was as good as being dead here in the dragon tomb.

That was why Beigong Xuan had run off earlier. And now, it was his turn. He threw another glance at the nearby Fire Parasol Tree with frustration in his eyes.

"Let's go!" He swept the Donglin immortals to him and left, a cold smile playing on his lips.

"You have a vicious enough style!" Tuoba Jie approved, then was promptly aghast to see the eighteen cannons swivel toward him. He collected the scroll of the Blithe Entrapment Formation without another word and left with the immortals of the Witherdew court.

All three heavyweights had left with their factions, immediately halving the number of immortals present.

"I don't really want to go on a killing spree, so all of you must leave." Black flames ignited in Lu Yun's eyes.

Seeing even the Witherdew celestial emperor driven away, the remaining immortals were too intimidated to stick around. They might covet treasure, but not at the price of their lives.

Once the last of them made their escape, a pale Lu Yun turned to shout at the immortals he'd saved earlier, "Now, you too! Piss off out of here, now!!"

Finally, someone felt that something was wrong.

"Has something happened?" Xiangliu Ting asked worriedly.

"Get out!!" Lu Yun growled like a wounded animal. "Or you'll all die! Go!"

Xiangliu Ting and the other immortals tensed. They could tell from Lu Yun's tone that he wasn't threatening them with death. Something terrible here wanted them dead!

Lu Yun's now completely pitch-black eyes stared fixedly at the Fire Parasol Tree. "Qing Yunhe, Canghai Chengfeng, get out of here if you don't want to die!" The cannons aimed at where the two men were hiding.

They smiled wryly and took their leave.

"Qing Han..." Lu Yun's voice softened.

"I'm not leaving." Qing Han shook his head with a strange smile. "If you die, I'll have the world of immortals and all of the other worlds be your burial goods."

If Lu Yun died, he would follow Lu Yun. The curse in his body would come into effect then, and countless living beings would die as a result!

"I'm not going, either," Situ Zong said with great determination, punting Situ Yun out of the area. "If I die, I will do it protecting the sect head."

Some immortals hadn't gone far, staying in the vicinity of the clearing to observe the situation. Lu Yun's expression finally made them realize that something was wrong.

"Isolate this place with the Blithe Entrapment Formation," Lu Yun muttered, his head lowered.

Tuoba Jie, having doubled back to hide in the shadows, manifested the formation scroll he'd put away before. It slowly unfurled to isolate the clearing.

"What has he discovered?" murmured the celestial emperor, whose plans had been to surreptitiously sneak off with the Fire Parasol Tree should an opportunity present itself.

"Stay there and don't move. Not a single muscle. There's hope as long as you survive. If you die, we're all doomed." There was a slight tremor to Lu Yun's voice as he advised his friend.

Qing Han opened his mouth but didn't say anything, his gaze fixed on the luopan suddenly appearing in Lu Yun's hand. All three of the indicators pointed to the Fire Parasol Tree, and bloody characters surfaced the fortune-telling second layer of the compass: Great Evil.

Before Qing Han could say anything, Lu Yun turned around and approached the tree.

Chapter 362: Ghost Tree

Lu Yun approached the Fire Parasol Tree with a stern expression.

"Bunch of brainless bastards who only know how to make things worse!" he suddenly erupted.

"Charging into an ancient tomb knowing jack shit and just throwing their lives away like the useless fucks they are! What fucking North Sea emperor, trash of House Donglin, or Witherdew Celestial Emperor—you were all going to die here and fertilize the ghost tree!"

"What a bunch of amazingly braindead morons all of you are! There's practically a lit-up billboard here saying this is a trap, and you jumped right into it! If you want to die so much, go slit your throats outside!"

Those lingering on the fringes of the clearing pulled faces of hateful resentment at Lu Yun. They were all powerhouses who'd long earned their reputation in the world of immortals, and flames of fury billowed to hear a youth humiliate them in public.

"Babbling fools!" Lu Yun snarled again. "Don't you see all the dead immortals on the ground have been sucked dry?"

"Yet you keep killing and killing and killing! That Witherdew celestial emperor is even more of a pea-brained village idiot! Slaughtering people en masse with the Blithe Entrapment Formation? You just want to accelerate your death, don't you?!"

Tuoba Jie exchanged a glance with Donglin E, both men shuddering at the thought. Just like the celestial emperor, Donglin E had stealthily crept back alone, in hopes of being the oriole behind the mantis and cicada.

The two arcane dao immortals looked down for the first time since arriving in the clearing and realized the immortals who'd died during fighting for the tree had become withered husks, their fragmented souls, flesh, and blood all devoured by something unknown.

Greed had filled their minds and blinded their eyes earlier, preventing them from noticing the aberrations in the vicinity or the danger creeping in from the sides.

"If only I'd arrived even fifteen minutes earlier," Lu Yun muttered in a voice that only he could hear. Those he killed would've become his Infernum rather than be absorbed by the Fire Parasol Tree.

If the group of immortals had refused to leave earlier, Lu Yun would've killed them without hesitation.

At the edge of the clearing, Qing Han worried his lip between his teeth, concern shining in his eyes. The Lu Yun he knew wouldn't talk like this for no good reason. He was snapping and venting his spleen on the immortals outside because he was extremely nervous and needed to somehow loosen the lump of anxious energy in his throat.

This was no Fire Parasol Tree, but a ghost tree!

The real tree had already been devoured and turned into an outer skin for the ghost tree. This kind of tree was born of a superior-grade spirit root resurrected from a miasma of endless resentment and malice. Thus reborn as a new kind of spirit root, its might was all the more terrifying, despite not being a connate spirit root.

It was, in fact, the bane of all spirit roots. Even the Fire Parasol, a connate-grade supreme treasure that itself was half spirit root, had ended up as its fertilizer.

The ghost tree was an existence of great yin and evil, born to devour everything in the world. If it was allowed to grow and enter the world of immortals, a great calamity would descend upon the lands and countless living souls would become its nutrients.

Within Lu Yun's dantian, the Sal Tree of Life and Death was protected by a circle of blazing hellfire. Once fully grown, it might not fear the ghost tree, but right now, it was far from being the ghost tree's match.

"What an... interesting place the world of immortals is. First I saw a zombie tree, now I meet a ghost tree..." Lu Yun was thinking of the zombie tree in the eastern tomb realm of the Skandha Extinction Tomb.

The ghost tree wasn't as large as that one, but it was much more powerful. The zombie tree feared fire, so the three immortal fires had been able to disintegrate it easily. The ghost tree, however, was bathed in a strange flame that could rival the three immortal fires.

Lu Yun inhaled deeply as he approached the tree, his eyes fixed on it. It had yet to fully mature, and needed more flesh and souls to nurture it. At the moment, at least, it couldn't move.

Swoosh!

Little leaves of scarlet fire blazed as a grimacing ghost face appeared out of nowhere, its fiery eyes staring at Lu Yun.

Dragon howls rang from atop the tree, its branches suddenly transforming into decaying dragon corpses. Snarling, they brandished their claws at Lu Yun and glared at him with vicious, pale eyes. Immortal ghosts born from dead dragonlings circled about the corpses.

“So this is the spot.... You’re the culprit who destroyed the draconic bloodline in the dragon nest!” Lu Yun’s eyes went round. “You used the Dragon Empress....”

The empress could control some of the immortal ghosts in the tomb, but that was because the ghosts had been dragons when they were alive.

“She died here, and you ate her!!” Lu Yun jerked his head up to the largest corpse on the tree. It was a dragon covered in silver scales, with a pair of silver eyes set in its head. There was no sign of decay on its body, but it was a zombie nonetheless.

The ghost tree remained unmoving. Its fiery eyes remained fixed on Lu Yun—no, on the young dragon on his shoulder.

“Qing Han... tell Senior Myrtlestar to be careful,” Lu Yun transmitted when the realization struck him. “Where she’s going is very likely a trap! The lingering obsession of the empress has probably become a puppet of the tree.”

The one thing the Dragon Empress cared about wasn’t the dragons in the dragon nest, but the young one on Lu Yun’s shoulder!

With its resurrection, the empress’ obsession should’ve dissipated. However, she yet lingered on, which meant she’d become enthralled by the ghost tree! Wherever Empress Myrtlestar was going with the Dragon Empress was likely a trap!

“I’ve... lost contact with my teacher....” Qing Han’s voice trembled and a lost look filtered into his eyes. Empress Myrtlestar was the single most important person to the disguised girl other than Lu Yun, Qing Buyi, and Chen Xiao. Knowing that she might be in danger jabbed at him like numerous sharp blades.

"To seek a dragon of mountains coiled,

Those deathly cliffs with mysteries roiled.

Danger shies if mountains hide,

Multitudes of evils in layers bide!" Lu Yun emitted a long whistle.

The compass in his hand burst into blinding golden light, its large image covering the entire clearing. Nothing could hide its true nature from the luopan’s aureate rays. Killing formations and layouts reared their ugly heads, and even the Blithe Entrapment Formation’s scroll was revealed.

“What... the heck is this place?!” Outside the clearing, Tuoba Jie, Donglin E, and immortals who hadn’t left yet yelped in horror. The clearing of about ten kilometers wide had been blanketed in fire and light from the Fire Parasol, but now they saw a completely different world.

Skeletons and corpses formed piles all over the clearing. Immortals who had died in the tomb—except for those who died at Lu Yun’s hands—were all here. Their bodies were already zombies, and their spirits, immortal ghosts. The clearing was almost filled to the brim.

This was the truth of the matter!

Tuoba Jie and Donglin E even glimpsed their subordinates and clan members who had died in other places of the tomb!

Lu Yun had noticed signs of something unusual when he'd first set foot in the clearing. That was why he'd pretended to want the Fire Parasol Tree for himself and driven everyone away with a combination of intimidation and threats. Doing so had prevented alarming the enemy beforehand.

He'd wanted Xiangliu Ting and the others to recover their inner energy not so they could fight for the tree, but so that they could escape this place. If more immortals died before the ghost tree and fed it enough spirits and bodies, it would truly awaken.

Then the dragon nest would become no man's land; no one would be able to survive. Lu Yun would have no choice but to escape into the Gates of the Abyss, and Qing Han and Situ Zong would die.

Chapter 363: I'm Already Here

"What's that? That thing in his hand, it looks like a compass. It revealed the truth of our surroundings!" Some shifted their attention from the ghosts and zombies to the item in Lu Yun's hand.

A luopan!

Its golden light had revealed all the creatures and layouts in the area for what they were.

"No wonder Lu Yun and Qing Han were able to make their way here safely as two cultivators. Such a treasure can reveal all dangers in a tomb. If I can get my hands on it...."

All eyes were suddenly on the compass Lu Yun was holding, the Witherdew celestial emperor and Donglin E's included.

"That's refined from a Ten Orientations Stone," identified a well-cultured voice.

Immortals turned to find a young man with the air of a mortal scholar leisurely leaning against a rock.

"The ten Orientations Stone?" The ingredient took them by surprise, its name well-known to their ears.

It was an extremely rare material that exceeded ninth rank. Any master refiner in the world of immortals would go mad with want if they laid eyes on it.

"A year and a half ago, the Panorama Pavilion held an auction for the stone in Xiankan and it ended up in Lu Yun's hand," Qing Yunhe said at a deliberate pace. "At that time, Grandmaster Zhurong Cangshan of the Zhurong Clan asked Lu Yun for it, but was convinced to give up after Lu Yun demonstrated the greatest technique of equipment dao: the forge of earth and sky.

"He said he was going to refine a treasure with the stone. It would seem that he succeeded."

"Qing Yunhe from the Qing Clan!" Many immortals recognized him.

"What evidence do you have to support your claim that it was refined from a Ten Orientations Stone?" An aether dao immortal from House Donglin narrowed his eyes with a scoff. "You'd better think first about the consequences before you run your mouth!"

This compass could reveal every evil and trap in ancient tombs, which in itself made it remarkably valuable, even more so than the Ingress Path of Nephrite Major.

If Lu Yun had acquired it, it wouldn't be that much of a big deal. But if the youth had refined it himself... the ramifications of that were great enough to disrupt the status quo of the world of immortals.

The Ten Orientations Stone was rare, but if Lu Yun could refine one compass, he could refine many more. Most heavyweights were already convinced, but just didn't want to admit it.

"You haven't noticed, have you?" Canghai Chengfeng spoke up from Qing Yunhe's side, someone else who'd slipped back after receiving his marching orders. "Lu Yun used a combat art or method when activating the compass. Only with the two in tandem can the treasure fulfill its true purpose."

"Lu Yun's mastered a special heritage, a heritage for raiding ancient tombs." His tone was casual, but what he'd said almost drove everyone mad. They stared ardently at Lu Yun like they had at the Fire Parasol Tree. A living treasure moved and breathed right before their eyes!

"However, he's also the head of the Star Demon Sect," Canghai Chengfeng continued, effectively dousing his audience with a bucket of freezing water and snapping them out of their greedy craze.

"Star Demon Sect, Star Demon Sect...." The knowledge weighed heavily on everyone's mind.

Even the Witherdew celestial emperor looked wary. His relentless pressure and persecution of the Star Demon Sect was only to intimidate them, making them so cautious that they wouldn't make a move against him while he grew and filled out his wings.

Canghai Chengfeng and Qing Yunhe exchanged a look.

"That must be what Lu Yun meant when he said supplemental paths as king and wanting to raid all the tombs in the world...."

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Lu Yun was now close to the Ghost Tree bathed in blazing fire. Golden light shot out from the luopan, seemingly forming several minor worlds to drive away the unholy beings. While the Dragonsearch Invocation hummed in continual operation, the indicators and three layers of the compass continued to overlap and diverge, deducing the truth of the place.

"This isn't the heart of the dragon nest, but a qi point.

"This nest lays at the intersection of water and fire, which happens to form a great influence of the world. We are at the point of fire, so there must be a place of water somewhere else in the nest. If there's a creature like this there as well..." Lu Yun mumbled, his forehead slightly creased.

Dragon nests were the ancestral lands of the dragon clan where dragonlings were nurtured, So this couldn't be a layout of yin and yang. Those represented life and death, and were layouts for the dead.

Although this place had been modified into a tomb, it was still a dragon nest. Only through the interaction of water and fire could there be a layout facilitating procreation and the flourishing of one's descendants.

The dragon nest itself was a grand influence of feng shui where water and fire intersected. If Lu Yun's theory was right, the fire enveloping the Ghost Tree must be the ancestral fire of the dragons.

The fire had been extinguished when the nest was changed into a tomb, but for some reason, the Fire Parasol Tree then appeared here and ignited it anew with its connate fire.

What about the water point? How is that manifested? The vast North Sea, or... Questions chased after each other in Lu Yun's thoughts.

The Ghost Tree had become one with the dragon nest, devouring the souls and bodies of entering dragons to revitalize itself. But as long as it hadn't completely come back to life, Lu Yun could use the layout against it. The key to destroying the place of fire was the place of water.

Only, he couldn't be sure if the latter had also become host to another terrible creature.

"Wait! Point of water... can it be?!" A shudder ran down his spine as he recalled a terrible being.

Water Ghost Grasp!

A monster that was both spirit and layout. Even Lu Yun couldn't find a way to deal with it.

That's right. Water has no form, and it's not confined to a single location. The layout of Water Ghost Grasp must be the place of water...

The luopan in his hand flared again, driving back the agitated monsters as his mind raced.

The Ghost Tree teetered between the realm of life and death. Though its will continued to influence the monsters around them, it hadn't yet been fully resurrected.

Lu Yun poured everything he had into the luopan and pushed it to its limit, suppressing the Ghost Tree's natural instincts while his brain went into overdrive, searching for a way to kill it.

"Qing Han!" he transmitted suddenly. "Go back to the room where we encountered Qing Quan. The Water Ghost Grasp must be there. Try to lure it here!"

A way to locate its true self had suddenly struck him.

"That won't be necessary," a voice murmured at his ear. "I'm already here."

Chapter 364: Ghost Dragon Battles Ghost Tree

Having the voice come out of nowhere and suddenly whisper into his ear raised all the hairs on the back of Lu Yun's neck. It'd overheard his transmission to Qing Han!

Qing Han's worried gaze stayed on Lu Yun; he hadn't heard anything from his friend.

I'm already here.

It'd always been here.

A quick scan of the surroundings revealed only an endless supply of zombies and immortal ghosts. There was no sign of the Water Ghost Grasp; even the Spectral Eye couldn't detect it.

Has its power exceeded that of the Tome of Life and Death?

Lu Yun lowered his head with a dark expression. His consciousness spread like mercury out from his Purple Manor, amplified to tremendous heights by the power of hellfire.

“Ah... you aren’t really here.” He tilted his head up and looked back at the ghost tree.

Its blazing eyes remained fixed to the snoring dragonling on Lu Yun’s shoulder. Patently, the ghost tree cared very much about this dragon. In fact, it’d tacitly allowed the immortal ghosts of other dragonlings to consume the souls of immortals as nutrition for this baby dragon.

“You’re in a different space,” Lu Yun said in a voice only he could hear. “This dragon nest is a location in which the layout of water and fire meet, a grand influence of the world where the two elements synergize and strengthen each other.”

“Oh?” the voice said.

“The layout of fire comes from the ancestral fire of the dragons. As for the layout of water, it must come from a water treasure that can create its own world, which is where your true body is!”

That was how the Water Ghost Grasp killed its victims—by dragging them into the treasure to drown them.

Only silence answered him. Then, a white figure slowly padded out from thin air.

“Jin Heyi?!” Lu Yun froze when he saw the newcomer’s face. It was Jin Heyi, who had been killed by Water Ghost Grasp earlier.

“...no, you’re not him. You’re Ao Lin, the crown prince of the North Sea dragons from ten thousand years ago.” Lu Yun’s eyes flashed black as he called upon his death art.

Ao Lin had died and become an immortal ghost. Thus, Lu Yun could easily see his identity with the Spectral Eye. He was the first prince of the dragon clan, Aoxue’s elder brother.

Ghost Dragon’s eyes turned black as they settled in blank shock on Lu Yun. After a beat, he responded quietly, “Ao Lin is no more. I am Ghost Dragon.” He turned to the ghost tree with a mutter. “I finally meet the one who destroyed the North Sea dragons.”

Public knowledge put the blackwater snakes as the ones who’d destroyed the North Sea dragons, but in truth, the blackwater snakes by themselves were no match for the dragons. The true culprit was this ghost tree, which had been in this tomb for an unknown period of time.

Ghost Dragon had merged with the water treasure and become the layout of water in the dragon nest. Although the water and fire layouts strengthened each other, they could never meet.

He was finally able to see the tree in person because Lu Yun had suppressed the layout of fire with his luopan and diminished the conflicting power of the two layouts.

At last, the two great horrors met.

The ghost tree didn’t spare a glance for Ghost Dragon; its gaze remained fixed on the dragonling on Lu Yun’s shoulder.

“No, we can’t have any more death here, or it’ll become stronger!” Lu Yun exclaimed when he noticed that the number of immortal ghosts and corpses in the area had grown much higher, and the tree’s presence had solidified even more as well.

“Death fuels me too.” Ghost Dragon quirked his lips in a malicious smile. “Whoever covets the territory of the dragons must die.”

The flesh and souls of immortals who’d died in the tomb would not only come here and become immortal ghosts, but a portion would also enter Ghost Dragon’s treasure and turn into water ghosts.

He, too, was drawing upon the strength of the dead immortals.

That was why the ghost tree had projected the image of the Fire Parasol Tree; it wanted to lure in more immortals. Only those who died in the point of fire would be fully absorbed by the tree.

“You’re not like the tree,” Lu Yun snorted. “You’ll only become marginally stronger after consuming the energy of death, but that energy will allow the tree to escape the layout in the dragon nest. Then it could kill a hundred fools like you with a single leaf!

“If you want to keep killing,” his voice grew frosty, “then I’ll take matters into my own hands.”

“You?” Ghost Dragon sneered, but continued approaching the ghost tree instead of turning back to Lu Yun. Meanwhile, water ghosts elsewhere in the tomb continued to grasp and kill immortals who had entered.

“I can sense Ao Xue’s presence on you, so I won’t kill you. Hold the formations of water and fire in place. I’ll deal with the tree.” Waves of great power rose from Ghost Dragon’s body and swept toward the ghost tree.

Rumble.

The power of water and fire vied for dominance in the air and disintegrated countless immortal ghosts and zombies.

A goodwill fruit hanging from the Sal Tree of Life and Death spontaneously combusted in Lu Yun’s dantian to unleash a tremendous supply of inner energy, which rushed into the luopan. Blinding light burst forth from the compass like a miniature sun.

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“Dammit!” Alarmed, the Witherdew celestial emperor pushed the Blithe Entrapment Formation to its limit to seal off the clearing.

“Give me a hand, Donglin E!” Tuoba Jie growled. “If the scroll breaks, we’ll all die!!”

Realizing how dire the situation was, Donglin E tapped into his arcane dao cultivation and injected the formation with his wealth of energy.

“Come on!!” Other immortals who’d hung around until now followed suit as well.

All thirty-six hundred and fifty formations shifted, turning the Blithe Entrapment Formation from a formation to trap and kill into a pure trapping formation, keeping everything within the area of effect from getting out.

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One after another, dragon corpses came to life and protected the ghost tree with a strange power. Among the five elements, water countered fire, which meant Ghost Dragon was the tree's natural bane.

"Zombie dragons?" Ghost Dragon flickered in and out of existence, treading between the realms of reality and illusion. A faint smile tugged at his lips. "Perfect, I happened to acquire a treasure not too long ago."

Whoosh!

A greyish-yellow bag flew out of his hand and opened up. Every single one of the zombie dragons was involuntarily pulled from the tree and sucked into the bag.

The Bag of Corpse Refinement.

Swoosh!

As soon as the dragon corpses disappeared, the fire enveloping the ghost tree surged dramatically and deepened from a bright yellow to a dusky red as the image of a nine-headed phoenix rushed out of the flames.

Chapter 365: Pearls of the Four Divine Spirits

A tremendous clash of water and fire filled the void with aftershocks, but the sight of a nine-headed phoenix was still visible through the haze.

Can it be?

The figure of the mythical Nine-Headed Phoenix popped into Lu Yun's mind. There was only one phoenix with nine heads ever spoken of in legends, and that was the legendary progenitor of all phoenixkind, born countless aeons ago with heaven-defying potential.

It seemed very likely that its body had been refined into the Nine-Phoenix Casket, which now lay in hell. I mean, how many nine-headed phoenixes can there be? Though the fabled one had interred the corpse of an unknown lord in his netherworld, for some reason, the nine-headed phoenix before him neatly overlapped with the skeleton that should be in hell.

Why is that?

Was it because of the Fire Parasol Tree?

Lu Yun's mind was thrown into disarray and he couldn't quite figure things out.

.....

"Rooooooooooooaaar!"

The nine-headed phoenix's appearance elicited a piercing cry from Ghost Dragon, and grayish-black scales flourished over his body. The water attribute treasure hidden in the void began manifesting as well, and its world-forming power gathered and intensified.

"Hold, Ghost Dragon," a cool female voice interrupted the transformation.

The spectral body shook. Having already turned into a chimera of human and dragon, he tread a brackish wave as he scrutinized the phoenix before him.

The nine-headed phoenix was wreathed in flame, but its eyes were extraordinarily cold and emotionless.

"You are the parasite of the ghost tree." Ghost Dragon grew in stature until he was at least thirty meters tall; he glared at the firebird with ferocious hostility.

Under the combined power of fire, water, and the luopan's golden light, the place they were in seemed to begin drifting into an unknown reality.

"You summoned the Fire Parasol Tree here too... who are you? Why do you hate us dragons so?!" Ghost Dragon's hoarse interrogation was accentuated by the hateful look in his eyes.

The phoenix ignored him, however. All eighteen of the bird's eyes were fixed upon the baby dragon on Lu Yun's shoulder. A moment of anguish and disquiet broke through its coolness.

"I am not the one who condemned your race. If I hadn't suppressed the ghost tree's power, the dragons would've gone extinct long ago," the phoenix finally spoke. "But much of my kind undeniably perished at your hand.

"Ten thousand years ago, you fell into the Realm of Unearthly Water. After you became a half-ghost, you began cursing my phoenix bloodline."

This was around the same time that Huang Qing had risen, and from all the signs that appeared with her, the phoenixes should've experienced a renaissance. Yet not long after the North Sea dragons were destroyed, she had died, alongside much of her kin.

"Wait, wait, wait-wait-wait. There isn't just a dragon nest here. There's a phoenix nest too!" Though he had been very quiet until now, Lu Yun chose this moment to speak up. Two black rays of light shot out of his eyes.

"The dragon above, the phoenix below... together, their nests make up the water and fire layout here. The two races are normally friends, but this particular layout makes use of their powers to curse each other! What a brilliant curse layout. The person who set it up is a genius!" The young man took a deep breath in appalled astonishment.

"Both of you are pawns in this scheme. However, Ao Lin isn't supposed to be in the water layout, but took the place of the dragon on my shoulder!" He finally realized the truth behind everything he had seen thus far.

No wonder the ghost tree and the nine-headed phoenix were so focused on the small dragon! It had broken out of the layout, but the phoenix was still stuck within... and slowly being consumed by the tree.

As for Ghost Dragon... he would meet the same fate as the phoenix very soon. The awakening ghosts in the Unearthly Waters would make sure of that.

It was Ghost Dragon's turn to be expressionless, while the nine-headed phoenix sank into thoughtful silence.

"He has escaped the quagmire, but I am still ensnared," the divine bird suddenly remarked with unwillingness.

"The zombie king," Lu Yun forced out the words. "In the abyss of fallen divines, there's a tomb for the living. Someone left that as a lifeline for you—to raise a zombie king that can create an origin sphere. The limitless life essence inside such a sphere will bring you from death back to life, out of the grasp of the ghost tree."

The phoenix fell silent again.

There was a reason Diexi had come to the North Sea's skydragon tomb when she fled to the ocean. The nine-headed phoenix's will had drawn her here, the same way it had opened up the tomb to the world.

Alas, by unexpected happenstance, Su Xiaoxiao had brought Diexi out of the dragon nest and onto Levitating Island.

The phoenix's other hope had been Jin Heyi, who'd turned himself into a zombie king. He'd entered the dragon tomb with the origin sphere he'd taken from Diexi, but Ghost Dragon had gotten to him first. Indeed, that was how the former first prince of the North Sea had freed himself from the water-attribute treasure.

After that, the phoenix had been forced to subsume its last fragment of spirit into the ghost tree.

Without Lu Yun's feng shui compass to hold back the fire layout and the full might of Ghost Dragon's crushing influence upon the ghost tree, it would've been impossible for the phoenix to reappear in its true form.

Ghost Dragon had remained silent throughout all these revelations.

"Where did the ghost tree send the dragon empress and the others?" Lu Yun demanded; he was worried about Empress Myrtlestar.

Surely, the nine-headed phoenix's time in the ghost tree had given it a portion of the tree's memories.

"To the phoenix nest. Or, perhaps, it should be called the phoenix tomb instead," mused the phoenix. "I had the dragon empress take that person there. That person is the last chance of salvation for my race.

"The dragons will be fine from now on, but my phoenixes..." The bird sounded strangely despondent. The ghost tree wasn't fully restored yet, so the divine creature could still exert some of its will.

"She's extremely capable, but not when it comes to the curses and layouts here in a tomb. Tell me how the ghost tree can be destroyed. I will save your race!" Lu Yun instantly raised. As he said this, he raised hellfire to materialize an image of the Nine-Phoenix Casket sitting in the world below.

“Mother....” The nine-headed phoenix trembled, its nine pairs of reddish eyes radiating an incalculable sadness. Ancient memories of how the divine Nine-Headed Phoenix had turned itself into a great lord’s casket flooded its mind once more.

“I can hold the ghost tree back for three more days, but during this time, neither the dragon nor the phoenix nest can see any more death. If the tree receives nourishment from flesh or soul, it will gain the strength to consume me.

“Put away the origin sphere, it is no longer useful to me.” The phoenix shook its heads at Ghost Dragon’s proffered sphere. “The fools who fought among themselves just now have cost me my last chance.

“The place where the two nests meet is the breeding ground for a two-headed zombie king. It has a dragon head and a phoenix head. If you cut off the phoenix head before three days have passed and bring it here, the ghost tree can be dealt with.”

The nine-headed phoenix was beginning to fade, having exhausted its strength.

“Where’s the Skydragon Pearl?” Lu Yun asked hastily.

“You seek to lift the curse for the one behind you....” The phoenix’s voice and form were becoming indistinguishably faint.

“The Fusang Purewood... fruit from the Ancient Tree of Life... and the Skydragon Pearl will not be enough. You must collect pearls from all four of the divine spirits. The place where dragon and phoenix nests meet are where the skydragon and skyphoenix are also buried... you’ll find their pearls there.

“But remember this: you cannot plant the ten connate spirit roots in her. The one behind it all—” The phoenix dissipated mid-sentence, unable to complete its warning. Below it, the ghost tree had come to life once more.

“Go cut off that phoenix head. I will hold the ghost tree back,” Ghost Dragon declared and handed Lu Yun the Bag of Corpse Refinement.

Chapter 366: Can’t Kill Him

Lu Yun returned the bag with a flick of his wrist. “Better not, I’m worried I won’t be able to keep myself from destroying it.”

Back on Earth, tomb raiders sought to profit only from the dead. Harming the living was a great taboo. The Bag of Corpse Refinement was an evil item that refined living people into zombies, so according to his sect’s principles, such a thing had to be destroyed.

Lu Yun wasn’t a stickler for the rules, but the tenets of his tradition were indelibly imprinted into his mind and soul. At the very least, he knew right from wrong.

If Ghost Dragon hadn’t already taken possession of the bag and was using it to ward off the zombies here... he would’ve already destroyed it. The ability to turn the living into the undead was positively profane.

Ghost Dragon nodded. He put away the bag, then poured all his power into the Realm of Unearthly Water in opposition against the ghost tree.

“Take my feng shui compass, Qing Han. Do all you can to hold the ghosts back here. I’ll be back soon enough!” Lu Yun handed over the luopan to his friend, who nodded resolutely.

Ghost Dragon’s pupils contracted with shock. Water and fire had carved a new dimension in this space, but the human had come over with remarkable ease.

“Be careful in all that you do.” Qing Han didn’t sound at all worried. For Lu Yun, chopping off a zombie’s head would be as easy as pie.

“Remember. Whether you succeed or fail, you must return here in three days. If you don’t, the phoenix won’t be the only one to perish. The old turtle in the Unearthly Waters will awake and eat me as well,” said Ghost Dragon.

“Keep him safe.” Lu Yun pointed at Qing Han.

“Of course.” Ghost Dragon nodded.

.....

When Lu Yun walked out of the Blithe Entrapment Formation, he found the immortals that’d all previously left waiting with bated breath.

The space ahead of them had become hazy and indistinct, although the wailing of ghosts and the shrieking of zombies remained perfectly audible. The clash between Ghost Dragon and the ghost tree had slain innumerable undead, but too many still remained.

Situ Zong rushed up to his young lord, still carrying the black cannon on his shoulder.

“I’m going to slay a zombie and break the death formation here. Who’s with me?” Lu Yun declared coolly before a rapt audience.

“I’ll come!” Xiangliu Ting offered immediately. “This place is gradually turning into a ghostly realm. If things are allowed to continue, the heart of the North Sea will become anathema to all life!

“My East Sea is already troubled by such a place. The same can’t be allowed to happen to the North Sea!”

The monster spirits behind him stepped forward as well. “If you have a way to break the death formation, then we East Sea monster spirits will not shrink back.”

“I will go as well!” Sidling up to his master, Situ Yun gripped the hem of the old man’s clothes as tightly as he could. He didn’t want to be punted out yet another time.

“I want a hundred and eight peerless immortals,” Lu Yun shook his head. “Dao immortals need to stay here to protect the others. Someone needs to keep the formation safe, and the ghosts locked inside could very well break out and attack.

“The zombie is too powerful for me to kill alone—it’s probably the body of the dragon nest’s lord. If one hundred and eight peerless immortals assemble a formation, that’ll give me a chance to land a killing blow.

“Heh...” he chuckled suddenly. “If that zombie doesn’t die, then we all will.”

He could flee into hell, but he'd still have to come out at some point. Time didn't pass while he was in hell, which meant he'd be stuck in the same place. However, Xiangliu Ting's words did inspire him in another way.

A ghostly realm? There's something like that in the East Sea too, huh?

In this North Sea, there was a Realm of Unearthly Water and a peculiar ghost tree. The two in tandem could create a realm filled with endless dead.

"Is that so? Then I'll go!" A Donglin peerless immortal signed up. "But we'll still be mortal enemies after we leave this place, Lu Yun."

The young man glanced at him and nodded.

Soon enough, the hundred-odd quota of immortals was filled.

The peerless immortals participating were uniformly just a hair below dao immortal, with the strongest of the lot was a Ling clan immortal, one who'd already gained an understanding of aether dao. When he accumulated enough knowledge, he could easily pluck the fruit and break through.

The Ling immortal looked at Lu Yun with unmasked hatred, but he, too, held his peace. It wasn't because of the nearby Situ Zong, but because these immortals had plenty of experience with this kind of situation. It was quite common for them to put aside their personal grudges and differences to combat some ancient horror.

Necessity demanded it. Plus, it wouldn't be too late to resume their grudges once the danger was past.

"All of you, come over here." Lu Yun looked around the group he had gathered, then began relating what he knew to them. "Here's the truth behind the dragon tomb. This place is actually a draconic ancestral ground. You can call it a dragon nest."

"A dragon nest?!" His words caused a flurry of excitement to pass through the crowd, and some yelped in shock.

The dragon tomb was actually a nest?

Many found it hard to accept such a claim, while others were strangely unmoved. Evidently, knowledgeable people still existed in the world; they, too, had realized the truth of the tomb early on.

"Right, so where we are is a dragon nest," affirmed Lu Yun. "However, under us—under this nest—is a different one. A phoenix nest! One that's been made into a phoenix tomb!"

This subsequent revelation astounded those who hadn't been surprised by his earlier sharing, and shocked even Tuoba Jie and Donglin E, despite their focus on the Blithe Entrapment Formation.

So this wasn't just a dragon nest, but a phoenix nest as well? A confluence of dragon and phoenix...

"In the ancient times, dragons and phoenixes were on friendly terms. But, putting their two nests together... and making them into tombs..." Fear flashed in Xiangliu Ting's eyes. "I hear that the ghostly realm in the East Sea has a qilin nest and a tortoise nest."

"Among the four spirits, the dragon and phoenix are great friends. So are the qilin and the tortoise."

“A qilin nest and a tortoise nest!” Lu Yun lit up with anticipation. The four spirits’ sky pearls. Skydragon, Skyphoenix, Skyqilin, and Skytortoise!

If the dragon and phoenix nests contained their corresponding sky pearls, didn’t that mean the East Sea’s ghostly realm would have the remaining two he needed?

He forced back the excitement he felt, then uttered a commanding cry, “Alright, everyone listen to me now. The dragon and phoenix nests have combined into a water and fire layout.

“Fire is above, water is below. Where they meet and the two opposite forces merge is a two-headed zombie!

“In this tomb, the dragonlings and water ghosts are far from the scariest. The two-headed zombies are! And that zombie in particular is the reason for all the rest.”

The rest of the immortals nodded wordlessly.

“That zombie has very likely reached the level of a celestial emperor already. Perhaps it’s even gone beyond,” continued Lu Yun.

Finally, some members of the group began reacting.

“Beyond a celestial emperor? Do you intend to lead us into death, Lu Yun? Is this your idea of revenge?” immediately clamored one person.

“Shut up!” the Ling clan immortal cut him off. “Listen to what he says!” His strength and affiliation granted him plenty of authority in this group.

Quite a few people had sent word out to their comrades, and the experts scattered elsewhere in the tomb were gathering in this direction. Three arcane dao immortals with eight fruits had arrived already; one of them was from the Ling clan.

The peerless immortal who’d interrupted Lu Yun lowered his head, too fearful to object any further.

“The two-headed zombie’s strength doesn’t come from itself. It’s a monster born of the two tombs. So as long as we can break the layout here, we can slay it.” Lu Yun stood up. “Therefore, I’ll teach you the Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons. We’ll borrow power from the heavens and earth to break the water and fire layout!”

He had to explain the full scope of what they were going to do. Otherwise, none of them would give it their all and the effort would ultimately fail.

Before anyone else could speak, the young man opened his arms. A rush of energy from the world came to him, transforming into line after line of runes, floating in space before him.

The Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons used thirty-six heavenly stars to represent the heavens and seventy-two fiendish stars to represent earth. When they were brought together in a harmonious whole, the very power of creation was evoked.

“That... that’s a formation without foundation! He really can do it! He’s achieved something that countless dao immortal formation masters have never done!” Quite a few immortals were amazed at the performance. Lu Yun was only a spirit realm cultivator!

“The restoration of the void realm and the incorporation with the world it brings will create a new generation of immortals far more powerful than current ones. There’s both good and bad in that,” proclaimed the young man. “Therefore, I invented the heaven and earth layout and its corresponding formation. If you refine it into yourself and perceive the world.... You, too, will attain oneness with creation!

“However, the formation I’m teaching you right now is only good enough to break the water and fire layout. If you want to refine the world into yourself, there’s still some work to be done.

“Thus, I hereby invite every formation expert and master to come to Dusk Province. I call upon the wisdom of the world to complete this formation.”

The immortals present were stunned by his words. Plenty of them had become mad with fear upon the restoration of the cultivation path, including some very strong arcane dao immortals with eight or nine fruits.

No one wanted to be discarded by the times, and now Lu Yun had infused them with new hope. If they refined the Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons into themselves, they could achieve oneness with creation in another way!

“That’s what he meant when he said supplemental paths were king!”

“He won’t stop until he’s scared everyone else half to death with what he can do!”

Qing Yunhe and Canghai Chengfeng traded perplexed looks. “Perhaps that kid has even more up his sleeve....”

Previously, they’d thought that Lu Yun had been talking about his imitation war treasures when he’d said those words. Now, they realized his feng shui compass and incredible formation fit the descriptor far more. This would truly be how the supplemental paths became king.

An alarming thought lingered at the back of Qing Yunhe’s mind: was this really the limits of what Lu Yun was capable of?

“No, we can’t kill him... not before the Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons is complete, at least, we absolutely can’t,” Donglin E murmured. “Whoever does so will be the greatest sinner in all of history!”

Chapter 367: Bane

Donglin E and some of the immortals were originally planning to kill Lu Yun on the spot after the youth broke the terrible formation of death in the tomb. Lu Yun’s weapons of war were powerful, but not powerful enough to fell peak arcane dao immortals. They would be able to stop him if a few of them worked together.

But now, he'd created a formation that could simulate heaven and earth, and the fact that the formation contained the energies of the world hadn't escaped the attention of those who'd lived for thousands of years.

The power of the land remained in the formation, but if it could be incorporated into an immortal's body.... Even immortals who hadn't journeyed through the void realm would be able to become one with the world.

"This... this is ludicrously generous of him. If I had something like this, I would only share it with my confidantes and clan so that we could use it to conquer the world..." Tuoba Jie gaped at Lu Yun, stunned. With Tuoba Jie's values and perception of the world, Lu Yun's thoughts seemed absolutely incomprehensible to the celestial emperor.

"If Lu Yun completes the formation integrating heaven and earth, he'll... become a saint of the world of immortals, won't he?" murmured Donglin E. He wanted nothing more than to decapitate the boy where he stood. If he were to become a saint, House Donglin would suffer an incredible blow because they were his enemies.

And yet... he couldn't kill the brat now.

Even Donglin E himself wanted that formation, so that he could incorporate it into his body and gain the heights of the void realm.

.....

The hundred and eight peak peerless immortals had come together to study the Great Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons. It wasn't actually a formation, but a feng shui layout. But since the immortals of this world didn't yet understand feng shui layouts, Lu Yun called it a formation.

Two days!

It took the immortals two full days to deduce the will of the world in the formation. On the third day, Lu Yun made his way to the intersection of the dragon and phoenix nests with his full complement of peerless immortals. The water ghosts and the dragonling immortal ghosts scattered throughout the tomb had all been recalled back to their place of origin, so the only danger they faced was the two-headed zombie.

Situ Zong followed closely behind Lu Yun with an auxiliary cannon on his shoulder, warily scanning his surroundings.

"Young, er, Sect Head!" he worriedly transmitted to Lu Yun. "Is it wise to just share the knowledge about the great formation like this?"

"If I didn't do that, I wouldn't be able to leave this place alive. Even if I did, Qing Han would only come under attack instead." Lu Yun shook his head. "So far, we've been mostly focused on the good that comes from restoring the path of cultivation.

"But as we've seen from various reactions, repairing the void realm brought about the side effect of eliminating the influence and power of existing immortals. This means a significant dosage of bad karma accompanies the virtuous merit of Qing Han's actions, and it's probably only the blessings of the Dao

Flower that've been protecting him from retribution. This means that once the flower fades out of existence... a tribulation will descend upon him!"

Negative karma and retribution were a result of malice and resentment held by living souls during their lives. If an immortal was killed by a void realm immortal, most of the resulting retribution would concentrate on Qing Han, Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian.

Qing Han, especially, would garner most of it, since he was the dao sovereign who'd restored the overall structure of the void realm.

There was no inherent right or wrong in either good or bad karma; all that mattered was one's perspective and position.

To countless living souls, Qing Han and the youth sovereigns had done them a great service by restoring the path of cultivation, but rendering countless immortals obsolete with the times was also a stunning negative consequence.

That was what Lu Yun wanted to defuse with the Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons. That had always been part of his plan, so he'd never given up on completing it.

He'd shown it now for two reasons: first, the formation could counter the layout of water and fire and the two-headed zombie. Second, Lu Yun and Qing Han wouldn't be able to leave the tomb alive if they didn't demonstrate their worth.

Donglin E and the Ling powerhouse would absolutely aim to kill Lu Yun. And as for North Sea Emperor Beigong Xuan—who the hell knew where he'd disappeared to? The only guarantee was that he'd make a move against Lu Yun as well.

The Dusk lord didn't want to use his trump card here, so he decided to play the formation as his next move.

Lu Yun and Feinie had studied this great formation for a long time, but made no real progress. It was better to announce its existence to the world and invite formation grandmasters from all over to contribute. Perhaps the collective would be able to postulate how to incorporate the formation into one's body where the two had failed.

Situ Zong fell silent in understanding.

"Stop!" Lu Yun suddenly commanded. The peerless immortals walking ahead came to a halt as well.

"Turn back!" Black light flashed through his eyes.

"Since you've come here, Lu Yun," said a chilling voice from the darkness, "Why don't you stay a while?"

Something enormous slithered out of the darkness and filled the tunnel in the dragon nest to the brim. It was a snake of immeasurable size. The tunnel at the heart of the dragon nest was a couple kilometers wide, yet there was only a slight gap left between the snake's head and the top of the tunnel.

"This is the true form of a blackwater snake! Is it Beigong Xuan?!" Ling Zhen, the peerless immortal from the Ling Clan, recognized the snake with a single glance.

“Beigong Xuan?” Lu Yun scowled, then paled. He hadn’t expected the missing North Sea emperor to show up here and block their way. “...wait! Who discovered the Ghost Tree first?”

“Beigong Xuan,” said Ling Zhen. “He discovered the Fire Parasol Tree first, then the news somehow got out and reached House Donglin. After that, the Witherdew celestial emperor came and set up the Blithe Entrapment Formation.... Wait!!”

He blanched as a sudden, awful realization dawned on him.

“The blackwater snakes have made this dragon tomb their home!” Lu Yun said as he stared at the giant snake, enunciating every word. “No wonder you stayed here and did nothing to me, even after I raided your base and stole your palace.”

Derision flashed through Beigong Xuan’s black eyes, his black tongue flicking in and out of his mouth.

Lu Yun should’ve realized earlier. Back in the clearing where the Fire Parasol Tree was, most of those he’d kicked out had either doubled back or remained right outside the area, but Beigong Xuan had left with his people.

That in itself was unusual.

However, he hadn’t thought of that detail until Beigong Xuan showed up again in his true form.

“You destroyed Our North Sea court, Lu Yun, and now you dare ruin Our grand plan. You will not make it out of here alive!” As he spoke, Beigong Xuan’s enormous body trembled and emitted pure black light that turned into a tide of black floodwater and swept toward Lu Yun and the peerless immortals.

Situ Zong took a step forward and aimed the cannon at the black waters, blasting out a beam of white light.

Bam!

The entire dragon tomb shuddered.

Situ Zong staggered back, blood streaking down from the corner of his mouth. The great recoil had left him severely injured.

“Hehehe, pathetic parlor tricks!” Beigong Xuan cackled and suddenly advanced, increasing the terrible flood’s intensity.

“Assemble into formation!” Ling Zhen roared with a burst of starlight from his body.

“Formation my ass! Get out of here!” Lu Yun shouted to interrupt Ling Zhen’s suicidal move. “Beigong Xuan’s power comes from himself. The formation won’t do jack. Move!”

Lu Yun grabbed the severely injured Situ Zong and stuck a Size Manipulation Talisman on him, both of them disappearing into dust particles.

“So this is how you entered the monster spirit palace. No wonder no one discovered you.” Beigong Xuan’s dark eyes fixed on the space ahead of him. Lu Yun and Situ Zong had shrunk to the size of dust motes, but he could still see them.

“Die!!” he growled and opened his mouth, biting at the group of peerless immortals.

Swoosh!

Emerald fire blossomed in the air, casting the dim tunnel in vibrant green illumination. A stunning figure emerged from thin air, imprinting itself on everyone’s mind. Even Ling Zhen, one who’d grasped the true meaning of the aether dao realm, gazed upon her with admiration.

“We meet again, old snake spirit.” Bathed in Emerald Mistfire, Yuying stared coolly at the enormous snake with a half smile.

The snake flinched like he’d received an electric shock, his eyes fixed on the woman before him.

“Emerald Mistfire!” the blackwater snake screamed. “You’re still alive, Yuying...?”

This immortal fire was the natural bane of the blackwater snakes. Even though it was a mere peerless immortal controlling the fire, horror still pricked at Beigong Xuan. If he killed the peerless immortal, the fire would rage out of control, igniting the dragon nest and even the phoenix nest below it.

With the various layouts set up in the two nests, perhaps they wouldn’t be destroyed by the fire, but Beigong Xuan definitely would. He backed away. A thousand years ago, Yuying had crossed paths with him as a cultivator and driven him away with that fire.

“Go do what you must do, sir. I’ll keep this worm here. If he dares do anything, I’ll detonate the Emerald Mistfire.” Yuying smiled slightly. With a wave of her hand, the emerald fire surged and grew even more intense.

“You’ll die if you do that!” Beigong Xuan said in a trembling voice.

Yuying smiled in lieu of a response.

Lu Yun looked at her with conflicted emotions. How many times had Yuying shown up of her own accord when Lu Yun was in danger? Although he had many great elites as his followers now, she was still the same silent guardian she’d been before, his first Envoy of Samsara.

“Let’s go.” Lu Yun waved a hand and brought the peerless immortals with him as he flew over Beigong Xuan’s head.

The snake was of a mind to stop them, but Yuying had already advanced on him. Beigong Xuan wasn’t afraid of her power, even though she could control the immortal fire. However, if the fire raged out of control, he would surely die here.

Chapter 368: An Unexpected Person

With Yuying deploying her Emerald Mistfire to block Beigong Xuan, Lu Yun squeezed through the crack over the snake’s head with Situ Zong and the rest of the peerless immortals.

“Why’s it so hot in here?!” Scorching heat slammed into them as soon as they flew over the behemoth of a body. Caught off guard, many screeched loudly with pain. If they hadn’t been peak peerless immortals, they would’ve been scorched to death upon arrival. Meanwhile, Lu Yun wasn’t affected at all, as he had hellfire protecting him.

“What’s going on?” Stunned, he muttered to himself to collect his thoughts, “The phoenix nest is of the fire element, but the layout of water and fire has reversed the two elements. It doesn’t make sense for it to be so hot.”

They’d arrived at the former nest that had been turned into a tomb; the tunnel Beigong Xuan had blockaded was the passage between the dragon and phoenix nests.

“Wait, that’s not right! There are two layouts here! There’s a layout of water and fire in each of the two nests. The ghost tree bathed in fire and the Realm of Unearthly Water formed one such layout in the dragon nest. There must be another one in the phoenix nest as well!

“The one in the dragon nest is a yin layout, while the one here is a yang layout! Since the nests are the ancestral lands of the two clans, any layouts within must promote health and prosperity. However, both nests have been turned into tombs now, so... it makes sense for there to be a layout of yin and yang, since that’s a layout of life and death!

“Impressive, very impressive! No wonder I spotted only the dragon nest before, but was blind to the phoenix nest. The two have become one to form a massive layout of yin and yang.

“The dragon nest is yin, and the phoenix nest is yang. The heat doesn’t come from fire, but from pure yang!” Lu Yun muttered a continual litany of observations.

“The dragon nest should be of cold yin, but at its heart is a ghost tree bathed in fire. Then there must be something of the water element at the heart of the phoenix nest.... There’s no reason for me to go there, though. I just need to go to the intersection between the two nests and kill the two-headed zombie. That should resolve all our problems!” Lu Yun took in a deep breath and called out, “Assemble the formation!”

After a brief pause, the hundred and eight peerless immortals began setting up the Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Fiends according to their earlier practice. The power of the land instantly surged and encircled Lu Yun.

He still hadn’t told them the full truth in the end. The moment they formed the formation, they lost themselves in it and became his to command. He extended his fingers and manifested a black orb. The Yin Formation Orb!

Feinie had divided the connate-grade treasure once again. The Yang Formation Orb remained within the Layout of Resurrection to protect the little fox and Xing Mou, while the Yin Formation Orb had been given to Lu Yun.

In the blink of an eye, its power enveloped the great formation that the immortals had created.

“Let’s go!” Lu Yun ordered Situ Zong and grabbed the young dragon sleeping on his shoulder, tucking it into his waistband. Only now did he begin to see the truth of the phoenix nest.

While there remained traces of the dragon clan in the dragon nest, the phoenix nest had been completely transformed.

It was no more. The curse on the phoenixes had reached its peak and destroyed almost every phoenix in the world of immortals. Perhaps Huangqing was the only pureblood phoenix left in the world.

The two-headed zombie! Both the dragon and phoenix nests were transformed for it. Cursing the dragon and phoenix bloodlines? ...no, that's not what this is. The culprit wanted to concentrate the bloodlines and the fortunes of both races on the zombie! The moment the layout comes to fruition is the moment the two heads of the zombie become one! And what ghost tree, it doesn't exist at all! It's just a manifestation of the two-headed zombie!

Whoosh!

Lu Yun made his way forward at great speed.

Unlike the dragon nest, which consisted of crisscrossing tunnels, the phoenix nest was a giant bird's nest. With his Spectral Eye scanning through all the layers, Lu Yun spotted something chilling at the heart of the nest through all the dense flames around them.

Nevertheless, he didn't pay it that much attention and focused on piercing through the various layers of illusions here. The Yin Formation Orb also flared with waves of formation light, revealing assorted hidden formations and layouts.

The Formation Orb couldn't determine feng shui or tell fortunes, but its power of breaking formations was even greater than that of the luopan.

"Grrraaww!" A tremendous roar rang out as a two-headed zombie descended from the sky with twin maws yawning open, releasing dual waves of putrid stench. It had a dragon head and a phoenix head!

"A dragon and a phoenix head.... Is this the guy we're looking for?!" Eyes gleaming, Situ Zong came to a sudden halt and aimed the cannon on his shoulder at the zombie.

Bam!

White light beam ripped the zombie to pieces.

"It's not, the real one can't be that weak. That's only an illusion it's created! Let's go!" Scintillating sword energy shone from the Sugato Sword in Lu Yun's hand. With the assistance of the Formation of Heaven and Earth, his speed reached unprecedented heights.

He suddenly grasped something in this moment: the thing not yet fully awakened in the ghost tree and the ghost in the Realm of Unearthly Water were both the two-headed zombie! The dragon head of the zombie had been drawing upon the dragon bloodline in the dragon nest, while the phoenix head had absorbed the phoenix bloodline of this nest.

Splash!

Lu Yun heard flowing water, and a cool, pale hand took his left wrist. It took only a moment before half of his left sleeve grew damp.

Water Ghost Grasp!

"How the fuck dare a mere water ghost approach me? Piss off!" A blaze of hellfire from his eyes accompanied his angry roar, frightening the unseen water ghost. The pale hand flinched and instantly retreated.

So there was a Water Ghost Grasp layout here as well. However, this particular layout had been transformed from a dead phoenix. It seemed that a heavyweight of the dragons had been buried at the heart of the phoenix nest—a perfect foil for the phoenix buried beneath the ghost tree!

Dragons and phoenixes were doomed to forever clash in their hallowed ancestral grounds and cursed each other in their nests. The dragon clan only possessed a sliver of hope because the nine-headed phoenix had summoned the Fire Parasol Tree, the greatest treasure of their race.

Meanwhile, the Water Ghost Grasp layout in the dragon nest was operating to the full limits of its potential due to the efforts of Ao Lin after his intrusion. Now known as Ghost Dragon, he'd destroyed almost all of the phoenixes of the world.

As for the phoenix that should've been in the phoenix nest—one unique to its race like the dragon tucked in Lu Yun's waistband—it'd been completely devoured by something akin to the old ghost hiding within the Realm of Unearthly Water.

Lu Yun didn't stop after scaring the Water Ghost Grasp away. Maintaining a steady pace, he moved toward the intersection of the two nests.

Hum!

After a buzz sounded by his ears, he and Situ Zong entered a different space.

Here, birds chirped and flowers bloomed. All life thrived atop a grassy plain beneath the blue sky, and all kinds of immortal herbs and ingredients were waiting to be found. Under a large tree hung a swing.

"How did we get here?" Lu Yun started and quickly panned his surroundings. This... was Su Xiaoxiao's tomb!

Or this place looked exactly like her tomb, but her tomb had already been destroyed.

"Wait a second, it's not her tomb." Lu Yun turned in another direction and came face to face with a crimson altar.

Raised at the center of the area, it was roughly forty meters tall. Fully crimson, ancient, and mysterious runes covered the structure. He could've sworn he'd seen this altar before... no, an altar like this!

"The Water Altar at the center of the ancient Truewater City, under the Myriad Formation Summit," Lu Yun murmured to himself.

"No, this is the Fire Altar," remarked a pleasant voice from behind him.

"Qi Hai." Lu Yun's gaze remained fixed on the altar, but he recognized the voice.

It belonged to Qi Hai, the foremost pill master of the ancient world of immortals. He'd refined heaven-defying pills, such as the Heaven Descent Pill and the Tribulation Surrogate Pill, bringing about the prosperity of pill dao.

He was the reason why pill dao had exceeded the other supplemental paths in the ancient times. Although he'd died in the last era, his name had been passed down to this generation. Even Lu Yun held an unexplainable veneration for the pill master.

Lu Yun didn't dare turn around. He was... rather afraid to see what the current Qi Hai looked like. However, Situ Zong had already completed the swivel of his body. After a long moment of hesitation, Lu Yun finally lifted his eyes and saw Situ Zong's look of horror.

His eyeballs reflected a monster that had almost fully decayed—a zombie with a dragon head and a phoenix head. One of Su Xiaoxiao's memories floated to the fore at the sight. Qi Hai had once kept a blackwater snake as a pet, named Xuan.

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After a long while. Lu Yun sighed and turned around. A handsome young man dressed in white came into view, his sunny disposition identical to the Qi Hai from Su Xiaoxiao's memory.

"I should've known it was you. Xiaoxiao was able to travel between the dragon tomb and Levitating Island because of you," Lu Yun said faintly to the young man. "She may be dead, but her body was still alive. That was your doing as well."

Qi Hai nodded slowly.

"Look," Qi Hai said, pointing at the Fire Altar not far from them.

Within it, Lu Yun glimpsed Canghai Chengkong and many other immortals. Empress Myrtlestar, missing for days, was there as well.

Chapter 369: Sinful Blood and Traitors

The Fire Altar was almost a minor world unto its own. Plenty of immortals were fighting on and exploring within it without realizing where they were.

Hidden in a veil of silvery starlight, Empress Myrtlestar observed her surroundings from a quiet, concealed corner. Even someone as strong as she hadn't noticed the sacrificial nature of her locale.

"Is there a connection between this Fire Altar and the Water Altar buried in the abyss of fallen divines?" asked the young man after considerable deliberation.

To his eyes, the Qi Hai before him was still a handsome youth with an urbane, uncommon bearing. Whether he looked through his Spectral Eye or his actual eye, nothing about the white-robed gentleman seemed out of the ordinary.

However, Situ Zong's perspective told a different story: before him was a zombie with two heads—one dragon, one phoenix!

"Ten thousand years ago, the Water Altar sat over there." Qi Hai pointed toward the opposite side of the space, where the setup was exactly the same as Su Xiaoxiao's tomb. "When someone took it away, that extended a further lifeline to the dragons."

Lu Yun didn't respond.

"You yourself came out of the altar just now," continued Qi Hai.

"What about you?" Suddenly, Lu Yun raised his head in accusation. "Why do my eyes see you differently from his?"

Situ Zong paled. Despite trembling like a leaf, he did his best to aim the cannon at Qi Hai. In his eyes, Lu Yun had been talking to himself all along. The almost fully decayed two-headed zombie stood before the sect head, glaring at him with blackish-red eyes.

Oddly enough, they seemed to be at a standstill.

“The formation of heaven and earth around you has cut off its will. It dares not approach you,” smiled Qi Hai. “That’s why you see me instead.”

“You’re not the zombie?” Lu Yun raised an eyebrow.

“Of course not.” Qi Hai shook his head. “It ate me, but couldn’t fully digest me. So I live within it... I am attached to it.”

In the ancient world, no one had known the cause of Qi Hai’s death. All relevant records indicated that he had existed; and then one day, like a joke, everyone knew he was dead.

As for why and how? Those had remained eternal mysteries.

Well, now the man himself had spoken: he’d been devoured by the two-headed zombie from the dragon and phoenix nests.

So when had the layout come about, then?

Lu Yun didn’t entirely believe everything Qi Hai was saying. After all, Beigong Xuan had been his pet.

“I intend to slay this zombie,” he declared after another prolonged pause.

“You can’t. Your formation will preserve your life, but no more than that,” sighed Qi Hai. “I came here all those years ago to do the same, but I ended up being eaten.”

“You had a formation of heaven and earth too?” Lu Yun shot back.

“No,” Qi Hai shook his head, “but my cultivation was at peak principal realm. The powers of the world were no more than toys for me.”

Lu Yun colored slightly. He suddenly recalled that many ancients had been born with immortal constitutions. They hadn’t needed to walk the path of cultivation in order to reach the level that void-realm immortals could now attain.

“If the strength of heaven and earth could kill this monster, I wouldn’t have died.” Derision flickered across Qi Hai’s face, as if to mock Lu Yun’s overestimation of himself.

“The strength of heaven and earth?” Lu Yun sighed. “Haven’t you noticed? We’ve been talking quite a while, but the two-headed zombie has done absolutely nothing—either to me or to Situ Zong.”

Qi Hai blinked.

“The strength of heaven and earth is a mere trifle.”

Boom!

As if on cue, the formation upon Lu Yun’s body burst forth with energy.

The Great Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons had a hundred and eight stars in all. Lu Yun's formation employed those stars to enact a feng shui layout of heaven and earth!

Indeed, he'd created a layout and not a formation.

In feng shui, the passage of wind and water affected all things around them. These guided effects could culminate in something strange and mysterious... something powerful enough to create a new world!

The highest level of feng shui layouts had the ability to enact the influences of the real heaven and earth, not just their effects. The Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Fiends had done just that through forming a miniature world.

This world was lesser in every way to the one outside, but it wasn't any less real. Yin and yang, the five elements, profusion and proliferation... it possessed all of these things.

This was the greatest advancement Lu Yun had made in feng shui since his transmigration. He could now set up a feng shui layout on the level of a grand influence over the world!

He was the best tomb raider in history, back on Earth, and his abilities had been amplified by the Tome of Life and Death after arriving in the world of immortals. After obtaining several immensely talented envoys and their knowledge of the world, he'd finally been able to deploy this Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Fiends with the aid of the Formation Orb.

Far from being a mere formation, it doubled as a layout of heaven and earth, one that reached the level of influencing the world.

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As soon as the heaven and earth layout appeared, the two-headed zombie shrieked in terror. Dual cries of dragons and phoenixes created an endless cacophony that reverberated in the vicinity.

Lu Yun couldn't hear any of that, though. Within the heaven and earth layout, he was completely immune to the two-headed zombie's power. In fact, he couldn't even perceive any traces of the zombie's existence.

In his eyes, there was still only Qi Hai.

"You... this is the art of feng shui! How do you know something that's supposed to be extinct?" Qi Hai murmured to himself in a daze, stunned by the glittering starlight.

"...you know what feng shui is?" Lu Yun blinked. He'd seen plenty of feng shui layouts in this world, both large and small. Natural ones, accidental ones, and intentional ones.

However, he'd never met a single person who understood how feng shui layouts worked. No one alive seemed to know what feng shui even was. People as powerful and wise as Empress Myrtlestar were no exception.

Yet Qi Hai had recognized it.

"Do you know what you're doing, Lu Yun?" Qi Hai's face had grown very white, and evil flared in his eyes. His polite demeanor vanished, replaced with a malevolent grin set in a disquieting face.

Lu Yun narrowed his eyes at the change.

“The blood of those you release is steeped in unforgivable sin. For this unlawful act, you are likewise branded... a traitor,” Qi Hai continued.

Fwoosh!

Qi Hai’s body began burning with a blindingly white flame. Within seconds, both he and the conflagration disappeared.

Rumble...

A deafening grinding noise resounded through the void. On the other side, the Fire Altar suddenly turned into a shadow and shot into the air. An enormous phoenix nest came into view, overlaid upon where the group of immortals stood.

Before Lu Yun appeared a veritable graveyard, tombstones and structures rising up everywhere.

Chapter 370: The Grace of Conferring Knowledge of Dao

“That’s Lu Yun! What’s he doing here?” The immortals were taken aback by the young man’s sudden appearance. They’d been previously floundering in a forest of tombstones and burial structures, from which frequently manifested immortal ghosts that wasted not a moment to attack them.

Everyone’s nerves couldn’t be more taut after that thoroughly confusing slaughter of epic proportions. Lu Yun and Situ Zong’s arrival nearly incited them in a gut reaction of a mob attack. If not for Situ Zong’s timely threat down the cannon barrel, they probably would’ve already cut Lu Yun to ribbons.

Within the crowd, joy flashed across Canghai Chengkong’s face. The Dark North sword immortal had lost contact with Lu Yun upon arrival in this strange graveyard, so his master’s reappearance slightly eased his mental strain.

However, his expression soon turned grave once more. Lu Yun was unresponsive to his transmitted messages. His master was lost in a reverie and remained unaware of the situation here.

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“Sinful blood? Traitor? Dragons and phoenixes are sinners? What, I’m a traitor because I’m releasing them?” In this instant, Lu Yun perceived Qi Hai was now someone else altogether. His soul was still his; but his spirit had become another’s.

Dragons and phoenixes were considered blessed creatures nearly everywhere, on Earth and any other mortal world. Furthermore, they were supposed to represent sovereignty and imperial authority.

Even in this present world of immortals, dragons and phoenixes occupied lofty positions. Whenever they were mentioned, other immortals became generally reverent.

But this person claimed their blood to be sinful!

Wherefore had that sin come about? Who had decreed it so?

However, the last sentence scared Lu Yun the most. Why had he called Lu Yun a traitor for wanting to kill the two-headed zombie and releasing the bloodlines of these two races?

Not 'enemy', but 'traitor'!

To him, Lu Yun must be one of 'them'.

But... who were 'they'?

Why had they laid down such a terrifying curse upon the bloodlines of two great races?

Ten thousand years ago, the Water Altar had existed at the intersection of the dragon and phoenix nests. Later on, it was transplanted to the abyss of fallen divines... to suppress the divine race there!

The Skandha Range, too, carried an unbelievable curse targeting the entirety of the divines, one that included the four cardinal tribes as well as all the rest. Could the same group of people have done all that?

Had he... had the old 'Lu Yun' been one of them?

The young man was lost in thought. What was all of this for?

The Tome of Life and Death? Hell? Or something else?

He didn't care about the 'traitor' part all that much. His 'fellows' had spent so much time and effort to lay down all these curses, which meant they sorely lacked the absolute strength to accomplish their aims.

Why else would they go to such elaborate lengths otherwise? Violence was often the simplest solution.

"M-milord!" Situ Zong scrambled to Lu Yun's side. "W-what should we do? They're coming for us!" Although he carried the gun, this young man controlled the proverbial trigger.

"Eh?" Lu Yun finally snapped to reality. "Who's coming for us?"

He shook his head a little before taking in his surroundings for the first time.

"Aha." A gentle point from his finger unleashed a fountain of starlight.

Hum.

When the light dimmed, the air cleared to reveal the hundred and eight peerless immortals. Still in their positions in the Great Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons, they looked uniformly perplexed.

In the moment of the formation's completion, all of them had lost their selves to become part of the world—until Lu Yun had dissolved the formation at this moment.

"I... I grasped the truth of aether dao? I can pluck the fruit as soon as I am strong enough!" murmured a peerless immortal.

“And I... I have accumulated enough. The endeavor for dao fruit is still quite dangerous, but I can see a ray of hope...” Ling Zhen shook his head to clear his mind, then inclined his head to Lu Yun in deference. “Thank you for your help, fellow daoist!”

“Thank you for your help, fellow daoist!” All hundred and seven other immortals spoke in unison. To a person, they were immensely, sincerely grateful.

Concentrated goodwill welled up from their bodies, streaming into Lu Yun. The fruit of goodwill he had burned earlier spontaneously regrew itself.

Lu Yun had hand-picked all hundred and eight of the immortals himself. Any enemies among their number would still be honorable in their conduct.

After their enactment of the Great Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons, they found themselves filled with the truth of aether dao. The handful who’d had that before were granted sufficient strength and comprehension instead.

This was the grace of conferring dao, and the Sal Tree of Life and Death absorbed their gratitude as purest goodwill.

Although the amount paled compared to what he’d received on Levitating Island, their concentrated purity was still enough for an instant goodwill fruit.

No... there’s more than goodwill here. Virtuous merit? Lu Yun’s heart trembled.

It was exactly that! Virtuous merit, gained through conferring knowledge of the dao.

New ideas, conscious and unconscious, began to flood his mind.

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The other immortals tensed when they saw the hundred and eight peerless immortals suddenly appear, and some of them noticed that the entire group had gained a newfound understanding of aether dao immediately.

Previously itching to leap into action, their eagerness to strike was dampened by that fact. A hundred and eight peerless immortals who understood aether dao, working together, were more than capable of threatening a handful of those who’d already grasped it.

“To seek a dragon of mountains coiled,

Those deathly cliffs with mysteries roiled.” Lu Yun suddenly gave a long whistle. The mystical force within him spun rapidly before gathering overhead. Before long, a luopan appeared.

Hum—

Brilliant golden light blazed forth from his body.

Crack!

The void before him fractured quietly, almost imperceptibly.

Thump!

A huge corpse landed at the young man's feet.

It was the two-headed zombie, the very same one that Lu Yun had leveraged a heaven and earth layout to quash. This was the real key to countering the ghost tree.