

## Necropolis 401

### Chapter 401: The Dao of Monster Spirits

"It won't work." Lu Yun shook his head in resignation after studying the glyphs. "They've been branded by the nascent spirits of the cultivators who owned them. Although the cultivators are dead, the brands remain, albeit in a dim, inactive state."

"Then we'll have to enter the city for the Life Glyphs." Qing Han nodded worriedly.

"The good thing is my Shapeshifting art can fool even the nine celestial emperors... I'm curious, though, what've you done to disguise yourself? I haven't been able to see your true form all this time..." Lu Yun gave Qing Han a onceover.

"It's the power of starstones," Qing Han shot him a glare and responded after a brief pause, his tone uneasy. "The starstones draw upon the power of the stars in the sky to create a shapeshifting barrier around me. Since the power belongs to nature, very few can see through it."

Lu Yun didn't dig further after that. As someone living his second life, he understood where Qing Han was coming from. She dwelled on too many concerns, but he wasn't the impatient sort. Some things were worth waiting for.

Qing Han sighed in relief after Lu Yun dropped the issue. For some reason, she was reminded of the time Lu Yun treated her with the Poison Fiend.

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"Oh? It's the two bumpkins. They returned in one piece!" Cultivators who had witnessed Lu Yun and Qing Han leave with the old man were rather surprised to see them return.

"Yi Tianling didn't kill them?"

"Why would he kill us?" Lu Yun asked, his head cocked and lips curved into a mocking smile.

"Um..." the man awkwardly fell silent. Many knew what Yi Tianling was doing, but none of them had ever thought to warn the cultivators he'd preyed on.

"Come on." Qing Han grabbed Lu Yun and walked away; none of these people were worth their time.

Now he knew what the half-smile on Lu Yun's face had meant when he'd heard about the True Sovereign Meet. It might have been organized for a good purpose, but the execution... left a great deal to be desired.

Three years ago, Lu Yun and the others had planned the Sovereign Meet to promote the exchange of information amid friendly sparring. It would allow cultivators of all levels to test their knowledge and improve themselves together.

This Sovereign Meet, however, had much higher stakes. Great rewards could be won, and there was an ancient secret realm to be explored. By now, many cultivators had forgotten the original motivation for the gathering. The importance of the journey itself had fallen by the wayside, replaced by a drive for rewards and unknown opportunities.

All of the other cultivators were their obstacles or stepping stones, and everyone wanted nothing more than to weed out the competition.

There were two days until the Sovereign Meet commenced, but the organizers were still handing out Life Glyphs.

It was the first ever Sovereign Meet, so it was only natural that preparations would be lacking and the great factions in the world devoid of sufficient experience in holding such an event. Therefore, the registration process—namely, the process of requesting a Life Glyph—would only come to an end two hours before the event commenced.

Not only were the cultivators in a frenzy in and around Destiny City, but the organizers were constantly bustling back and forth in a flurry of action as well.

“What an impressive city!” Outside the city, Lu Yun scanned the feng shui out of habit.

“Five dragons on the ground form four dragons, four dragons soar into the sky to become five dragons. This is a layout of the nine emperors!” A chill went down Lu Yun’s spine. “Is the city lord trying to become the immortal emperor of the world?”

“What?” Qing Han gaped at Lu Yun.

By definition, a celestial emperor ruled over only one of the twenty-four facets, so, theoretically speaking, there should be twenty-four celestial emperors ruling over the nine majors, ten lands, four immortal seas, and the central world.

Meanwhile, there could be only one immortal emperor, and they would be the emperor of all immortals.

Back in the Primordial Era, there had been just one immortal emperor. Other immortals who reached that level would be called a great emperor or an imperial lord, Empress Myrtlestar being one example. She could rival the immortal emperor, but her official title at court was the Great Empress of the East or the Imperial Lady of the East.

There had been no immortal emperor since the war of immortals a hundred thousand years ago. Even the divines who’d ruled over the world called themselves divine emperors rather than immortal emperors. However, Lu Yun had just said the city lord was trying to become the next immortal emperor!

That was too much for Qing Han to believe. Empress Myrtlestar was also silent within the scroll.

“Seal off the scroll, Qing Han,” she eventually said. “You will be on your own in the coming battle. Neither Azure Dragon nor I will be able to help you.”

“Eh?” Qing Han blinked.

“I believe there’s a standalone minor world on Lu Yun as well. Such things won’t be of any help during the Sovereign Meet,” Empress Myrtlestar said. “The two of you should be prepared.”

“This is a sparring match between peers.” Lu Yun smiled, having received the transmission as well. “We won’t be facing shameless old freaks. You don’t have to offer us any help, ma’am.”

"I am no ma'am." Empress Myrtlestar scowled darkly. Though she was an imperial lady from the ancient times, she was as youthful and lively as a sixteen year old girl. The 'ma'am' honorific was hardly appropriate for her.

Qing Han smothered a laugh at Lu Yun's embarrassment. The empress meant to imply that the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals might be exposed, so they had to keep the treasure hidden.

With the medicines Su Xiaoxiao and Xingzi had refined, Qing Han's fatal poison had been further suppressed. He should be fine now, even without the scroll.

After another round of scouting, Qing Han and Lu Yun entered the city.

"Heavens... what's going on here? Is this... a zoo?" Lu Yun gaped with shock as he set foot in the city. From the outside, the city measured a thousand kilometers across and bristled with a dense arrangement of buildings. However, it was ten times larger on the inside.

Lu Yun activated his Spectral Eye, which could allow him to see a thousand kilometers into the distance, yet he still couldn't see the edge of the city.

What was even more mind-boggling were the various immortal beasts and the occasional rare divine beast roaming about in the city. Flying avians screeched through the air and land animals prowled the earth. Various predatory animals were stalking about everywhere. Lu Yun even saw a few divine sharks swimming through the air as they moved about the streets.

Although there were many human cultivators and immortals as well, it was impossible not to notice the beasts and marine animals.

"They're monster spirit cultivators," Qing Han slapped his forehead and explained with a wry smile. "Scarlet Ape has set up a monster spirit sacred land, with Levitating Island as the foundation. It's urged all monster spirits to assume their natural form, claiming that 'the dao of the monster spirits is greater than that of humans', and that they shouldn't imitate human form. The reports were sent to your desk, but you haven't read them yet."

Lu Yun had been busy studying the supplemental paths and the Great Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons. Thus, he hadn't spared any attention for the news. That was why Qing Han wasn't surprised at all, while Lu Yun was in for a good shock.

"How dare humans point and stare at brave monster spirit warriors?!" A silverback gorilla came out of nowhere with a snarl and swung a giant rod at Qing Han's head.

## **Chapter 402: Enemy Agents**

The thick, pitch-black iron rod looked almost identical to the Divine Seaward Iron wielded by Scarlet Ape; the silverback was obviously mimicking its new leader. It swung the iron rod with a force of hundreds of thousands of kilograms, a blow that would very likely pulverize a regular cultivator.

Scowling, Qing Han reflexively grabbed the iron rod and crushed one end of it into dust with a loud crack.

The silverback's expression shifted drastically and it whirled around, running off with half of its weapon remaining.

“Shameless humans are never up to any good! How dare you bully us monster spirits in public? Don’t you know fighting is forbidden in Destiny City?!” Its unusually booming voice rang through the area, prompting nearby monster spirits to spring into action and rush to the premises.

“Where’s the human scum insulting monster spirits?” A giant wolf roughly three meters tall with a silver moon between its brows rushed over.

“Perfect timing, Wolfking. It’s the two of them!” The silverback gorilla immediately stopped running and pointed at Qing Han and Lu Yun when it saw the wolf and the dozens of monster spirits in the newcomer’s entourage.

“That’s... a Silvermoon Wolfking!!” someone yelled. “The king of wolves that only emerges from its race once every ten thousand years!”

Although the wolf appeared to be only a nascent spirit cultivator, a strong, razor-sharp aura wreathed it, making the human cultivators around it back away as soon as it arrived on the scene.

“It’s said that six Silvermoon Wolfkings have arisen from the wolves, and all of them are arcane dao immortals. This one before us is the seventh, and it’s already touched upon the void realm.”

The cultivators in the area sucked in a breath upon hearing that. All of the previous Silvermoon Wolfkings were arcane dao immortals!

The wolf before them was already half a step into the void realm. If it then attained immortality, it could very well exceed its forefathers and reach origin dao realm!

“How dare impudent humans bully monster spirits?!” growled the wolf, fixing its silver eyes on Qing Han. “I will permit you to leave if you break one of your arms.”

Qing Han was still holding the remains of half an iron rod in his hand. The silverback gorilla stood behind the wolf and leered tauntingly.

“Since when can beasts like you run rampant in human territory?” Lu Yun took a step forward and responded leisurely, “Aren’t you afraid that the combined might of the human elites will come together, slice and dice all you dumb animals, and stick you in a stew?”

The wolf and other monster spirits in the area glared at him with fury in their eyes.

“Think carefully about your actions. This year’s Sovereign Meet is unlike the tournament three years ago. Back then, we exchanged knowledge and sparred with each other to validate our cultivation. But now, the higher one’s rank, the greater the rewards.

“Wouldn’t it be fine for the competition to be limited to humans? Why should we let dumb animals partake in the glory? Let’s just cut them all down right now, and we’ll have much less competition once the Sovereign Meet begins.

“Besides, humans and monster spirits have been at war for tens of thousands of years. If we were in their territory, we would’ve all died a long time ago.” Lu Yun’s suggestion seeped into hearts like poison, giving rise to waves of shock and want.

That was right, hadn't things always been like this? Everything was on the table in their quest to take down future competition, which was why they didn't even bat an eye when monster spirits went after fellow humans.

One person dead was one competitor less. However, Lu Yun's words had sounded a bell of clarity. If they all worked together now and destroyed the monster spirits in attendance, they would all abruptly have a lot less competition.

Moreover, the monster spirits had been running roughshod over everyone in Destiny City these days. Many a human cultivator had had to take the abuse in silence.

A thick, heavy silence fell forebodingly over the scene.

The Silvermoon Wolfking glared at Lu Yun with light-silver eyes, itching to pounce on the human and tear him to pieces.

"Silverback gorilla!" a voice suddenly roared from the crowd. "Three days ago, you ambushed my junior brother for no reason when he entered the city for his Life Glyph. He's now on the brink of death... pay with your life!"

Swoosh!

A crescent of sword energy arced toward the gorilla.

"Kill!!!" As if that attack had set a chain reaction in motion, the human cultivators in the area all sprang to action at the same time and attacked the monster spirits.

"Wake up!" boomed an angry voice, sending the flying swords slashing at the monster spirits back to their owners.

A shudder ran down the collective spines of the humans in the crowd, their backs drenched with cold sweat. They'd been possessed just now and making moves against their will.

An old man in cyan robes walked down from the air, scanning the area with an eagle eye.

"Get out here!" he thundered, the words reverberating in every cultivator's chest and making them go pale.

"Oof!" A girl in a black dress stumbled out of the crowd. She looked about seventeen years old and was a charming little thing with a petite figure. Blood dripped down from the corner of her mouth as despair crept into her expression.

"Witch from the Star Demon Sect, how dare you use the Demon Possession Tone in public! Are you attempting to start a war between humans and monster spirits in Destiny City? You shall not be suffered to pollute these lands!" He thrust out with a palm strike, intending to take the girl's life.

"Stop!" demanded a faint voice. An emerald bamboo stick shot down from the air, firmly burying itself in the ground next to the girl in the black dress.

Sporting an emerald chiffon dress, a girl roughly about eighteen years old descended from the sky.

“Old knave, how dare you hurt my junior sister?! Do you have a death wish?” Though she was thin, the girl’s presence was as great as a towering mountain. The powerful might of heaven and earth radiated from her!

The void realm!

The girl in the emerald dress was a void realm cultivator!

The monster cultivators behind the old man exchanged startled looks before casting murderous gazes at the newcomer. Some of them kept looking at each other, communicating through their eyes on how they should kill this void realm cultivator.

“You... are his disciple?” The old man stilled when he saw the bamboo stick, the look in his eyes concerned.

The girl in green—Wanfeng—cracked a smile that was oddly familiar to Qing Han. It was a smile that frequently appeared on Lu Yun’s face.

“Monster spirits purposefully stirred up trouble to create excuses to kill the elites of the human race. As a human elder, not only do you let them walk free, but you take their side and go after my junior sister! Today, on behalf of my master, I will teach a lesson to this agent of the enemy!” As she spoke, she picked up the bamboo stick from the ground and swung it at the old man.

#### **Chapter 403: Holy Girl of the Star Demon Sect**

“How dare you!” snarled the old man in cyan when Wanfeng called him an enemy agent and came at him with the bamboo stick. “This seat is an arcane immortal and an enforcer of the Sovereign Meet. It would be one thing if your master were here in person, but a little junior like you will not talk with such disrespect! This seat will teach you a lesson in your master’s stead, young woman. You will learn to respect your elders and superiors!”

He grabbed unceremoniously at the bamboo stick.

“Ha!” Wanfeng scoffed, emerald radiance flaring out of her eyes. Her bamboo stick dodged the old man’s hand like it’d come to life, and snaked around to hit him squarely on the forehead.

Whack!

The arcane immortal howled in pain, his cultivation instantly repressed to the nothing of a mortal’s, leaving him lightheaded.

“Teach me a lesson in my master’s stead? No one other than milord is in any place to do that!” Wanfeng took swing after swing at the peerless immortal with her bamboo stick.

The stick contained a special power that suppressed one’s ability to fight back. Even being a mighty arcane immortal didn’t afford him any breathing space from the weapon. Round and round he stumbled, reeling from the blows of the bamboo stick under everyone’s shocked gaze.

You can do that to an arcane immortal?

The old man was one of the enforcers of the Sovereign Meet and had a duty to maintain order in the event. However, he was receiving a thorough beating right before the event commenced!

Enthusiasm for the Sovereign Meet suddenly dwindled greatly as the event abruptly lost a lot of shine. If it weren't for the great rewards, many would've considered pulling out.

"The Sovereign Meet is holy, and the lord enforcer's authority should be honored. How dare you commit such disrespect?! Monster spirits, join me in taking this cretin down!" The declaration came from the Silvermoon Wolfking, who was now leading the monster spirits in a charge toward Wanfeng.

Close to a hundred monster spirits followed after it and attacked with various combat arts and treasures, kaleidoscopic scintillation flashing from their bodies.

"You won't hurt my senior sister!" The girl in a black dress who Wanfeng had been shielding sneered and stepped out of Wanfeng's shadow, her hands forming a seal.

There was a gust of wind, and then...

"Dastardly monster spirits, how dare you throw your weight around like this in human territory? Do you think we humans will just roll over and take it? We kill!!" A few human cultivators lunged at the monster spirits with bloodshot eyes.

"Come back here, junior brother!"

"Senior brother, what's with you?"

Their brethren's abrupt charge caught some other cultivators by surprise. A beat behind, they hurriedly ran after their suddenly crazed companions.

Conflict started anew. Humans and monster spirits were dragged into another chaotic brawl, shattering the short-lived truce. The goal of the monster spirits was clear: the human void realm cultivator must not be allowed to reach maturity.

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"Your little lover is in danger."

Lu Yun and Qing Han were staying out of the chaotic melee. Although the girl in the black dress possessed a powerful entrancement art, it wasn't enough to influence the two.

"Jealous?" Lu Yun turned to Qing Han and grinned merrily.

Qing Han didn't dignify that with a response. Fine, fine, he somehow knows already. Can't he just, well, pretend not to know?

"Don't worry, Wanfeng will be fine. The treasure in her hand is enough to sweep away every opponent." Lu Yun stroked his chin and whispered into Qing Han's ear, "On the other hand, if we expose our identities, we'll probably be taken out immediately. There's more than one dao immortal observing everything here, waiting for us two to show up."

Feeling Lu Yun's hot breath hitting her ears made Qing Han fidget awkwardly.

Indeed, a strong presence descended from the sky as soon as Lu Yun spoke, separating the clashing human and monster cultivators.

“What’s going on here? What is the meaning of all this?!” A tall and burly immortal in golden armor strode down from the sky, scanning his surroundings with sharp eyes like those of a bird of prey. His aura as a dao immortal was on full display. “Explain yourself, Su Heng!”

Su Heng, the arcane immortal that’d become Wanfeng’s new punching bag, sat on the ground in a daze with empty eyes. He struggled to alertness when the dao immortal in golden armor demanded an answer.

Smack!

Before he could say anything, Wanfeng swept him down to the ground again.

Lu Yun rubbed his forehead. “She didn’t learn that from me!”

Qing Han gave him a sideways glance. “But I seem to remember her being your number one minion back when you were the greatest troublemaker in Dusk Province.”

Lu Yun hunched his back and didn’t respond.

Wanfeng normally appeared to be a gentle and delicate girl, but when it came to her bottom line, unusual ferocity would explode in defense of her principles.

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“Allow me to explain.” Wanfeng grasped her bamboo stick lightly and answered softly, “This man tried to kill my junior sister.”

“Kill your junior sister?” The golden-armored dao immortal scowled when he saw Wanfeng knock down Su Heng, but he hesitated when he took a better look at the bamboo stick in her hand.

The girl in black shrank behind Wanfeng’s back.

“Are you sure the holy girl of the Star Demon Sect is your junior sister?” The dao immortal glowered at the girl in black. “Since when did your master turn into a villain running with the Star Demon Sect?”

Those in Destiny City only knew Wanfeng’s master as a mysterious heavyweight. He’d arrived at the city a few days ago and had taken down scores of arcane dao immortals with his bamboo stick. As a result, many powerhouses of the world had developed a healthy fear of bamboo sticks.

The dao immortal in golden armor was under the city lord’s personal command. Although he was wary of Wanfeng’s master, he wasn’t afraid of the mysterious man. After all, the city lord of Destiny was one of the greatest immortals in the world. Even Zhao Fengyang, the previous Nephrite Celestial Emperor, had once sought guidance from the city lord.

“Who she is doesn’t change the fact that she’s my junior sister. As for the Star Demon Sect...” Wanfeng paused. “If you think my master is a member, I won’t deny it.”

Her master, Lu Yun, was the head of the Star Demon Sect! Wanfeng would love it if Wayfarer joined the Star Demon Sect, so why would she deny it?



“Witches from the Star Demon Sect are to be dealt with!” The golden-armored dao immortal scowled and prepared to strike.

“Hold!” another voice interjected suddenly. “The Sovereign Meet is commencing soon. In Destiny City, all living beings in the world of immortals, be they human, monster spirit, divine, or demonic, are equal here—members of the Star Demon Sect and other major factions included.”

The new speaker was a young man in silver armor. He wore it with an uncommon grace and genteel presence. He seemed to garner the favor of heaven and earth simply by existing, and people couldn't help but look at him.

“Milord!” The dao immortal bowed to the young man in silver armor. This young man was the city lord's disciple and a void realm cultivator.

“At ease.” The young man nodded slightly. “Who started this? Who caused the conflict between the monster spirits and human cultivators?”

#### **Chapter 404: City Lord of Destiny**

The golden-armored dao immortal dispelled the girl's entrancement with a soft yell, delivering everyone back to their senses again.

“Those two started it! They bullied me because they have the superior cultivation!” The silverback gorilla hadn't left yet. It pointed its broken iron rod at Qing Han, who was standing toward the back of the crowd.

The human cultivators shuffled to the side, revealing Lu Yun and Qing Han. Wanfeng looked at Lu Yun as well, a trace of hesitation appearing in her eyes when she settled on him. She seemed to have noticed something, but wasn't sure of her speculation.

The two looked utterly mundane. Their cultivation was only at initial transformed nascent spirit realm. Their looks were ordinary, and their bearing beyond ordinary. In short, they looked like two country bumpkins out in the world for the very first time.

They might possess some strength, but there was no faction backing them up. Yi Tianling had gone after them precisely because he'd been deceived by their appearances.

“All lives are equal in Destiny City,” the disciple of the city lord demanded with a sharp glance. “Why did you start this conflict?”

“And its words are the truth just because it speaks them? You believe the gorilla?” Lu Yun looked at the man with a mocking smile playing at his lips.

“Whether its claim is true or not will be determined in a trial. Guards, take these two for later interrogation!” scoffed the city lord's disciple.

“Understood!” A dozen immortals in golden armor showed up to surround Lu Yun and Qing Han.

“Oh no you don't!” Wanfeng suddenly took a stand and tapped her bamboo stick on the ground, sounding a clear clink. “Arresting people with no regard for right or wrong... is this what Destiny City is? Is this what your so-called Sovereign Meet represents?”

She cut a slim and petite figure, and her features were delicate with a gentle air. However, her attitude was anything but.

Emerald light subtly flashed over her body, and the power of heaven and earth gathered upon her, gracing her seemingly fragile appearance with an overwhelmingly strong presence.

She picked up her bamboo stick and pointed it at the city lord's disciple with a snort. "Taking people away for no good reason. Aren't you even going to ask what happened here?"

The power of heaven and earth about her put the young man on guard. However, he only sneered in response. "There's no need for that. The monster spirits are our guests and this city belongs to the humans. None of the monster senior brothers would stir up any trouble here."

"So it seems you're the reason why the monster spirits have been killing humans in and outside Destiny City these days with no concern for the consequences... Take this!" Wanfeng's bamboo stick transformed into a streak of green and swung at the young man's head from a hundred meters away.

"You court death!" The city lord's disciple flew into a rage upon seeing the incoming attack.

Hum.

His silver armor burst forth with blinding light and blocked Wanfeng's attack.

Both of them grunted and took a step back. The silver armor he wore and the bamboo stick Wanfeng wielded were both powerful treasures; neither was greater than the other. Their cultivations were at a similar level as well. The clash left both of them slightly injured with no clear winner.

"What are you waiting for?! Take those two down!" growled the dao immortal next to the city lord's disciple.

Whoosh!

The few dozen immortals quickly raised their weapons and prepared to kill Lu Yun and Qing Han!

Kill, not arrest.

Wanfeng was too occupied with fighting the city lord's disciple to spare any attention for them.

"What a surprise," Lu Yun said faintly, staring at the armored young man. "The city lord's disciple is a monster spirit."

He and Qing Han hadn't even moved from their spots, completely dismissing the armored immortals as threats.

Boom!

A rumbling noise cascaded through the air, shaking the earth beneath them.

"Stop, all of you!" boomed a voice from all directions with great gravitas.

"Master!" Panicked, the disciple blocked Wanfeng's attack and dropped to the ground, too intimidated to make another move.

Wanfeng floated back down to the ground as well.

“If anyone dares start a fight in the city again during the Sovereign Meet, death will be the only punishment. No exceptions,” said the city lord after a brief pause. “This matter ends here.”

“Understood!” The city lord’s disciple bowed to the air with an impassive expression, while Wanfeng twisted her lips with derision.

“You got lucky today.” The city lord’s disciple gave Lu Yun and Qing Han a final glance before walking away.

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The cultivators in the area slowly dispersed.

“He went after you two on purpose. You must be careful.” Wanfeng walked up to Lu Yun and Qing Han to give them a warning, despite not having recognized them, then disappeared into the crowd with the girl in black dress.

“After us? Can it be...” Lu Yun frowned. Had their identities been discovered?

“No.” Qing Han shook his head and transmitted to him. “It’s Yi Tianling.”

Lu Yun paused.

“The Blood Ganoderma was too big to be kept secret.” Qing Han sighed. “Someone else must’ve discovered it, and only left it in place so Yi Tianling would continue raising it.”

Realization abruptly dawned on Lu Yun. Yi Tianling had led the two of them away, but they’d returned in one piece and the ganoderma was gone. They were now the suspected owners of the ganoderma.

The Blood Ganoderma needed to be nurtured by the flesh and blood of living cultivators and immortals, which went against the natural laws. Therefore, those who’d discovered it had been waiting for Yi Tianling to raise the ganoderma to full maturity before reaping the gains.

Though it was rare, and no Blood Ganoderma had ever appeared in the ancient world of immortals, it wasn’t completely unknown; records could still be found in some ancient ruins.

Lu Yun and Qing Han had become targets as soon as they entered the city; the silverback gorilla’s provocation was to create an excuse to take them away. What truly surprised Lu Yun, however, was that the city lord’s disciple was a monster spirit!

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The registration process this time had been replaced with obtaining Life Glyphs. Anyone who had a Life Glyph could participate in the Sovereign Meet.

“Are we in the right place?” Lu Yun and Qing Han had arrived at where the glyphs could be acquired.

It was an enormous plaza that looked about six hundred meters wide on the outside, but was in fact compressed by a spatial formation. The true plaza was ten kilometers across. At the center of the plaza

was a stone stele of about nine hundred meters tall that had countless names etched on it. One simply had to etch their name into the stele to gain a Life Glyph from it.

#### **Chapter 405: Immortal Emperor and Demon Sovereign**

“Young lord, the two have reached the stone stele.” In a building on the other side of the plaza, the silver-armored disciple of the city lord sat cross-legged in meditation. Seemingly resting for the moment, he opened his eyes and looked out a window at the stele, his gaze resting on Lu Yun and Qing Han.

“The Blood Ganoderma is a matchless spirit herb recorded in books dating before the ancient times,” murmured the disciple. “If I can obtain it and refine it as my replica, it will complement my true body and shore up any gaps. I will then absolutely triumph over the heirs of those old farts who refuse to die, and become the champion of the Sovereign Meet!”

The truest use of a supreme natural material wasn't in consumption or refinement into a pill, but to refine a replica for oneself. In that way, the material would be in perfect harmony with the refiner, allowing its strength and essence to fully meld into their body.

However, the process of refining a replica was quite arduous, making it so that very few since the ancient times had found success. But for someone on the level of a disciple of Destiny's city lord, it'd be a very easy task.

“Send someone to watch over those two and create some appropriate trouble for them. Force them out of Destiny City!”

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Countless names covered the surface of the stone stele. Despite looking like there was no more space, it could remarkably still accept new names without the additions looking shoehorned in.

“Hahahahaha!!” Brays of laughter echoed around the plaza.

A boy had failed to carve his name into the stone and furiously demanded why this was so. The stele... had actually given him a response!

“Over-reliance on pills during cultivation, making for a weak foundation. Rejected.”

The boy flushed beet red.

“He seems... to be the grandson of an ancient grandmaster.” Someone recognized the irate requester.

“Ah, the descendent of a pill grandmaster huh? No wonder.”

Humiliation increasing at the sounds of discussion around him, the boy covered his face and fled. This was but a small interlude in the vicinity of the stone stele and didn't affect too many.

“So we have to carve our names into the stone... does it have to be our real name?” Qing Han wondered out loud as she scanned the stone.

“No, it doesn't have to be,” a teenager nearby answered kindly. “The names are just a moniker. You can write whatever you want, as long as you leave a mark on the stone. I don't know which braggart started

it, but someone started the practice of actually etching their entire name on the surface to prove how strong he was.

“Take me for instance, my moniker on the stele is ‘Future Immortal Emperor’.” The teenager grinned sheepishly.

“Future Immortal Emperor...” Snickers spread throughout the crowd when people heard the name. Wasn’t this guy calling someone else out for being over the top? He was the true braggart here!

“What are you all laughing about! Isn’t the ultimate goal of us cultivators to ascend to the heights of an immortal emperor and reign over the nine heavens?” ‘Future Immortal Emperor’ defended himself hotly.

Snickers grew into guffaws, but many peered at the stone to find that, yes indeed, there really was a ‘Future Immortal Emperor’ carved into it.

“Future Immortal Emperor, is it? And what’s that worth huh? Watch me, I’m going to be the Future Demon Sovereign!” A loud voice boomed out as a tall, stocky man strode up and firmly carved ‘Future Demon Sovereign’ into the stone.

Faintly golden splendor flashed over the stele’s surface as a Life Glyph flew out of the stone, landing in the hands of ‘Future Demon Sovereign’. He raised his head high and puffed out his chest, proudly scanning the crowd.

“He’s a devil from the Star Demon Sect!” Someone recognized the newcomer, but there were no further comments of censure.

All beings were equal during the Sovereign Meet being held in Destiny City, regardless of sect, clan, faction, or race. The city lord had just warned everyone not too long ago that no fighting would be tolerated in the city for the duration of the tournament, an area which included the satellite cities around the main city.

Apparently, two dao immortals had disregarded the order and clashed with each other in one of the satellite cities anyway. Their disagreement was quickly ended when the city lord smacked them both to death at the same time with his two hands.

“His cultivation is at the void realm! Pity, though, he only got there after the Dao Flower disappeared, so he didn’t receive its blessings.”

“Not a pity, a boon! Thank goodness a devil from the Star Demon Sect didn’t get the Dao Flower’s blessings!”

“Right right right, a huge boon! Thank the heavens!”

The natural scowl on ‘Future Demon Sovereign’s’ face darkened when he heard the strains of conversation around him.

“Me next!” Amused by Future Immortal Emperor and Future Demon Sovereign, Qing Han bounded up to the stone stele.

After some thought, he quickly wrote two words down on the stone.

Qing Yu.

Hum.

A pillar of rainbow light shot into the sky and dyed the stele all colors of the rainbow. The name 'Qing Yu' glittered with sparkling radiance, eye-catching in the extreme.

Everyone quieted down and stared at the sparkling characters.

"Qing Yu." A smile flitted across Lu Yun's face as he looked at the slightly frail figure in front of the stone stele. Meanwhile, the other cultivators stared in a daze.

"Qing Yu? A Qing surname? Is he part of the Qing Clan? But I've never heard of a genius called Qing Yu from that clan... though Dao Sovereign Qing Han comes from them."

"The world of immortals is vast, who says someone with a Qing surname has to come from that clan?" snorted an onlooker. "Look at that stele, there's at least a thousand Lu Yuns on it. Are all of them the lord of Dusk Province?"

Wordless exasperation descended on Lu Yun when he heard that. Upon taking a closer look at the stone, he found that yes, there were indeed roughly a thousand Lu Yuns in a certain portion of the stele.

Of course, not all of them were called Lu Yun. A great deal of them were like the Deaf Prince, people who viewed him as their idol. In short, they were a bunch of fanboys.

"But that Qing Yu is obviously a tremendous genius to be able to elicit this kind of phenomena from the stele. Although he's only spirit realm, he's on par with those void realm cultivators, or even stronger."

"Not even void realm cultivators got this kind of response..."

"It's a pity that the Dao Flower's disappeared so he won't be getting the flower's blessings or creating his own void realm method."

"Not at all. It's a good thing he wasn't born in the Qing Clan, or the clan would think he's a traitor because of his potential and hunt him throughout the world.

"Hahahahaha, that's so true. The Qings are such a weird clan. The more of a genius you are, the more they ostracize you. The weaker and more idiotic you are, the more they protect you. Apparently, their young master Qing Buyi is a heckuva cultivator who can casually slice up dao immortals, but his personality underwent a huge shift because they hated on him since he was young."

The expressions on the Qing cultivators in the immediate surroundings were forebodingly dark. Qing Han... the first Dao Sovereign beneath the Dao Flower had once been from the Qing Clan, but the clan had viewed him as a traitor and exiled him.

They were now an incredible joke in all parts of the world.

"That Qing Yu's potential is extraordinary. Since his surname is Qing, he must have something to do with our clan. We need to think of a way to pull him to our side," murmured a Qing immortal.

"Your turn!" Hands behind his back, Qing Han skipped back to Lu Yun, but then suddenly seemed to think better of this stance. He crossed his arms in front of his chest and grinned merrily at Lu Yun.

Lu Yun smiled back, then walked up and carved in a few characters: Qing Yu's Sidekick.

Wham!

The stone stele shook again as bolts of golden light converged on the three words, then shot into the air.

"Void realm!!"

"He's a void realm powerhouse, and one that's been blessed by the Dao Flower!"

Shrieks of surprise and shock erupted in the crowd.

### **Chapter 406: To Splurge**

There weren't that many void realm cultivators to begin with, and ones who'd received the Dao Flower's blessing before its disappearance were rarer than hen's teeth. Those kinds of cultivators were the precious jewels of every faction and carefully protected, not only because they possessed immense potential and strength, but also because they'd invented their own void realm methods and walked their own path. Theirs were futures that would lead their factions to new peaks of everlasting glory.

Personages like them were always accompanied by a heavy guard whenever they traveled, with at least one arcane dao immortal following by their side. However, this boy who called himself 'Qing Yu's Sidekick' was swaggering through Destiny City without a care in the world.

"Did the monster spirit cultivators and disciple of the city lord target these two because they know Sidekick's background?"

"The city lord is a heavyweight himself, on par with a celestial emperor. Is he also afraid of these void realm cultivators developing?"

A thick buzz of conversation started among the crowd as speculations flew thick and furious about the city lord's disciple's true motives for targeting the two.

In the building next to the plaza, the disciple looked on broodingly. He hadn't thought Lu Yun would be in the void realm.

"That explains why Yi Tianling died at their hands. There must be someone else behind them, and the Blood Ganoderma is in that person's hands!" His eyes narrowed in thought. "I need to find a way to take these two alive and draw out their backer!"

Previously, he'd only suspected they were the new owners of the spirit herb. But now, with Lu Yun displaying his level of cultivation, it cemented the disciple's nebulous hunch.

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Meanwhile, Lu Yun was quite resigned as well. He hadn't wanted to reveal his cultivation, but this stone stele was simply too remarkable. One had to call upon their cultivation to leave a mark on its surface; cultivation was the brush for one's name.

He'd deployed the Tome of Life and Death just now to suppress his cultivation to the lowest level possible, but it'd still given rise to unnatural phenomena and drawn the attention of the crowd.

Who knows what would've happened if he'd fully unleashed his cultivation?

Qing Han was very much the same and had suppressed his cultivation just now with the starstones. Otherwise his—her—phenomena would've been even stronger. However, the disguised girl was currently glaring viciously at Lu Yun.

Qing Yu's Sidekick?

What the heck is that?

The cultivators around them were already looking at them weirdly. After all, a man called 'Qing Yu' and another called 'Qing Yu's Sidekick'... anyone would suspect of something going on between them.

Come on, they were currently disguised as two men!

Lu Yun hummed an unknown ditty and sidled up to Qing Han, not feeling the least bit awkward. His skin was many times thicker than Qing Han's.

"Come on, let's go. The Blood Restoration Pill is ready. Let's go find a place where I can stand guard for you." Lu Yun suddenly whispered next to Qing Han's ear, sending the disguised girl into a daze. He picked up her hand and the two vanished into the crowd.

"Uh... what?" The cultivators looked around blankly after the two left.

"Are the two of them... dao partners?" Strange expressions floated onto many faces.

"Humans. Interesting as always." Cultivators of other races looked around with weird looks as well, some at the crowd, and others at the pair that'd just vanished.

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Teeming with people as it was, all of the inns and cultivation locales in Destiny City had long been occupied by disciples of various peak factions. There were no empty rooms to be had, no matter the price.

But of course, there were always exceptions to be made.

"Men from the city lord's disciple are following us." Lu Yun strolled aimlessly on the streets, still hand-in-hand with Qing Han.

Feeling immense pressure from the looks and stares of passersby, Qing Han had no desire to talk to Lu Yun at all.

"Do you want to revert to your original appearance instead?" Lu Yun changed the subject when he saw that Qing Han wasn't speaking.

"When you reach immortality." Qing Han's voice shook as he firmly stomped down on the impulsive streak within him. "You can have anything you want when you become an immortal."

Lu Yun kept himself focused on the here and now with great effort and nodded firmly.

"We're here!" He suddenly stopped in front of an enormous manor floating in midair. Layers of killing, trapping, and defensive formations ringed its outskirts. The main doors towered grandiosely, various



precious ornaments and gold decorating its walls. It was obvious that the master of the residence was far from ordinary.

“This is...” Qing Han blinked in astonishment. From the outside, this floating manor appeared far too opulent. This kind of residence would be a rare sight even in the Qing Clan.

“Bought it with ten billion immortal crystals.” Lu Yun shrugged.

“Ten.. billion immortal crystals?! Do you not have any place else to spend your money?!” Qing Han’s eyes widened further in shock.

How much was ten billion crystals? Even the Qings wouldn’t be able to take out so many crystals in one go. To many peak factions of the world, this sum was on par with war funds. Most importantly, she knew how much this kind of manor was worth, since she was from the Qing Clan.

It was worth nowhere near ten billion crystals!

Its price had been inflated to these heights because they were on the cusp of the Sovereign Meet and demand far outstripped supply at the moment.

“There’s bound to be all sorts of natural phenomena when you break through. There’s no place more suitable than here.” Lu Yun placed his hands on Qing Han’s shoulders and enunciated each word clearly, “What are ten billion crystals compared to you? I’d consider it a bargain even at a hundred billion!”

After obtaining the Blood Ganoderma, he’d sent people into Destiny City to purchase this manor. Only in a place like this would he be at ease letting Qing Han take the pill and break through to the void realm.

At the same time, he revealed the price of this manor to her so she would be at ease. This was the safest place in all of Destiny City, so she could ascend with abandon and not worry about dragging him down.

Dragging Lu Yun down because of her affairs had always been one of her worries. She would attract a multitude of effects if she broke through, bringing forth countless experts to her location and causing untold trouble for Lu Yun.

Not only did the manor come for ten billion crystals, but so did the friendship of its previous owner. He would stand guard for Qing Han in the shadows. Ten billion immortal crystals was enough to hire any peak expert in the world of immortals.

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“Young lord, those two have entered Jadeite Manor in the east of the city.” A runner immediately passed a message onto the city lord’s disciple after Lu Yun and Qing Han entered the complex.

“What?” The disciple’s expression shifted into a slight frown. “Jadeite Manor is my senior brother’s real estate... Why would they take up residence there?”

“According to our intelligence, an unfamiliar woman bought the manor from Lord Yingchen for the price of ten billion immortal crystals. The woman was an arcane dao immortal!”

Yingchen was the name of the city lord’s eldest disciple; his cultivation level was at peak arcane dao immortal.

“Do we know that woman’s background?” asked the disciple expressionlessly.

“No, she’s an arcane dao immortal known by no one. She’s not part of any faction, nor is she one of the secluded old freaks. She’s not a secret weapon hidden by the great factions, either.” The runner paused a moment, then continued, “However, her true form isn’t human. She’s... a rimesnake king!”

## **Chapter 407: Xi Yingchen**

Palatial!

This was Lu Yun and Qing Han’s instinctive assessment of Jadeite Manor. The very ambience of the place oozed immortality. Every rock, pebble, leaf, and flower in the garden was intricately sculpted from exotic and expensive ores and spirit herbs.

“I... think this ten billion was well spent!” Qing Han gasped in amazement with every turn she made.

Lu Yun wasn’t as engrossed by the surroundings. Tossing out a few formation disks to cloister off the space, he summarily put his Formation Orb atop the disguised girl’s head.

“We’re doing it here?” Qing Han blinked.

“Yes, here,” Lu Yun nodded. “This manor belonged to someone else, I’m not about to trust it so easily.”

Although there were quiet rooms and cultivation formations elsewhere in the manor, he wasn’t particularly interested in testing their safety or reliability. He hadn’t bought the manor for the environment, but for the protection of the manor’s former owner.

The young man produced a blood-red pill from his pockets.

As soon as the pill was revealed, the air filled with an exotic fragrance. A heady mixture of every herbal essence and floral aroma imaginable, it was strangely free of blood. Aside from its color, the Blood Restoration Pill certainly didn’t look the part.

“Is this the Blood Restoration Pill?” Qing Han was a little hesitant.

When Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi had proposed shoring up her vitality via refining an origin sphere from millions of lives, she’d refused them on threat of suicide. Because the Blood Ganoderma came from similar origins, she wasn’t sure whether this was the right thing to do.

In the end, her desire for good health overcame her reservations. A few seconds later, she took the pill.

Hum—

An aura of crimson light blossomed from her body, then contracted itself into a large cocoon.

The Blood Ganoderma’s real food wasn’t only blood, but its victims’ talents and essence as well. The pill was born out of the condensation and refinement of the Ganoderma’s nutrients. Long ago, the shamanic tribe had cultivated many a Blood Ganoderma for their use in the pill.

Of course, there was another use for them as well. A Blood Ganoderma could be refined into a replica outside one’s body, a second spirit. It would retain its ability to feed off of the essence of others, allowing the cultivator to benefit from its ill-gotten gains.

At least one shamanic expert had perfected their constitution by doing exactly that.

Lu Yun wasn't interested in that, though. A pure soul had already been born within the spirit herb, a true spirit that had three ethereal and seven corporal soul-parts. If it took physical form, it would directly receive a dao fruit and become a connate dao immortal.

After all, the most crucial component of achieving dao immortal realm was forming a true spirit. Only when spirit and soul coexisted in a body could it harbor dao fruits.

He wasn't at the point where he could benefit from something like that yet, so using the ganoderma right now would be a waste. Meanwhile, refining the Blood Restoration Pill had only taken a portion of the herb; its core remained intact.

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Fwoom!

A huge pillar of light erupted into the sky and natural energies rushed in like the eddies of a frenzied vortex. This was a sign of Qing Han's void realm.

Lu Yun could isolate her aura from the outside world, but heaven and earth were another matter. Because the void realm necessitated fusing oneself with the world in order to perceive the void, there wasn't much he could do about the commotion.

Qing Han's nascent spirit was silver—as brilliant as the stars. At her side, Lu Yun looked up to find a pair of clear eyes. They... were Qing Yu's, from way back then.

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All of Destiny City began trembling. Countless people looked toward Jadeite Manor in astonishment.

“Someone is breaking through to void realm inside this city. Such powerful pulses... they're more powerful than the void realm cultivators who received blessings from the Dao Flower. Who could it be?!”

“Such an unparalleled human genius... they cannot be allowed to live!” growled an old grey wolf. Its greenish eyes narrowed at the expanse above. “Any genius who is not ours must die! We monster spirits have a great sage now, and he has built a sacred land of our very own. The twenty-four facets should be ours to rule!”

The old wolf was resolute and unyielding; its mane glowed with silvery moonlight in the next moment. A luminous crescent rose from its head into the sky, pouncing in wolfish fashion toward Jadeite Manor.

A Silvermoon Wolfking, an arcane dao immortal!

“The timing of that Qing Yu's breakthrough... can he have consumed the Blood Ganoderma?! Yes, that must be it! Only the ganoderma's raw energies could provoke such a natural reaction!” The disciple of the Destiny city lord found his eyes glued on the sky, at the spirit becoming one with the world.

“Dammit, dammit, dammit! A Blood Ganoderma! A legendary spirit root unknown even to the ancients! How dare you ignorant fools waste it like that!” Aside from the fabled Blood Ganoderma, he really couldn't imagine what could elicit such a dramatic response from heaven and earth.

“Leng Che!” the disciple roared.

“Young lord,” a cold voice sounded at his ear.

“Go to Jadeite Manor and bring me those two bastards right away!” Bitter, the disciple couldn’t obey his master’s orders any more.

“Yes, milord.” The man named Leng Che disappeared in a streak of light.

The Wolfking and Leng Che weren’t the only ones on their way. A number of other experts had come at the momentous sign as well, ones that even the city lord dared not anger. More than themselves, they represented the everlasting factions they hailed from.

A stalwart figure rose up from Jadeite Manor. It was a long-haired, white-robed man, whose gaze was as cold and forbidding as a glacier. He swept the personages assembled with a disapproving look.

“What is the purpose of your visit, fellow daoists?”

“Xi Yingchen!” A lean old man was the first to reply. “Hand over the youth that’s refining the Blood Ganoderma. A treasure so rare as to elude the ancients isn’t something that just anybody deserves.”

“Hand over the Blood Ganoderma and the two youths. Otherwise, prepare for your Jadeite Manor to be turned into history,” a mist-hidden black shadow threatened.

“Do you recall what my master said, only days ago?” Suddenly, Xi Yingchen cracked a savage grin. “Have you all come here to die?” His scholarly appearance was replaced with a bloodthirsty ferocity.

“How dare you!”

“Such impudence!” The senior experts present scoffed in near-unison, but Xi Yingchen paid them no heed. Instead, he grabbed at something inside the manor. His fingers closed around the shape of a man.

“A dog like you, Leng Che? Trespassing on my land? Do you think this seat won’t put you down on the spot?” Xi Yingchen’s eyes grew icier. “Go tell Chu Yingxin this: if he’s not interested in living any longer, I don’t mind cleaning house on master’s behalf!”

#### **Chapter 408: A Bounty of A Hundred Billion Premium Crystals**

Xi Yingchen tossed Leng Che aside with a flick of his wrist.

Bang!

The unexpected sound of a muffled explosion came from the servant’s body and Leng Che coughed up a nasty mouthful of blood.

“You... you destroyed one of my arcane dao fruits!” Leng Che howled hoarsely, his voice losing any semblance of an even tone. He was a two-fruit arcane dao expert, but Xi Yingchen had taken one away in an instant!

The powerhouses nearby gasped in wary unison. What was a dao fruit?

A marvelous artifact of the greatness of creation, an impregnable fruit that contained immeasurable power.

However, Xi Yingchen had crushed one with the most cursory of gestures!

If he was the leading disciple of the Destiny City lord, how much stronger was his master?

“Scram, unless you want to lose your other fruit.” Xi Yingchen declared coldly.

Leng Che scurried off with a mixture of fear and shame.

“Don’t be afraid. The Destiny city lord is an origin dao immortal who probably sustained a grievous injury during his origin dao tribulation. I doubt he’ll be able to fight at full strength.” The Silvermoon Wolfking’s hungry eyes seared inexorably into Xi Yingchen’s skin.

He was an eight-fruit arcane dao expert, one who’d reached the zenith of his realm and was nearly at the point of obtaining his ninth fruit. The others near Jadeite Manor were similar in strength.

“Out of the way, Xi Yingchen,” another voice cut through the crowd as a man shrouded in silvery starlight slowly walked down from the sky.

Donglin Taihuang!

The number one genius of the Donglin clan—nay, the entire world!

Despite being only a hundred years old, he was already a seven-fruit arcane dao immortal, a definite entry in the ranks of the truly strong.

“The person breaking through to void realm possesses a cosmic constitution. I would like to see exactly who this ‘Qing Yu’ is, and if they are male or female.” Donglin Taihuang spoke with an aloofness that showed his wanton disregard for Xi Yingchen.

Although his clan had lost its ancestral home and become the laughingstock of the world, its resources and connections were still there and it was still one of the strongest factions around. The strongest members of the clan had been absent during Lu Yun’s attack. If they’d been there, things could have turned out quite differently.

“Senior.” Jadeite Manor’s doors opened for an ordinary-looking youth to walk out from within.

All eyes gathered on the young newcomer. Xi Yingchen glanced at Lu Yun before sparing an imperceptible nod.

The one who’d purchased Jadeite Manor earlier was a three-fruit arcane dao immortal. Their comparative youth meant that there had to be a great faction or heritage behind them. Moving in shortly thereafter were two youths who were similarly gifted. Indeed, their talents were practically unrivaled by anyone in the known world. This alone confirmed his earlier suspicions.

“This junior offers another hundred billion premium crystals, in exchange for Donglin Taihuang’s life.” A milky river flowed out of Lu Yun’s hands as he spoke, encircling the entirety of Jadeite Manor. It glistened brilliantly under the light of the fiery sun, filling the air with an intense aura of energy.

A hundred billion premium immortal crystals! That was enough to buy out a first-rate sect or faction! Even the greatest races and clans didn’t typically have this much wealth on hand!

Xi Yingchen was dumbfounded, and everyone could see his hard swallow. Next, his head swiveled toward Donglin Taihuang in murderous keenness.

Shoom—

A slight ripple of energy indicated Donglin Taihuang's departure; he'd vanished without a trace.

"My offer remains entirely valid. Anyone who can kill Donglin Taihuang and bring his nascent spirit to me will be paid this hundred billion." Beneath the river of crystal, Lu Yun had issued an ultimatum with hands clasped behind his back.

The bounty was heavily enticing, causing plenty of nearby experts to cast meaningful looks at the Donglin clan members. Everyone knew that Donglin Taihuang was in trouble now.

His kinsmen gnashed their teeth, but there was nothing they could do about the hundred billion crystals that weighed upon their hearts like a metaphorical mountain. Thankfully, the youth's vendetta was against Taihuang alone, and not the entire clan.

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"Where do you get your crystals from, child?!" quavered a vicious crocodile from its hovering perch. This peak arcane dao monster didn't hesitate to show its true form to the world. Evidently, it'd joined the banner of the North Sea Scarlet Ape as a member of the monster spirit sacred land.

"Are all monster spirits as stupid as you?" Lu Yun rolled his eyes.

"There are many people in the world rich enough to afford such a sum, and apparently there's six profligates rich enough to produce a crystal mountain on demand," jeered some of the bystanders. "Tsk tsk tsk, I'm glad none of them came to the Sovereign Ranking battles. Even a dao immortal would die under the weight of so much crystal. Aside from Dusk Province's Lu Yun, who else would be able to handle them?"

By now, the destruction of the North Sea's Myriad Returns Market at the hand of the infamous six was known all around the world. The crocodile had no reply to that.

Xi Yingchen took his eyes off the hundred billion crystals.

"Child!" An old man in grey strode forward and surreptitiously swallowed his saliva at the sparkling river of crystal over Lu Yun's head. "Yi Tianling is a member of our sect. The spirit root he had with him is one of our invaluable treasures—isn't it a little untoward for you to seize it from us?"

The old man was an avian monster spirit, although his humanoid form was indicative of his allegiance... or lack thereof. Unlike the crocodile, he didn't belong to the North Sea Sacred Land.

The Scarlet Ape was powerful, but it could hardly command every monster beneath the sun.

The old man in grey cut straight to the point: he wanted the Blood Ganoderma. The spirit herb was quite large, and breaking through to void realm certainly didn't demand all of it. There had to be a part that was left over. Plus, even if it was all gone, they could refine the person who had used it to reacquire its medicinal properties.

“Yi Tianling is a member of your sect, you say?” Lu Yun squinted at the old man eagerly.

The old man blinked, then nodded. “Yes, Yi Tianling is a disciple of the Sky Peng Sect. This person has killed our disciple and stolen our treasure... does Destiny City intend to harbor such a criminal?”

The Sky Peng Sect was the foremost sect of Horizon Land, one of the ten lands among the facets. It was near enough to the leading factions of the nine majors in its own right.

Moving on from conversing with Lu Yun, the second half of the old man’s words were an interrogative toward Xi Yingchen.

“I’m glad to know that Yi Tianling is a disciple of the Sky Peng Sect. I’ve been trying to find out who you are.”

Clatter!

Lu Yun opened up a storage ring, allowing several hundred Life Glyphs to tumble onto the ground. All the glyphs had gone dark, signaling the deaths of their previous owners.

Eyes shot wide as gasps of surprise sounded. Every glyph here corresponded to a young genius! Any cultivator who could leave their mark upon the stone stele was undoubtedly gifted with great potential.

“Sky Peng Sect. Allowing your disciple to murder several hundred cultivators in cold blood is one thing, but now you’re suing the victim of your own crime. Do you wish to die?!” Xi Yingchen struck before Lu Yun did.

Yi Tianling’s exploits were common knowledge to his peers, but they’d abetted his actions in order to feed the Blood Ganoderma. Lu Yun’s revelation sent waves through the crowd.

“No, no, no!” The old man in grey quickly panicked. “The Sky Peng Sect abandoned Yi Tianling long ago. His actions have nothing to do with us!”

#### **Chapter 409: The First Match of the Sovereign Rankings**

The Sky Peng Sect elder reddened after saying his piece; there was nothing he could do. It seemed increasingly unlikely that any of them here would get the Blood Ganoderma.

Xi Yingchen’s swift display of force was intimidating enough by itself, but Lu Yun’s subsequent bounty to scare off Donglin Taihuang had only added fuel to their mental flames.

None of the powerhouses congregated here were brave enough to strike.

They were in Destiny City. Xi Yingchen was the senior disciple of the city lord and a peak arcane dao expert in his own right. Despite the potential opposition arrayed against him, he remained perfectly calm.

Moreover, Lu Yun’s exposure of Yi Tianling’s crimes backed them into a corner. If any of them made a misstep, they could very well become a target for the rest.

Qing Han was still in the process of breaking through. Her body remained in the bloody cocoon, but her nascent spirit had risen over Lu Yun’s formations. Energy gathered from the land, flowing to her in an enlightening stream of power and knowledge.

Perceiving the void meant understanding creation's secrets. The Blood Ganoderma couldn't help her with this part; she could rely on only her own talents.

She had many factors on her side: her cosmic constitution, the starstones she carried, the Dao Flower's blessing, and the multitude of connate spirit roots within her. On paper, her talent was greater than Lu Yun's.

The formations around Jadeite Manor lit up upon activation. A dense web of runes and lines wrapped all around the estate in a protective barrier. By the time the onlookers reacted, it was already too late for the hostile powerhouses to do anything.

"We shall see what happens at the Sovereign Ranking battles." With a final glance at Qing Han, the experts retreated one by one with sneers on their faces.

The factions they hailed from had no shortage of talented geniuses, and most of the world treated the past tournament in Dusk Province as a joke. Five Youth Sovereigns? What were they worth?

This time, many more geniuses hidden behind the scenes would rise to the challenge, and their strength could very well match the two cultivators here today.

Xi Yingchen nodded to Lu Yun upon the departure of the threatening powerhouses, then disappeared as well.

Chu Yingxin glared at Jadeite Manor with a brooding look.

"You dare oppose me, Xi Yingchen? I see you haven't taken second senior brother's death to heart." His expression grew colder as he passed over the kneeling Leng Che.

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A guardian expert like Xi Yingchen was a superb deterrent to any and all would-be troublemakers. Furthermore, the river of a hundred billion premium crystals still hung over the manor as a stark reminder that the bounty against Donglin Taihuang was yet valid. Anyone who could kill him and bring his spirit to Jadeite Manor would collect a princely sum!

Barely anyone in the world would be brave enough to do so, of course. Killing the Donglin Clan's number one genius was a surefire way to have one's entire faction razed off the face of the world.

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Qing Han took an entire day to finish her breakthrough. Reaching perceived void seemed to enhance her lightness and purity; the filthy disguise she had on was having a hard time hiding that part of her. Whenever she moved, heaven and earth focused on her.

She'd finished just in time, as well—the Sovereign Ranking would begin today.

Whoosh!

An enormous scroll rolled out across Destiny City's skyline, covering the entirety of its firmament.

The Sovereign Ranking!



Three golden words were emblazoned upon it.

“So there really is such a thing after all!” Everyone lucky enough to see it for themselves was astounded by its glory.

“The immortal dao is a path for the living, and intimately connected to all life. When living creatures require a Sovereign Ranking, the immortal dao will respond to that need.” Within Jadeite Manor, Lu Yun and Qing Han exchanged knowing smiles.

The scroll contained more than just its own name. It was densely packed with the names of all kinds of cultivators... at least thirty million of them! Everyone who'd come to participate was recorded, albeit, only the ones still alive.

Countless experts from all over the world opened their eyes in unison, looking toward Destiny City.

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North Sea, Levitating Island.

“Although humanity created the dao of immortals, it belongs to all living things. It is different from the human dao of the past.” A golden ape stood upon a cliff, overlooking the sea below. Its keen, glowing eyes were directed at the Sovereign Ranking above, just like everyone else.

Once upon a time, Scarlet Ape had cultivated the human dao of the Primeval Era. At some point, it would've needed to take human form to continue walking the path. However, it'd reached its peak only after the Primeval Era, in the age of immortal dao.

In that tumultuous age, every race vied for dominance throughout the momentous events of the times. With the creation of the immortal dao however, humanity had scaled the peaks once more and regained its status as lord over all creation.

A number of things had happened afterward that led to the demise of human rule. The ape had experienced it rather personally, as a human expert had sealed it into a dragon nest to act as its curse's source.

“The immortal dao is inclusive of all things. Monster spirit, demon, human, divine... I wonder how those wretched divines managed to destroy it and establish their own in the first place.” Muttering to itself, Scarlet Ape glanced toward Dusk Province to where the Skandha Range was.

“The desolate willow... a great power who existed in the era of human dao. I did not expect it to have forgotten the past as well... The Skandha Extinction Tomb is a devilish curse indeed. No wonder there are barely any divines left, and they have all absented themselves from the world's stage.”

The ape inhaled deeply. “In the era of human dao, the divines betrayed humanity alongside the dragons, phoenixes, qilins, and turtles. The humans forgave them in the next era, the one of immortal dao, only for them to betray their friends once again. Such inconstant, ungrateful allies are not worth having.”

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A golden path appeared in the sky. One end was attached to the sky over Destiny City, but the other end was too far away to be seen. Thirty million Life Glyphs lit up in unison all around the city. The cultivators who'd obtained them were forcibly turned into streaks of light, sucked up by the endless path.

"That's the prized possession of the Nephrite court: the Path of Ingress!" A cultivator from Nephrite court immediately recognized the path.

This wasn't just any path, either; it was the original. The small splinter Lu Yun carried could hardly compare.

No one knew how long or wide the path was. Even after the thirty million cultivators had come to rest upon it, there was still plenty of room to spare. As soon as Lu Yun and Qing Han landed, they split up.

"The first round of the Sovereign Ranking... begins!" the voice of a great will boomed through the land. "Those who successfully tread the path in three days will move on to the second round. The rest will be eliminated!"

As soon as this was said, the entire path shook with a deafening rumble. Something had changed in the golden boulevard. Everyone felt their bodies sink downward and many were forced to the ground under a great weight.

"What happened?!" a cultivator screamed fearfully. "I'm a peak spirit realm cultivator. Why do I only have an initial golden core cultivation now?!"

Although he'd managed to remain standing, he was unable to take a step forward. His body wasn't the only thing that had grown heavy; his true spirit within was laden with lead as well.

Images of all thirty million cultivators on the path were projected down by the Sovereign Ranking, granting immortals and cultivators both inside and outside Destiny City an excellent view of the proceedings. Despite how numerous the competitors were, the observers miraculously found themselves able to follow the action of each individual.

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"Their cultivation is limited to the core realm? Then we should've gone in there, too." A group of core realm cultivators pounded their chests in regret.

"You want to get in there? Then make a mark on the Sovereign Stele. Where's your Life Glyph, huh?" snickered a true immortal nearby, causing the first group to redden.

Yes, the stone stele had a name now: The Sovereign Stele. Anyone who could leave their mark upon it was at least in the spirit realm. In other words, core realm cultivators weren't eligible to participate in the Sovereign Meet this year.

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The more capable cultivators had already begun to sprint, as the Path of Ingress had repressed both their cultivation and any techniques that could help them move along. Therefore, the only things they could count on were their bodies and their leaden spirits.

Three days was too short! No end to the path was in sight.

“Is this a competition... or a test?” Lu Yun shook his head slightly and strode along the path with steadfast steps.

“You’re Qing Yu’s Sidekick, aren’t ya?” A sinister voice sounded at his ear.

Fwoosh!

A rough gust of wind blew by, accompanied by a broad, overhead swing. A thick, metal staff descended upon him at full speed.

“Die!” The surprise attack had come from a silverback gorilla with a vicious smirk. It’d put everything it had into the blow.

“Hmm?” Lu Yun turned his head and saw his assailant. Leaning slightly to the side, he casually avoided the iron rod. “Oho! I see who it is.” An amused smile crept over his face.

“You’ve got fast reflexes, kid!” the gorilla sneered. “That Qing Yu lorded his cultivation over me in the city, but now that we’re the same level... you’re dead for sure!”

Despite its nascent spirit realm cultivation, it possessed immense physical strength. Even a transformed spirit cultivator would be no problem for its staff. Against an opponent of the same level, it was practically invincible. This golden opportunity wouldn’t pass it by!

Missing the first swing was no discouragement at all; it promptly came back around for a repeat smash. Ordinary cultivators had a hard time just moving on the path, but the silverback gorilla could easily wave around an eighty ton staff. Such was proof of its physical prowess.

#### **Chapter 410: Steed**

“The pressure of this Path of Ingress isn’t unbeatable. I just need some time to adjust. I think I’ll be used to it in a day or so.” Lu Yun continued muttering to himself, seemingly oblivious of the staff coming down on his head. “If I don’t want to fall behind during this time, using a musclehead like you as transportation is the best solution.”

Clang!

An intervening fist slammed into the swinging staff—Lu Yun’s hand.

The impact shattered the foot-wide metal pole, leaving the part left in the silverback gorilla’s hand shivering alongside its wielder. Walking up to the gorilla, Lu Yun stomped firmly on its guts. The gorilla gritted its teeth in pain, but nevertheless acquiesced by putting all its limbs on the ground.

The young man walked onto its back.

“You will be my steed, or my dinner.” His ruthless whisper at the gorilla’s ear elicited another round of violent trembling. Lu Yun exuded chillingly visceral killing intent, and its survival instincts screamed for it to obey. It tossed aside its staff as quick as it could, then pounded its limbs forward against the ground for dear life.

The nearby human cultivators were speechless, but also rather inspired by what they had just seen. The monster spirit cultivators around them seemed quite... tempting, in their original forms.

No one knew who threw the first punch, but it didn't take long for a small brawl to break out between man and monster near the starting line.

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"Bastard! How dare that Qing Yu's Sidekick bully one of our boys like that!" A monster spirit powerhouse flared up with anger at what he was watching.

"One of your boys? He's a gorilla, isn't he?" snickered a human immortal. "Using the wrong pronoun there, aren't you?"

"You!" The monster spirit glared at the offending commenter, who returned the look with twofold intensity.

"What're you looking at? You're just a bunch of animals, so use pronouns appropriate for your species! Bring it on if you don't agree with that!"

Several monster experts lunged angrily at the human immortal. They had had enough.

"All of you, stop!" The strongest experts seated in the air above everyone else released their auras in unison, forcing the monster spirit immortals back.

"Anyone who causes trouble during the course of the Sovereign Ranking will die!" the Destiny city lord's voice sounded once more as origin dao power coursed freely through the air.

Innumerable immortals felt their hearts tremble a little. Just as they'd thought, the city lord was in the origin dao realm!

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The chaotic brawl at the start of the path raged onward. Cultivators fought messily among themselves, both to acquire a mount and to thin out the competition. They'd noticed the same thing Lu Yun had: the pressure of the path wasn't absolute. It would only take some time for them to get used to the weight.

Thankfully, the limitation also prevented them from doing serious harm to each other. Very few had the absurd strength of a silverback gorilla, after all, and the truly strong had already left.

Many of them had a strange hunch: those who reached the other end of the Path of Ingress first would receive unexpected prizes.

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The silverback gorilla's mad dash was fueled by fear for its own life. It'd finally understood the danger of upsetting its rider.

Just like Empress Myrtlestar said... the Path of Ingress has cut me off from hell. When Lu Yun tried to open the Gates of the Abyss with the realms of yin and yang, he noticed that the connection was strictly one-way. He could only put things in, not take them out. A familiar force had cut him off from hell.

Similarly, if he tried returning to hell now, he would exit the netherworld into Destiny City. Well, actually, he would end up where he was before the Life Glyph had brought him here.

Wait a second... A moment of clarity struck him. My body is still back where we started. The only things here are my mind and spirit! My spirit can send things into the Gates, but taking them out is impossible... the power that's cutting me off is the void!

If I tried sending my spirit back, I'd probably be eliminated. Lu Yun closed his eyes. Through hell, he could clearly sense where his body was—sitting by Qing Han's side back in Jadeite Manor.

"That means... this body is a simulacrum made by the Sovereign Ranking. Wow, it's so realistic! I almost didn't realize the truth. Aha... so that's it." Out of the corner of his eye, he saw his Life Glyph glowing. It was melded into his body... no, it was his body.

Cultivators had written upon the Sovereign Stele with their cultivations. Accordingly, their Life Glyphs were imprinted with their life and mind. When they'd set foot on the path, the glyphs turned into vessels suitable for containing their spirits.

The immortals outside had noticed this already; it was only the competitors who were left in the dark.

Out of boredom, Lu Yun looked for the silverback gorilla's name on the Sovereign Ranking.

"Yingxue? The characters for silver snow?" he repeated incredulously. "You're female?"

"Male!" The silverback gorilla replied with a muffled voice.

"Why's your name 'silver snow', then? Sounds female to me," Lu Yun harrumphed.

"So what? Yingxue is the name of the number one genius of my race! And the prettiest one, too," the gorilla snapped back. "See? That female who just ran past was 'Lu Yun', right? But that's not her actual name. She just admires him!"

"That... female who just ran past?" Lu Yun squinted into the distance.

Sure enough, there was a girl ahead of him who looked about seventeen or eighteen. A whirlwind at her side carried her off like a gust of wind; it wasn't long before she'd completely disappeared from view.

"She's going really fast, yeah. Way faster than you."

The gorilla fell silent. It wasn't good at going fast. The only reason it could run at all was because of its unreasonable physical strength. After they spent some time getting used to the pressure, the cultivators behind them would absolutely catch up and surpass them.

"Eh?" Suddenly, its eyes widened in shocked astonishment. It couldn't believe what it was seeing. "No way!"

"What is it?" Lu Yun followed the direction of the gorilla's gaze—ah!

Just like the gorilla, the half-step void realm Silvermoon Wolfking from earlier was running with all its might. Someone stood atop its back as well.

Qing Han!