

Necropolis 411

Chapter 411: To the Blood Sea

Only six Silvermoon Wolfkings had been born over the last eighty thousand years. Over time, all six had become arcane dao immortals or stronger—proof of the bloodline’s potency. And yet, Qing Han was treading the seventh Wolfking underfoot! A great existence, destined to become an arcane dao immortal, was being used as a human’s steed!

The old wolf inside Destiny City howled to the sky.

“I don’t care who you are, Qing Yu! You’re as good as dead! Your humiliation of the Silvermoon Wolfkings shall not go unpunished! Even if the nine celestial emperors stand in my way, I will tear you limb from limb!” its voice thundered across the metropolis.

Many immortals covered instinctively in fear.

The wrath of an eight-fruit arcane dao immortal was frightening. Even the humans who’d bickered with monsters earlier chose to stay quiet; the Silvermoon Wolfkings were strong enough to vie against the nine celestial emperors.

Qing Han looked completely unaffected by the threat. She made silly faces at Lu Yun instead, evidently quite proud of her accomplishment.

“I’ve been mad at this thing for a while. It was nearby when I came in, so I subdued it.” She grinned merrily as the wolf approached Lu Yun’s side.

“Yeah, the same thing happened to me. This gorilla even had the guts to attack me.” Chuckling, Lu Yun stamped a little on the silverback beneath him.

Neither youth noticed the gorilla brighten at their conversation, sweeping away its previous dejection. In fact, it was pleased enough to puff out its chest in pride. A silverback gorilla was a pretty ordinary monster spirit, so when there was a Silvermoon Wolfking to share its plight, being a mount for others didn’t seem so bad any more.

The Wolfking wanted to cry. It was pretty obvious what the gorilla was thinking. Alas, there was nothing it could do—Qing Han had just taught it there were things much worse than death.

The Path of Ingress was very long; no one knew where it ended. As time passed, more and more cultivators grew used to the path’s pressure and began zipping along at much greater speeds.

The fights between the competitors became bloodier. It was quite normal to see cultivators fighting and eliminating each other from time to time. Here and there, alliances and cliques formed for mutual protection and support.

Oddly enough, Lu Yun and Qing Han remained the only two with mounts. They had to fend off would-be assailants countless times along the way, although anyone who died on the path was disqualified and returned to their real bodies instead.

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“Stop!” Lu Yun called out suddenly. The gorilla and wolf both slid to a halt.

“Why are we here? Do we have to ford this part too?” Qing Han exclaimed.

It wasn't just them. Many of the cultivators who'd arrived earlier had stopped here as well, unwilling to blindly set foot on the section ahead. The path before them had turned from gold to crimson. The sky overhead was a similar shade of bloody scarlet; through the void, Lu Yun could see the crash of bloody waves.

The Blood Sea!

This was where the Path of Ingress led?!

The bloody path teemed with an uncountable number of the sea's denizens. Having clambered onto solid ground, they now blocked the way forward.

“Most cultivators will have no problem reaching the end of the path in three days. After getting used to the pressure, traveling along it is a piece of cake. This place... is where the first trial actually is,” Lu Yun murmured.

He could see corpses strewn about in the mass of monsters. Some belonged to cultivators, while others belonged to the sea creatures. Evidently, the former belonged to intrepid adventurers who'd already forged ahead.

“Hold on a second, you two!” Eight cultivators approached them with a polite salute. “The way forward is perilous. It would be very hard for two people to make it alone. Why not team up with...”

“There's four of us!” the silverback gorilla beneath Lu Yun's feet huffed, while the Silvermoon Wolfking covered its face with a foreclaw. Its joy at having slipped past unnoticed had been rudely shattered by a gorilla's shout. Now everyone was staring at them!

“That's a Silvermoon Wolfking, a fabled beast of legend. I know of six in total, all of them unparalleled sovereigns... but this one is being ridden!” yelled someone who was keen enough to recognize the wolf for what it was.

“Who are these two? Why are they riding a Silvermoon Wolfking?!”

The Wolfking wanted to smack the blabbering gorilla into the ground, only for the silverback to thrust out its chest.

“Look closely, kid! There's four of us!” the silverback gorilla corrected indignantly.

“Um...” The human cultivator blinked. “Yes, I suppose so.”

Qing Yu and Sidekick were pretty famous, but all thirty million cultivators hardly knew them in person.

“What faction do these rich kids belong to? Bringing in a Silvermoon Wolfking like this...” a girl muttered among the eight.

The Wolfking wanted to riptearkillRAGE!

“Fine,” Lu Yun coolly acquiesced to the request.

“Come on, then.” Qing Han spurred on the Wolfking underfoot.

“You sure we shouldn’t call for a few more fellows?” another piped up worriedly.

“No need,” Qing Han shook her head. “You eight plus us four is enough. Too many would only paint a bigger target.”

Soon, the boy, girl, gorilla, and wolf began plodding on ahead again. The bloodstained path didn’t daunt their progress. However, the eight cultivators behind them hesitated.

“Should we... follow them?” the girl who’d spoken earlier ventured carefully.

“Those two good-for-nothings have only come this far because of their mounts.” The leader snorted derisively. “If they want to show off, they can go right ahead to their deaths. We should keep waiting here. We’ll need at least a hundred to have a chance at traversing the Blood Sea.”

Thud!

A violent boom interrupted his speech. Having pulled out another staff from who knew where, the silverback gorilla was brandishing it around wildly. Several crimson creatures had been sent flying by its swings.

“The pressure here is three times greater than outside!” The Wolfking gasped as it tore a creature to shreds.

“There’s only five hundred kilometers left. The road ahead is the real trial... the stretch so far was just a warmup,” said Lu Yun. “Open your mouths.” He tossed two pills into the compliant beasts’ maws.

New sources of energy bubbled into the two monster spirits and they jumped back into the fight with the sea monsters with renewed vigor. Lu Yun and Qing Han remained unaffected astride their mounts.

“They really are loaded! They’ve got mounts and pills and everything. Do they have stronger treasures, too?” The cultivator group looked on at the pair ahead of them with envious eyes. They almost regretted staying back. If the two youths ahead weren’t strong enough, so what? They had plenty of treasures to make up for it.

“Why is this Sovereign Ranking so different from the one in Dusk Province? Shouldn’t this be a tournament between cultivators? What’s with this road?”

This rather salient question popped into many participants’ heads.

Chapter 412: Dao Partners?

Lu Yun and Qing Han didn’t pay any attention to those behind them. The Ingress Path was a trial of not only cultivation and strength, but courage as well. If the cultivators didn’t even dare set foot on the path, they were in no place to participate in the second round of the Sovereign Ranking.

There were a good number of strange creatures in the Blood Sea, but their cultivation had been suppressed to the golden core realm, just like the cultivators.

Having swiftly grown accustomed to the pressure, the Silvermoon Wolfking and the silverback gorilla no longer needed the supplement of Lu Yun's pills and were able to forge a bloody path through the Blood Sea.

Though incredibly vast and boundless, the Ingress Path somehow ran across the entirety of the Blood Sea despite it being only five hundred kilometers in length.

What level of treasure is this Ingress Path? Lu Yun thought pensively. From his observations, the Ingress Path was more powerful than even the Formation Orb. It exceeded connate-grade treasures and even rivaled the Fire Parasol Tree.

He thought he'd a good understanding of the Ingress Path with the imitation he'd acquired, but realized how wrong he was the moment he set foot on the real deal. The splinter hadn't even given him a glimpse into the full extent of the Ingress Path's power!

Lu Yun had crossed the Blood Sea before and possessed a deep understanding of how terrifying it was. However, the Ingress Path took them across the waters in only a short hop of five hundred kilometers. It could even capture the monsters in the sea and use them as challenges along the path.

"It's no coincidence that the courts of the nine majors have stood strong in the world of immortals for eighty thousand years, given the great treasures at their deploy." Lu Yun's gaze flickered.

A rapprochement between him and the Nephrite court was a near impossibility. The heavenly court would never stay on the sidelines while Lu Yun established his foundations in Dusk Province, and he would never bow his head to them; not unless Zhao Fengyang became the celestial emperor again.

Although the thrones were passed down between celestial emperors, the imperial clans of the nine majors had maintained an unbroken grasp on power. The phoenixes had once fought the Zhao Clan for Nephrite Major, but suffered a terrible defeat in the end.

Lu Yun was reminded of the mysterious land where not even the light of the Dao Flower could reach: the central world.

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Five hundred kilometers was a distance that was neither too short nor too long. Both the silverback gorilla and Silvermoon Wolfking were elites of the monster spirit youths. It wouldn't be difficult for them to cross the Ingress Path in three days.

The wolf, especially, had almost ascended into the void realm. As long as it grew accustomed to the environment on the path, it could defeat anyone and anything here. However, it didn't dare even think about fighting back.

Lu Yun had acquired the gorilla's help through violence, while Qing Han had made the Silvermoon Wolfking her battle pet with a method that Empress Myrtlestar taught her.

Bam!

Suddenly, a figure flew back from the front and crashed onto the ground before Lu Yun and Qing Han. Before Lu Yun could say anything, the silverback gorilla rushed up and knocked away the lunging Blood Sea monsters with a sweep of its iron rod to protect the person.

It was a girl who looked about eighteen, clad in the ivory-colored robes of a daoist nun and her hair swept up in a bun. She cast the gorilla a grateful look, then hurriedly took out pills from her storage ring and popped them in her mouth.

These Life Glyphs were fascinating items. They not only replicated the cultivator's body, but also their storage rings and treasures. Treasures that contained real worlds, such as the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals and hell, however, were inaccessible.

"Oh, it's you." Lu Yun threw the nun an amused look.

"You're the weirdo who was riding a gorilla!" yelled the nun after catching her breath, goggling at Lu Yun in surprise.

Lu Yun and Qing Han had dismounted and sent the wolf and the gorilla to take point. The nun before them was the girl who'd used Lu Yun for her moniker. She'd acclimated to the pressure on the path even before Lu Yun, and she was speedier than the silverback gorilla. Her talent was quite apparent.

"Be careful," the girl said before Lu Yun said anything. "There's a group of cultivators from the divine race blocking the end of the path. They've thrown a lot of people back."

"No wonder." Qing Han came up to them with a realization. "You don't look like you've been attacked by the Blood Sea monsters."

There was only one possible ending for those defeated by the monsters: death. Their consciousness would return to their bodies and they would thus be eliminated from the ranking.

"They would've eaten me if it weren't for you." The girl shuddered.

Many cultivators had reached the end of the Ingress Path by now, but the divine cultivators waiting there critically injured them all and threw them back.

Along the last stretch of the path, any injuries effectively spelled a death sentence. The monsters of the crimson sea were unusually bloodthirsty; any hint or trace of blood was enough to send them into a frenzy. Most of the cultivators who'd been thrown back had died at the monsters' hands.

"Those blasted divines!" The girl shot to her feet. Before she could rush back, Qing Han grabbed her.

"Wait! The same thing's going to happen again if you go there now."

"It was just a moment of carelessness that allowed them to ambush me. I, Lu Yun, will not back down from an open fight with them!" She brimmed with confidence.

"Huh? You're Lu Yun?" Qing Han looked up at the sky. However, the Sovereign Ranking wasn't visible on the Blood Sea, so he couldn't see the names of the participating cultivators.

"Um... I'm his admirer." The girl blushed. "He can't participate in the Sovereign Meet because all the powerful factions in the world are targeting him, so I decided to enter using his name."

"This time around, I'll live up to the title of Top Youth Sovereign no matter what! Maybe Lu Yun will fall in love with me when he learns about what I've done. Then we'll become dao partners and give birth to a lot of children..." The nun became increasingly engrossed in the grand future she was painting.

“As his dao partner, I mustn’t back down!” With that, she broke free of Qing Han’s grip and vanished.

Qing Han glared at Lu Yun’s slack jawed expression.

“Let me explain...” Lu Yun gave Qing Han a pitiful look.

Qing Han snorted with laughter. “Come on. Let’s go see what’s the matter with those divines. I thought only the monster spirits would stir up trouble, but it seems the divines are no different.”

“There’s definitely something between these two,” the silverback gorilla came up to the Silvermoon Wolfking with a grumble.

“And you noticed just now?” The wolf shot it a look. “They call themselves Qing Yu and Qing Yu’s Sidekick.”

“What are the two of you talking about?” Qing Han snapped when he heard their mutterings.

The wolf and gorilla immediately shut their mouths and focused on advancing along the path.

Chapter 413: Mountain Divines

Fighting was handled by the Silvermoon Wolfking and silverback gorilla for the last five hundred kilometers. Reaching the end proved to be quite easy after all. A pitch-black island loomed ahead of them, like a great shadow cast over heaven and earth. Even Lu Yun’s Spectral Eye couldn’t get a good look at the specifics.

However, the young man was sure of at least one thing: the island was located on the other side of the Blood Sea, and not within the ocean. In light of that, his curiosity continued to grow—what was the Sovereign Ranking, exactly?

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There was a melee at the very end of the path.

Here, some of the divines had set up an ambush to throw passing cultivators back onto the walkway over the Blood Sea. Their would-be victims were no slouches, however; everyone who had come this far was exceptionally talented. Resistance against the divines came naturally to them.

Although the ambushing divines were hidden in the void with some special techniques, cultivators of various other races had banded together to strike at divines who arrived there openly.

The Path of Ingress was too wide to fully encompass; cultivators who walked upon it were almost ant-like in scale. Although Lu Yun and Qing Han hadn’t encountered many people on their way through, more and more cultivators were joining them every second.

Right now, at least several hundred thousand of them were gathered here.

Humans, monster spirits, and cultivators of other races had formed all kinds of groups to gang up on any divines that passed by. From time to time, their efforts were sufficient to force some out of concealment.

The divine race had gained an air of mystery after relinquishing worldly rule eighty thousand years ago; its members rarely appeared to the public anymore. This time, quite a few of them had chosen to participate. Although they weren't as numerous as the other races, their talents far outstripped their competitors'.

Of course, plenty of cultivators with ulterior motives were provoking fights for their own gain as well. Although all contestants were uniformly limited to golden core, the strength they displayed far surpassed their theoretical realm.

Thump—

A dull impact saw the little daoist nun from earlier flying back once more. She landed in front of a startled Lu Yun in a heap.

"How'd you get tossed back here again?" Qing Han helped her up.

"There were seven of them! Not fair!" The girl looked like she was about to cry. She cast a pitiable look at Qing Han, unsure of whether to ask for help; she was out of restorative pills.

Qing Han passed one along, which the girl accepted with hurried thanks.

"Out of the way!" An ochre-colored man came barreling in their direction and came at the nun with a pair of hammers. "How dare a human wench eliminate my brother. Die!"

A loud hum preceded the weapons' transformation into two small mountains, its zone of effect now encompassing Lu Yun's entire quartet.

To Lu Yun however, the man's movements told a different story. Instead of trying to kill the quartet, the man was actually trying to blast them back onto the Path of Ingress in the Blood Sea for the marine creatures to finish the job.

"No, you die!" The silverback gorilla grinned evilly and ran up to intercept the attack with its staff.

"Don't kill him!" the girl warned hastily. "We can't kill anyone here. Anyone who does will be eliminated themselves!"

But it was too late; the gorilla's staff collided with the pair of mountain-sized hammers.

Clang!

Metal struck metal with a resounding clash. The staff of dubious quality exploded into chunks, and the gorilla soared through the air like a cannonball.

"Bastard! Are you trying to get yourself killed?" The ochre man was propelled in the opposite direction. His arms trembling, cold sweat gathered on his face.

The attack had been intended for all five in the group, but the silverback gorilla had taken the brunt of the whole thing itself. If it weren't for its monstrous physique, the gorilla would've been pulverized.

Clambering up from the path over the Blood Sea, the gorilla snapped a few blood monsters' necks before charging back. Its physical fortitude rendered it largely invulnerable against cultivators of the same realm.

Roaring to the sky, it produced yet another staff and lunged forth in a wild bash. Though the ochre man seemed to have had the advantage in the last exchange, he'd been granted it entirely through the quality of his hammers.

The meridians in the man's hands had exploded from the recoil, blocking the flow of internal energy in his body and preventing him from channeling any energy to grip the hammers for another go. He looked in despair at the sight of the falling staff—

Boom. Boom. Boom.

Six blasts of force slammed into the gorilla from behind the man, sending it hurtling backward once again as six more ochre-colored men strode to their brethren's side.

"Humans and monsters cooperating? How odd," said the smallest of the six. He was the slimmest and most diminutive, but possessed the strongest presence out of the group. He squinted at Lu Yun's company with thoughtful eyes.

This time, the Silvermoon Wolfking dashed to the rear and dragged the gorilla back.

The unfortunate simian wasn't in good shape anymore. There wasn't a single unbroken bone in its body, and its mouth foamed with blood. If the six men hadn't pulled their punches, it probably would've died on the spot.

"Mountain Divines!" Lu Yun breathed out the two words, taking in the earthen glow of the seven men in wonder.

Mountain divines found their origin in the worship of divine spirits located in mountains and rivers. When more and more of them came together, males and females reproduced to form a tribe.

There were two kinds of mountain divines.

One was aligned with nature and could make use of its power to shift mountains and rivers. The other kind included the seven men before him—projections of pure earthen might with bodies built like mountains.

Qing Han fed a healing pill to the gorilla, who grumbled a few times before stumbling to its feet; it knew better than to fight again.

"Why are we wasting time? We should eliminate them and avenge our eighth brother!" the first mountain divine shouted.

"Die!" The other six readily met the call. They'd come here to ambush the other races' geniuses, working to ensure there'd be less competition for their own race's promising youth.

This was due to an important discovery: the second round of the Sovereign Ranking had a lot to do with luck, as well as strength. The island before them was filled with opportunity. Ancient immortal heritages were everywhere, including those that belonged to the current races' ancestors.

"Roooooar!" The Silvermoon Wolfking bristled at the divines' assault and every hair over its body turned a glistening silver. A colossal wolf shadow rose up from behind it, pouncing upon the seven divines. This was its race's talent.

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“The Silvermoon Wolfking has finally come!” Cultivators ahead of them who’d noticed the disturbance paled. When it came to talent, Wolfkings were definitely among the most gifted of all. Thankfully, this one was only in the spirit realm. For some, it didn’t pose much of a threat.

“The Silvermoon Wolfking is the pinnacle of our silver bloodline! Those divine pieces of trash are nothing before our young wolf king. Come on, let’s go watch him win!” Fresh out of a battle, a few monster spirit cultivators were invigorated by the wolf-shadow’s appearance and dashed toward it as fast as they could.

Chapter 414: Thrown Into the Blood Sea

Monster spirits followed a system of strict hierarchy. Far beyond being tied to their respective races, the hierarchy was intimately connected to bloodlines. The silver bloodline was a particularly noble pedigree, akin to monster spirit royalty.

The Silvermoon Wolfking and silverback gorilla both belonged to this bloodline. The former, moreover, was at the very top of the social ladder. After all, the six Wolfkings before it had all achieved arcane dao immortal or better.

When the Silvermoon Wolfking manifested its blood strength through the giant wolf shadow, it’d naturally drawn the attention of every monster spirit nearby. Snarling and poised to lunge, the ferocious vestige glowed with a radiance reminiscent of the full moon.

It scared the seven mountain divines out of their wits. Their tribe wasn’t a particularly strong one—definitely a far cry from Silvermoon Wolfkings, in any case.

“You’re a Silvermoon Wolfking!” The leader among the seven yelled in surprise. “The other six Wolfkings have already become protectors of the North Sea Sacred Land. They’re sworn enemies of humanity. How can you be allies with... them!”

“Roooooaaaagh!” His only reply was a deafening roar. The wolf flung a mountain divine onto the Blood Sea section of the Ingress Path with a swipe of its paw. Sea monsters snarled and pounced, tearing the divine to shreds in the blink of an eye.

“What a ridiculous question. Those humans are the young king’s slaves, of course. As expected of a bumpkin divine like him,” a monster spirit merrily chuckled nearby.

Humans and monster spirits were opposed to each other, but every race considered the divines a greater threat as they’d enslaved everyone else eighty thousand years ago. Although they were now gone from the world, their ambition to return as its rightful rulers had never diminished.

A silent and efficient throwing machine, the Wolfking tossed out a second mountain divine in a matter of seconds.

Four powerful divines suddenly joined the fray. Although they bore auras that were characteristic of their race, it was difficult to judge what tribe they hailed from.

All of them wore black blades upon their backs, but none made a move to draw their weapon. Even barehanded, the four of them together were evenly matched with the Wolfking. With the help of the remaining mountain divines, they succeeded in holding the wolf back for a time.

“Aw, no! It’s them!” The onlooking monster spirits blanched when they saw who it was.

These divines were the initial ambushers, responsible for severely injuring cultivators and throwing them into the Blood Sea. There weren’t many of them, but they were individually extremely strong. The average genius couldn’t possibly hope to best them.

“You there, human slaves! Why aren’t you doing something?” one particularly fervent monster called out angrily to Lu Yun and Qing Han. The two humans were calmly watching the fight from the side, completely unperturbed by what was happening.

Speaking was all the monster spirit would do, however. Neither it, nor anyone else, would step in and help a fellow competitor in the Sovereign Ranking.

“All of you, shut up!” The silverback gorilla didn’t particularly enjoy the commentary from the peanut gallery. “If you keep talking, I’ll rip you all to pieces!” Brandishing its iron staff, it leaped to the Wolfking’s aid.

The other monsters didn’t take to the gorilla’s roaring very well at all. They were scared of the Silvermoon Wolfking, but would hardly be shaken by a mere silverback gorilla.

“Oh, it’s them!” a human cultivator spoke up in realization. “When I came here, I think I saw two people riding a silverback gorilla and a Silvermoon Wolfking.”

“Ah, me too! Those two monster spirits are their mounts. I saw their names in the Sovereign Ranking as well: one is Qing Yu, and the other one’s Qing Yu’s Sidekick!”

“I heard they had a small run-in with a Silvermoon Wolfking back in Destiny City, but I really hadn’t expected they’d commandeer it as a ride!”

“Qing Yu’s Sidekick is a void realm expert who’s been blessed by the Dao Flower! Qing Yu broke through himself in Jadeite Manor, and caused that huge commotion.” Quite a few of the surrounding cultivators began chatting about what had transpired in Destiny City.

“Ah...” A group of injured youths traded confused looks among the crowd.

“Senior brother, didn’t you say they were just spoiled rich kids?” one of them, a girl, asked weakly.

Resounding silence answered her. These people were the same ones who’d proposed grouping up before the Blood Sea. The ‘senior brother’ in question had a rather contrite expression; if he’d followed Lu Yun and Qing Han, they wouldn’t have suffered the losses they had along the way.

“Absurd! How can the young Wolfking be someone else’s mount! You humans are a shameless bunch, trying to ruin our king’s cultivation mindset like that! Die!” Several of the more hot-tempered monsters came rushing in his direction.

They’d heard the rumors on their way here, but had dismissed them as human gossip intended to put down monster spirits. Hearing the words again here... well, they really didn’t want to believe it.

“The truth is right in front of you, but you don’t want to admit it! If you want a fight, that’s exactly what you’ll get!”

“Haha... we should learn from the two seniors’ examples! Why don’t we catch a few monster spirit mounts of our own?” A handful of chortling human cultivators immediately moved in to intercept.

The world of immortals was an enormous place, home to an innumerable amount of geniuses, and the thirty million who were competing in the Sovereign Ranking were the cream of the crop. Their exceptional talents gave them the pride to meet any challenge head-on.

The area near the Blood Sea descended into greater chaos as humans and monster spirits waded into a free-for-all with the divines.

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“Careful!” Suddenly, Lu Yun felt the hairs on his neck stand on end. Turning reflexively, he stretched out his arms and put himself in front of Qing Han.

Splort!

A sword stabbed out from the void through his shoulder.

“Get lost!” Lu Yun growled. Energy surged all over his body, shaking free a humanoid figure from the void. “How dare you!”

The young man was furious, his expression dark with killing intent. If he hadn’t reacted in time, the sword would’ve pierced Qing Han’s neck and eliminated her. Because their cultivation was limited to golden core, their spirits were unrefined and the Purple Manor yet to be established. If their bodies died, that meant the end of their lives.

He stepped up, projecting an engulfing force with an outstretched hand. The person he’d just sent flying was sucked back in. The assailant was dressed and equipped exactly the same way as the ones fighting the Silvermoon Wolfking. However, he was clearly stronger than his peers. He could probably take on the Wolfking by himself!

Combined with his unpredictable sneak attack techniques, the Wolfking would lose in a single round.

“Don’t kill him!” The little daoist nun trembled at Lu Yun’s bloodthirst. “If you kill him, you’ll be eliminated by the rules here too!”

The divine in black sneered at that. “If you don’t kill me now, I’ll always be able to try again... until the person behind you is dead. The blood monsters on the path cannot hurt me.” His voice was raspy.

“The Blood Sea monsters on the path can’t hurt you?” Qing Han mused coolly. “I’m pretty scared of death, but I don’t like leaving loose ends...”

“Are you going to kill me?” The divine smirked.

“No!” Qing Han shook her head decisively. “Sidekick, toss him into the Blood Sea itself. Let’s see what happens.”

Chapter 415: The Twenty-Fourth Facet of the World of Immortals

Fear finally broke through the calm mask of the divine in Lu Yun's grasp.

Toss him into the Blood Sea?

The last stretch of the Ingress Path arched right above the Blood Sea, which painted the sky with crimson. There was no telling what would happen if a cultivator fell in.

Many had noticed by now that they weren't here with their real bodies, but as replicas that were identical to their true selves. Dying here would only get them eliminated. Nevertheless, they still deeply dreaded the Blood Sea.

The Ingress Path was incomparably wide, but all the cultivators clustered near the center and stayed far, far away from the crimson waters on the sides. The rippling waves and monsters' roars were a constant assault on their nerves.

"No, you can't do that..." Mad struggles ensued as the divine sought to gain his freedom from Lu Yun's hand.

"The successor of that sword has come as well, haven't they?" Lu Yun transmitted suddenly.

Color drained from the divine's face after a stunned pause.

Swoosh!

Lu Yun seized the opening and hurled his opponent toward the crimson sea.

Bam!

A tremor passed through the air as an invisible barrier shattered and the divine cultivator vanished into the vast sea of blood.

"There's a barrier between the Blood Sea and Ingress Path!" exclaimed a monster spirit. "I tried to throw a human cultivator into the Blood Sea earlier, but I failed. How powerful is Qing Yu's Sidekick to break the barrier??"

The speaker was an enormous gorilla more than forty meters tall with strong, thick arms. He could only be described as a towering behemoth.

Previously, a human cultivator had unwisely attempted to make it their mount and been hurled into the sea for their troubles. However, there existed a tremendous barrier between the sea and the path, and the cultivator had only broken every bone in their body instead of falling into the waters.

Yet Lu Yun had smashed the barrier from thousands of kilometers away and lobbed the divine into the sea.

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Destiny City.

Within a great manor, a black-clad man's eyes flew open, fear coursing through them. Crimson light then burst forth from his body, churning him to pieces.

However, none were the wiser since everyone's attentions were on the images projected by the Sovereign Ranking.

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"Those divines holding the longswords..." Qing Han gave Lu Yun a look of dread.

"That's right, it's him." Lu Yun nodded gravely. "The sword has found its new master, and the two have emerged in the world."

The Sword of Chaos embodied the will of the ancient divine court. It hadn't emerged to protect the descendents of the ancient divine court, but to reestablish its rule!

That would... hardly be ideal.

The wielder of the Sword of Chaos had intervened twice at Dusk. First to sever the road the long-haired black monsters walked, then a second time to rescue Scarlet Ape from Lu Yun.

"No wonder the curse in the Skandha Extinction Tomb has never been able to fully destroy the divine race, and they're able to revitalize themselves again and again. The Sword of Chaos has been guarding the last of their fortunes.

"Since the successor has come, however, I'll find them..." Lu Yun narrowed his eyes.

He then took a step forward and threw a punch, blasting a black figure out from the air. This was the second divine who'd come to assassinate Qing Han. His goal was simple: Kill with a single move!

"Come on!" Scowling, Lu Yun grabbed Qing Han and barrelled forward, yelling at the silverback gorilla and Silvermoon Wolfking, "Stop fighting and come with us, you two!"

Chills ran down his spine. These assassins were... deathsworn!

Countless divine deathsworn were hidden in the area, locked on to Qing Han. They wouldn't stop until they killed their quarry!

Lu Yun's instincts rang the alarm loud and clear. Wu Tulong, Mo Qitian, and Zi Chen were dead, and divine deathsworn now targeted Qing Han... Nothing good would come out of this.

Qing Han's heart pounded at the killing intent surrounding her.

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Jadeite Manor, Destiny City.

A faint shadow easily slipped through the formations in and outside the manor and located Lu Yun and Qing Han's true bodies.

Swoosh!

It manifested a long sword and shot at Qing Han's forehead in a drilling stab, but—

Bam!

Something round collided with the head of the man in black, exploding the assassin's head like an overripe watermelon.

The round thing revealed itself to be a human head, one that quickly sucked in the dead man's escaping nascent spirit before returning to its own body—the head belonged to none other than Ge Long.

Lu Yun and Qing Han had only brought the rimesnake king Bing Ling with them on this adventure, leaving everyone else behind in Dusk Province. However, Ge Long was mysteriously on the premises.

His gaze was uncharacteristically deep, and he looked up at the Sovereign Ranking without sparing the headless body a glance.

"Speculations from back then are now reality," he muttered. "The will of the immortal dao has yet to recover from its destruction, so who or what is pulling the strings?"

He sat down cross-legged beside Lu Yun and Qing Han to protect their bodies.

.....

Divine deathsworn continuously flickered into existence and lunged at Qing Han with ferocious killing intent, undeterred by the prospect of death.

Lu Yun and Qing Han pulled no punches and knocked them away, making their way to the black island ahead of them. The divines were too difficult to track. They were able to blend into the air without leaving any traces, and Lu Yun was only able to see them with his Spectral Eye.

Relying purely on instinct, Qing Han managed to pull off dodge after dodge, always by the skin of her teeth. The silverback gorilla and the Silvermoon Wolfking had rushed over to help, but to no avail. They couldn't even sense the divines' presence.

"They're shadow divines! The shadow guards of the divine court from eighty thousand years ago!" Many in Destiny City voiced their shock when they saw the mysterious divine tribe.

"So that tribe has reappeared as well. Is the divine race planning on returning to the world of immortals?" The possibility weighed heavily on everyone.

A powerful monster spirit had just emerged and established a sacred land of its kind in the North Sea, and now the dreadful tribe of shadow divines were making an appearance as well.

The shadow divines had prowled in the shadows eighty thousand years ago, earning themselves a reputation as the most lethal of the divine tribes. No one knew just how many elites from different races had been assassinated by them.

"With the nine celestial emperors passing down their thrones, the nine majors of the humans are experiencing great instability. The monster spirits are poised on the sidelines, waiting for the optimal opportunity to strike, and even the divines are growing restless."

.....

"This is..." Warding off the assassins, Lu Yun and Qing Han finally set foot on the black island.

Qing Han's eyes widened in shock and she blurted out, "The central world! This is the twenty-fourth facet of the world of immortals, the central world!"

Chapter 416: Graveyard

Aside from the four great oceans that connected the world of immortals, there were nine majors, ten lands, four immortal seas, and a central world.

Everyone knew that much.

The last of these, however, had always been shrouded in mystery. The public knew of its existence, but not how to actually reach it. Eighty thousand years ago, the divines had ruled on high from within the central world. However, that facet was also their later source of misfortune.

In the present world, not even the nine celestial emperors knew where the central world was located.

"You're telling me this is the central world?" Lu Yun shivered with incredulous anticipation.

During the Dao Flower's bloom and repair of the cultivation path, Qing Han's will had enveloped the entire world as the flower's proxy. There was only a single place the flower's light had been unable to reach: the central world!

As such, she was especially sensitive to this place. The Dao Flower hadn't been incapable, but had been rejected by some force from the twenty-fourth facet.

"This is the central world? It... looks like a graveyard!" Lu Yun mouthed each word slowly, body tightly tensed up. Now that he was closer, he could see what the island actually looked like.

Rather than an island, it seemed the tip of a continent. The layout upon it was an enormous graveyard.

Unlike a proper tomb or mausoleum, a graveyard had no structure to speak of. A mausoleum was a complete system in itself. There existed an interconnected relationship between all the tombs within that, together, formed a whole and comprehensive layout. However, no matter how many burial sites lay within a graveyard, it would remain a vast, deserted wasteland.

Qing Han abruptly turned toward Lu Yun, her expression aghast. The Wolfking, gorilla, and little nun were similarly taken aback.

"What central world? What graveyard? What in the world are you talking about?" the little nun asked in a trembling voice.

"The Path of Ingress has taken us here, to the central world... but all I can see is a huge graveyard!" Lu Yun took a deep breath.

They were fully off the Path of Ingress now, padding over a greyish land that was devoid of color. Although they hadn't fully reached the region ahead just yet, they weren't far off.

It appeared that fighting was forbidden here, as even the divines had settled down after arriving. Plenty of cultivators were already there. Some rested in cross-legged meditation, while others glanced around furtively.

“We’re not allowed to attack each other here. Anyone who does so will be instantly eliminated,” a voice suddenly reminded the newcomers.

“Hmm?” Lu Yun looked toward the source of the voice, as the speaker was someone he recognized: Mo Chenfeng of Lazuli Major, a kinsman of Mo Qitian. He nodded in gratitude to his old acquaintance.

Mo Qitian was nearby as well, at complete odds from his usual lively self. There was an aggressive dominance around him that gathered other Mo cultivators closer to him in nervous attention.

Mo Chenfeng was already considered one of the brightest in his clan. Lu Yun’s sword ocean intent and Vast Dragon Seaturner had both used him as a source of inspiration. However, his personality seemed to be completely stifled before Mo Qitian. After his reminder to Lu Yun, Mo Chenfeng carefully sat down beside his kinsman without another word.

Lu Yun’s lip curled slightly, but he didn’t comment. There was definitely something off about Mo Qitian. This simply wasn’t the same young man that Lu Yun had once known.

The young man tried opening his Spectral Eye, but the results were rather fruitless. Mo Qitian looked the same, and he was definitely still alive, but...

“Mo Qitian feels strange, somehow. Something’s wrong,” whispered Qing Han.

Before Lu Yun could respond, there was a bit of a commotion slightly further away.

“Hahaha... well, well, well. Isn’t this the young Wolfking of the silver bloodline? You’ve been enslaved as a mount by humans, haven’t you? What shameful behavior for royalty!” The remark came from a bald man with a pair of golden horns on his head; clearly, he was an ox monster of some sort. His humanoid form informed everyone else that his tribe hadn’t joined Levitating Island’s sacred land.

Internally, the monster spirits were now split in opinion. Some had joined Levitating Island’s sacred land, while others remained loyal to the ten lands’ monster courts.

The main way they differentiated themselves was in the form they preferred. Sympathizers of the new faction reverted to their original forms, while ten-lands loyalists remained humanoid.

Due to Levitating Island’s sacred land being very new, the two factions hadn’t had a chance to enter into any material conflict as of yet. However, tensions had definitely built up over the past few months.

There would be war between them, sooner or later.

Fighting was forbidden here, but snide words could still be exchanged. The monsters on the opposite side began to loudly mock the Wolfking and gorilla. The former’s face clouded over, but it ultimately didn’t respond.

“Take human form, then stay close to me.” Qing Han reacted to the banter with considerably more annoyance.

The wolf complied; after a flash of silver light, a pale-haired girl of sixteen appeared at Qing Han’s side. She cut a surprisingly lithe and beautiful figure.

“A female?!” The silverback gorilla blurted out instinctively, voicing the stunned thoughts of the group aloud.

The silver-haired girl reddened slightly, and she cast the latest in a succession of vicious glares at the gorilla. The monsters on the other side were similarly at a loss for words.

.....

Three days passed in no time at all.

The Sovereign Ranking rumbled once more. The cultivators still stuck on the path were transported back by the glow of their Life Glyphs. In the end, only five hundred thousand were successfully able to traverse the first round.

It was a sizable number, at first blush, but the second round’s participants had been selected from among thirty million competitors! Now, less than two percent remained—incredibly terrifying odds, upon further thought.

The second round of the Sovereign Ranking would last a month. Over the next thirty days, all five hundred thousand of the cultivators needed to survive in the dark land before them. Mutual elimination... was permitted!

Surviving was necessary to qualify for the third and final round.

In addition to these rules, the Sovereign Ranking pointed out the dual existences of great opportunity and terror in the land ahead. It wouldn’t be easy to last four weeks in such a harsh, foreign environment.

“Great opportunity? Great terror?” Lu Yun sighed softly. “Ancient experts and heritages are buried in a graveyard. Of course there’s a lot to find. The air of resentment is really intense here, though. Who knows what kind of monsters have been born in this place?”

Chapter 417: Peculiar

Five hundred thousand cultivators felt their worlds spin. When they returned to their senses, they found themselves among different scenery upon the dark continent.

A kind of random transportation had taken them here. The groups and cliques that’d formed earlier were now scattered, their members sent to different corners of the land. The foreign environment was enough to put everyone on edge.

As elites from the various races of the world, none of the contestants were rash enough to make any sudden moves. For now, they were more interested in acclimating themselves and finding their allies, rather than eliminating potential rivals. An aura of death lingered in this place, and with it, the shadow of great danger.

Risk and opportunity often went hand-in-hand.

.....

Lu Yun had arrived inside a shadowed vale. Black mist roiled upon the earthy floor and there was no trace of life to be found anywhere.

“Most immortals would imagine the central world to be a lofty, mysterious place, full of experts beyond celestial emperor realm. But this place...” He surveyed his surroundings carefully.

There was only death to be found on this blackened land. There was no life, no nature, and certainly no energy of the land. The only description that fit the bill was a dead world.

Crack!

Something snapped crisply underfoot; the young man had crushed an old bone.

“This bone... this bone belonged to an origin dao immortal!” Lu Yun was astounded by the find.

“Bones from eighty thousand years ago...” His face changed through a spectrum of colors.

The bone belonged to a human immortal who’d died eighty thousand years ago, around the same time as the destruction of the divine court.

“This origin dao immortal was part of the divine court, and he died protecting it?” Closer observation with the Spectral Eye yielded some truly incredible information. Hadn’t the divines enslaved the other races during their rule eighty thousand years ago? Hadn’t non-divine geniuses been slaughtered and persecuted?

Why would a human origin dao immortal die protecting the divine court? Moreover, he had done so willingly, rather than through coercion.

“Eighty thousand years ago, after the flames of that great war, even the divines shouldn’t have had many dao immortals left. Yet a stray bone off the ground just so happens to be from an origin dao immortal. What the heck is going on here?”

Lu Yun suppressed the impulse to revive the bone’s owner. He wanted to know the truth, but there were only two spots left for his Envoys of Samsara. He was already at eight out of ten.

He didn’t care much about his envoys’ strength in life. As long as the Tome of Life and Death existed, they could always grow stronger. No, what he wanted was potential and talent.

Once revived, this origin dao immortal would become a peerless one at best. Moreover, he’d be killed instantly. In the distance, a dark character blazed against the black horizon, legible despite the lack of contrast.

Restriction!

A restriction against immortals!

This black land—the central world of the world of immortals—carried a great restriction against the presence of immortals as well. This one was far more potent than Dusk Province’s. Anyone who reached immortality would be erased.

In fact, Lu Yun found the restriction oddly familiar. It very closely resembled the one from the Dao Flower’s tomb.

Did the restriction from that tomb arrive here after the tomb collapsed into the Blood Sea? Maybe the tomb itself was part of the central world...

Possible theories flooded his mind; there was too much that needed to be explained here. In its own way, the central world was full of mysteries.

Finally, Lu Yun raised his head and scanned his surroundings more carefully. There were old bones everywhere here; even the black 'earth' was made up of bone dust. Death information filled his Spectral Eye as far as the eye could see. Thankfully, the now enhanced version rendered him immune to the sensory overload.

"Hmm?" Suddenly, he noticed something nearby and zipped toward it immediately. There was a small fight happening just across the field. "...skeletons?"

The combatants in question baffled him. Having crawled up from the ground, a dozen or so skeletons had encircled a girl in ivory-white daoist robes. It was the little daoist nun he'd met before.

"If the little girl is here, Qing Han shouldn't be too far, then!" Moments later, his eagerness was disappointed; Spectral Eye or no, there was no Qing Han anywhere to be found within five hundred kilometers.

Most of what he saw were teeming undead and scattered bones. Among them were a few hundred living creatures, but none were Qing Han.

Lu Yun's heart sank a little.

"Hey, you! Yes, Sidekick over there! Come and help me, would you!" the girl shouted anxiously, clearly thankful to have spotted him. Lu Yun had made no effort to hide himself. She didn't really know how to refer to him, so went with the nickname Qing Han used.

The black skeletons were extremely strong, as they were all roughly the equivalent of peak origin core realm. Because the girl's cultivation was limited to golden core, she had a hard time dealing with a dozen at once. She would've handled herself fine if it'd only been one or two enemies.

"I guess I should save one of my admirers," Lu Yun muttered under his breath. He cast a sword ray from his fingertips that splintered into a dozen more. Each embedded itself into a skeleton, annihilating the group completely.

"Huh?" He blinked in surprise at the feedback. A warm current rushed into him from every direction, increasing his cultivation by the slightest bit. "I get it!"

This was the key to the second round: a great hunt!

The participants of the Sovereign Ranking were uniformly limited to the initial golden core realm.

However, hunting the denizens of this dark land could increase their cultivation. As long as they kept killing, they'd return to their original cultivation. Furthermore, it was likely that the same effect would be forthcoming when hunting their fellow competitors.

Only a killing spree would allow him to gain sufficient strength to excavate the opportunities here and outlast the round.

"Are you alright?" The little girl poked him, unsure of why he'd frozen still.

Recovering from his reverie, Lu Yun spilled the beans to her about what he'd figured out.

"I..." The girl pouted dejectedly. "I can't beat them!"

The skeletons roamed in groups, and it was rare for them to be found alone. At her current level, it was very hard for her to deal with more than one or two.

"Maybe we can team up!" Her eyes lit up. "We'll be stronger if we're together... Oi!" The way Lu Yun looked at her made her redden again. "Why're you looking at me like that!

"You know, I'm actually very strong! It's just, most of my arts just need to be powered by a nascent spirit. If you protect me now, I'll do the same for you when I get there, okay?" The little girl puffed out her chest. "Still, I'm gonna say this ahead of time: I'm Lu Yun's dao partner! Don't you dare get any ideas about me!"

The 'dao partner' in question could only shrug. There were no words available to communicate his feelings about this development. In fact, not even he was sure what he was feeling.

Chapter 418: Excavating Burial Mounds for Immortals

That was the story of how Lu Yun found himself in an alliance with the little nun. Like she'd said, there was strength in numbers. Many of his death arts were restricted here, so Lu Yun had to be careful as well.

This year's Sovereign Meet had attracted practically all of the genius cultivators in the world. Even reclusive heavyweights had sent their proteges to participate in the tournament. Competition was much fiercer than it had been in the Dusk Tournament three years ago.

Lu Yun was fortunate enough to own the Tome of Life and Death and rule over hell, but he never for one moment felt he was the only one with such luck.

There would always be a greater talent in the world.

.....

Seven days passed.

Many had discovered the secret of the land of darkness and begun hunting skeletons and spirits to increase their cultivation. Those who'd reached this round were all geniuses with great potential and battle strength, so it was incredibly easy for them to defeat enemies that outranked their current level.

Whoever reached a higher cultivation realm earlier would gain the first-mover's advantage, and could make headway in eliminating other competitors.

Some contestants had already been eliminated over the past week. Many had found out through firsthand experience that eliminating other cultivators would result in greater gains than killing skeletons and spirits. As a result, some had given up on skeleton hunting entirely, and shifted focus to fellow cultivators. This was a ruthless and brutal competition.

Although being eliminated didn't mean death, schemes and plots abounded in the entire process. Geniuses who were trusted allies one second might turn on each other the next, defining the second round so that strength wasn't everything.

In these seven days, Lu Yun had progressed from golden core to life core realm. He could now kill skeletons with a singular, powerful strike with his dense inner energy.

"Stay away from the nascent spirit realm skeletons for now." He scanned an enormous, black-gold skeleton some distance away and quietly retreated with the little nun in tow.

He'd been looking for Qing Han all this time. He and the little girl had traversed thousands of kilometers over the past week, but Qing Han was nowhere to be seen. His extended failure brewed increasing agitation in his heart.

Clink!

Lu Yun sent a sword ray out and chopped the legs off an approaching skeleton. The little nun quickly ran up and landed the final blow, upon which her presence immediately changed. She'd finally reached the life core realm.

"This is too slow!" she grumbled. "We've only reached the life core realm after seven days."

Lu Yun gave the girl a withering look.

She flushed red. She knew she was a burden on him; if it weren't for her dragging Lu Yun down, he would've reached nascent spirit already.

"Someone's here." Lu Yun gestured at her to be silent.

Swoosh!

A flash of sword energy slashed at the nun's head with imperceptible speed.

Lu Yun took a quick step to the side and caught the flying sword threatening her. It vibrated violently in a bid to struggle out of Lu Yun's grasp.

"An origin core cultivator... He's quick!" Lu Yun looked up and saw a man dressed in green slowly emerge from hiding.

"Please return my sword," said the newcomer. "And we can pretend this didn't happen."

Origin core cultivators were among the most powerful on this dark land. Lu Yun had prevented the ambush from succeeding, which told the would-be attacker that this young man would be no easy prey.

"Despicable!" snapped the little nun once she recovered from the shock. "You snuck up on us, and now you want to pretend it didn't happen?"

"What else do you want?" the man sneered. "Do you want others to reap the benefits after we've grievously injured each other? Return my flying sword!"

Only elites had reached this far into the dark land. Most of them were equipped with immortal swords, but couldn't make use of their weapons at the moment, given the suppression of their cultivation to the core realm. Flying swords were thus more valuable, considering the circumstances.

The little nun had a few immortal swords with her, but no flying swords, which had prevented her from tapping into her full power.

"Grievously injure us? Just you?" Lu Yun scoffed and threw the sword to the little nun. "Take it."

She merrily accepted the sword and stowed the immortal sword she'd been wielding into her storage ring.

"Die!" the man growled, barrelling toward the little nun with an explosion of inner energy. The flying sword was integral to his survival here. He couldn't use his immortal swords before he ascended to the nascent spirit realm. If he could kill these two, though, he had a chance of breaking through.

Hum.

Golden light burst forth from his body, blinding Lu Yun and the little nun.

Bam!

A loud collision sounded out, followed by a tremor passing through the earth beneath them.

"What... what happened?" the little nun asked in a shaky voice after soothing her nerves.

"No idea." Lu Yun shrugged. "It looks like he rammed himself dead."

The man had run head-on into the mountain beside the little nun, breaking his head open like a rotten watermelon.

"Wait, what's a man like you doing with a mirror?" The little nun paused when she saw a mirror in Lu Yun's hand.

Splash!

The mirror evaporated when he opened his hand; it'd been formed by the elemental power of water. The little nun fell silent.

A familiar current streamed into Lu Yun, much more powerful than what he'd felt before. He perked up as his cultivation powered to peak life core realm. He'd only just ascended to the realm earlier, but he made dramatic progress after killing the cultivator.

"Eliminating other people is the best way to go!" Lu Yun's gaze turned sharp.

The little nun was still confused. The man had obviously been charging at her, so how had he ended up smashing himself into the mountain?

"Because he's an idiot," Lu Yun answered the question that was written on her face. "He was clearly highly sheltered when growing up. He's had no experience in the way of real battles other than ambushing others. Rather than just depending on our eyes, cultivators must rely on our consciousness as well."

He'd created a mirror with water energy to reflect the light the man released. Then he'd taken advantage of their attacker's momentary blindness to kick the man into the mountain bluff, creating the illusion that he'd charged into the rock himself.

"Come on." Lu Yun sucked in a deep breath. "Let's go kill some people!"

"Alright!" The little nun nodded; she'd also felt her companion's increase in power. Unlike how innocent Wanfeng had once been, the thought of taking lives didn't give the equally sheltered girl any pause.

Hum.

Suddenly, a beam of resplendent light soared into the sky, blanketing the area with the thick presence of immortal dao.

"Someone's broken into one of the burial mounds!" Lu Yun blurted out. He grabbed the little nun and made his way to the beam of light.

Chapter 419: Ninety-Nine Steps

The burial mound of an immortal had been broken into, giving rise to powerful natural phenomena and drawing the attention of thousands of cultivators within five hundred kilometers of the mound.

Upon arrival at the land of darkness, many had discovered the wreckage of burial mounds. Not knowing who was buried where, nor what dangers lay within, had given the cultivators pause. Immortals should be buried in tombs upon death; it was hardly fitting that they'd been stuck in burial mounds.

However, someone had broken into a burial mound that belonged to an immortal, releasing a surge of immortal energy. Lu Yun naturally wasn't going to miss out on this opportunity. There was no telling how far the beam of light would reach. It was bound to attract many eyes, perhaps including Qing Han's.

Many in and outside of Destiny City reacted as well.

"It's a legacy of the ancient immortal dao!" exclaimed an arcane dao immortal. "Just like the ones found in ancient tombs!"

Realization rippled out. Such legacies were exactly what contemporary immortals excavated ancient tombs for!

They were often embedded in items, treasures, or books. The Sword Pagoda erected in Dusk Province, for example, was the legacy of the ancient Sugato Lord. Anyone who reached its top would receive the ancient lord's heritage.

Who would've thought that such legacies were to be found in the Sovereign Meet as well!

No wonder origin dao immortals who'd been laying low and recovering from their injuries had emerged and sent their proteges to the Sovereign Meet. There were great opportunities to be had!

Cultivators who'd been eliminated bemoaned their luck, beating their chests in frustration and regret, but there was nothing they could do. Among the thirty million cultivators who'd acquired a Life Glyph, only five hundred thousand had reached the land of darkness. They were the cream of the crop among the cultivators of the world.

.....

The beam of light continued to persist, thickening the presence of immortal dao in the area.

Cultivators who'd exhausted much of their energy in battle felt a wave of replenishment and refreshment when they approached its area of effect.

Given the lack of natural or immortal energy here in the central world, spirit stones and immortal crystals were the only source of energy replenishment, and the crystals couldn't even help the cultivators since their cultivation was suppressed to the core realm. They had to rely on spirit stones instead.

The great majority of them were core members of their factions and normally cultivated with crystals, so they didn't have a reason to bring something as lowly as spirit stones with them.

The precise circumstances of the Sovereign Meet had caught everyone off guard.

Core realm cultivators couldn't use immortal treasures or crystals. Once they exhausted too much of their inner energy, they could only remain in place and slowly recover with their own cultivation methods.

Thus, the energy-replenishing radiance leaking from the burial mound prompted a swarm of cultivators to head toward its source, creating quite a stir in the local vicinity that'd been flooded by the light.

.....

"It was too easy to lure those fools here." Under the rays of ethereal light, two figures stood shoulder-to-shoulder, smiling at the cultivators seated in the area to recover their energy.

They looked roughly eighteen, and there was an exceedingly high degree of resemblance between them, marking them to be most likely brothers. Behind them was a short foothill with a broken tablet erected before it, faint characters still visible on it.

It was the burial mound of an ancient immortal, but it'd been broken into. A jadeite-colored dao book hovered in the air, the source of the immortal light that'd been soaring into the sky.

"Let's eliminate them all. Our cultivation level will reach transformed spirit realm then, brother, and we'll be able to fight for the greatest heritage in the central region."

"Formation!" the other brother exclaimed.

Rumble!

A great explosion sounded as a large formation rumbled to life, isolating an area of ten kilometers across.

"Dammit. Someone set up a formation here... It's a trap!" Cultivators who'd been recovering energy in preparation for the fight ahead panicked.

"Let's go, let's go now! There's a formation here!" They picked themselves up to make a run for it, but the formation had already taken shape and trapped them all where they were.

The two brothers hovered in the air, sending a series of green glyphs into the formation with hand seals. Great power swiftly converged from all directions, transforming into terrifying might that slammed into the cultivators trapped within.

It was a pure killing formation.

Formations drew upon the power of heaven and earth. Although there was no natural energy here, its strength was everywhere and available for the formation to tap into.

Color draining from their faces, cultivators in the formation despaired for their future. They'd been drawing upon the energy of the light to recover, but now, they were slowly suffocating to death. A murderous rain of light showered from above, attacking them relentlessly.

"You stay here," said Lu Yun. He left the little nun somewhere safe before making his way to the center of the formation.

Anything went in the Sovereign Meet, including making use of the supplemental paths. He could tell the formation had been set up in the central world, rather than having been taken here from the outside.

Through previous experimentation, he'd discovered that formations brought in from the outside were rendered useless in the central world, unable to draw upon the power of heaven and earth. Anyone who could etch formation runes in this zone wouldn't be a regular formation master.

It took no time for more than half of the thousand cultivators to be eliminated, and those that were left struggled for breath.

"Oh?" The brothers tensed when they saw Lu Yun making his way through the layers of formations, heading in their direction.

"Impossible!" one of them blurted out. It was clear as day that this unassuming young man was setting down his every step on the formation's weak points, making it impossible for it to attack him.

More importantly, there was a unique rhythm to the way he walked. With every step, he dismantled part of the formation. If he took ninety-nine steps, the formation they'd worked so hard to establish would be shattered.

"Stop, stop!" they quickly called out.

Lu Yun had already taken ninety-eight steps, and his foot was lifted to take the final step.

The brothers turned green in the face. They'd broken into the burial mound to set out bait for their prey, but along came an even worse predator!

Chapter 420: Good-For-Nothings

The ninety-ninth step!

This abnormally strong killing formation would disintegrate if that final step was completed, leaving the two brothers at the mercy of however many cultivators that still lived.

They did indeed have some skill up their sleeves, and were one step away from transformed spirit realm after eliminating several hundred cultivators, but their victims were all unparalleled geniuses, the best

that the world had to offer. It mattered not that most of them were still in the core realm. In fact, even a few nascent spirit cultivators numbered among their ranks.

Formations were what the brothers were skilled in; they didn't actually possess any great fighting strength. Instead, they'd relied on their ability with formations to make it to their current cultivation level. If Lu Yun broke their formation now, the combined fury of the cultivators within the light would blast them so thoroughly that there wouldn't even be bone dust left of them.

"Brother, let's talk!" The two of them stared fixedly at Lu Yun's descending right foot, voices rising in a whining beg.

"Talk, whose disciples are you? There aren't many formation masters in the world with talent like yours," demanded Lu Yun, his foot hovering in the air.

It was an exceedingly difficult task to etch formation runes in the central world, even for Lu Yun. But these two had managed to lay out a killing formation ten kilometers across—they were nearly on the level of formation grandmasters! At least, none of the formation masters he'd met in Xiankan could manage such a feat.

The two chuckled wryly, and the older-looking one took up the task of replying. "My name is Lin Yu, and this is my younger brother Lin Xuan."

"Lin Yu, Lin Xuan... are you from the Lin Clan of Lazuli Major?" Lu Yun peered closely at the two and discovered that the cultivation methods circulating in them were similar to the ones used by Lin Yan of the profligates' alliance.

"That's right..." Lin Yu smiled ruefully.

The Lins were a true peak powerhouse of the world of immortals. Their roots in Lazuli Major were even more domineering than those of the Mo Clan's. Even the foremost aristocracy of the world, House Donglin, was said to have splintered off from the Lins.

Due to their origins, House Donglin hadn't formed their own clan after declaring their independence. Stylizing themselves as a noble house, they set their sights on returning to the fold one day and... replacing the clan entirely. That a branch of the clan could be so powerful and prosperous after going its own way was itself testament to the might of the Lin Clan.

Wham!!

A tremendous shudder in the air accompanied Lu Yun's final step.

"You!!" The brothers' expressions shifted drastically, but before they could react, they discovered that the shudder in the air had repaired their formation that'd been tottering on the brink of collapse.

"I'm good friends with Lin Yan. If you're his clansmen, I won't make things difficult for you," Lu Yun remarked faintly, his hands crossed over his chest.

"Ah, so you're Lin Yan's friend, no wonder you're so heaven-defying!" The brothers looked at each other, admiration overflowing from their eyes when their clansmen was mentioned.

Lin Yan had already reached the void realm, and been blessed by the Dao Flower as well. He was supposed to participate in the Sovereign Meet this time as well, but after returning from the North Sea and collecting a few priceless treasures from the clan, he'd set off again without sending any word back.

In the Lin Clan, there was none more favored by the high council than Lin Yan. As long as he didn't destroy the clan, he could take any treasure he wanted—the personal weapons of the forefather included.

When he returned from the North Sea, he'd brought back countless priceless treasures, items, weapons, fruits, and herbs. It made one think of the rumors that Lu Yun hadn't been the only one to raid the North Sea Palace, but that Lin Yan and his friends had been involved as well.

His return with all those treasures was explanation enough, and the old titans of the Lin Clan chortled so hard that they almost couldn't breathe. Others might be afraid of the North Sea monster spirits and that big monkey in the waters, but the Lin Clan absolutely wasn't!

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"Alright, you guys may go." Lu Yun waved a hand in the middle of the two brothers striking up a conversation with him.

"Ah?" Lin Yu blinked. It was only then that he realized they'd lost their connection with the formation at some unknown point in time.

"Senior brother..."

"I already said that I won't make things difficult for you, since you're Lin Yan's clansmen." Lu Yun grinned broadly. "But I did observe that your skill with formations is only one step away from being grandmasters in your own right. You've even gotten hints of creating formations without foundation. If you'd like to keep improving, come find me at Jadeite Manor in Destiny City after the Sovereign Meet."

"Really??" Lin Xuan's eyes lit up. Their new friend had been able to dismantle the formation in ninety-nine steps, then casually seize control of it. He was obviously an immensely strong formation grandmaster.

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan were the clan's twin weapons when it came to formations. Though their cultivation was only a piddling transformed spirit realm, their talent in formations was a rare sight. Their ambitions were such that they wanted to use formation dao to ascend through the void realm, so they'd decided to hold off on any breakthroughs until that was within reach. The young man in front of them could very well help them with this step.

"Jadeite Manor... you're Qing Yu's Sidekick, the one who put a hundred billion bounty on Donglin Taihuang's head!" Lin Yu immediately guessed Lu Yun's identity. "Alright, that's settled. When this is all over, we'll pay you a visit at Jadeite Manor!"

"Take the dao book with you." Lu Yun pointed at the scroll still hovering over the burial mound. He wasn't about to take it, as this opportunity belonged to the brothers. Besides, a certain bold notion of his was becoming ever clearer after meeting the two brothers. Theirs was precisely the kind of talent he needed at the moment.

“That book is the heritage of a sword immortal. It’s useless to us, so please take it if you like, senior brother.” Lin Yu grinned broadly.

Lu Yun rubbed his forehead.

Within Destiny City, the Lin clan members keeping an eye on the brothers were hopping mad with anger. So they might not need it, but surely there would be someone in the clan who did! Were those two spendthrifts going to just gift it away to someone else??

“That Qing Yu’s Sidekick has incredible skill in formations. Can he be that one from Dusk Province?” someone mused.

“I think not. Lu Yun’s skill in formations comes from obtaining the Formation Orb that used to be in Myriad Formation Summit. According to our speculations, something like the Formation Orb wouldn’t be able to enter that patch of land,” refuted a strong immortal, setting everyone at ease. “That Sidekick’s skill in formations is his own, so they should be different people.”

“I rather hope that person is Lu Yun. He says he’s going to make the supplemental paths king and doesn’t possess much strength himself. No outside forces are able to aid cultivators once they enter that patch of land...”

“He’s deader than a doornail if he’s Lu Yun,” sneered another voice. “Without being able to make use of outside forces, this so-called First Youth Sovereign is just a paper tiger, a monkey swaggering about with borrowed influence.”

A group of monster spirits bared their teeth at the humans when they heard this.

A monkey swaggering about?

The lord of the North Sea was a monkey! This was an underhanded insult to monster spirits!

“In that case, I shan’t stand on ceremony then.” Lu Yun stowed the scroll with a wave of his hand. This was the heritage of an ancient immortal, after all, and the complete principles of immortal dao were contained within. It’d be a shame to just pass it up.

Back in Destiny City, the Lin immortals really did jump with anger and loudly cursed Sidekick’s name. Lin Yu and Lin Xuan were also due for their fair share of lecturing.

Those good-for-nothings! Only Lin Yan cared about the family!