

Necropolis 481

Chapter 481: A Slap

"I am just a regular cultivator, and don't know any combat arts of the divine race." With a wave of his hand, Lu Shenhou summoned the immortal sword buried before Qing Han. "However, just fragmented combat arts are sufficient enough to kill you."

Hum.

A black glow blossomed from Lu Shenhou's body as inner energy rushed through him, unleashing the power of his peak returned void cultivation. A great vortex of energy from the land emerged over his head, rampaging through the air like a behemoth of a black dragon.

Expression grave, Qing Han opened her hand and activated the power of starstones once more. Silver starlight washed over her.

"Allow me," said a familiar voice. Lu Yun treaded on air and stepped between Qing Han and Lu Shenhou. The disguised girl cracked a small smile, stepping back to give Lu Yun room.

"You're here for Qing Han's Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, aren't you?" Lu Yun immediately saw through his opponent's intentions.

Face impassive, Lu Shenhou raised his longsword at Lu Yun. He was indeed here for the scroll, but he couldn't possibly admit that.

"Let us finish what we started in the Sovereign Arena, Lu Yun," Lu Shenhou responded calmly.

His words caused an instant uproar. The powerhouse that most couldn't see back in the Sovereign Arena was Lu Shenhou?!

Members of the Lu Clan outside Dusk City were much more affected. They very much preferred Lu Shenhou over Lu Yun!

In their eyes, sole responsibility for the clan's current ignoble straits rested squarely on Lu Yun's shoulders. He was an outsider, while Lu Shenhou was a genius born and bred within the clan. To them, Dusk Province was more akin to a prison that kept the Lu Clan confined within.

"You really are still alive, senior brother... Did Lu Yun lie to us all?" Lu Qingshuang stared dumbly at Lu Shenhou, her gaze confused and conflicted. Her inner energy grew erratic as signs of a cultivation deviation appeared on her.

"Focus your mind and calm your breathing! Don't think so much!" a stern voice commanded at the ears of Lu immortals and cultivators, snapping them out of their reverie. It was Lu Daoling, their ancestor!

Lu Qingshuang started and recovered herself.

"Ancestor!" called out the Lu immortals.

Lu Daoling entered Dusk City in the next moment. Lu Yun had anticipated there would be massive unrest among the Lu Clan once Lu Shenhou showed himself, which would cripple Dusk City. That was why he'd asked Lu Daoling to return earlier.

Only he could pacify the Lu Clan.

“Lu Daoling? Since you’ve kindly shown yourself, it’s time to die!” As soon as the Lu ancestor emerged, flashes of sword energy rushed at him from six different directions.

The attacks were too quick for the Lu members to react. Even Lu Daoling wouldn’t be able to escape the looming specter of his doom. The attackers were all void realm cultivators, and highly powerful ones at that. With his cultivation suppressed to the august immortal realm, Lu Daoling wouldn’t be able to resist the six void realm cultivators.

In no time at all, the six rays of sword light threatened to cut him down.

“Hah!” A sudden cry shot through the sky as an enormous pair of gold and silver wings burst out to shield Lu Daoling.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The six golden slashes exploded upon crashing into the wings and scattered as motes of light. A stunning figure stepped out from the void: Yue Longsha, genius of the Nephrite Major’s Yue Clan, and one of the Twin Stars of Xiankan.

Mo Yi had saved her from being kidnapped by a dao immortal in Xiankan, then she and Zhu Yan had both been sent to Dusk Province for protection. The two young women were now Mo Yi’s disciples.

The wings of light were the ones Lu Yun had earned in the auction held by the Panorama Pavilion, which he’d gifted to Qing Han. Qing Han had later given them to Yue Longsha, enabling her to bring this connate-grade treasure back to the world of immortals.

The Lunisolar Wings were a wondrous match for Yue Longsha’s constitution. Although she couldn’t yet tap into their full power, it was more than enough to deal with a few void realm cultivators.

More importantly, Yue Longsha was a born immortal. Like those in the Primordial Era, she’d never been hindered by an incomplete cultivation path. As long as she could find a flawless immortal dao combat art, she would be capable of unleashing great power.

After officially setting foot into this territory, although she hadn’t yet made up for her flawed cultivation method, she was much more powerful than other golden immortals. At the very least, she wouldn’t lose to void realm cultivators.

Twin piercing beams of silver and gold radiance shot out from the Lunisolar Wings, forcing the six void realm cultivators out from hiding.

“Die!” Yue Longsha’s gaze turned cold.

Swoosh swoosh swoosh!

Terrifying radiance churned into the void realm cultivators like blades. Rather than divines, the six cultivators were human cultivators who’d fallen victim to soul planting. Leaving them alive wouldn’t do any good.

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Outside Dusk City, Lu Yun was fighting Lu Shenhou.

Lu Shenhou was very strong, and his cultivation greater than Lu Yun's by an entire realm. Back in the Sovereign Arena, Lu Yun hadn't been able to fight him. But now that Lu Yun had ascended to the unravelled void realm, Lu Shenhou could no longer push him around with impunity.

"Why don't you deploy the sword technique you used in the arena, Lu Yun?" Lu Shenhou fought Lu Yun with decided ease. The sword in his hand wasn't the Sword of Chaos, but the power it unleashed had already blocked Lu Yun's three sword techniques—Vast Dragon Seaturner, Peng of Kun, and Starstream Stroke.

Lu Shenhou seemed to be a better swordsman than Lu Yun.

"Are you so certain I'm him?" Lu Yun asked casually, sending out the Starstream Stroke to block Lu Shenhou's attack.

"Of course you are!" exclaimed a clear voice from outside Dusk Province.

Dusk's neighboring Outré Province was more than ten thousand kilometers away from Dusk City, but that was nothing for immortals.

"I saw you when you and Qing Han—or should I say, Qing Yu—visited the Mo territory in Destiny City with Mo Chenfeng and revealed yourselves. Qing Han is Qing Yu, and you're her Sidekick!" the Mo peerless immortal declared with great certainty. Since Lu Yun had already shown himself, there was no reason for him to keep hiding.

"It really is you two!" The dao immortals in the area finally realized why House Donglin was so sure that Qing Yu was Qing Han. They'd planted a spy in the Mo Clan!

"If I'm not mistaken, Lin Yu and Lin Xuan, the formation masters of the Lin Clan, are in Dusk Province too, aren't they?"

The dao immortals scanned through the province and quickly found the brothers, confirming the Mo immortal's speculation.

"You can't talk your way out of this, Lu Yun. Qing Han!" Lu Shenhou's lips curled into a cold smile as he collected his sword and stared at Lu Yun.

Smack!

The crisp sound of a hand striking a face suddenly rang out. It was a definite slap across the face, one that hurled the Mo immortal backward.

Chapter 482: Two People

Abject disbelief rocked the scene.

None of the dozen dao immortals present had reached origin dao realm, but most of them were arcane dao immortals, making them undisputed powerhouses in this world. However, none of them had seen what had happened! No one had sensed anyone approaching, either.

The Mo peerless immortal only managed to come to a bedraggled halt after flying out nearly ten kilometers. His left cheek was swollen and his teeth were knocked out. He spat out white teeth one after another, cutting a pitiful figure.

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“Who was that?!” Scanning the surroundings with eagle eyes, the Donglin dao immortal’s consciousness swiftly spread out like mercury. When he caught sight of a faint figure in the sky, his pupils contracted violently.

“It’s you... How is this possible?!” he screamed.

Qing Yu’s Sidekick!

His presence, the ripples of his nascent spirit—everything about him was identical to the man with Qing Yu back in Destiny City, only he’d changed into black robes.

Jaws dropped and sharp gasps abounded. The real deal had shown up when the Mo immortal accused Lu Yun and Qing Han! Could it be that Lu Yun and Qing Han really weren’t the two shitstirrers?

However... the entire world of immortals was hunting down the pair. How dare Qing Yu’s Sidekick show his face here? Did he even know what death was?

All eyes were on him, and even Lu Shenhou’s expression turned grave. Qing Yu’s Sidekick had already entered Dusk Province, however, so the dao immortals didn’t dare follow him.

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“Behold, for I am Xing Chen,” Xing Chen announced calmly from the sky. “Xing as in the character for Xing of the stars, Chen as in the character for Chen of the stars. I was just going to watch the show, but I didn’t expect there to be a traitor who’d forgotten his roots in the Mo Clan. Tsk tsk, that’s more than enough. I do have a bit of a relationship with the Mo Clan.”

The Mo peerless immortal turned pale, but thick confusion colored his gaze. He’d seen Qing Yu’s Sidekick call himself Lu Yun back in the Mo residence in Destiny City. Why would he show up at the same time as Lu Yun?

He was certain that the man before him was Qing Yu’s Sidekick, the very one he’d seen that day.

“Ha!” the Donglin dao immortal scoffed. “It’s just a trick with a replica... I’ll shatter your disguise!” He manifested a gleaming mirror as he spoke.

“No replica is perfect, and they’re never separate living beings. The flaw may be visible in the form of a damaged soul or a second nascent spirit! Do you think you can fool everyone with a fake, Lu Yun?!”

He lifted the mirror and aimed its iridescent light onto Xing Chen, making visible the young man’s nascent spirit, three ethereal soul-parts, and seven corporal soul-parts. Every curve of the soul’s grain and structure of his spirit was revealed for everyone to see.

This special treasure couldn’t remove disguises, but it could reveal nascent spirits and souls for what they were, fully piercing through replicas and foreign nascent spirits.

“Impossible!!” screamed the Donglin immortal. “This is completely impossible! You aren’t a replica, but a separate living entity?! Then... the Lu Yun in Dusk Province must be a replica!”

Upon shifting the mirror to Lu Yun, he stumbled backward and shot a look of disbelief at the Mo peerless immortal. Lu Yun was his own being, too, with a complete set of nascent spirit and soul-parts.

“No, that can’t be true! When I was in the Mo residence, I saw Xing Chen with my own eyes and heard him call himself Lu Yun!” The Mo peerless immortal couldn’t believe it either.

Lu Yun and Xing Chen were two different people! There was no connection between them. Each had their own nascent spirit and soul-parts, and neither was a fake.

Xing Chen ignored them and turned to face Lu Shenhou.

“In the Sovereign World, Sword Divine, you said you’d kill me for interfering with your plans. Today, I shall grant you a chance to do so.” With his hands behind his back, he manifested ten sword atlases that each contained a thousand and eighty immortal swords.

“You and I both suffered great injuries that cut our fight short in the Sovereign Arena. Today, we shall continue our fight in Dusk Province and determine the victor!”

Swoosh!

All ten sword atlases lit up and radiated sword energy that wrapped around Xing Chen. His cultivation as a returned void realm cultivator was fully on display.

“I was only at perceived void realm in our first battle, which allowed you to dominate the exchange. Now that I’ve ascended to returned void realm, we’ll see which of us is the stronger!”

“Sword atlases!” a cultivator called out. “He really is the shitstirrer... He swept the floor with his sword atlases back in the Sovereign Meet!”

They all had firsthand experience of the atlases’ abilities, having been killed by them. Involuntary shudders gripped many onlookers when Xing Chen conjured up the frightful weapons again.

Outside Dusk City, Lu Shenhou was confused as well. What was going on here? Could Lu Yun and Xing Chen really be two different people?

“Then let us fight.” Lu Shenhou wasn’t going to turn down the challenge, since Lu Yun had pulled away from their exchange a while ago. “Let me see what manner of monster you are.”

“Pfft.” Xing Chen snorted. “A dead man walking calling me a monster? That’s rich... We fight!”

He soared into the sky with Lu Shenhou close behind on his heels.

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“Even if Lu Yun isn’t Xing Chen, Qing Han must be Qing Yu!” the Mo immortal exclaimed, refusing to let the matter go. “Xing Chen must be working with Lu Yun! Otherwise, why would he show up now?”

“I won’t mind cutting you down if you keep running your mouth.” Lu Yun flashed the Mo immortal a dark look. “All of you keep throwing baseless and unfounded accusations at Dusk Province. Do you really take us for pushovers?”

Rumble!

Forty-seven enormous fortress ships emerged over Dusk City, each of their bows topped with a giant weapon of war. These ships were modelled after the Divine Glory. Although their main cannons weren’t on par with the Black Emperor, they were still much more powerful than its auxiliary cannons.

Having fully utilized the resources and treasures from the North Sea Palace and House Donglin, along with the support of the Panorama Pavilion, Lu Yun was finally demonstrating what it meant for supplemental paths to be king.

“Even that great monkey from the North Sea slunk off with his tail between his legs after invading Dusk Province, and two origin dao immortals also died here... Who do you all think you are?” Lu Yun fiercely stood his ground.

“Weapons of war?” snickered a Nephrite dao immortal when he saw the fortress ships and their cannons. “The nine heavenly courts have such weapons as well!”

“A thousand and eighty of them have surrounded Dusk Province! If you dare take a shot with yours, I promise the entire province will become a wasteland in a breath of time!”

Chapter 483: Shamanic Divine

The two sides had entered a standstill.

Weapons of war were akin to nuclear weapons on Earth, destructive enough to annihilate the entire world if their use raged out of control. A thousand and eighty circled Dusk Province, and their numbers were still growing. They weren’t there merely to intimidate Lu Yun, but to truly decimate the province.

Powered by the connate-grade Formation Orb, Lu Yun’s Divine Glory could slay even origin dao immortals, marking it too great a threat. However, he wasn’t intimidated by the show of force facing him, as he still had tricks up his sleeve he hadn’t pulled out and a great secret weapon he could fall back on.

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Up in the sky, where the wind was strong.

Colliding in a mighty clash, Xing Chen and Lu Shenhou both pushed themselves to the limit. Lu Shenhou called upon his full strength and tapped into the power of the Sword of Chaos, while stars emerged in the daytime sky from Xing Chen’s cosmic sword aura.

A hundred and eight thousand immortal swords from one hundred sword atlases filled the sky. This was a clash between the greatest of sword dao in the world of immortals.

Onlookers on the ground were entranced, the ten lords and thirty-six champions included.

“Those are true void realm combat arts. Flawless combat arts are nothing by comparison!” The Fangyang youth couldn’t suppress his shudder.

“That’s because you’ve yet to fully understand the essence of flawless combat arts,” Lu Yun threw him a cool glance. “Immortals in the Primordial Era were never cultivators, and their foundation of immortal dao was complete. They were just like modern immortals who ascended through the void realm.

“Even the weakest of flawless combat arts from that time are greater than the ones we have today. Unfortunately, immortal dao and immortals are inextricably linked. Immortals and cultivators born under a damaged immortal dao won’t be able to understand perfect combat arts, even if they acquire any.”

Lu Yun suddenly thought of Zhu Yan and Yue Longsha.

Both of them were natural-born immortals, like those in the ancient times, but they weren’t that much better than regular immortals today. It wasn’t until Mo Yi created cultivation methods for them that they became stronger.

Lu Yun’s words made many cultivators ponder.

“Those flawless methods were created by the immortals in the Primordial Era. Whether or not a combat art is flawless, only those that suit you are of any value.

“The greatest clans today are shortsighted in the way they keep everything to themselves. Do they think they can dominate the world by staking a claim of ownership on a few ancient tombs and excavating them?” Lu Yun scoffed. “The ancient immortals have all died. They were failures and losers, all of them!”

His words reverberated in their ears and shook even the dao immortals outside Dusk Province. The ancient immortals were all dead, they were failures! Why should they follow the path of losers?

“Three years ago, the nine celestial emperors, in their infinite wisdom and foresight, organized a tournament centered around the inheritance tower in Dusk for the geniuses of the world. Only through constant exchanges and sparring can the geniuses of today continue improving, create our own combat arts, and usher in our own era.

“But... tsk tsk tsk, what a joke the Sovereign Meet was. So the things left behind by those losers are enough to attract all of you?” Derision crept into Lu Yun’s tone, but he’d also conveniently left out the fact that he himself had benefited from what those so-called losers had left behind.

“That’s why we need to host another Sovereign Meet in Dusk Province!” the Fallen Lord took a deep breath and declared self-righteously. “We’ve never forgotten about the purpose of this gathering!”

Lu Yun snorted. “Organize the event wherever you want, but not here. Dusk Province isn’t interested.”

He had greater plans for his territory, and putting on another dog and pony show would only cause him trouble. He wasn’t going to do something that would only uselessly expend time and effort.

“Dusk Province is a part of Nephrite Major,” a Nephrite cultivator sneered. “Do you really think it’s your personal property?”

"It is the wish of the world of immortals for the Sovereign Meet to return to Dusk. You alone cannot stop us," the Monster Lord, Dragon Lord, and Thunder Lord voiced their collective agreement.

The aura of tens of thousands of cultivators came together and crashed into Lu Yun, who offset the power with an easy flare of black flames from his eyes.

Bam!

A thunderous collision rang from the sky right before a figure slammed into the ground, causing a rumbling tremor to rock the earth. All one hundred and eight thousand immortal swords and a hundred sword atlases circled around Xing Chen as he walked down from the sky.

"I hear you don't think much of me and my Little Yu?" Xing Chen looked around at the cultivators in the crowd. "Then let us fight."

He was more powerful than even Lu Yun. The soul shroud in Xing Chen had been refined from the soul of a shaman king, which contained boundless strength in itself. If he so wished, Lu Yun could've had Xing Chen ascend to immortality from the void realm right now.

In other words, the replica wielded much greater strength than he did.

Lu Shenhou might be more powerful than Lu Yun, but he wasn't Xing Chen's match. With all hundred sword atlases unleashed, Xing Chen was unrivalled in the province.

"I haven't lost yet!" Lu Shenhou rasped hoarsely as he struggled out from underground, dragging his tattered body along. His right arm was broken and his chest heaved violently as he glared venomously at Xing Chen.

"You aren't Lu Yun! I'm certain of that now! You're a descendant of the shamanic race from the Primeval Era!" Lu Shenhou cracked a cruel smile. "To think there'd be some of your kind left in the world... What is yours is now mine!"

Bam!!

Untold bloody light burst out of Lu Shenhou as a giant crimson fiend barrelled out from his body and lunged at Xing Chen.

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"It's him! It's him!!" Through a crack of hell, Wushen Ruyi stared at the giant figure and shrieked, "He was the one who snuck up on me and Yueshen Jixiang and refined Yueshen into a corpse coffin!!"

"What?!" Lu Yun lost his calm. "He's of the shamanic race as well? Isn't he a divine?"

"He's a shamanic divine," Xingzi said quietly off to the side. "Some divines infiltrated the shamanic race and practiced our methods, then became a tribe of their own.

"Orthodox shamans would never casually turn to methods such as corpse coffins and soul planting, but shamanic divines have no such taboos." Xingzi's tone turned foreboding. Strictly speaking, shamanic divines weren't shamans, but divines. They were a new breed of divines comprised of those who'd stolen the shamanic dao.

Lu Yun found records of this shamanic divine tribe in Xingzi's memory. They were more heartless than even the shamanic race, and they were the bane of the shamans! They were the ones behind the destruction of the shamanic race!

Chapter 484: Bedlam

Legends of the shamanic divines had long been lost to history, evidence of their existence purposefully erased. If Xingzi weren't here, Lu Yun would've had trouble identifying the tribe even with access to her memories.

Hence, what people knew about the primordial shamanic race might not even be about the real one, but rumors of the shamanic divines.

What Ruyi said next stupefied Lu Yun even more.

According to her, the shamanic divines were indeed part of the divine race, but eighty thousand years ago, they'd set up corpse coffins to curse their origin race as well as destroyed the divine court.

So the Tombs of Yin and Yang on Levitating Island set up with the corpses of two Exalted divines was their doing as well!

"What's going on with all this?" A series of possibilities flashed through Lu Yun's mind as he flew back into Dusk City.

Xing Chen remained where he was, coolly staring down the oncoming bloody light and an imperceptible black flame flickering in his eyes.

"This is... hellfire!!" screamed the shamanic divine within Xing Chen's body. A crimson shadow rushed back out of Xing Chen to make a hurried escape from Dusk Province.

Swoosh!

Lu Shenhou's body slowly burned into ashes and dissipated on the wind.

Pah!

Xing Chen threw up a mouthful of dark blood and sagged, wilting visibly. His body had been refined with a shamanic method and the power of shamanic divines was its bane. Lu Shenhou's attack had greatly injured him in just an instant.

If the power had remained in him just a moment longer, Lu Yun's replica would've disintegrated and reverted back into a Nine Yin Soul-Parting Wood. Then the gig would've been horrifyingly up.

What alarmed Lu Yun even more was what the shamanic divine had called out as he escaped: Hellfire!

Traces of hell's existence had long since been erased by an unknown hand, and even Empress Myrtlestar was oblivious to its existence. However, the shamanic divine knew about hell!

"He can't be Lu Shenhou!" Lu Yun's expression grew quite frightful. Like Xing Chen, the shamanic divine wore a soul shroud, one refined from Lu Shenhou's soul!

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Hardly a moment had passed from the divine's emergence to his forced retreat by hellfire. Many didn't even realize what had just happened, given the lack of time to process events.

Then, Dusk City shook from a series of enormous explosions.

Buildings detonated one by one. Some immortals who'd sealed away their own cultivation were even killed.

Bam!

The city gates burst open and a figure emerged. "What are you waiting for? Charge into the city with me! This land should be ours!"

The newcomer sported violet hair and eyes, and wore an outfit completely of violet with an immortal sword in his hand. It was Zi Chen and he'd announced his arrival by blowing the city gates wide open from the inside!

The cultivators outside paused, then rushed into the city with glee.

"Kill Xing Chen first!" someone yelled. "He was critically injured by Lu Shenhou earlier, this is the perfect time to kill him!"

"Allow me!" roared the Monster Lord. The golden lion lunged at Xing Chen in a flash of golden flame.

"Scram!" Xing Chen snarled and threw a punch at the lion.

Bam!

Darkness rippled through the air as the Monster Lord wailed in a backward trajectory of a straight line, many of its bones broken.

"Such a strong physique!" called out the lion. It'd been grievously injured, but only physically; its nascent spirit and monster core remained intact.

Roiling inner energy churned and instantly healed its body, but dread overtook its golden gaze.

The golden lion was a pureblood immortal beast among the monster spirits and its physical prowess was almost second to none in its kind. However, Xing Chen had managed to throw it back and shatter its bones with just a single hit, even in his injured state. His physical strength greatly exceeded that of the Monster Lord's.

Rumble!

Purple lightning crackled across everyone's gazes: the Thunder Lord. Lightning circled madly around him and morphed into powerful combat arts, blasting into Xing Chen.

Xing Chen was struggling beneath the assault. The shamanic divine had made a complete mess of his inner energy, and his body was on the brink of collapse. He didn't dare tap into his full power. Otherwise, he would've killed the Monster Lord with that punch.

The Thunder Lord attacked him relentlessly with terrifying lightning arts, forcing him to retreat again and again. He couldn't do anything but bear the brunt of the attacks with his body. If he hadn't been a

replica refined from Nine Yin Soul-Parting Wood, he would've already been rendered to ashes from all of the concerted attacks.

The Fangyang youth made a move at this time as well. Powerful flawless combat arts hit Xing Chen squarely in the chest, slamming him into the ground. It took but a few moves for the three to jointly suppress the injured Xing Chen.

Unfortunately, Lu Yun didn't have time to spare for Xing Chen at the moment.

He'd been absent from Dusk Province in recent period, and Qing Han had been preoccupied with the unrest within the Chen and Lu Clans. She'd been unable to do anything else, especially after the death of the Lu patriarch.

Meanwhile, Lu Yun's Envoys of Samsara had been helping Lu Yun refine the replica in hell. Dusk Province had thus been infiltrated in the absence of careful attention.

Although no powerful immortals had entered the province, a band of elite cultivators springing out of nowhere were enough to occupy Lu Yun for a while. They were all deathsworn and responsible for the deaths of the senior council members in the clans and the self-sealed immortals moments ago.

Those people didn't really belong to Dusk, but everyone knew Lu Yun was the reason they'd been forced to leave their homeland and hide in Dusk Province as wanted fugitives by their major. If they died here, Dusk Province and Lu Yun would become an utter joke.

Lu Yun's allies, the Panorama Pavilion and East Sea Court, and even the Mo Clan and Star Demon Sect included, would question their alliance when they saw Lu Yun's weakness and failure.

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Dusk Province fell to utter mayhem and chaos.

An army of cultivators had emerged from places unknown to invade the cities in Dusk. The capital wasn't their only target, as all of the other cities were under attack as well. Meanwhile, Xing Chen's body was cracking under the concerted effort of three powerful cultivators.

"Die!" A crescent of ivory sword energy slashed through the sky.

Thud!

A giant Monster Lord's head flew into the air, the nascent spirit within sliced and diced to pieces.

Outside of Dusk City stood an average-looking, but tall young man. Wearing long robes of the same shade of ivory, he gripped an immortal sword that glinted with a frosty light.

Qing Yu.

She was in the form she'd assumed back in Destiny City.

Chapter 485: Killing With A Borrowed Knife

Qing Yu had slain the Monster Lord with a single stroke, the headless corpse collapsing soundlessly to the ground was testament to that.

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On Levitating Island, an old lion roared to the sky.

“Qing Yu! The golden lions swear an unending vendetta upon your name! Ancestor!” It turned to the floating island proper, but its call went unanswered.

Scarlet Ape seemed to be paying no attention to Dusk Province at all. It sat upon a giant stone in a daze, its faint golden eyes tinged with confusion and perplexity. It had adopted this pose ever since the shamanic divine appeared; no one knew what it was thinking.

The old lion gritted its teeth and flew out of Levitating Island as a streak of golden light.

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Hurrying to Xing Chen’s side, Qing Yu poured a stream of qi into his body.

The youth shivered as a third of the injuries the shamanic divine had dealt him melted away. His eyes widened questioningly at Qing Yu, who smiled ever so slightly.

“Moon Osmanthus.” The two words she uttered were very enlightening.

Xing Chen understood. Only a replica refined with one of the ten connate spirit roots could reach this level of seeming reality, of impenetrable perfection.

Aoxue had instantly seen through Donglin Shaohui’s embittered bamboo clone because he’d been too weak to make proper use of it. Rather than make it into his replica, he’d merely turned the bamboo into a humanoid shape. That kind of semblance was utterly insufficient against an Envoy of Samsara who’d been empowered by the Tome of Life and Death.

The replica Qing Yu was using right now, on the other hand, had been refined by Empress Myrtlestar and the Azure Dragon King after practicing the method of the immortal dao founders. Anyone who didn’t surpass those two in cultivation wouldn’t be able to see the truth of what she was.

Even the nine former celestial emperors would believe that Qing Yu and Qing Han were two separate people.

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The Thunder Lord and Fangyang youth colored at Qing Yu’s appearance. She’d decapitated the golden lion with a single, clean stroke. Neither of them could match that, even in an ambush!

With the Monster Lord’s death, the ten lords became nine.

Xing Chen’s body shook slightly and he exhaled a long mouthful of grayish-black smoke, recovering a bit more from his wounds.

“You didn’t think much of me, did you?” Stepping forward, Qing Yu brandished a sword that blazed with lunar radiance.

Because the force inside of her came from the Moon Osmanthus, her power was just as innate as the spirit root. Her replica was every bit Xing Chen’s equal. In fact, it was stronger in some ways.

The Nine Yin Soul-Parting Wood was a sacred relic of the shamans, but it was no connate spirit root.

“I grant you a chance for a fair fight.” The girl’s voice was cold in its lethality. She cast a steely glare toward the two youths who opposed her.

The Thunder Lord and Fangyang youth stumbled back in a panic. As soon as she appeared, they knew they were no match for her, Sovereign Arena or no!

“Enter the city, you two. Join the others against Lu Yun and Qing Han.” A different voice cut through the air as a golden dragon descended from the sky, bearing a young man upon its head.

Wu Tulong.

As soon as he touched ground, the dragon he rode turned into an aureate spear in his hands. Another joined him shortly thereafter, landing neatly behind Xing Chen and Qing Yu.

Mo Qitian!

Strengthened by the supreme treasures they bore, both youths radiated powerful auras that were in no way weaker than Xing Chen and Qing Yu’s.

Qing Yu sobered up. She wasn’t afraid of the two newcomers, but they were formidable enemies nonetheless.

“I’ll hold them off. Hurry up and recover!” Her figure flickered, then turned into two. Each copy headed for a different target. Xing Chen was still seriously hurt; he needed time to get better.

An incredible amount of qi blasted into the sky. Despite fighting one against two, Qing Yu appeared evenly matched with Wu Tulong and Mo Qitian. She was more than capable of delaying them for a fair amount of time.

The Thunder Lord and Fangyang youth were positively ashen by this point. They finally realized the full extent of the massive difference between the thirty-six champions, ten lords—er, nine by now—and real geniuses of the world.

“When Dusk Province is taken and a new Sovereign Ranking is started, I can become just as strong as them!” Roaring angrily, the Thunder Lord charged into the Dusk capital with ripples in his wake.

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“They’re just asking to die, aren’t they?” Lu Yun and Qing Han stood atop the inheritance tower, neither of them rushing to show themselves or attack. They were perfectly fine excusing themselves from the fray.

“I guess this is fine, though. Those Feng idiots absolutely ruined the city’s feng shui when they rebuilt the city. I haven’t had a chance to fix it yet, so these chumps are doing a good job as a demolition crew.”

Despite their perch atop the tower, no one dared attack them directly. Instead, fires of war ravaged the city streets. The attackers were only interested in razing the city to humiliate its ruler.

Still, there were plenty of other experts who resided here. Zhu Yan and Yue Longsha demonstrated strength beyond golden immortals and as strong as any void realm immortal. The nine lords and thirty-

six champions had a hard time taking them on individually, and it took a concerted effort from all thirty-six of the champions to stave off defeat at the pair's hands.

"Why are these Lu and Chen clan immortals acting so strange? And where did their cultivators go?" After killing an immortal with a palm strike, the Fallen Lord scanned his surroundings. There were a few Lu and Chen clansmen around him, but really not that many.

"Have they been evacuated already?" He traded a look with the Dragon Lord. "No matter—kill them all!"

At this point, their hearts were no longer beholden to any sense of right or wrong. Only conquest and massacre were left! Plus, the Lu and Chen clans were Nephrite traitors anyway. Emperor Zhao Changfeng had personally given the decree to kill them on sight.

"Bastards!"

Surrounded by several powerful void realm cultivators, a Lu immortal spun in a red-eyed frenzy. Maddened, he released his peerless immortal strength without inhibition—

Boom!

A brilliant pillar of energy fell from the sky, annihilating him utterly. The province's immortal restriction had taken effect.

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"All of these people are sleeper agents! Ones whose souls have been planted!" Among the crowd, Zi Chen's face became very ugly indeed. He didn't expect all of the soul planted cultivators and immortals to be released like this!

He'd heard absolutely nothing about any of this. Although it seemed that Lu Yun had been taken unawares, at first, his plethora of readied maneuvers showed that was not the case.

Since not even Xingzi could get rid of the planted seeds, Lu Yun had found the geniuses' attack an excellent opportunity to excise a festering problem.

Chapter 486: A Pathetic Worm

The world of immortals was still skeptical of soul planting. The Chen and Lu Clans, especially, didn't even believe Lu Yun. After all, having a foreign soul planted didn't really result in noticeable changes.

Their disbelief was echoed by the rest of the world. Although the Mo and Zi Clans, along with the Immortal Martial School, had all come out and confirmed Lu Yun's words, no one believed them, either.

Moreover, based on current events, it wasn't possible for Sword Divine to tamper with the immortals and cultivators of every faction in the world, further diluting those who could prove the existence of soul planting. Other than the Mo Clan, Zi Clan, and the Immortal Martial School, he'd been focusing mainly on the Chen and Lu Clans.

His intentions were clear: gaining ownership of the factions that the dao sovereigns belonged to.

Lu Yun had been struggling to come up with a way to deal with the tampered individuals in Dusk. He couldn't just kill them, but he also couldn't release them. Thankfully, the cultivators invading Dusk City had just resolved the issue for him.

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"I should've connected Sword Divine to the shamanic divines a long time ago!" Lu Yun scowled at the sight of Lu and Chen immortals being slaughtered beneath him.

"Soul planting was invented by the shamanic divines. The shamans could refine soul shrouds, so there was no need for them to create flawed soul seeds!" Lu Yun looked at Zi Chen, then cast his gaze upon Mo Qitian and Wu Tulong outside the city.

They'd each had a flawless soul seed planted in them. Once they matured, the seeds would turn the host's soul into a soul shroud and conceal the foreign soul. Such was what had happened to Lu Shenhou.

"Is the heir of the Sword of Chaos a shamanic divine, or has a member of that tribe gotten close to the heir?"

Countless immortals and cultivators tore into each other within Dusk City, inciting bedlam in every part of the city. Lu Yun's mind was an equally tangled mess.

Rumble!

A sudden tremor passed through the land outside Dusk City as skeletons emerged from underground, disassembling and reassembling into giant skeletal beasts in the air.

"Lu Yun!!" Atop a beast three hundred meters in height was a faint figure enveloped in a pall of corpse energy. Unaffected by the energy, his gaze pierced through the air and settled on Lu Yun on the inheritance tower.

"Dare you come out of the city and fight me?!" The void realm Corpse Refiner brimmed with confidence. Although he hadn't participated in the Sovereign Meet, he'd reached the returned void realm all the same.

The Corpse Refiners possessed a great secret, which was why they hadn't even considered the Fangyang Nobles from the Primordial Era a threat. The projected self assurance from the genius Corpse Refiner indicated that their disciples didn't need the Sovereign Meet to become top cultivators of the world!

"My name is Jiangchen Xie. Jiangchen Wushang, who you murdered, was my clansman! However, he was merely the future host selected by our ancestor, so he would've died sooner or later. You killing him has nothing to do with me. I'm just here to prove that I, Jiangchen Xie, is no lesser than anyone, despite not attending the Sovereign Meet."

With a wave of his hand, another hundred-odd skeletal beasts emerged from earth.

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"Jiangchen Xie! That freak finally showed his face!" Ankle deep in a killing spree in Dusk City, the Fangyang youth blanched and stared at the Corpse Refiner in fear. "It's said that Jiangchen Xie reached

peak spirit realm thirty thousand years ago, but refused to ascend to immortality, claiming the existence of another realm past the spirit realm! Thus, he sealed himself and went into slumber...”

“He sensed the existence of the void realm when he was at peak spirit realm?!” the Thunder Lord asked in shock.

“That’s right!” the human youth nodded next to him. He hadn’t sensed anything either, when he himself was a peak spirit realm cultivator. “He wasn’t the only one at that. There were geniuses like him in the Primordial Era, outside the world of immortals!

“They refused to ascend to immortality and sealed themselves away when they reached peak spirit realm, consigning themselves to drift about the endless cosmos in a deep sleep.”

Since the void realm had been revealed to the world, the information recorded in the texts of the Fangyang Nobles was no longer secret and could be openly discussed.

“Back in the Primordial Era, immortals ascending from the other worlds were much weaker than the natives of the world of immortals. The world of immortals was considered the higher plane and the center of the universe, which many believed was the reason why native immortals were especially powerful... Now it seems...”

The Thunder Lord fell silent, and the Fangyang youth’s words had also reached the others by now.

Some great geniuses of the Primordial Era had sensed the incompleteness of the path of cultivation. They’d thus sealed and exiled themselves to float among the cosmos, awaiting the chance to soar to new heights.

Here was a living example in front of them—someone who had sealed himself away thirty thousand years ago!

There also seemed to be bad blood between the Fangyang Nobles and Corpse Refiners, a feud stemming from countless years in the past. Hence, their factions knew a thing or two about each other.

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“How unexpected!” Battle intent lit up in Lu Yun’s eyes, but was extinguished as quickly as it came. “You aren’t as great a genius as those who came before you.”

Facing the charging horde of skeletal beasts, he manifested the Sugato Sword and unleashed an ocean of sword energy.

“Oh?” Jiangchen Xie put on a thin smile. “How so?”

Hands twisting, he commanded the beasts to form great combat arts and tangle with Lu Yun. Both sides deployed bitterly harsh techniques and put their lives on the line with every move.

“Because you’re still alive,” Lu Yun said, too composed for someone engaged in a fierce battle. “When I guarded the Dao Flower, I set foot on that misty white path. The blood splashed there belonged to the geniuses who came before us. They’d attempted to restore the path in the past!”

Jiangchen Xie shook and balled up his fists, lunging at Lu Yun. "So? They failed, and they died trying. They were nothing but failures!"

Countless skeletal beasts howled and abruptly disassembled, then reassembled themselves as a wild current of white bones that slammed into Lu Yun.

Lu Yun used the Sugato Sword as an anchor and made several slashes, countering the terrifying current.

"There's no pursuit of dao in your heart, you're just a pathetic worm waiting for handouts from others! The seniors who came before us may have died, but their spirits live on. One day, they'll return to the world of immortals and take their place as great people!"

"You live, yet you lack devotion to dao. You didn't dare set foot on the path of cultivation. You are the truest failure!" Lu Yun put his hands together and transformed into a giant sword, stabbing at Jiangchen Xie's chest. "By the way, you have a detail wrong. Jiangchen Wushang was killed by a water ghost in the dragon tomb. I'm not responsible for his death."

Bam!

Lu Yun's attack landed smack on Jiangchen Xie's chest, hurling him back like a cannonball.

Chapter 487: Hadal Bonfire

The legendary Jiangchen genius, the one who'd sealed himself away after sensing the void realm thirty thousand years ago, had lost!

With a single blow, Lu Yun dismantled the endless rings of bones surrounding Jiangchen Xie. Mere aftershocks were enough to send the archaic genius deep into the earth. Furthermore, Lu Yun's disdainful words depicted his defeated opponent as completely worthless.

"I'm a failure? A pathetic worm?" Jiangchen Xie's eyes became empty.

When he'd first sensed the void realm thirty thousand years ago, he'd also seen that long, white path. He knew the streaks of crimson upon it were painted by the blood of his own kind.

After a very long period of hesitation, he'd shied away from stepping foot upon the path proper. He could have found the long-lost void realm, yes... but he would've also died doing so.

"No!" Jiangchen Xie regained his focus. "I'm still alive... so I haven't failed! I'll never fail!"

Boom!

His body tunneled out from the ground. "Lu Yun!"

Following a loud, explosive roar, his scattered monster of white bone began collecting back into shape. Its new body was fifty kilometers long and bore both draconic and tigrine features. A single horn was perched upon its crown. It stood in front of Dusk capital like a mountain range, every bit as humongous as the walled city before it.

Jiangchen Xie himself was enveloped by a bone-white aura of light. His presence intensified once more, until it reached the zenith of what was possible for returned void. Standing atop the head of his bone beast, a thick mantle of white fire had replaced the air of corpse energy about him.

Despite being roughly ten kilometers away, Lu Yun felt a peculiar wave of both extreme heat and cold hit him. It was a rather paradoxical feeling.

“Hadal Bonefire!” The young man paled slightly.

Such a terrifying flame was born only in a place of boundless death and disaster when an unfathomable amount of malignant air set bones alight. The fire’s polarizing duality of hot and cold was potent enough to destroy all things.

Nurturing the malignant air within that served as its fuel, it was one of the strongest kinds of fire in all of existence—worthy enough to be mentioned alongside the three immortal fires of the world.

Lu Yun hadn’t expected Jiangchen Xie to carry such a sinister flame, nor had he accounted for the genius’s remarkable skill with it.

“The Hadal Bonefire comes from the bone beast beneath him!” he gasped, realizing the key. Jiangchen Xie hadn’t just tamed the fire for himself, he’d also refined its natural vessel into his treasure.

“Come on, then!” Jiangchen Xie roared again.

The bone serpent beneath him shambled toward Lu Yun with surprising speed, a tongue of bleached fire from its maw leading the charge.

The surrounding immortals and cultivators scattered, afraid of the slightest touch from the fire. If the fire made contact, it would strip the flesh from their bones without fail. The earth began trembling as the Dusk city walls behind Lu Yun fissured with frightening cracks.

Corpse Refiners invaded the city from every direction, a zombie horde in tow. Their objective was clear: anyone who wasn’t one of their own must die!

The world’s great factions and clans had always tried forming alliances to hunt them down. Even after the sect had become the ruler of Truespirit Major, plenty had refused to give up their efforts. Thus, they were perfectly content to attack indiscriminately. Both outsider geniuses and Dusk cultivators and immortals were on their hit list.

Outside the city, Xing Chen and Qing Yu were still grappling with Mo Qitian and Wu Tulong. Shockwaves from their battle were nearly enough to level the city, and those caught in the crossfire could only flee and pray.

By now, Xing Chen was fully recovered from his injuries. A pillar of light erupted from his body as he closed in with Wu Tulong. What shocked him, though, was the fact that this Wu Tulong was stronger than the ‘Lu Shenhou’ from just before. He could only hold his ground with all hundred scrolls of his Sword Atlas unfurled.

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Dusk City, main gate.

Streams of sword aura wove to and fro upon the Sugato Sword, turning into a Cerulean Sword Dragon fifty kilometers long. The monumental manifestation of bladed power stood in the bone beast’s way.

The two serpentine creatures bared their teeth and tore into each other in midair. Though Lu Yun's Cerulean Sword Dragon was annihilated countless times, the Sugato Sword's light continually restored it to life.

Lu Yun floated above the battle, Violetgrave in hand and his body a brilliant violet. Hadal Bonefire was too powerful for him to take lightly; he didn't want to use too much hellfire, as it would only draw unwanted attention. Violetgrave, on the other hand, was more than capable of shielding him from the Bonefire, enabling him to remain unscathed in the upcoming duel.

Jiangchen Xie howled in anger. Zombies teemed all around him, surging toward Lu Yun like an army of relentless clones.

Boom!

A sudden unified attack from more than a hundred zombies sent Lu Yun crashing into a section of the city wall.

"Zombies?" Dusting himself off awkwardly from the ruins, Lu Yun rose into the sky once more. "I have quite a few helpers myself!"

With a wave of his hand, he flung thirty-six golden beans into the air.

Hum...

The same number of armored soldiers appeared in a scintillating blaze of light. As they popped into existence, Lu Yun tossed each of them a Weaponry Talisman, the paper slips turning into weapons in their hands.

"Charge!" the soldiers boomed as they stormed toward the zombies.

"Void realm summons?!" Jiangchen Xie was astounded by the strength of the conjured soldiers. However, there was no time for him to marvel over them. He marshaled his zombies into a Corpse Refinement Formation as fast as he could.

Alas, the soldiers were completely undaunted by the formation's power, as they were protected by a sacred light that pierced through the noisome air.

"Return!" Jiangchen Xie brandished the Bag of Corpse Refinement, which flew out from his hands.

Before he could grasp it, a pernicious violet streak arced across the sky and drew a heavy scar across the ochre bag.

Skrrrk!

The treasured bag of the Corpse Refiners was broken.

Chapter 488: What We Really Have Up Our Sleeves

When the Bag of Corpse Refinement exploded, a rain of zombies fell from the sky. Some were already fully undead, while others were still in the process of being zombified. Lu Yun's pupils constricted slightly as he saw many familiar faces among the collected dead; most were geniuses from the Sovereign Arena and Sovereign World.

Compared to him, the other immortals nearby were numb to this revelation. The Corpse Refiners had slaughtered every genius they could find of late, arraying the rest of the world against them. In the world of immortals, the number one demonic sect was no longer the Star Demon Sect, but the Corpse Refiners!

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“How dare you destroy my treasure!” Jiangchen Xie’s face contorted with fury. Bags of Corpse Refinement were very important to the Corpse Refiners, and his bag in particular was superior-grade—far better than all of the others. There was no bag like it in all the sect.

“You’re the current master of Violetgrave!” Suddenly, he noticed the bewitching violet glow in Lu Yun’s right hand. “Everything you have today is owed to that sword... which means you’ll be dead, sooner or later. I have no need to quarrel with you!”

The genius changed his mind upon seeing the sword, abruptly no longer interested in dueling Lu Yun. The Corpse Refiners’ special heritage retained records about the sword named Violetgrave.

The evil blade had a habit of elevating its master to the peak of the world, beyond the heights of mortal reach. However, the moment of their greatest triumph was also the day of their demise, for they would be devoured as a sacrifice to the sword!

Jiangchen Xie already saw Lu Yun as a dead man. What reason did he have to fight someone like that? More importantly, someone who reached their level of strength relying on an artifact like that had no right to be his opponent.

Even a pig who wielded Violetgrave would be able to dominate the world... for a time. Like a shooting star, they were destined for short-lived glory and would soon be out of sight, out of mind.

“Get out of my way!” Snorting, Jiangchen Xie repelled the charging Lu Yun with a Corpse Refinement Formation formed from three hundred sixty-five formation flags.

A roiling stench of death buried the Dusk capital in a noxious shroud. Jiangchen Xie was attempting to refine every living thing in the city into a zombie!

“No!” the Fangyang youth screeched angrily. “That’s the most powerful Corpse Refinement Formation the Corpse Refiners possess. He’s going to turn us all into zombies!”

The Corpse Refiners never had true allies for long. Anyone who left their backs open to them would become battle zombies by their side. In the eyes of the sect’s disciples, zombies were the only trustworthy comrades they had.

“Break the formation!” The nine lords and thirty-six champions were no longer interested in killing or ganging up on Zhu Yan and Yue Longsha. They were one consolidated force, drilling as hard as they could into the dome choking the city.

Alas, the Corpse Refinement Formation was far too strong. Even Lu Yun couldn’t come up with a way to defeat it immediately from his position outside, much less the trapped cultivators.

Splash!

A loud sound of sloshing water broke through the din as a barrier of black water and pristine white mist slowly rose into existence, covering the Dusk capital in a protective membrane. The corpse odor of the Corpse Refinement Formation was shunted aside by the aqueous defense.

Bare feet tucked under aged white robes slowly descended from the sky, the owner of which was a young girl with a subtle bloody glimmer in the depths of her eyes. Eighteen black flags fluttered by her side, glowing with the same shade of faint crimson. These were the source of the endless stream of water and mist.

Diexi!

The zombie king, Diexi.

She was now at peak peerless immortal and could pluck an aether dao fruit anytime she wanted. The eighteen foreboding flags that flanked her were eighteen formidable zombies, all of which had submitted to her command.

The Celestial Mistfield Banners were among the top ten defensive treasures of the ancient immortal court. Not even a connate-grade treasure would be able to penetrate its bulwark.

Although the Corpse Refiners were the ones who'd refined the banners into zombies, Lu Yun had refined them again with the power of hell when Diexi obtained them, distilling their power in the process. As a zombie king, she had subjugated the zombified flags with ease.

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"Those are the Celestial Misfield Banners! They're our treasures!" Inside the Corpse Refinement Formation, Jiangchen Xie looked on darkly.

When a senior had obtained them after the ancient war, he'd refined them into zombie flags for Corpse Refiner disciples to use more easily. Who would've expected the banners to be turned against them?

"That zombie king! That's the one that fool Jin Heyi was after!" Jiangchen Xie looked at Diexi with unmasked desire.

"Are you really unwilling to continue our duel, Jiangchen Xie?" Lu Yun furrowed his brows as he shouted toward his opponent. No matter how much the cultivators and immortals inside rained attacks down on the formation, the sect disciple's reinforcement made it largely invulnerable.

"The puppet of an evil sword has no right to fight me," Jiangchen Xie sneered, then made a special seal with his hands.

The eighteen Celestial Mistfield Banners by Diexi's side began shaking, seemingly struggling to be free of the zombie king's control! Considering how long the sect had had with the flags, it was no wonder that the Corpse Refiners would have a method of retaking control of them if they were lost.

Color draining from her face and eyes narrowing, the bloody light in Diexi's eyes intensified.

"As you wish!" Lu Yun suddenly put Violetgrave away and ceased attacking the Corpse Refinement Formation. He made a resolute declaration from the air. "You're using a supplemental path against the Dusk capital. I will respond in kind and break it!"

“Planning on using that war treasure, are you?” Jiangchen Xie snickered. “Doing that will destroy my formation, but it will also annihilate everyone in the city.”

“War treasure? You don’t know me very well, do you? Does everyone think that’s the only thing Dusk Province has?” Lu Yun threw his head back with laughter. “If that’s the case, let me show you what my province really has up its sleeve!

“Come!” he bellowed into the air.

The Cerulean Sword Dragon locked in combat with the bone beast disintegrated on command. Likewise, the Sugato Sword exploded into a cloud of sword aura, filling the firmament with fragments of devastation.

As the target at the heart of the blast radius, the bone monster was torn to shreds by the detonation. And then...

Thud!

The entire province shook as a huge mountain uprooted itself from the ground.

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“That... that’s the inheritance tower! Lu Yun’s using the inheritance tower!” the dao immortals watching from outside the city shrieked in dismay. Lord Sugato’s tower was the main reason why they were here. Lu Yun was activating its latent power, but they could do nothing more than watch!

The Sugato Sword turned into rays of sword light and fused with the tower. Rising high into the sky, the structure slammed down upon Jiangchen Xie’s formation with destructive force.

Chapter 489: Flawless

The combination of Sugato Sword and inheritance tower shattered Jiangchen Xie’s Corpse Refinement Formation. Spitting out a mouthful of blood, the genius wilted visibly.

“H-how can this be!” Protected by a ball of Hadal Bonfire, he could only stare, flabbergasted, at the inheritance tower that now soared three thousand kilometers in the clouds.

Such was Dusk Province’s true strength, and such was Lu Yun’s trump card!

Having refined the tower long ago, he’d already received the ancient lord’s recognition and heritage. This alone provided him with the ability to found a great faction in the world, provided he had sufficient strength. The ancient heritage of Lord Sugato held an incomparable amount of knowledge.

Yet no one had ever noticed this fact. They’d always thought the inheritance tower to still be masterless, open to be taken by anyone.

Reality had cruelly snapped their dreams in half.

“He could’ve taken the tower away at any time as his personal treasure, but he allowed it to stand here in Dusk Province for everyone to cultivate in...”

“He wants to start a sacred land! He wants to become a saint!”

That was the only possible explanation for Lu Yun's apparent altruism.

The inheritance tower was a haven for cultivation, comprised of ancient laws and methods that significantly bolstered the strength of all those who entered it. Anyone else would certainly keep such an amazing treasure for themselves and their own, whether for use or for profit.

During the Feng clan's occupation, anyone who wanted to use the inheritance tower had to pay a hundred thousand crystals a day. For most people, such a price was exorbitant beyond belief.

After Lu Yun had retaken the province, everything had immediately gone back to its previous normal. And now, it seemed that everyone had discovered the reason why.

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Inside the Skandha Range, the desolate willow glowed with a black, spectral light. Dissolving into heaven and earth, the light passed on to Lu Yun in Dusk Province.

"Up!" Lu Yun commanded loudly, compelling the tower to slowly uproot itself and fly into the air. It exerted a terrifying pressure upon everyone around it, forcing even Qing Yu, Xing Chen, Wu Tulong, and Mo Qitian to cease fighting for a time.

By now, Dusk capital was completely destroyed. A huge hole in the ground was revealed where the tower had been: Lord Sugato's tomb.

"Come on, then! Who else wants to die?" With both hands behind his back, Lu Yun declared a cold ultimatum to the rest of the world.

All of creation became silent for a moment.

The pressure of the inheritance tower was too much for them to bear. Even the nearby dao immortals watching the commotion from the province's border paled at the tension. The power the tower emanated was sufficient to strike one of them down in a single hit as well!

"That's not Lu Yun's true strength! He's borrowing influence from elsewhere. A perceived void cultivator like him shouldn't be able to move the tower at all!" a dao immortal called out emphatically.

"You're right," Lu Yun nodded. "I can hold on like this for another thirty breaths, though. At twenty, I'm going to begin a massacre."

Saying this, he closed his eyes and waited.

"We're leaving!" The cultivators within and without the city paused for only a moment at his words, then turned their backs on the battleground without hesitation. Even Jiangchen Xie was compelled into involuntary retreat.

It would be suicide to clash against Lu Yun right now; no one wanted to see whether they could survive the tower's impact.

In twenty breaths of time, every foreign cultivator and immortal had vacated the premises.

Boom!

Ten breaths later, the inheritance tower smashed weightily into the ground.

Drained of every iota of energy, Lu Yun collapsed to the ground in an exhausted heap. He'd borrowed strength from the desolate willow of the Skandha Range, otherwise calling upon the tower would've been impossible.

The desolate willow had taken root in Dusk Province countless years ago, and was practically one with the province. The power it'd sent him was equivalent to natural energy of the purest variety. Just as tired out as the young Dusk lord by the exertion, the human face on the tree dimmed.

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Some of the immortals and cultivators outside the province noticed Lu Yun's weakness, but not even the dao immortals turned around.

They had already lost.

Going back now would allow them to take Dusk Province and kill Lu Yun, but their dao hearts wouldn't permit such an act.

"He didn't kill us in the end." Casting a glance back at Dusk Province, Jiangchen Xie gave a cursory wave. The throng of Corpse Refiner disciples and their zombies instantly melted away at the signal, as if melding with heaven and earth.

Zi Chen, Mo Qitian, and Wu Tulong vanished as well.

"That's too bad," the dao immortals sighed as they took their leave.

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"Roooooar!" A bestial noise tore through the peaceful silence as a golden wave of sonic energy rippled through all of Dusk Province.

"Who is it?!" The immortals in the process of leaving stopped in their tracks, shocked by what they saw in the north.

A golden lion slowly approached upon the waves.

"Come out here, Qing Yu!" The monster was enormously large at three hundred meters long. Its fur burned with golden flames and its dark eyes focused on a certain lonely figure in Dusk Province.

Qing Yu.

The shout seemed to strike the girl like a thunderbolt, and she coughed up a mouthful of blood.

"You killed my heir, my direct descendant. Today, I'm only after your life. Show yourself outside of Dusk Province!"

"The Golden Lion King! That old thing decided to show itself?"

The Golden Lion King was the strongest member of the gold bloodline. When the Scarlet Ape had first established the monster sacred land, it'd been the first one to jump out in support of the ancient monkey, dividing the monster spirits as a result.

The Lion King was an origin dao immortal itself, and had endured grievous injuries in order to pluck its origin dao fruits. However, the aura it radiated right now was far stronger than any of the other crippled origin dao immortals in the world. It stood between heaven and earth like an insurmountable mountain, dividing the gap between the two with endless strength.

Even though it was still outside the province, the immortal restriction was already on the verge of activating. Every crippled origin dao immortal opened their eyes at the same time and looked in its direction.

“The Golden Lion King’s origin dao fruits... are perfect,” one murmured.

Chapter 490: Mo Yi’s Senior Sister

A collective gasp of shock and astonishment followed the origin dao immortal’s observation.

Once upon a time, the Golden Lion King had suffered great injuries to attain origin dao immortality, marking his cultivation as a crippled one as well. Yet its latest appearance showed that its dao fruits had been restored. Its old wounds afflicted it no longer!

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Qing Han turned ghastly pale. Her current replica was refined from the connate spirit root Moon Osmanthus, but that wouldn’t allow it to remain intact under the pressure of a flawless origin dao immortal.

Xing Chen whitened as well. He interposed himself between Qing Yu and the lion, taking on the burden of the pressure alongside her.

“If you’re not coming out... then die.”

Bam!

The Golden Lion King raised a foreclaw, aiming a swipe into Dusk Province. The appendage expanded to a hundred thousand times its normal size. It blotted out the sky like a mountain, threatening to crash down on Qing Yu, Xing Chen, and the Dusk capital ruins.

“No... even if a war treasure was charged to full power, it still wouldn’t hurt a flawless origin dao immortal!” Lu Yun struggled to get up. His exhaustion from calling upon the inheritance tower meant that he had nothing left to spare for the Divine Glory.

The other war treasures at his disposal could kill origin dao immortals, yes, but only injured ones. The old lion could do the same with a casual slap of its palm, so the cannons were of no threat to it.

“The corpse puppet!” Lu Yun gritted his teeth. He had no choice but to use the celestial emperor corpse puppet! Aside from this final weapon, he had nothing else with which to fend off the lion. He’d wanted to save it for Scarlet Ape in the North Sea, but what else could he do now?!

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Suddenly, everything became very quiet. The claw reaching into Dusk Province ground to a halt, some invisible restriction binding it in place. Every mote of dust, every speck of qi, became immobile.

A light-blue figure descended from the heavens, gracefully landing upon Dusk Province's soil. A middle-aged daoist nun, she wore the simple robes of her order and her hair was swept up into a bun. Although she seemed to be thirty-something at first, a second look revealed many girlish features about her.

Shwip!

A sword light flew forth from her hand.

The golden lion's mountain of a palm crashed to the ground, severed and spraying an arc of golden blood high into the sky. The lion king wanted to scream, but the restriction holding it firmly in place meant that it could only tremble with silent agony.

"Keep your subordinates on a better leash, Scarlet Ape. Next time, it will lose its head, instead." The daoist nun projected cold lethality.

Upon Levitating Island, the daydreaming ape seemed to recover itself. It inclined its head very slowly.

The nun spun around, then disappeared. As she did so, everything went back to normal.

"Aaaaaaaieeee!" The lion's anguished shriek came a little late. It retracted its forearm, then fled with its tail between its legs.

Lu Yun let out a breath of relief and retracted his consciousness from Violetgrave.

"Her aura was a lot like the little daoist nun's... could she be a senior of the little girl?" Qing Han ventured, looking in the direction of their savior.

"There's more to that little girl than meets the eye." Lu Yun nodded. "A special power is sleeping inside her. When it awakens, she'll become one of the top geniuses of the world for sure."

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The great battle ended even more suddenly than it had begun.

Dusk City was completely destroyed. Even the site of its ruins was in ruins, and the rest of the province had fared no better. When geniuses surrounded Dusk City, factions hostile to Lu Yun had taken the opportunity to raze every city in the surrounding countryside.

Although this battle had occurred on a smaller scale than the North Sea monsters' invasion, the earth had been more fully salted this time.

Cultivators and immortals who'd come into the province upon the lifting of the blockade had done so only in order to destroy. Earth, mineral, and spirit veins that had been slowly recovering under Lu Yun's rule had all been decimated by the saboteurs. This time, it would be absolutely impossible for them to recover.

"Dusk Province is done. Very soon, this place will become more desolate than the Endless Desert in western Nephrite. A single ancient lord's inheritance tower won't be enough to salvage this mess." Some looked on at the devastation with visible pleasure.

They hadn't obtained the inheritance tower or occupied Sword Lake, but the sudden destruction of a growing threat was still a delightful sight to savor.

“The natural energies here are dissipating. Now that its source has been uprooted, the immortal qi cannot recover. If Lu Yun wants to found a sacred land of immortal dao, he must go somewhere else... but where possibly can he go?”

Feng, Qing, Donglin, and Exalted immortals smirked knowingly at one another. Only powerful immortals of these great factions had methods available at their disposal to destroy a province’s earth veins like this.

When Dusk Province’s natural energies had dispersed, causing its poverty, there had still been a possibility for its renewal.

But now? They’d systematically demolished every single vein underground. Human intervention to heal the land was absolutely impossible. Not even the nine celestial emperors would be able to save Dusk Province now.

As for the Golden Lion King and the daoist nun in blue... well, everyone chose to selectively ignore them.

The Golden Lion King had healed from breaking through its cultivation threshold, but the only reason for its emergence had been the death of its heir. Meanwhile, the nun in blue had only interfered to repel it. Evidently, there was a sort of balance keeping each other in check here.

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“Junior sister, will you still not return with me?” In a corner of Dusk Province, the daoist nun was speaking to Mo Yi. Her face was troubled by the pretty girl in boy’s clothing.

“I’m not going back.” Mo Yi shook her head. “The world of immortals is a rare patch of unsullied land in the multiverse. Someone needs to protect it.”

“Can any eggs remain unbroken when the nest is destroyed?” The nun furrowed her brows. “This world edges closer to ruin every day. If you stay here...”

“Senior sister, that’s enough. To each our own aspirations.” Mo Yi waved a hand. “Plus, I don’t think the world will necessarily be destroyed. There are other people protecting it.”

She looked toward the ruins of Dusk City.

“Are you talking about Lu Yun?” The woman shook her head. “He has a lot of potential, but he’s already made a deal with Violetgrave... he won’t have time to grow, anyway.” She raised her head toward the sky. “The divines protected this world eighty thousand years ago, but for what? Their own extinction? Smeared as slavers, they’ve now become an enemy of the rest of the world. Do you intend to follow in their footsteps?”