

Necropolis 491

Chapter 491: A Distinguished Gathering

The endless expanse of the North Sea's rippling waters was largely calm, broken only by the flight of a few waterfowl.

After barely managing to reattach its broken claw, the Golden Lion King darted as a horrified, golden streak of light back toward Levitating Island.

Upon repairing its origin dao fruit, Scarlet Ape had expressly warned it not to leave the island without permission. For good reason, it seemed, as the lion king had encountered disastrous trouble as soon as it'd disobeyed.

The foreclaw seemed a light injury, but the stroke had damaged its lifeforce. As a result, it was now a thousand times slower than its uninjured self. A distance that could once have been traversed several times in a single breath now took considerably longer to cross.

Splash!

The marine waters exploded in a spray of salinity. Sunlight glinted off countless blades flashing through the sky with pernicious intent toward the golden lion.

"Who is it!" the lion king roared angrily. Its fiery golden fur bristled with blazing radiance in an attempt to parry the oncoming attacks, but the sword lights were simply too terrifyingly sharp. They cut through his defensive flames like hot knives through butter.

Despair bubbled up in the lion's eyes.

"Peak origin dao?!" it howled hoarsely with desperation.

"No. I am missing a single perfect origin dao fruit for that." A shadowy figure swooped down from above. "That final fruit will come from you," he chuckled softly, longsword still unsheathed.

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"Stop!" Upon Levitating Island, Scarlet Ape was both shocked and furious. It summoned its iron staff with a quick wave, then soared into the sky on a rescue mission.

Thwap!

A bleached hand slapped it back down from the air.

"If you dare leave, I will destroy everything on Levitating Island," it communicated through thought waves.

The master of Ingress Island!

It was the eponym of the realm after the dao immortal realm, and the lord of Ingress Island was one of the few remaining ingress immortals in the world.

“When you returned to the world, you devastated Ingress Island and slew an innumerable amount of my disciples. Today, my disciple will take that Golden Lion King’s perfected origin dao fruit for his own. Such is cause and effect,” intoned the island lord.

The man wielding the sword over the waves was the leader of one of the North Sea’s three great factions: the head of the Dark North Sword Sect!

Tongues of flame almost blazed from Scarlet Ape’s eyes in the depths of his rage. The ants it’d crushed were worthless, compared to a real origin dao immortal!

“Fine!” it spat out suddenly. “Dragon veins! Give me the four dragon veins from Ingress Island and the Dark North Sword Sect. Otherwise... this seat will destroy both of your factions if it’s the last thing I do!”

Originally, it’d planned on sneaking in and personally stealing the veins. Now that it was prevented from saving the lion king, the least it could do was seek compensation. Besides, it’d told the Golden Lion King more than once not to leave Levitating Island or act directly in the world of immortals. This was the consequence of its own foolhardiness.

“Acceptable,” the Ingress lord replied after a long while. “What use have you for dragon veins?”

“I made a deal with the kid of Dusk Province. He’s the one who wants them.” Scarlet Ape wasn’t interested in keeping Lu Yun’s secrets. On the contrary, it wanted the entire world to know that dragon veins could heal shattered earth veins and restore the natural order.

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Although the lion’s origin dao fruit had been repaired by Scarlet Ape, it was powerless against the head of the Dark North Sword Sect.

Three sword strokes later, the sect master walked away victorious, a sparkling origin dao fruit now his. Hefting the lion king’s corpse in his other hand, he returned to his sect in a single step.

As if on cue, the bleached hand outside Levitating Island slowly retracted into the void. Four snarling dragon veins brandishing their claws flew from the Dark North Sword Sect and Ingress Island onto Levitating Island shortly thereafter.

Retiring to the floating peak at the center of the island, Scarlet Ape looked very grim indeed.

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No one paid any attention to the Golden Lion King’s death. The rampaging sword auras over the North Sea had caused no commotion elsewhere. Aside from Scarlet Ape himself, no one on Levitating Island had even noticed the Ingress Island lord’s intervention.

Dusk Province was being rebuilt for the umpteenth time.

However, the most recent devastation had also been the most complete; this time, obliterating public sentiment as well. Her few survivors had departed alongside the other cultivators, no longer considering Dusk their home. Plenty of Lu and Chen immortals and cultivators were among their ranks, hiding their names and lineages to wander the rest of the world.

Lu Yun made no effort to stop them.

Everyone had their own goals in life. Dusk Province was on the path to becoming the world's greatest enemy, and its destruction at regular intervals was no laughing matter. He couldn't begrudge them for their prudence—not when he very much agreed with it.

Legions of Infernum marched out from hell to assist in rebuilding the province. The East Sea Court, Panorama Pavilion, and Star Demon Sect all contributed a tremendous amount of resources and craftsmen to help as well.

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Soon, great cities rose up from the ground once more. Three hundred sixty-five in all, they were arranged in a special pattern upon the province's forty thousand kilometers of land. To the knowing eye, they formed a colossal feng shui layout.

The new Dusk City was ten times bigger than before, and now spanned five hundred kilometers across. Mortals and cultivators alike would have a hard time hiking from one side to the other. A myriad of buildings towered across the landscape inside the city, forming uncouneted feng shui layouts in turn.

Lu Yun had poured everything he knew into the new city. After innumerable hours of calculation and research, he'd come up with this final draft. Every brick and tile were manufactured and placed according to a meticulous standard.

The inheritance tower stood in the city's northeast, glittering with dazzling sword light.

"You're not just building a city... what is all this?" Qing Ruyan asked, astonished by the scale of the city.

The city had been planned out in an excessively orderly fashion. It didn't seem like a place for the living at all. None of the remaining Lu and Chen clan immortals resided in the capital; they'd all been assigned to other cities. The rebuilt provincial capital was completely empty.

"You'll know soon enough."

Lu Yun gently tousled the hair of Qing Ruyan's daughter in her mother's arms. Liu Qingmiao was only a few months old; though she was the monster spirit ancestor's reincarnation, and had heaven-defying potential, she was just a sleeping baby for the moment.

"We can begin now," he said.

"Have you really decided?" Qing Ruyan looked rather serious. "You'll be funding your enemies this way! There's too many of them. Even if they get something of yours, they won't be grateful to you for it."

"I'm just a perceived void cultivator. There's no way I can make that many enemies alone." Lu Yun shook his head. "Anyone in my position will become a public enemy sooner or later."

"But..." he raised his head toward the cerulean sky, "I don't want to die, and I don't have much time. If I could, I really would prefer taking things quietly slow and steady instead..."

Qing Ruyan tilted her head quizzically at the young man, who shook his head again wordlessly.

“Alright. I hope you can bear the consequences of this... of teaching the entire world that supplemental paths are king...” Qing Ruyan flicked her wrist.

A shower of golden shimmers flew from her fingers into every direction. They were headed for every major, every land, and every nook and cranny where geniuses and experts lived: Panorama Pavilion invitations in the form of faintly sparkling talismans.

As one of the top three mercantile organizations in the world, the Pavilion had an incomprehensible amount of wealth and power at its disposal. Qing Ruyan had sent out invitations to the entire world with only a wave of her hand.

Everyone who received an invitation was informed the Panorama Pavilion was hosting an auction of legendary proportions. It had done so only twice in eighty thousand years of this era’s history. Each auction had elevated many factions to new heights, while causing a great deal of death and destruction in the process.

Now, a third auction of worldwide scale was upon them once more.

“Dusk Province.” Many people furrowed their brows at the indicated address.

Dusk Province, of all places?

After its veins were destroyed two months ago, it must’ve already become an inhospitable environment for cultivators. And yet, the Panorama Pavilion was hosting their third great auction there...

“An auction of this level will be hosted by all ten of the best merchant guilds in the world. I doubt the Panorama Pavilion has executive authority alone,” one intrepid invitee inhaled. “This is hope for our race. Even if the auction takes place at the bottom of the mythical abyss, we will still go!”

Just like both times before, the Panorama Pavilion had been one to send out the invitations. When the actual gatherings were held, though, all ten mercantile organizations were joint hosts of the two prior auctions. However, this time was different—only the Panorama Pavilion was involved.

Hesitation stayed the footsteps of the other nine. If Panorama Pavilion was brave enough to send out the invitations, they must have something prepared.

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The auction was slated to take place in three months’ time.

Standing upon the capital’s battlements, Lu Yun inclined his head toward the North Sea. “Please come to keep the peace in three months, honored seniors.”

A dragon’s croon and phoenix’s cry answered in the affirmative.

Chapter 492: A Flood of Evil Spirits

The auction was to take place in three months. In the interim, Lu Yun wanted to take care of Qing Han’s longstanding problem.

Xing Chen and Qing Yu were headed to the Endless Desert in western Nephrite in search of their long lost friends, while Lu Yun and Qing Han dove into the North Sea. Dusk Province was empty right now, anyway. Even the Lu and Chen clans were slowly migrating out and taking refuge elsewhere.

The Star Demon Sect provided a great deal of aid in the process. Neither clan particularly wanted to build a connection with a demonic sect, but it was still better than staying put. They weren't brave enough to try putting down roots in Dusk Province anymore.

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Coast of the East Sea, Azure Province.

Similar to Dusk Province, there was an ancient immortal tomb beyond emperor-grade at this province's center as well.

Unlike Dusk Province, though, Azure Province hadn't undergone any decline whatsoever in the last five thousand years. It bustled with prosperity and activity and was one of the wealthiest aside from Life Province.

East Sea monsters invaded from time to time, since the province bordered that body of water, but there were no large-scale battles beset with bloodshed and strife like with the North Sea monsters.

After all, the East Sea heritage hailed from the Monster Celestial Master of the ancient court. They considered themselves the right and proper extension of immortal dao. Any clashes with Nephrite or the other majors were minor scuffles at best, unlike the feud between the North Sea and Nephrite Major.

Lu Yun and Qing Han disguised themselves and obscured their cultivation levels. After transforming into two spirit realm cultivators, they headed toward the tomb at the province's heart.

Lu Yun opened his Spectral Eye and perused the tomb more closely.

"This tomb has died," he sighed suddenly.

"Died?" Qing Han was rather amazed by the descriptor.

"Its formations and layouts are completely destroyed and the tomb qi is entirely discharged. Whoever was buried here is probably gone... and it happened not too long ago." Lu Yun was taken aback himself as he mused over the facts. "Are the four tombs really related somehow? Wait, we need to hurry to the Azure capital!"

He tugged urgently at Qing Han and the two youths shot toward the city as fast as they could.

"What's wrong?" Qing Han's heart sank a little at her friend's sombre demeanor. It was rare for him to be so unnerved. Even during Scarlet Ape's invasion, complete equanimity had remained in Lu Yun's bearing.

"A flood of evil is coming..." Lu Yun replied soberly. "If it's not dealt with, they'll destroy Azure Province in its entirety."

They reached the Azure capital in nearly the blink of an eye. Aged walls evoking an ancient grandeur and dark blue bricks weathered by the passage of time came into view. About a hundred kilometers across, the city was one of the greatest in all of Nephrite Major.

Cultivators and immortals came and went with remarkable frequency. The level of activity here was every bit Xiankan's equal. Everyone who came here voluntarily landed before entering through the gates—a sign of considerable respect for the city lord.

It was the same at places like Destiny City and Xiankan.

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“Stop right there!” When the guards saw Lu Yun and Qing Han attempting to fly over the city walls, they immediately moved to block the rude interlopers.

“Out of my way!” Lu Yun sent the two true immortal guards flying with a burst of sword aura.

“How dare you force your way into Azure City! You court death!” Before the guards could react, other nearby immortals leaped to their defense.

An array of sword light poured in from every direction, interposing itself between Lu Yun and the inner city.

“Scram!” Lu Yun was growing impatient. Dusk Province may not be at risk, but billions of innocent lives were!

As the commandant of tomb raiders, he had no desire to see an ancient tomb's restless dead wreak havoc in the world of the living... the world of immortals! He shunted the attacks aside with tremendous force.

“A great flood of evil spirits is coming, why do you not prepare?!” Qing Han took the opportunity to shout as loud as she could. Bolstered by her internal energy, a wave of sound rolled through the city in mere moments.

“A flood of evil?” Numerous immortals blinked before roaring in laughter. “Don't try stirring up trouble in the city with your lies... get out!”

A golden immortal came forth from the city, clad in an official's robes and holding an azure seal. The seal allowed him to make use of the power of the city, which he blasted in Lu Yun and Qing Han's direction.

This man was an official of the Nephrite court. Though his was no governor's seal, it could still borrow the city's might.

Azure City's wealth meant the imperial court wouldn't possibly allow the governor to reign unchecked. Sending officials to counterbalance his faction was completely understandable, and this golden immortal was one of them.

Tremendous energy flowed in from every direction, forming a fanged beast.

Lu Yun's face colored with anger and impending violence.

Whoosh!

A blast of terrifying void realm qi burst from his body, then—

The power of the land answered his call, smashing down against the attack as a large millstone shaped by the six strands of his nascent spirit.

Boom!

The power of the city gathered by the azure seal instantly dispersed upon impact.

“Void realm?!” The golden immortal official paled.

Void realm cultivators breathed with the rhythm of nature. Having refined heaven and earth, they could borrow its power for their own use. However, most void realm cultivators right now used their old arts and methods; wielding heavenly energy was too stressful for them to maintain for too long.

“Move!” Lu Yun waved a hand, gathering the purest energy of the land a second time and sending the golden immortal flying. The seal in the immortal’s hand shattered.

“Void realm really is stronger than golden immortality! It’s true! He’s a void realm cultivator, but he’s defeated a golden immortal!” gasped countless people in- and outside the city.

It’d always been rumored that a void realm expert could defeat golden immortals and match arcane immortals. Some even said that they were as strong as peerless ones. However, those rumors had been nothing more than hearsay... until today.

Today, a golden immortal official wielding a city seal had been sent flying by a void realm cultivator in a single blow. His seal had shattered, too!

“Governor of Azure Province!” Lu Yun didn’t want to go through the process to be granted an audience. “There will be a huge outbreak of the undead tide in twenty minutes. You’d better prepare for it right now!”

“The Azure Governor’s seal always warns me of such an event.” A coolly collected voice sounded from the governor’s residence, but its owner sounded hesitant. There had to be a genuine reason for this void realm genius to barge his way into the Azure capital so hastily.

However, the governor’s seal provided no information whatsoever that any doom was impending.

“Are you sure that an undead tide is coming so soon?” the Azure governor pressed again.

Chapter 493: The Last Sanctuary

“I’m sure.” Over Azure capital’s battlements, Lu Yun nodded.

“Why should we believe you?!” The golden immortal official who’d been sent flying reappeared again. His hair was disheveled and his clothes were in tatters. He cast a baleful glare at Lu Yun. A golden immortal—a right and proper official of the Nephrite court—had been smacked aside with a single blow. How deeply humiliating!

Despite his elevated status, the golden immortal was the first to prove to the world that a void realm cultivator really could beat them that handily. He’d probably be famous for it one day, his name found on everyone’s lips.

Already imagining what was in store for him, the official grew even angrier.

“Speak! Who are you? Why did you come to Azure Province?!” However, the man didn’t dare make any aggressive moves. Lu Yun had clearly shown mercy just now. Otherwise, he’d probably already be dead.

“The reason why the governor’s seal can warn you in the first place is because of its connection to the ancient tomb at the heart of the province. The tomb is intricately fused with the province, such that trouble in the former will reflect in the seal of the latter.” Lu Yun ignored the golden immortal.

“However, the ancient tomb has died recently. Its tomb qi has all spilled out, and its master is gone. Even if it exploded, nothing would happen to the seal.

“It’s up to you whether you believe me or not. I’ve spoken my piece. Whatever comes after... well, I shall have a clear conscience,” he said softly.

“A clear conscience, eh? Then... I see no reason not to believe you.” The governor of Azure Province finally showed himself. He swatted aside the golden immortal official that’d been about to erupt in fury again, then produced a deep blue seal with his right hand.

Kaboom!!

Heaven and earth quaked at the commotion. Every population center in Azure Province was covered by a blue light.

“Gather the million soldiers of the Azure Legion. We march on the ancient immortal tomb!” The governor burned with azure radiance; he was as brilliant as a small sun!

“Understood, Your Excellency!”

The comparatively quiet capital suddenly became alive. Figure after figure emerged from who knew where, arraying themselves in the city’s airspace.

The Azure Legion!

It was a heavenly army as famous as the Dusk Phalanx, but stronger than any past version of it. This was an army of golden immortals with an ancient heritage, the most stalwart line of defense Azure Province had against any undead tide.

At the governor’s command, a million soldiers formed a dragon and soared toward the central tomb. The governor himself stayed put and glanced at Lu Yun.

“Who are you? Why do you know the secret of the governor’s seal?” the man messaged.

“I am the former Dusk Province Governor, Lu Yun.” Despite his disguise, Lu Yun didn’t hide his identity.

The moment he’d arrived at the Azure capital, he’d noticed that the Azure governor was under just as many restrictions from Nephrite Major as he had been. Just like himself, many immortals were covetous of the Azure governor’s position.

“As I thought,” nodded the Azure Governor. “Don’t worry. The million strong Azure Legion will be more than enough to stop the tide.”

“You... should send more people than that.” Lu Yun pressed his lips together. “A million soldiers are barely enough to present the smallest bit of resistance to the oncoming onslaught of evil. If you can, ask for help from the origin dao immortal secluded here. Alternatively, seek reinforcements from the Nephrite court.”

The Azure governor’s expression froze.

“Now that the ancient tomb is dead, it cannot restrain the dead inside it any longer. This undead tide will be the last one for Azure Province. If you survive it, this place will become more prosperous than even Life Province. If not... a desolate waste awaits.”

Lu Yun looked toward the east. There was such a desolate waste deep in the East Sea, a zone forbidden to all life.

The Azure governor looked somewhat uncomfortable, as he still had a hard time believing the full magnitude of Lu Yun’s words. The young man was a miracle who’d done tremendous things. He was also a thorn in the side for many, many people in the world.

The governor could understand all these things. Besides coming from humble origins, Lu Yun himself was fairly weak. He didn’t have the strength sufficient to own what he possessed, which was why he attracted undue attention.

If some great faction owned Dusk Province, the inheritance tower, and everything else, things would be very different. It was also because of his weakness that the governor had trouble accepting the gravity painted by the youth’s words.

The final undead tide? One that could turn Azure Province into a desolate wasteland? That sounded as credible as a fairy tale.

“Dusk Province’s tomb is already broken,” said Lu Yun. “Azure Province isn’t alone in its plight. Very soon, Crimson Province to the south and Argent Province in the west will undergo something similar.”

The Azure Governor became as white as a ghost.

“I understand! O ancestor, I beseech you!” He shook his governor’s seal once more, as if calling on someone.

The Azure, Crimson, and Argent Provinces were different from Dusk.

Five thousand years ago, Dusk Province had sustained a serious blow that saw the annihilation of its then-governor’s clan. Later governors were natives of the province, but they didn’t belong to the old governing bloodline.

The other three provinces boasted eighty thousand years of heritage, and their governors’ clans were some of the oldest in the world. In terms of strength, they were more than a match for the likes of the Fengs and Qings.

Due to the three provinces’ exceptionalism, and the fact that they experienced regular calamities, the Nephrite emperor restricted the clans’ origin dao immortals, rather than wiping them out.

The simplicity of Lu Yun's words helped the Azure Governor understand the gravity of the situation and he immediately woke up his clan's sleeping origin dao immortal. Two more spirit seals appeared in the governor's hands, to which he flicked into the wind, sending them speeding toward Argent and Crimson Provinces.

The imperial court?

After Zhao Fengyang's abdication, the three provincial clans couldn't be bothered with Zhao Changkong's affairs.

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Boom!

The tomb at the heart of Azure Province split open with a deafening sound. Countless spirits and undead dispersed like smoke in every direction. Although the troops of Azure Province were already in place, they were nevertheless flustered by the sheer volume of their opposition.

In the span of a few seconds, the million soldiers of the Azure Legion went up in smoke. Nothing of their bodies, souls, or spirits remained.

It was an absolute disaster.

Ordinary immortals were powerless before the undead tide, and innumerable defensive formations were broken, their wards consumed.

"Die!" The Azure Governor wept tears of blood to see so many of his people gone within seconds. Bringing the entire province's power to bear with his governing seal, he charged into the torrent of evil spirits.

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"The four ancient tombs are four openings to the outer worlds. Now that one's been opened, the world of immortals is one step closer to destruction. That person cut off his eyes, nose, mouth, and ears to seal the openings, but he failed in the end..."

High above the earth, Mo Yi quietly stood in a plane of her own. She sighed wistfully at the sight of countless spirits and undead surrounding Azure Province.

"Dusk Province is where the human emperor fell. The human demon and immortal restriction are there to protect it. But Azure Province benefits from no such luck.

"The prelude of this world's destruction begins here. Soon, the last sanctuary in all the universe will disappear."

Chapter 494: Misery and Suffering

On an island in the South Sea, the world of immortals.

The South Sea Gourmet, who resembled a meatball more than a human, carefully turned a freshly killed beast on a spit over a bonfire. Suddenly, a shudder ran down his spine.

“Dammit!” He turned to the Azure Province in shock. “The body of the eyes escaped and ate the body of the ears! The crack leading to the outer world has been opened!”

“This won’t do, I must go to Crimson Province. If the eyes eat my body and open up the crack there, the world of immortals will be doomed!”

The South Sea Gourmet abandoned his meal and rushed to Crimson Province in Nephrite Major.

At the same time, the two Wayfarers in the world looked up in unison toward the direction of Azure Province.

“Where did the demonic nature of the body come from? I only wanted to devour the old man and take his place, but he... he wants to destroy every living thing!” Art Saint Wayfarer shuddered. Next to him, Zhao Changkong observed the situation with knitted brows.

“Attention, Nephrite Imperial Army!” commanded Zhao Changkong after three breaths of hesitation.

“Wait!” the Art Saint hurriedly stopped him. “The yin spirits from outside the realm are not to be trifled with. No amount of low-level immortals will be able to stop them! Numbers alone mean nothing.”

“Allow me!” Lifting the veil shrouding him, Art Saint Wayfarer threw out the portrait of a beautiful woman and made his way to Azure Province. “If I don’t return, Your Majesty, find the South Sea Gourmet in Crimson Province. He will protect you for a century in my stead.” With that, he disappeared into the distance.

Letting out a deep sigh, Zhao Changkong brooded. Gravely, he bowed to the air. “Please take the Ingress Path to Azure Province, royal uncle.”

Hum.

Amid the fading hum, the pristine white path disappeared from Xiankan.

Following Wayfarer, Wanfeng arrived at Azure Province as well, with her emerald bamboo stick. A hazy green light had enveloped the province, keeping the swarming yin spirits firmly confined within. Those who hadn’t been able to make it to the immortal cities or larger settlements had all been devoured by the terrifying spirits.

Unlike other large provinces, however, Azure Province was highly experienced in dealing with swarms of enemies like these. Immortals and cultivators alike moved to their appropriate places in an orderly manner and activated all of the great formations in the cities and settlements, made sturdy by the Azure Province Seal.

The spirits weren’t breaking into the cities any time soon. With their continuously increasing numbers, though, it was only a matter of time before the defenses of the cities failed.

The governor of the Azure Province was a peerless immortal. He could enter heaven and earth to search for aether dao fruit and become a dao immortal at any time. However, he currently felt like he was being suffocated to death.

Terrifying waves of yin spirits came with great ferocity, and a battle formation of a million golden immortals and their bearers were completely destroyed after only a little more than ten breaths. The Azure Governor felt a stabbing pain in his chest.

“Die!!!” he snarled. The seal in his hand shook violently as he drew upon the power of Azure Province to blast the spirits back. Every one of his attacks disintegrated a great number of enemies.

“The power of heaven and earth!” Inspiration struck Lu Yun. “The vast power of the world is these spirits’ greatest bane!”

Bam!

He made a move following his observation of the governor’s actions, retracting his combat arts and tapping into the world’s power with his nascent spirit. Great energy of the land rippled out like water, creating immense waves in the air that swept over many of the yin spirits and rendering them into ashes.

But there were simply too many of them, and an endless supply of yin spirits continued to emerge from the ancient tomb. Although Lu Yun had killed tens of millions of spirits with a single attack, their casualties were quickly replenished.

“There’s no end to this. The key to it all is the ancient tomb... I must seal it!” Hellfire burned around him as he changed course and struggled to make his way to the tomb.

Although the yin spirits were afraid of hellfire, their sheer numbers prevented Lu Yun from moving about freely. It felt as if he was wading his way through a marsh, each step slow and ponderous.

Other than the immortal cities, ordinary settlements like mortal towns and cultivator cities were falling, losing countless residents to the invasion of the yin spirits. In fact, even the larger immortal cities were struggling as well.

Bam!

A slight tremor passed through Azure Province, followed by the descent of a white path. Its great heavenly power destroyed countless yin spirits with a casual shake, and a wizened peak arcane dao immortal stood upon it.

“Governor of Azure Province, why did you not request help from the heavenly court when the province was struck by such a calamity? You are an official of the imperial court! Is this meant as a challenge to the court’s authority?!”

The nine-fruit arcane dao immortal destroyed yin spirits as easily as flipping his hand. The path under his feet landed within the province and extended in thousands of different directions like an enormous dragon, protecting the immortal cities teetering on the edge of annihilation.

The arrival of the Ingress Path lifted a great amount of pressure from Azure Province, and many more elites had traveled upon it to stem the tide of evil.

The flood of spirits was innumerable, but most of their strength fell between peerless immortals and normal cultivators. With the newcomers’ concerted efforts, half of them were immediately decimated.

“Ancestor!” the Azure governor suddenly wailed in sorrow.

A skeleton lay crouched over the crack in the ancient tomb at the center of the province, its flesh and essence all devoured. It was the origin dao immortal serving the province—or rather, his remains after failing to seal the tomb with his own body and being eaten by the endless tide.

“What happened here?!” Zhao Changkong’s royal uncle gazed gravely at the skeleton. “He’s an origin dao immortal. Even with his dao injuries, he shouldn’t have been killed and eaten by mere yin spirits... No, watch out!!”

Scarlet shadows emerged from nowhere and lunged at the elites coming to the province’s rescue. A dao immortal was consumed before he could even react, falling helplessly to the ground as a withered, dried husk.

“Waughh!!” Piercing screams rang from the tomb, and from the crack swarmed a horde of scarlet shadows. A pungent, metallic smell permeated the air.

Chapter 495: Ominous Peril

Scarlet yin spirits were far more powerful than the regular black spirits that were frequently seen from the tomb’s previous outbreaks, catching many dao immortals off guard. Azure Province fell into chaos once again, and even the sky turned a bloody red. Keeping watch over the cities of the province, the Ingress Path churned furiously, barely rebuffing the tide of yin spirits and preventing the cities from being overrun.

“Abandon all cities beneath the immortal level!” commanded a voice. “Retreat to the immortal cities!”

Arriving in cyan robes, a portrait of a stunning woman danced around Art Saint Wayfarer—Yuying! The portrait turned into a streak of white light and whipped through the sky, strangling every scarlet yin spirit it passed through.

“The Ingress Path can’t protect all of the cities,” he said with steel in his voice. Smears of ink splattered around him like a splash-ink painting, transforming into figures that rushed into the fray.

“Art Saint Wayfarer!!” Many of the immortals recognized him. After all, he’d been a household name in the world of immortals only twelve hundred years ago, and the Dusk governor a thousand years ago.

A millennium was but the blink of an eye to immortals.

“You... you’re the one who’s been helping His Majesty!” Expression shifting, Zhao Changkong’s uncle pushed the Ingress Path to its limits and called out, “You’re right, but we can’t just abandon hundreds of millions of citizens!”

Azure Province was very vast. Apart from the immortal cities, there were also other lesser cities and settlements that housed countless living spirits. If they were abandoned, all Nephrite citizens would lose confidence in the heavenly court.

“Fool!” the Art Saint almost choked on his anger. “The Ingress Path connects all of the cities in Azure Province! It’s as simple as having everyone take the path into the immortal cities!”

Bam!

A crimson yin spirit suddenly broke apart the splashes of ink around Wayfarer and almost cut through his defenses.

Shamefaced, the old imperial uncle quickly descended from the sky and assumed control over the Ingress Path, shuttling immortals and cultivators into the immortal cities. The treasure was able to transcend space; when pushed, it could keep the scarlet spirits at bay for some time.

Wayfarer was here as well, but he headed straight to the ancient tomb rather than meet up with the Art Saint and attempted to seal the crack above the tomb. However, there was a strange power encircling the tomb which seemed to have torn into the world and left behind an indelible wound, rendering all of his efforts futile.

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Seeing the chaotic battlefield, Lu Yun brought Qing Han with him back to Azure City. In the sky, azure light intertwined with the white of the Ingress Path, forming an invincible wall.

Still, the city was cast in dark crimson as countless yin spirits had attached themselves to the barrier formed by the formation, gnawing away at its power. What should've been an invincible formation continuously quaked and slowly weakened under the pressure.

Lu Yun could see cracks surfacing on the formation when he opened his Spectral Eye. Without the Ingress Path, the formation activated by the Azure Seal would've long been destroyed by the scarlet yin spirits.

"This won't do!" He stood on top of the city with a grave look on his face. "The ancient tomb must be sealed again. Otherwise... Azure Province won't be the only victim. The neighboring provinces will be hit as well!"

As for the rest of the world... Lu Yun expected the world would take notice once the yin spirits spread further. Crippled origin dao immortals would then work together and eliminate the terrifying enemies.

Therefore, only Azure Province and its nearby neighbors would fall prey to the yin spirits. There were, however, hundreds of millions of people in Azure Province. Add to that its neighbors...

"Do you have a solution?" Qing Han perked up. If Lu Yun mentioned sealing the ancient tomb, then he must have a way of doing that.

"I do!" Lu Yun answered decisively. "I can set up another tomb and re-bury the premises!"

"It's you two!" shouted a hoarse voice from the city. "You're the ones who attracted the swarms of yin spirits!!"

The golden immortal official from earlier suddenly appeared and leveled an accusatory finger at Lu Yun and Qing Han.

"What?!" Dao immortals who had retreated back into Azure City turned to look at them as well.

"Two void realm cultivators?" An aether dao immortal scanned Lu Yun and Qing Han and demanded, "Speak! What's going on here?!"

As he spoke, he made a move to take the two down, but another dao immortal stepped in.

“Hold! There’s yin spirits ravaging the land everywhere, Feng Wushen. Are you really going to attack geniuses of the world just because they clashed with a member of the Feng Clan?”

Most void realm cultivators were from powerful factions that would absolutely retaliate if one of their own was injured or offended. Due to current circumstances, it was imperative that the province stick together as a united front.

The golden immortal official and the dao immortal who’d wanted to make a move against Lu Yun just now were both from the Feng Clan. This was the clan that the heavenly court had sent to Azure Province to keep the governor’s influence in check.

“Out of the way!” Feng Wushen growled at the aether dao immortal. “They cannot be forgiven for agitating the tomb and triggering the flood of yin spirits wreaking havoc in the province!”

Bam!!

Energy of a peak aether dao immortal surged from Feng Wushen, knocking the other aether dao immortal away.

“You can’t be an irredeemable sinner, since you were willing to come here today... so I’ll let you live.” Lu Yun’s lips curved into a devious smile, his eyes turning pure black. “Now scram!” Two arcane dao immortals emerged from behind him.

Expression twisting, Feng Wushen quickly retreated and glared ominously at Lu Yun.

“All of you, stop it!” shouted a Nephrite peak arcane dao immortal. “The Ingress Path won’t hold for that much longer against all these vicious spirits! Now isn’t the time to fight amongst ourselves!”

Feng Wushen grunted heavily and tamped down his urge to attack. The golden immortal official had just transmitted to him that the two void realm cultivators were very likely Lu Yun and Qing Han.

When the Azure governor asked Lu Yun who he was, Lu Yun had answered through transmission. Thus, his response remained unknown to others. However, that’d been sufficient to raise the Feng golden immortal’s suspicions.

Feng Wushen kept the newly shared speculations to himself. If anyone else learned who the two youths were, things might not turn out in his favor. It would be best to capture or kill them with no one the wiser. Even with the mysterious arcane dao immortals trailing Lu Yun, he still had a chance of killing the boy in one swift attack.

After all, it was only a matter of time before Azure City fell.

The formation raised by the provincial seal had cracked, and the Ingress Path was the only thing holding it together. Outside the city, the Azure governor, Art Saint Wayfarer, Nephrite emperor’s uncle, and a few other peak arcane dao immortals were madly slaughtering all of the scarlet yin spirits in sight.

“Senior!” Lu Yun shouted to the emperor’s uncle outside the city. “Please escort me to the ancient tomb!”

“Oh?” The emperor’s uncle started and looked at Lu Yun.

“I can seal the crack outside the tomb!” Lu Yun declared with great certainty as black flames circled around him.

“Alright!” With the arrival of even more scarlet yin spirits, even a smaller immortal city had been forced to evacuate its inhabitants. Zhao Changkong’s uncle had no choice but to grasp at the slimmest of hopes.

“I will go with you to protect you,” said an approaching voice from outside the city. It was the arcane dao immortal from the Feng Clan.

Chapter 496: To Bury Immortals

“That’s right. It’s dangerous outside the city, and absolutely deadly if you approach the tomb. If you intend to head there, young man, you should have people along to protect you!” Many immortals clamored in agreement with the sentiment.

They understood the timeline of events now.

First, these two youths had hurried here to inform the Azure governor about the incoming tide. If not for that, every city in the province would have fallen in the first couple of seconds. They of Azure Province were at the end of the line. They’d have to rely on him even if he were an ordinary mortal, much less a void realm cultivator.

“No need. Too many people will attract unwanted attention from the yin spirits. Qing Long and I are enough.” The Feng arcane dao immortal had dragged a fellow Qing along for the ride.

Both were seven-fruit arcane dao experts, and it’d be a tall order to find many better in Nephrite Major.

Qing Long and Feng Xiao descended from the sky, landing at Lu Yun and Qing Han’s side.

“You stay here,” said Lu Yun.

Qing Han shook her head. “When push comes to shove, I’ll be able to help.”

Her resolute look compelled a very slow nod from Lu Yun.

“Alright then. Let’s go.” He saw no reason to refuse the Feng and Qing immortals, either. He did indeed need protectors and experts to accompany him. Even if they hadn’t come on their own, he would’ve sought them out.

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Zoom!

The white Path of Ingress carried Lu Yun and company out of the Azure capital toward the ancient tomb.

Over the land outside, the color of blood filled the air. Brandishing a bamboo staff, Wayfarer struck down exceptionally powerful spirits while beating back the bloody aura.

Upon the group’s arrival, Qing Long and Feng Xiao produced powerful dao-grade treasures that drew enormous energy from heaven and earth. For a time, they were able to hold off the scarlet tide.

"Whatever you're going to do, be quick about it. We can't hold on for too long." Feng Xiao looked at Lu Yun with unconcealed bloodthirst, a glint of sardonic humor in his eyes as if he were watching a clown perform.

The defense he coordinated with Qing Long seemed to take no toll on him. A strange, bloody light flared upon them, sealing off their signs of life to evade the yin spirits. However, the light barrier they set up was a bit crumblier. It appeared liable to fall at any moment against the sustained attack.

"Senior." Lu Yun and Qing Han ignored them, and instead raised a cupped fist salute toward a different direction. "We have brought the sacrifices. Let us begin."

His words chilled the two dao immortals to the bone.

"Lu Yun! You were the one who brought the tide, after all..." Feng Qing shrieked.

Before he could finish, an emerald staff struck him down to the ground. Qing Long wanted to flee, but the same fate awaited him.

A black flame ignited upon Lu Yun's body, its protective aura covering both Qing Han and himself. Because the fire blotted out their aura of life, the scarlet spirits simply ignored them.

Outside the cities, arcane dao immortal protectors were focused on the tomb as well. When they saw Wayfarer take down Qing Long and Feng Xiao, the shrieking of the latter drained the blood from their faces.

Lu Yun?

The messenger was Lu Yun? Then the one with him must be Qing Han! Was he really the mastermind behind the outpouring of evil spirits? What was he doing? Did he intend to take revenge on Nephrite Major?!

"Lu Yun is the head of the Star Demon Sect, a veritable demon himself!" a Feng clan immortal clamored. "He must have led us here on purpose after sparking the undead tide! The only reason he delivered that message was to feed our lives to the demons!"

There was a wave of panic at his words. Several arcane dao immortals were consumed by the aggressive spirits in a moment of negligence and their bones clattered to the ground.

"All of you, shut up!" Nephrite emperor's uncle commanded. "Anyone who babbles any further will answer to my sword!"

He drew an immortal sword with a ringing schwing!, then cut the prattling Feng immortal in half.

Trembling like cicadas in winter, the others were too intimidated to engage in further hearsay after that.

"What do you want, Lu Yun?!" Enveloped in a cocoon of light, the old man sternly called out to Lu Yun by the tombside.

"The Feng and Qing clans are my enemies. Why do you believe their words, senior?" The young man opened his Spectral Eye and began surveying the surrounding landscape as he answered.

His words were intentionally quiet, so they didn't carry far; the only ones who could hear him were the strongest experts present.

"Plus, they specifically came with me after learning who I was... shouldn't all of you already know what they intended?" He smiled. "But that's all water under the bridge now. Even a mountain of sins are absolved by their coming. This is how I will seal the tomb: I will bury these two right here!"

His volume increased continuously as he spoke, ending at a deafening level. The experts who heard his words felt their ears humming at the commotion. Burying two seven-fruit arcane dao immortals here... to seal the ancient tomb?

Feng Xiao and Qing Long were still alive!

The two men paled when they heard Lu Yun's words. Burying them here to seal the tomb? They were great arcane dao immortals—lofty, noble, and to be venerated! They'd endured incredible trials and tribulations to pluck their seven arcane dao fruits!

And now, an ant of a cultivator was going to... bury them?

"Lu Yun!" an old man cried out coldly. "If the two of them lose a single hair on their body, I will crush Dusk Province!"

He was a Qing arcane dao immortal—one with eight fruits. Eyes burning with fire, he wanted to save the other two, but couldn't possibly break through the layers of evil spirits to reach them.

"The old senior wants me to give up on saving Azure Province, then?" Lu Yun snorted. "If that is your wish, I must comply. The people of Azure Province need to be saved, but I refuse to let the people of Dusk Province die for no reason."

The Qing expert bristled with anger. That casually delivered last statement pinned all of the blame on him!

"Do whatever you need to, Lu Yun. If the Qing Clan dares move against Dusk Province, my clan will integrate into Dusk Province and feud with the Qings to the bitter end!" Cutting a swath through the spirits with his seal, the Azure governor gave an ultimatum.

"May your will be done, Your Excellency." Lu Yun waved a hand and stripped off two talismans from Qing Long and Feng Xiao's bodies. It was these talismans that'd hidden their life auras from the undead.

"Senior, please adjust the geographical layout of this place as this junior tells you." He turned to Wayfarer soberly. "This junior is going to bury immortals."

Chapter 497: A Piece of Human Skin

Bury immortals!

Wayfarer's expression remained passive, but his face twitched visibly.

There were also tombs in the world of immortals where immortals were buried after their deaths. In Lu Yun's eyes, however, those weren't so much tombs, but underground palaces with formations set up and the dead buried within.

True burial rituals combined formations, feng shui, astronomy, geology, and all other aspects of civilization, a path that had been lost to history in the world of immortals.

A thousand years ago, Art Saint Wayfarer had had to break into an ancient tomb for immortals to let Yuying occupy it as her own. And now, Lu Yun was going to inter immortals via setting up a real tomb for immortals.

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Rumble!

Lu Yun transmitted a landscape layout into Wayfarer's mind, and the senior began redoing the terrain according to the blueprint. Landscapes shifted and rivers changed course. The earthen veins in Azure Province roiled violently.

The layout to bury immortals.

That was the most powerful burial layout that could be found in the records kept by Lu Yun's sect. It was too grand for even emperors of the mortal world, true Sons of Heaven, to be buried in.

The layout only existed on paper. At least, he'd never seen such a setup on Earth. Now, however, he was going to set up tombs of yin and yang with a corresponding layout to seal the crack.

Though the layout to bury immortals was no connate grade layout, it gave rise to a most powerful grand influence over the world. With Lu Yun's current strength, he wasn't powerful enough to set it up. In fact, he would be shattered if he came into the slightest contact with it.

But Wayfarer was different.

He'd reached the greatest of heights in the world of immortals. Not even the scarlet yin spirits could approach him. He didn't have to understand feng shui, but simply set up the layout according to Lu Yun's instructions.

Once the layout was drafted, Lu Yun would be able to tap into its power through his mastery over feng shui and enter the next phase.

With a wave of his hand, Wayfarer transformed the terrain of Azure Province. As a result, a faint authority emerged around the ancient tomb. Seemingly suppressed by the sudden aura, the endless swarm of yin spirits halted, and scarlet spirits scattered in all directions out of sheer fear.

"It's really working!" Immortals fighting the yin spirits outside the cities lit up.

The scarlet yin spirits were brutally vicious and their numbers too great. Many dao immortals had already died fighting them. Even a brief halt to the endless replenishment of the spirits was more than noticeable to those continuing the fight. The despair weighing them down lifted, and hearts were rejuvenated with hope.

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"Grrrrr!!" Suddenly, a powerful roar rang out from beneath the tomb. An enormous scarlet hand a full fifty kilometers long reached out and swatted at Wayfarer.

“Protect the geography here, don’t let it destroy the landscapes!” Lu Yun’s expression turned grave. He hadn’t expected such a monster would be buried underground!

His finger was poised on the trigger, ready to haul out the emperor corpse puppet at a second’s notice. If things got out of hand, he would immediately unleash his secret weapon. Several provinces—billions of lives—were at stake!

Wayfarer was completely occupied with constructing the vast layout to bury immortals. Even someone as powerful as he had to suffer an immense backlash from the grand influence of the world. He would’ve died, if not for his great might.

“Let me!” Qing Han quickly leaped into action when she sensed that Lu Yun was about to pull out some sort of trump card.

Hum.

Blinding starlight burst out from her body, and her long raven locks gained the luminance of the cosmos. She’d tapped into the full power of the starstones to strengthen herself. The Scroll of Shepherding Immortals transformed into a river of stars and wrapped around her figure.

“Go back!!” Qing Han attacked the giant hand with a great violet-gold palmstrike.

Conflicted emotions ran through Lu Yun’s face and he ultimately put the corpse puppet away. He lifted his hand and sent out dark cyan lightning from his palms. It was the technique the Azure Dragon King had taught him—Yi Wood Cleansing Thunder.

Rumble!

A violet-gold palmprint tangled with the lightning and slammed heavily into the scarlet hand. It flinched like it’d been burned, then retreated underground.

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“That’s the Yi Wood Cleansing Thunder of the azure dragon divines! Why would Lu Yun know a divine combat art?!”

There were many with a wealth of knowledge in the world of immortals. They might not have ever seen the formidable technique in person, but it was mentioned in more than one ancient record. Immortals often lamented the fact that tomb raiding would’ve been several times easier had the yin spirit-countering thunder been passed down.

Yet here it was!

And from the hands of Lu Yun, a public enemy of sorts, no less.

Such wasn’t time for these kinds of musings, however. As soon as the scarlet hand retreated, the terrible yin tide returned once again. The hand seemed to have not only stopped Wayfarer from setting up the layout, but also further torn open the crack deep within the tomb.

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“The true evil spirits are emerging. These immortals are doomed.” Up in the air, Mo Yi’s senior sister looked on with regret and fear on her face.

Plink! Plonk! Plink! Plonk!

A delightful melody of strings sounded as a graceful man dressed in white robes approached, surrounded by different notes.

It was Wayfarer!

Another Wayfarer!

“I do not know if these immortals are doomed, but I know that, as a member of the world of immortals, we must step forward at times like these, rather than watch from the sidelines.”

“Wayfarer...” Mo Yi’s senior sister gazed at the impeccably-groomed young man, her expression flickering through changes in quick succession. “You are no longer you.”

She schooled her face and sighed faintly.

“I am no longer Wayfarer after the real Wayfarer cut off his five senses and used our bodies to seal the cracks. I am Qin Sheng, also known as the Zither Saint. The cultivation of the eyes deviated and his body devoured mine, thus opening the crack. Although this was the eyes’ doing, I am still responsible.”

He smiled and manifested a zither before leaving for Azure Province.

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A refreshing melody spread across Azure Province, rejuvenating the exhausted immortals.

“Finally.” Art Saint Wayfarer went up to Qin Sheng, protecting him with the beauty’s portrait, his eyes burning with suppressed greed. He had to keep his urges under control so as to not swallow Qin Sheng whole on the spot.

“The old guy’s real body is over there.” Art Saint pointed at the Wayfarer next to the ancient tomb, who was putting forth all of his efforts into a layout to bury immortals.

“Your cultivation has deviated and you’ve lost yourself to the taint of demons,” Qin Sheng responded as he played his instrument. “Wayfarer is dead. If that man really is him, then none of this would’ve happened.”

He spoke at a steady pace, his voice calm and collected. Crimson light flashed through Art Saint’s eyes, then he grimaced in great pain.

Qin Sheng glanced down at the Wayfarer below them. The man didn’t appear as a real person to his eyes, but as a piece of empty human skin.

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Calling upon immense power, Wayfarer summoned sixty-four great mountain ranges from other parts of Azure Province to surround the ancient tomb according to the influences of the eight trigrams.

With the crack in the tomb torn open again, however, the swarm of yin spirits became even more deadly.

Lu Yun had stopped attacking. Luopan in hand, he moved around the sixty-four mountain ranges. He was going to set up both the tombs of yin and yang and a layout to bury immortals!

The power of yin and yang were the only thing that could seal the crack below.

Qing Han was faltering, and the yin spirits were becoming ever stronger. Hellfire's countering effects were dwindling. Lu Yun could let hellfire rampage freely to keep them down, but then the world of immortals might become a second hell.

"Qing Han!!" Lu Yun almost lost his mind when he saw Qing Han collapse.

"Do not worry. I have her." A pair of silver eyes opened gracefully, and a mild voice spoke into Lu Yun's ear.

Violet radiance cascaded out of silver luminescence, surrounding Qing Han in a protective circle. A silver sword emerged in the air.

Cosmic Skycarver!

The sword found in the dragon nest of the North Sea appeared in the void, its brilliant sword energy filling the area and instantly cutting down the yin spirits. Empress Myrtlestar remained within the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals as she manipulated the Cosmic Eyes and Cosmic Skycarver.

"Do not use the power of the corpse puppet, or you will attract even stronger spirits and the tunnel beneath will be completely torn apart," Empress Myrtlestar said calmly. "Qing Han is fine, and, unlike you, needs the tempering of life and death. She will be fine with me protecting her."

Cosmic Skycarver fell into Qing Han's hand in the next moment. She wiped away the blood at the corner of her mouth and smiled at Lu Yun.

Letting out a sigh of relief, Lu Yun sent the corpse puppet back into the depths of Violetgrave.

Crackle!

Dark cyan lightning crackled once more around Lu Yun. He took a deep breath and stomped on the ground.

Then—

Powerful dragon howls rang out from all directions. The earthen veins beneath the sixty-four mountain ranges shot out of the ground as individual dirt-colored dragons.

The layout to bury immortals had taken shape, and sixty-four earthen veins slowly evolved into dragon veins under the influence of the layout. Prompted by Lu Yun's compass, they'd emerged as dragons.

Chapter 498: Dragonshift Method

Legend had it that powerful feng shui masters could manipulate earthen veins and use dragon veins to freely set up layouts and manipulate feng shui.

Lu Yun was far from those lofty heights.

However, the heritage of his tomb raider sect was incredibly great. In addition to the Dragonsearch Invocation, used to survey terrain and determine feng shui, there was also the Dragonshift Method, a powerful technique that could change feng shui.

The three-layered luopan disassembled in Lu Yun's hand and reassembled into a compass of three hundred and sixty-five layers, matching the number of days it took for Earth to orbit the sun. Sixty-four brown dragons clashed and tore into each other with teeth and claws, seeking to devour one another.

Lu Yun was going to reverse yin and yang, as the tombs of yin and yang required to seal the crack were too large to create. Even if Wayfarer had set up the layout for him first, he would have trouble transforming the layout into tombs.

That was why he was using the sixty-four earthen veins transported by Wayfarer to evolve yin and yang after the layout had been arranged. That way, the layout of yin and yang would be completely under his control.

"Grrrrawwwl!" The earthen veins would soon evolve into dragon veins. As they swam through the air, they crooned with piercing dragon howls and unleashed an endless supply of great natural power.

Every scarlet yin spirit near them was shattered by the dragons.

In only a few breaths of time, a vacuum measuring a radius of fifty kilometers formed around Lu Yun. Anything that dared set foot in the area of effect was slaughtered by the power of the dragon veins, including the yin spirits pouring out of the ancient tomb.

Rejuvenated, the dao immortals went on a furious killing spree of the scarlet spirits. The number of yin spirits swarming Azure Province dwindled at a speed visible to the naked eye.

Naturally, this was no small task for Lu Yun.

He'd raised sixty-four soon-to-be dragon veins into the air to reverse yin and yang on his own. Not even the nine celestial emperors could've done that. If not for the Dragonshift Method and the protection of the luopan, he would've long disintegrated into ashes. Still, the effort had left him completely bathed in blood.

His skin cracked and blood vessels burst, fresh blood dyeing his clothes red. Blood continuously seeped out of all seven orifices, and his nascent spirit and soul began cracking.

Lu Yun had a set of principles he lived by. As a commandant of tomb raiders, he would not stand by and do nothing while yin spirits from the ancient tomb wreaked havoc in the world, even if he had to pay the price with his life.

More importantly, he'd played an essential part in causing the invasion of yin spirits. If the pair of eyes in the Dusk Tomb hadn't been released as a result of his actions, it was very likely that Azure Province's calamity never would've happened.

However, he hadn't had a choice at that time, either.

If he hadn't released those eyes, then the extinction layout in the Dusk Tomb would activate, resulting in a disaster just as horrific.

Lu Yun felt as if the great power of heaven and earth was tearing his body apart. And injuries inflicted by the grand influence of the world couldn't be healed by any medicine or pills.

Hum.

There was an unexpected flash of emerald light around Lu Yun. Wayfarer's staff had flown out of his hand and turned into a lively shoot of bamboo, sending forth radiant vitality into Lu Yun's body to offset his injuries.

"Unfortunately, this bamboo stick isn't the real Embittered Bamboo, despite the trace of bloodline it contains." Wayfarer spoke in a toneless voice and with an emotionless face, but his words greatly stirred Qing Han. "He's suffered the counterforce of heaven and earth. Connate-grade spirit roots can heal such injuries."

Splinter.

Wayfarer's bamboo stick began cracking ominously.

"Connate spirit roots can help him?" Eyes bright, Qing Han collected the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals and drew upon her power.

Preoccupied with his work, Wayfarer didn't notice. The layout to entomb immortals had taken shape, but there remained many details to take care of. He followed the extensive blueprint Lu Yun had given him and bent his mind to the finer aspects. It was much easier without the scarlet yin spirits interrupting him.

"Mm, that's right. The true connate spirit root of Embittered Bamboo will solve his problem," Wayfarer responded offhandedly. "Embittered Bamboo is unique among the connate spirit roots in that it can help with the comprehension of dao, boosting a living spirit's cultivation and enlightenment for a short period of time. It's clear that Lu Yun is using a taboo combat art, which he isn't powerful enough to... eh?"

Wayfarer paused. He could neither see nor hear, but his consciousness was extremely powerful. He suddenly sensed a bamboo of eighteen meters long by Lu Yun's side, golden patterns running throughout its length.

Emerald leaves drifted from the bamboo and entered Lu Yun's body, slowly healing the ugly wounds left all over him by the backlash of heaven and earth.

Lu Yun felt a weight lift from his mind, breaking down the barriers he'd been struggling to overcome. Suddenly, he was able to understand the difficult method that'd been stumping him and master it.

"Embittered Bamboo..." He turned around with difficulty, his expression twisting.

Under the bamboo, Qing Han sat cross-legged with her eyes closed. The starlight surrounding her had dissipated and all her attention was on the Embittered Bamboo, tapping into its power to heal Lu Yun's injury.

The bamboo had been suppressing the accursed spirit root in her, along with the Moon Osmanthus and Fusang Purewood. However, the Moon Osmanthus had been refined into a replica by Azure Dragon King and Empress Myrtlestar, leaving only the Fusang Purewood and Embittered Bamboo to suppress the poison.

As soon as Qing Han extracted the Embittered Bamboo, her accursed spirit root reared its ugly head. Her face turned a sickly blue, and black energy concentrated between her brows. The Fire and Big Dipper Starstones floated from her body, circling around her and unleashing silver starlight in an attempt to suppress the accursed spirit root.

Lu Yun's heart burned with concern. Empress Myrtlestar, who'd been hiding in the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, was panicking as well. She hadn't expected Qing Han would risk her life by extracting the Embittered Bamboo to help Lu Yun.

"I will do all I can to keep her poison under control," Empress Myrtlestar snapped, noticing Lu Yun's reaction. "Seal the crack, now!"

Lu Yun hurriedly bit the tip of his tongue open, splattering blood essence on the multi-layered luopan.

Bam!

The three hundred sixty five layers of the luopan disassembled and formed a minor world while the sixty-four dragons in the sky went into a frenzy.

Chapter 499: Evolution

The sixty-four dragons of earthen veins had been tearing into each other, with none gaining a clear upper hand.

At this time, Lu Yun amplified the feng shui luopan with his blood essence and pushed the Dragonshift Method to the limit. In an instant, eight of the dragons grew exponentially in size and devoured the other fifty-six earthen veins.

Afterward, those eight spontaneously evolved into true dragon veins. The power of heaven and earth furiously gathered around the dragon veins and they moved to form a strange pattern in the air—the eight trigrams!

Earlier, the sixty-four earthen veins had been layouts of the sixty-four forms derived from the eight trigrams. But they'd reverted back into the eight trigrams after Lu Yun reversed feng shui with the Dragonshift Method.

An enormous layout of eight trigrams was thus created, erasing all scarlet yin spirits in a five-hundred-kilometer radius. What attracted everyone's eyes, however, wasn't the layout, but the vibrantly vivacious bamboo beside Lu Yun.

"That's Embittered Bamboo, one of the ten fabled connate spirit roots!" Greed threatened to tear many of them apart. The ten connate spirit roots were more valuable than even connate-grade treasures!

There were enough connate-grade treasures for each faction and clan to acquire a couple, while there were only ever ten connate spirit roots in history!

Each of the spirit roots had a unique property that could influence its surroundings and give rise to powerful treasures. Wayfarer's bamboo staff, for example, had gained the power of an ultimate immortal weapon with a simple hint of the Embittered Bamboo's energy. Back in Destiny City, Wanfeng had used it to knock down many immortals.

With the true form of the Embittered Bamboo before their eyes, the dao immortals no longer overwhelmed by yin spirits had their gazes glued to the spirit root.

"Lu Yun is the one who caused the yin spirit tide. He's obliged to seal the crack to pay for his sins. The merit that garners cannot offset all the deaths he caused in Azure Province." A Feng dao immortal leered with a cruel smile.

"The Embittered Bamboo belongs to the Qing Clan," scoffed a Qing arcane dao immortal as he casually crushed a spirit charging him. "As the patriarch's son, Qing Han betrayed the clan and stole our greatest treasure... It's time for us to collect what's rightfully ours!"

With the source of the yin spirits within the tomb stoppered, the dao immortals were under much less pressure. The Ingress Path's assistance was enough for them to kill most of the scarlet spirits in the province, so it seemed as if there was no longer a threat.

What they didn't see was that there was still an endless supply of yin spirits rushing through the layout of eight trigrams. Its influence was just too powerful for any of those yin spirits to survive and emerge from the tomb.

"Is the Embittered Bamboo really yours, Qing old man?" someone mocked, unconvinced. "How is it possible for a mere Qing Han to steal such a treasure from you?"

"Hmph, my clan's Arcane Golden Bell is still in that little bastard's possession as well..." The Qing dao immortal scowled, his eyes fixed on the Embittered Bamboo.

The uncle of Nephrite's emperor sighed with resignation. Treasures were a great lure, but in the end, the immortals only dared covet the spirit root because Lu Yun and Qing Han were too weak!

If they'd been the celestial emperors, or even just peak arcane dao immortals, no one would've dared say anything even after they took out the Embittered Bamboo.

Bam!

With a wave of his hand, the Ingress Path divided into strands of white light and ensconced the entire area within its protective zone. He didn't want anyone to disturb Lu Yun at this moment. If the crack opened again, the consequences would be unbearable. He didn't have enough power to activate the Ingress Path again.

Art Saint and Qin Sheng hovered in the air, shoulder-to-shoulder.

Art Saint wanted to devour Qin Sheng, but to his dismay, the latter was much more powerful than he was. If they got into a real fight, there was a greater chance that he would be killed.

Under Qin Sheng's calm and genteel facade was a man with ruthless might.

Failing to suppress his vicious urges, Art Saint had snuck up on Qin Sheng and attacked him just moments ago, but Zither Saint had easily countered him and slammed him into the ground.

“What did you see all those years back that planted such a terrible demonic seed in you?” Qin Sheng frowned deeply. “There was a setup to allow your body to escape and merge with you in order to remove the demonic taint, but the eyes’ viciousness turned out to be greater than yours.”

“I don’t know.” Art Saint shook his head. “I lost control of myself after Yu Ying’s death.”

He grabbed his head, tormented, then unfolded the portrait of the beauty in his hand and stared at the woman portrayed on it.

“You’re the one who got Yu Ying killed. You’d deviated even before that.” Qin Sheng shook his head and shifted his attention back to the ancient tomb.

The eight trigrams had evolved again, reverting back to the four divisions—those referred to not just the four quadrants of the sky or divine beasts. The divine beasts were the divine spirits of the four cardinal directions, born of the four divisions and only one small part of them.

The four divisions combined the cardinal directions, cosmos, and earth in the four directions—north, south, east, and west. They were the amalgamation of four grand influences.

Currently, the pattern of four divisions generated endless power with a reach of ten thousand kilometers across. The four dragon veins dashed madly in circles within. They’d stopped attacking one another, but instead clashed and came together. The four neutral dragon veins thus gain the property of either yin or yang. Even the Ingress Path was pushed away.

Next to the Embittered Bamboo, Lu Yun’s body was bathed in rotating swirls of golden and green light. His feng shui compass had disassembled completely into golden glyphs, intertwining with the light of the Embittered Bamboo.

Bam!!

A crisp collision sounded as the giant boulder beneath Lu Yun’s feet cracked open. Splintering shards of stones flew as the stone was whittled into two sarcophagi.

Qing Long and Feng Xiao retained their consciousness, despite being sealed, and their faces turned a shade darker in reaction. Lu Yun really was going to bury them here!

“Your formation has sealed the crack already, Lu Yun!!” Feng Xiao screamed in panic. “There’s no need to bury the two of us...”

“We’re arcane dao immortals who have come to Azure Province’s rescue, Lu Yun! We’ve done a great deed for this world. Are you not worried about public backlash if you kill us?!” Qing Long was despairing as well, but kept his calm and attempted to persuade Lu Yun with logic.

“I’ve killed even origin dao immortals. Do you really think I’d worry about you two?” Face impassive, Lu Yun wasted no time in throwing Qing Long and Feng Xiao into their final resting places.

The pattern of the four divisions had disappeared, replaced by an enormous graph of yin and yang.

“Stop!!”

“You court death, Lu Yun!!” The Feng and Qing elites could no longer stay their hands and lunged at Lu Yun.

Chapter 500: Karma Visits the Bloodline

The land and skies slowly returned to peace. Cut off from their source, the flood of scarlet yin spirits was entirely extinguished.

In the firmament, the enormous graph of yin and yang rotated slowly. Almost everyone believed that the crack had been sealed shut again. When they saw that Lu Yun really did intend to prepare Qing Long and Feng Xiao for burial in stone sarcophagi, two arcane dao immortals of their clans couldn't help but leap into action.

Of course, while they looked like they were preventing Lu Yun from burying two of their kin alive, their goal was very apparent: the Embittered Bamboo!

Face tinged with a black pallor, a dark, poisonous miasma wreathed Qing Han's body. From their positions in the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, the Azure Dragon King and Empress Myrtlestar poured forth their efforts into keeping the poison under control.

“Stop them!” Lu Yun roared, but no one moved a muscle.

Wayfarer was fully preoccupied at the moment, still embroiled in the finer details of the layout of burying immortals. If he struck out in defense of the two youths, flaws would appear in the layout and invalidate all of their previous efforts.

Up in the sky, the unsteady yin-yang graph began to tremble.

Arcane dao immortal strength was simply too overwhelming, while Lu Yun's cultivation was too weak—the yin-yang layout he'd set up was similarly constrained by his capabilities. Adding to that its incomplete status, it meant he was unable to fully deploy the power of the land.

As the two arcane dao immortals came bearing down on him, their explosions of energy shook the yin-yang graph greatly. Repercussions were immediate—the previously obstructed scarlet yin spirit tide came flooding out again.

“What? No!” Numerous dao immortals struck battle stances again, attempting to stem the tide.

“Lu Yun, you're taking public revenge for a private slight!” hectoring the Qing dao immortal. However, he didn't halt his actions. After clearing the space around him, he was less than three hundred meters away from Qing Han—spitting distance for arcane dao immortals. Insatiable greed glinted out of his eyes.

“Qing Han, you little bastard, it was your great fortune to survive the poison from back in the day. Let's see who can save you today, hahahahaha!!”

This Qing dao immortal had plucked eight arcane dao fruits and was one of the peak experts of the world. Though he appeared benevolent and refined, he was the mastermind behind some of the Qings attempting to kill Qing Han with rimesnake poison. The poison spirit root within her was her greatest souvenir from that attempt.

Immortal sword scintillating with piercingly cold light, he closed the distance to Qing Han like he was stalking prey. The Feng dao immortal had arrived as well, and stood in a marvelous spot that just so happened to block all of the immortals behind them.

They'd reached an agreement in the second it'd taken them to flash to the youths. The Feng and Qing Clans would subdue the connate spirit root together, marking the formal alliance of the two clans with joint possession of the Embittered Bamboo.

Both of them were eight-fruit arcane dao immortals, and heavyweights that stood at the top of the world. Their statuses within their clans were second only to their forefathers, so they absolutely had the right to make decisions on their own. Their agreement today was the precursor to official partnership between the two clans.

"Qing Yuezhe, Feng Wuxian, stop! Both of you, stop!" Zhao Changkong's uncle called out urgently when he took stock of the situation. However, he too couldn't spare further effort from the new siege of scarlet yin monsters surrounding him. "Lu Yun and Qing Han really are presiding over the formation. If any flaws develop within it, that will be the prelude to great disaster!"

"Heh heh heh, that whelp Lu Yun is greedy and cruel like a wolf with a savage heart. Don't you see that he's purposefully opening a portion of the formation to release the spirits? This is how he plans to hold the imperial court hostage," chuckled the confident Feng Wuxian. "Don't worry, this seat is a formation grandmaster as well. After killing Lu Yun and Qing Han, I can naturally take control of this formation and seal off this place completely!"

He performed a pincer movement with Qing Yuzhe, gradually closing off the avenues of escape for Lu Yun, Qing Han, and Wayfarer. The remaining Feng and Qing dao immortals gathered 'round as well, but no one else dared move.

They'd discovered that whenever they deployed their own energy, the resulting ripples in the qi of the land shook the yin-yang graph and spewed forth another rush of yin spirits.

Many had already retreated thousands of kilometers back, so they could do nothing about the alliance forming right before their eyes. Even if some of them coveted the Embittered Bamboo as well, they didn't dare approach. Where the connate spirit root was would be a spot of unmitigated death if there was another explosion of yin spirits.

However, the two clans cared not about this at all. Just as Feng Wuxian had said, he was a formation grandmaster, so he could absolutely take over from Lu Yun and seal away the tomb.

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"Die!" No longer hesitating, Qing Wuxian brought his sword down on Qing Han. Frosty light carved a sinister curve through the air, slicing down on the youth's head. If this stroke connected, Qing Han would be cleaved in half.

"Scram!"

Boom!

The ground trembled as an earthen-vein-evolved dragon burst forth, shattering the ground it'd come from.

Rumble!!

The layout that Wayfarer had painstakingly set up broke apart amidst loud cacophony. A mouthful of fresh blood followed as the ancient expert wilted visibly. The backlash of nature's forces wasn't something that a personage at his level could endure, either.

Beneath the earth, the gradually closing crack split open once again, allowing entrance to even larger numbers of scarlet yin spirits from the tomb. Numbers newly refreshed, they barreled straight into the yin-yang graph in the air.

"How dare you destroy the formation, Lu Yun! Do you want to be condemned as a sinner for the ages?!" Feng Wuxian roared when he saw the formation suddenly break apart, rudely shaken out of his engrossment in how to gain control of it.

Lu Yun ignored him, watching the yin-yang graph revert back to the four divisions, eight trigrams, and finally sixty-four earthen dragons.

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Wham!!

The ancient tomb exploded open and cratered into a deep abyss that yawned open fifty kilometers across. Countless black, scarlet, and even purple spirits charged out of it.

Up in the air, Qin Sheng and Art Saint looked on in dismay and horror. Due to the vibrations of the earthen veins after the two dao immortals intervened, the ruins of the ancient tomb had been entirely shattered to pieces. The crack that it'd been sealing shut was now a large door that'd been flung wide open.

In the span of a breath, all of Azure's cities—save for her capital—were toppled, and hundreds of millions of lives torn apart and devoured.

"Lu Yun... you are humanity's sinner for the ages!!" howled Feng Wuxian. He, too, was surrounded by a dense tide of yin spirits, and casualties instantly claimed more than half of the Feng and Qing immortals.

Thankfully, the sixty-four earthen dragons dove down from the skies at just that time, bringing with them tremendous power from the land to protect the local vicinity and sparing the rest from further harm.

"Lu Yun, you demon!!"

"Shut UP!" Qing Han's eyes shot open when she heard the clans continue assigning blame to Lu Yun. Her eyes and lips were a blackish-green and her presence had expanded to the level of an arcane dao immortal. Most curious was the energy within her body—it'd morphed into a peculiar poison and was circulating through her body, spirit, and soul.

“Don’t kill them!” Anguish shone in Lu Yun’s eyes when he weakly turned his head at Qing Han. She’d made use of her final option and become one with the poison. The disguised girl was only one step away from becoming a poison fiend, thus losing herself like the monster in Lü Guhong’s Wheel of Poison.

“That crack broke open because of the Qings and Fengs. If we want to seal it, we need people of their bloodline!” Lu Yun waved a hand, surrounding himself and Qing Han with the sixty-four dragons through aid of the Embittered Bamboo.

“You two up in the sky!” Hellfire exploded from Lu Yun and soared through the clouds, breaking through the surge of endless yin spirits and carrying his voice out. “This location has a great karmic relationship with the Fengs and Qings. It can’t be sealed without their bloodlines. Please go to Xiankan and fetch their forefathers, then select thirty-six dao immortals and three hundred sixty-five peerless immortals as well. The stronger the better!”

Amplified by hellfire, Lu Yun’s voice traveled all throughout Azure Province.

Qing Yuezhe and Feng Wuxian shuddered when they heard the request, color draining from their faces. Everyone had noticed that there were two powerhouses up in the skies; though they hadn’t made a move, ever-present zither melodies continuously refreshed the Azure defenders’ stamina and kept them at peak condition.

Lu Yun wanted those two heavyweights to capture the Qing and Feng forefathers from Xiankan?

“NO!!” Qing Yuezhen screamed with despair. “Everything that happened here is because of Lu Yun, we should be taking his blood kin instead!”

Feng Wuxian had already struck against Lu Yun, but the boy was protected by sixty-four earthen dragons at the moment. The power of the land was at his beck and call, so not even someone like the Feng dao immortal could break through the defenses of the veins.

Wielded by Qing Han, the Embittered Bamboo fully unleashed its powers and blessed Lu Yun with them.

The youth’s condition was currently invincible.

Of course, it was also because they were where they were. With the destruction of the layout to bury immortals and scattering of the yin-yang graph, their strength fell under the luopan’s jurisdiction and was directed to Lu Yun.

This condition couldn’t be maintained for long before it, too, dispersed, but it was more than enough to handle the two clans. With a casual flip of his hand, he suppressed the remaining Qing and Feng immortals around him and shoved them all into stone sarcophagi.

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“This is an opening to the world of immortals, and a place sanctified by the will of immortal dao and the world. The Fengs and Qings really were looking to die when they interrupted Lu Yun and Qing Han just now, and they dragged the rest of their clans down with them,” Qin Sheng sighed. “This is a crime against the heavens and karma that will be inflicted upon their bloodlines. If we don’t do as Lu Yun says, the Qings might be fine enough in the future, but the Fengs will cease to exist in less than a hundred years.

“Alright then, let’s go to Xiankan.” Qin Sheng clapped the Art Saint’s shoulder and the two vanished together. However, his words echoed long after his disappearance, intertwining with the sounds of zither music.