

Necropolis 541

Chapter 541: Lungs of the World

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“Is it through the altar?” Lu Yun returned to the top of the Metal Altar. He’d already tried, and failed, to collect the four beast nests placed on top of it; they seemed to be embedded firmly into the air. He couldn’t move them even with the realms of yin and yang.

Each of the nests was originally thousands of kilometers across, but a certain spatial power atop the altar had shrunk them to roughly forty meters wide. He’d also figured out what the fourth nest was by now—the nest of scarlet apes!

The scarlet ape nest was likely the first to be placed on the altar, and there should’ve been a scarlet ape statue erected before it at some point. However, it’d been moved elsewhere by now, and replaced by the one of the yin-yang beast.

In the Primeval Era, there’d been a kungpeng tribe. Although their numbers weren’t great, they were one of the most powerful clans in the world of immortals. The turtle and qilin tribes were among the top clans as well.

Scarlet apes, though, were exceedingly rare. Legends were told about them in the primeval world of immortals, but none of their members had ever been found.

Even Xingzi and Lu Li—the blood turtle Lu Yun had just made his ninth envoy—had never seen the nest of scarlet apes before. Thus Lu Yun hadn’t recognized it upon first glance, and he’d only come to this conclusion after discovering the remains of scarlet apes upon closer inspection.

“The yin tomb should be on the other side of the void. Where the four nests are attached to the Metal Altar is the intersection of the yin and yang tombs.” Lu Yun’s Spectral Eye sparkled with black.

Seemingly embedded in the air, the four nests were actually attached to the tombs of the yin and yang realms. Their counterparts in the yin realm on the other side should be four ancient tombs.

“Leveraging the layouts of the yin and yang tombs is how the yin-yang layout came to be. It then begat a layout of life and death, which gave rise to the actual power used to repair the giant lungs... The birth of the divine spirit within the lungs was no accident, either. Its energy was needed to inject the dead lungs with life!

“How masterful!” Lu Yun had figured out a few things over the course of the past three days. “The turtle and qilin nests, along with the corresponding turtle and qilin tombs, must’ve been part of the layout for a curse. However, it now exists no longer... or, more precisely, the curse has run its course.”

Spirit turtles and qilins were extinct in the current world of immortals. Water qilins, the only qilin tribe in the Primeval Era, had been slaughtered by the human race and Cangyin killed by a time manipulation art. That marked the end of the qilin bloodline.

If Lu Yun's speculations were correct, the qilin nest and turtle tomb had arrived here first, and the turtle nest and qilin tomb drawn here later on. As for the curse layout, it'd collapsed after the curse served its purpose in the Primeval Era. There was clearly another layout here that someone had set up after that development.

"This is where the yin and yang tombs intersect, but it still isn't the origin of the celestial master tomb..." Lu Yun walked down from the Metal Altar and looked around, once more failing to find the exit with the luopan's determination.

"Wait!" He paused. "The gaseous sand disappeared... It wasn't drawn out of the opening over the abyss, but by something else!"

Lu Yun transformed himself into a particle of gaseous sand with a thought, his physical form popping like a bubble.

And then—

A great suction force roared to life from somewhere in the air. Resistance was futile as the power reeled him in.

"Lungs! It's the power of lungs, and much more powerful than that set just now!" Lu Yun started. "The power didn't emerge until the Enneawym Coffinbearers dragged those lungs to hell!"

He continued musing as the power guided him along. "It's several times more powerful than the giant lungs, yet they were able to keep the power under control when they were here! Violetgrave was right. There exists a place in the ghost realm with the same power as the lungs, and it's in the celestial master tomb!

"However, that place—or rather, that thing—is intangible. Intangible power can never beat tangible power, no matter how great it is! That's why it was kept out while the giant lungs were here.

"Given enough time, the divine spirit born from the lungs will become the real organ of the world, completely replacing that place!" Lu Yun's mind flew furiously through theories and speculation, bolstered by the Tome of Life and Death and being pushed to its limit to understand the greater picture at hand.

In only a few breaths, Lu Yun saw light dawn in front of him, marking his sudden exit from the abyss. Not even he could tell how he'd gotten out.

"Finally!" Overjoyed, he shifted back into himself and stood firmly on the ground. In this form, the tremendous suction power didn't work on him at all.

He'd arrived at a clearing filled with great vitality, where the sun dazzled bright and flora and fauna thrived. The heavenly qi here had almost turned liquid, and he'd barely escaped being drowned to death by the overwhelming qi when he'd first landed.

"Here it is! A place in the world with the same ability as lungs!" Lu Yun looked around, certain that he was still in the celestial master tomb. "This is what the underworld should look like. It should be a prosperous land of auspicious feng shui, where heavenly qi gathers and remains!"

Indeed, in his eyes, the underworld should be a locale of optimum feng shui and bursting at the seams with great treasures and talents. Immortals and geniuses alike should've flocked to such a place, and there'd be no end of great fortune to be found in nature or otherwise.

Currently, however, there were none other here, despite the vitality of the place.

"Celestial master tomb... celestial master tomb... Nuh uh, this isn't the celestial master tomb. The tomb is trying to bury... this place! This locale embodies the power of the world's lungs." Lu Yun looked around and muttered to himself, "This is the origin of the celestial master tomb."

He turned to look behind him. Two separate lanes extended in two different directions, gradually forming two vast spaces—one bright, the other dark. Like twins, the layouts within them were identical. Lu Yun even saw another abyss of divine burial in the yin tomb.

"It's the same place, but separated into yin and yang." Lu Yun saw everything clearly now. The yin and yang tombs were two sides of the same coin, in essence the same entity expressed in two different realms.

"Scarlet Ape! Kui! And the Ingress Path! They're all in that chamber!" Lu Yun's eyes lit up.

Here, at the origin of the celestial master tomb, he could take in a bird's eye view of the entire tomb.

The origin of a tomb wasn't the location of the main chamber, but a mere starting point of the overall complex. This was what'd given rise to the rest of the celestial master tomb's structure, and in turn, the ancient tomb as a whole.

There were two kinds of tomb frameworks in the world.

The first were connate developments. The architect in question sought out appropriate natural feng shui layouts and built an ancient tomb upon them.

The second were manmade creations. After completing the tomb, the tomb owner's own fortunes influenced its surroundings and gave rise to various feng shui layouts.

The latter were the most commonplace structure in the world of immortals. Although the daos of feng shui and burial had been lost, they hadn't been destroyed.

Contemporary immortals may not know feng shui, they could still build some tombs. Albeit crude, those tombs contained a rough structure of feng shui on the surface while being absolute messes on the inside.

Feng shui masters could also set up layouts, but they didn't dare construct burial blueprints. At most, they would set up a few layouts within layouts after the tombs were built.

If anyone changed the local terrain and restrained the earthen veins like Lu Yun had with the Dragonsearch Invocation and Dragonshift Method—creating layouts like the interment of heaven and earth or the bronze palace—they would soon be visited by wrathful retribution from the heavens.

Most tombs were built upon earthen veins. That kind of land was the only thing that could bury the dead and grant them peace. No one could survive tampering with an earthen vein.

Lu Yun, however, possessed the Tome of Life and Death. Its tremendous might could offset the backlash from the world. When Feinie had moved the earthen veins and everything else in an area five thousand kilometers wide, she'd been protected from any counterforces by the Tome of Life and Death.

The celestial master tomb had clearly been built when the architect had found an ideal spot, using the layout of the lungs of the world as a buttress... However, the strange tomb had then turned around and buried the layout it was built upon.

Whoever had set up the tomb wanted to destroy this place of power.

"What the heck is going on here..." Lu Yun shook his head. Many of the layouts here clashed with each other. The Hell of Skinning, Abyss of Divine Burial, the giant lungs, the curse of the beast nests and tombs... and now this place.

"The tomb intended to destroy the lungs, but then someone came and changed the layout. I have to make the yin and yang tombs whole again and destroy this place!"

He had to destroy the celestial master tomb completely, and without prejudice. Otherwise this locale serving as the world's lungs would be buried, and the endless cycle of heavenly qi would be broken. One day, the qi of the world would be exhausted.

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Chapter 543: Wielding Dao Through the Sword

Lu Yun was supremely confident in his talent; all he needed was a spark of inspiration to send him off in the right direction.

Back on the white path of cultivation, he'd successfully grasped the essence of dao and incorporated it into his sword technique. Logically speaking, it followed that Violetgrave's sword dao would be no problem for him, either.

Moreover, she'd plainly demonstrated that stroke to Lu Yun on purpose, revealing to him all the secrets of the move.

Captivated by the demonstration under the fifth abyss, there hadn't been anything for him to test his blade on. Now, the scarlet spirits filling the space as far as the eye could see would serve as the perfect targets.

Swoosh!

Violet sword energy enveloped the area, cutting down the spirits and exterminating them in an instant. However, Lu Yun knew that it wasn't the slash that killed the spirits, but the heavenly power contained within it.

In other words, he was still relying on his heavenly power to kill his enemies like he had before, exhausting what reserves he had in himself. He had yet to master sword dao like Violetgrave had and could only reach her heights through trial and error. As time went on, though, he would require less energy and instead, rely more on the strength of the sword itself.

"Vastdragon Seaturner? Peng of Kun? Starstream Stroke? Endless Cosmic Ocean? Those techniques really are jokes!"

His lips curled into a smile as he recalled the slash Violetgrave had performed. Gone were the overwhelming swarm of scarlet spirits, replaced by a trail of brilliant sword energy.

Sword dao.

It was an independent dao, just like that of equipment, pill, formation, and talisman dao. Sword techniques and intent were nothing but deviant shortcuts by comparison.

"Dao has no form! I wield dao with my sword, thus I am sword dao!"

Swoosh!

With a twitch of his arm, Lu Yun reeled back in his nearly exhausted heavenly power and frowned in concentration, sending out a flash of violet brilliance.

It took nary a moment.

Violet sword energy overwhelmed the local space, relying on no heavenly power at all. This purest of sword slashes eliminated all the scarlet spirits in the area.

"I... did it?! This, this is sword dao! Wielding dao through the sword!"

"...but it's not my sword dao, it's Violetgrave's. I'm only an imitation, just copying her moves. I'll have to find my own way on this path." Lu Yun looked up.

Hordes of scarlet spirits had gathered again, but they hovered in the air instead of immediately swooping down. This time, there was also a trace of purple among them.

“A... purple yin spirit?” Lu Yun quirked his brow. He’d seen such a spirit before in Azure Province. It was more powerful than the scarlet spirits, capable of killing an aether dao immortal in a single combat. It was responsible for the great casualties Azure Province had suffered, claiming many dao immortals.

So another had shown up here.

However, instead of entering the premises, it prowled around the edges of the local space. Something here gave it pause.

“It looks like my hunch was right. Dao immortals will be slain by the power here the second they set foot inside,” Lu Yun sighed in relief. Raising Violetgrave, he stood before the layout formed by the Yin and Yang Formation Orbs, looking up at the masses of yin spirits teeming in the sky.

The orbs were thirty percent of the way through a complete merger. The layout and the yin and yang tombs were likewise slowly coming together, like a torn wound knitting back into one piece.

“Waugh!” the purple yin spirit emitted a piercing scream. A wave of yin spirits churned toward him with even greater berserk viciousness.

However, Lu Yun no longer feared them. Pointing forward dauntlessly, Violetgrave flared with violet light and swept in numerous dazzling arcs.

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

Every single slash he made contained the techniques he’d created before—Vastdragon Seaturner, Peng of Kun, Starstream Stroke, and Endless Cosmic Ocean! Sword techniques that should’ve required significant preparation and many prerequisite steps were all on display in every single attack.

Such was the dao of the sword, sufficient to display tens of thousands of techniques in one attack. However, Lu Yun had yet to reach those lofty heights. His sword dao was merely an imitation of the real thing, and it belonged to Violetgrave, not him.

“Who is Violetgrave, really? She taught Qi Hai pill dao in the Primeval Era and made it the most dominant supplemental path of the time. Further in the past, she struck a deal with someone else and gave him a strand of the Nether Fire, which was used to destroy the hell of the human race!

“And now she’s shown me sword dao with a single stroke.” Violetgrave was proving to be quite the curious enigma, when she wasn’t preoccupied with the thought of eating him.

Lu Yun wielded his sword like a writing brush, liberally splattering sword energy all over the locale like ink on a pristine sheet of paper.

Every slash embodied dozens of permutations of the sword techniques he’d invented. However, the structure of the sword dao he relied on was still Violetgrave’s. He was still copying her.

“I need to invent at least a thousand sword techniques and combine them in order to create my own understanding of sword dao.”

This wasn't something he could do overnight, and success wasn't guaranteed even if he sequestered himself and spent all his time training. He had to keep fighting and tempering himself, increasing his understanding of heavenly dao along the way.

As for now—

Lu Yun's movements slowed, and the arcs of radiance he released grew smaller. Energy that had covered the realm created by the lungs shrank to a circle six thousand meters across, then six hundred. In the end, the violet barrier of light covered only the layout created by the Yin and Yang Formation Orbs.

The barrier, however, consisted of concentrated, unusually sharp sword shadows. The scarlet spirits rammed into it like eggs splattering on stone, disintegrating in an instant.

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“Hmm?” Lu Yun suddenly felt a weight lifted from him as the endless supply of spirits abruptly vanished.

“What happened?” He opened his eyes and looked up into the distance. The faint dash of purple was the only spirit left in the sky. It gave Lu Yun a meaningful look with its gem-like purple eyes, then turned to leave.

Boom!

Boom!

BOOM!

The next moment, explosive rumbles rang throughout the local patch of space.

“It's done!” Lu Yun's eyes lit up when he saw the Formation Orbs become one again. Gone were the yin and yang tombs, leaving behind only one giant tomb that was dark, chilling, and foreboding.

Chapter 544: Two Scarlet Apes

“Now, this is what I call an ancient tomb!” Lu Yun grinned from ear to ear at the sight of the dark tomb in front him.

The Hell of Skinning was completely destroyed the second the yin and yang tombs came together. Human skins in the yang tomb merged with their flesh and blood in the yin tomb, returning their owners to the world of the living.

“It's too bad that the orbs came together so fast... if the scarlet yin spirits had stuck around a bit longer, I would've been able to grasp the theory of my own sword dao.” He raised his head longingly at the black void above.

Alas, the hole that led toward the unknown realm was gone. No more yin spirits could come from there to here. More importantly, the layout of the lungs of heaven and earth that'd been about to be torn apart by the yin and yang tombs had restabilized.

Indeed, the place had come the tiniest bit alive. It seemed that the layout had created a delicate new beginning somewhere inside its boundaries.

“This is a complete layout of the lungs of heaven and earth now. It’s far superior to the actual lungs in hell!” Lu Yun could see everything about the microcosm more clearly.

This minor world was an exceptionally brilliant feng shui layout. There were no physical lungs anywhere in sight, but the entire world had the ability to fulfill the functions of a lung. It renewed waste into heavenly qi that was so crucial to the world’s continued existence.

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Now that the yin and yang tombs had become whole, two shadowed tombs were a single, real tomb. From where he stood, Lu Yun couldn’t see a thing inside. “The celestial master tomb is still interring the lungs of heaven and earth. If the tomb outside isn’t broken, the layout will still wither, sooner or later.”

He called the recombined Formation Orb and Sugato Sword back to him, then stepped out of the layout altogether.

“Hmm?” A faint haze of darkness covered his eyes, and he turned back to see that the minor world formed by the layout had disappeared.

“So if I want to go back there, I just need to turn into gaseous sand.” He breathed a sigh of relief.

The lungs of heaven of earth was far more powerful than any grand influence over the world. It was probably one of the strongest layouts ever, and Lu Yun wanted to be able to study it some time in the future.

“I should destroy the tomb before I do anything else.” His trusty luopan appeared on his palm. “Eh?”

Before he could do anything, he heard a disturbance up ahead.

“There’s a fight going on!” Lu Yun looked forward with his Spectral Eye. This was the end of the tomb, and a wall of bone bricks was right behind him. There was no other way out.

The din of the fighting grew fiercer as time went on, shaking the cavern he was in.

“It’s Scarlet Ape and Kui!” Lu Yun’s heart skipped a beat. He curled up and turned into a rock, then shuffled into an insignificant corner.

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“Kakaka... you’ve nowhere to run, Kui!” Scarlet Ape’s grating shriek was followed by a loud explosion.

Kui’s colossal body smashed against the celestial master tomb’s walls amidst a purple-gold flash.

“Uoooooooooh!” It roared angrily, firing wild thunderbolts into the darkness with its singular horn.

What?! Consternation filled Lu Yun’s heart. How did the kui return to life as well?

The kui he’d seen in Azure Province was a corpse divine. It kept the abilities it had in life, but it was definitely a type of zombie. The one in front of him, however, was much smaller, but it was definitely alive!

It had been resurrected!

"I don't understand." Despite his bewilderment, Lu Yun dared not reveal his shock. He tightly repressed his physical functions with the Tome of Life and Death. Though he was a real rock, an expert would definitely notice a rock that could think.

The kui in front of him was a much smaller specimen, yes, but Lu Yun remained confident that this kui and the corpse divine that had appeared before were one and the same.

Maybe Kui died here? An idea came to him. Yeah, only someone who died inside the tomb would be revived right now!

The yin and yang tombs corresponded fairly well to the worlds of the dead and the living.

A living creature that died went to the world of the dead. If the two worlds overlapped, a dead ghost could come back to life, if it found its corpse. The celestial master tomb's yin and yang tombs functioned in much the same way.

Everyone who'd died here was resurrected as well, Beigong Yu and the Scaled-Dragon King included. The former had died and become a yin spirit outside the tomb, which should have excluded him from the list. Nevertheless, his status as an Infernum under Lu Yun's command meant the Tome of Life and Death revived him upon the tomb's recombination.

However, he saw no reason to summon them right at this moment; their deaths would contribute nothing to the situation. Meanwhile, two ghostly figures barrelled out from the darkness. Two scarlet apes!

One golden, one silver.

The two apes charged at Kui as soon as they emerged, and the bovine god moaned thunderously in defiance. Lightning sparked upon its body, but inflicted no damage whatsoever on the scarlet apes.

Is that Scarlet Ape's dao partner? Lu Yun carefully transfigured a stony eye to spy upon the three battling beasts. He didn't dare use his consciousness, or even a real eye, lest he be noticed by the combatants.

The silver-white scarlet ape was bigger and stronger than the golden one. He couldn't see what cultivation realm it was in, aside from the fact there was a significant difference in strength between it and its ally.

The golden scarlet ape was roughly Kui's equal. The silver one, on the other hand, dominated Kui as soon as it took the field. Kui's thunder methods were effective against the golden ape, but the silver ape ignored every attack it fired.

What an absolute terror. This creature can't be allowed to enter the world of immortals. Otherwise, there'll be a disaster to Dusk Province and the rest of the world! Lu Yun's heart trembled; the silver ape was simply too powerful!

"Roooooooooar!"

The silver scarlet ape lunged forward with a berserk howl. A silver pillar of light burst forth from its arm, puncturing Kui's body clean through.

Chapter 545: Trap

The pierced Kui collapsed to the ground in a heap. It twitched a few times, then fell silent.

“Ook! Ook! Ook!” the silver scarlet ape roared loudly to the sky. It beat both of its gigantic fists against its chest with a rhythmic thump, thump, thump. After a while, a husky female voice emitted from the ape's mouth. “Let's go.”

“Mmm.” The golden scarlet ape nodded, and the two beasts disappeared in a flash of metallic light.

Four hours later, the golden ape suddenly reappeared.

“Is there really no one else here?” It scratched its head with a furry paw, then vanished once more, leaving behind only the faintest haze of light in the darkness.

Nevertheless, the stone that Lu Yun had turned into remained completely motionless.

After yet more time had passed, the silver scarlet ape reappeared as well. Its light blue eyes scanned the surroundings when it popped back in.

“Could they have left already? That slightest ripple of thought just now didn't escape my notice.” The silver ape swept a glance at the kui it had punched a hole through. It was still convulsing, but it certainly wouldn't live for much longer.

The apes fruitlessly searched for three more days before departing, seemingly for good.

“Finally,” Lu Yun breathed a sigh of relief. “So I was discovered after all, huh?”

When the silver scarlet ape had punched a hole through Kui, his thoughts had wavered the tiniest bit. The apes had noticed him back then.

Pop!

His body contracted into a mote of dust, and he carefully drifted toward the kui as best he could.

“It's not dead yet. It's alive, but only just!” His eyes lit up with eagerness. “This thing is mine, as long as it's not dead!”

Lu Yun was overjoyed, as he wouldn't be able to do much with a dead kui. He didn't really want to grant it his last slot for an Envoy of Samsara.

While Kui was a master of countless thunder methods, and a primordial principal realm expert besides, Lu Yun didn't consider it worthy of being an envoy. Moreover, Kui would be limited by its status as a new envoy; its cultivation would be restricted to the peerless immortal realm. What good would that do him?

As for its thunder methods... Lu Yun had the Thunder Palmstrike at his disposal, and could now deploy it instantaneously. When his cultivation improved, all thunder in the world would be at his command.

Lu Yun needed Kui's battle prowess, not its talents.

Fwoosh!

He expanded to his full size at Kui's side. The thunder god was incapacitated and immobile, its life force continually draining away. In only a few more moments, it would be completely dead.

Its body was infinitely smaller than the corpse divine that'd shown up in Azure Province. Right now, it was only three hundred meters long. Still, that was quite big compared to Lu Yun's puny human body.

"I need to kill it fast, or it'll die on its own." Lu Yun drew Violetgrave from its scabbard and sent a flash of violet toward Kui's body.

Clang!

A tremendous collision sent him reeling backward, requiring more than a dozen steps back to dampen the force.

Kui opened its huge eyes to reveal a hint of derision in its fading pupils.

"This kui's body is as tough as an ingress realm immortal!" Violetgrave was a keen blade, but his cultivation wasn't enough to make use of its full strength. Lu Yun was a mere void realm cultivator, while Kui was a primordial expert. It had lost most of its cultivation, but it was too mighty at ingress realm for him to even damage.

Kui glanced coldly at the young human by its side, then closed its eyes in resignation. Its aura of life was fading fast.

"What should I do? It'll die real soon." Lu Yun was rather anxious. Anything he killed would become his Infernum, but once Kui died on its own, he would only be able to turn it into an envoy.

"Maybe I can drag its corpse into hell... then use Resurrection to bring it back to life. I can kill it again after that, right?" His eyes sparkled with a new brilliant idea.

Resurrection was a death art that allowed him to revive anything that'd died within the last seven days, as long as he had an intact body to work with.

In hell, he was invincible. He could send Kui to hell, revive it, then kill it again. With that in mind, Lu Yun was no longer in a hurry. He sat down cross-legged to await Kui's death.

Kui opened its eyes just a sliver and locked its gaze on to Lu Yun.

"Moooooo—" It suddenly bounced up, lowing vehemently into the air.

Its cry was filled with anger and anguish. Soundwaves roiled through the tomb in a single instant, stopping everyone inside the celestial master tomb in their tracks. All eyes swiveled to where Lu Yun and Kui were.

"Kui is about to die!"

"Why is it so angry... can it be?!"

"The corpse! Hurry, we must get Kui's corpse!" Many immortals hurtled recklessly in search of the source.

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“There was someone there after all! What remarkable skill. How did he manage to hide from me?” The silver ape’s lustrous face contorted in a cruel grin. “Let’s see what that insect truly is.”

The scarlet apes traded a look before flying toward the end of the tomb.

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Kerthunk!

After its final cry, the Kui planted its skull into the ground. It had finally died.

“Shit, I’m screwed!” Lu Yun gasped in shock and horror. The thunder god’s death cry would surely summon back its killers.

“Open!” He had no time to think and immediately used the realms of yin and yang to send the Kui’s humongous carcass into hell.

“Lu Yun! So it was you!!” A raucous screech came from down the corridor. The scarlet apes had arrived in only a few breaths, and the golden one sounded pleasantly surprised.

“How good of you to come. Now, die!” It smashed its staff down upon Lu Yun’s head.

Shoom!

The young man disappeared on the spot, having fled into hell.

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Cold sweat beaded Lu Yun’s head. His clothes were drenched in it, too. The golden scarlet ape’s staff had been mere milliseconds from crushing his skull. If the staff landed, he’d be erased from existence!

“Shit, shit, shit on a stick. I’m going right back to where and when I was the next time I leave hell! How am I supposed to avoid that staff?” Lu Yun was flabbergasted. The scarlet apes had come back a bit too fast, hadn’t they?

“Dammit! That silver ape could have killed Kui on the spot, but she left it a dying breath... it was a trap for me all along!”

Chapter 546: Star Divinities

Lu Yun was at a complete loss for what to do next.

“I’m paying way too high a price to capture this kui.” Dismay and distress crept in.

Advantages went hand-in-hand with disadvantages when returning to hell. For one, he couldn’t advance his cultivation when inside. He could only research the supplemental paths and others, or restore his energy and stamina.

To use it as a means of escape was even less feasible, since he’d return to the outside world at the exact moment he’d gone inside. The same danger would reappear in front of him once more.

“Well, let’s forget about that for now. I need to deal with Kui first. Resurrection!” A bolt of black brilliance shot from his fingertip and sank into Kui, generating an imperceptible ripple that softly shook the creature’s giant frame, whereupon it opened its eyes.

“I’m not dead?” Kui’s muffled and somewhat naive voice sounded out. “No, I did die, but I’ve come back to life! What happened? Where am I?”

The creature scrambled back to its foot and studied the surroundings with its dark golden eyes.

“Are you the reason behind all this?” It immediately spotted the bug that’d tried desecrating its body earlier: Lu Yun. It certainly recalled the human.

Back in Azure Province, it’d been this very youth who’d used the Yi Wood Cleansing Thunder to lure it out of the celestial master tomb. Though Kui had already been a corpse divine back then, it still retained its memories from that time.

“How did you become so powerful?” The aura Lu Yun was currently exuding made it tremble and quake. The human’s strength looked to be at peak origin dao immortal realm, but there was a certain power lingering around him that seemed to depict the will of the entire world.

“Die!” Lu Yun wasted no time in nonsense. Violetgrave in hand, he unleashed a dazzling ray of violet sword radiance.

Swish!

In a flash of dream-like brilliance, Kui’s tremendous frame was instantly split in two.

Death!

Am I dead again? was Kui’s final thought before passing away. All in all, this was its third time experiencing the afterlife.

The first time was its death inside the celestial master tomb during the primordial times. The second time was at the hands of the silver scarlet ape. And this time around, it’d been felled by Lu Yun’s sword, making it three.

But the next moment, its halved body started knitting together, and before long, it stood back up with an expression of confusion.

“I’m alive again? Ah, master! This servant greets the master!”

Thank!

Kui’s lone leg bent as it knelt to the ground and fearfully kowtowed to the young man floating in the air.

“This servant wasn’t aware of your arrival, master, and made you fall into a trap. Master, please allow me to atone for my sins by killing myself!” Kui’s muffled declaration of contrition spread through hell.

“You want to die a fourth time?” Lu Yun snorted. “Take humanoid form while we talk.”

“At once, at once!” Purple-golden lightning crackled around Kui’s apprehensive figure as it transformed posthaste.

In humanoid shape, Kui was a bulky figure, coming in at ten meters tall and clad in purple-golden immortal armor. A single horn adorned its bald head, and its features lent it a ferocious air.

Its current cultivation level was merely origin dao immortal, comparable to celestial emperors of old. In contrast, its physique had already reached the ingress realm. But ingress realm body or not, a single blow from the silver scarlet ape had punched a hole through it all the same.

“You died inside the celestial master tomb?” Lu Yun glanced at Kui with a frown.

“Master, your servant did indeed die here,” the creature answered.

“For what reason did you die?”

“To be buried alive with the Monster Celestial Master!” Kui’s response greatly startled Lu Yun.

“What did you say?!”

“Yes, to be buried alive with the celestial master.” Kui nodded. “I wasn’t the only one. Fengbo and Yushi were also buried here for the same reason.”

Kui was a primordial thunder god, the strongest in the immortal court’s service. It was a leader among thunder gods, and the one and only kui in the world. There had also been two other figures of the same level, both reaching peak principal realm: Fengbo and Yushi!

Just like him, both were unique existences—connate divine spirits, the entire lot of them. And thanks to Su Xiaoxiao’s memories, Lu Yun knew of them as well.

“Why and how?!” Lu Yun cried out in spite of himself. “The Monster Celestial Master was of the primordial realm. Why did you three have to be buried alongside him after his death?”

“Master, the Monster Celestial Master isn’t dead!” Kui shook its head rapidly. “Each of the four celestial masters possessed power that nearly rivaled that of the immortal emperor. It’s true their cultivation was at the primordial realm, but it would’ve been child’s play for them to kill us!”

“Buried alive?” Lu Yun shook. In the ancient times, Kui had been a peak principal realm existence, a step removed from emperor realm. But the Monster Celestial Emperor could have easily killed it?! Just what kind of freaks were these four celestial masters?

“Correct, buried alive! What’s more, me and the others were perfectly willing to sacrifice ourselves.” Trepidation flashed through Kui’s eyes. “The four celestial masters had long foreseen the imminent advent of a cataclysm. The Monster Celestial Master chose to defy the heavens by his own power, so that the court might have a chance to survive the disaster. Alas, it seems that it ended in failure.”

As a god in the ancient dynasty’s service, Kui’s loyalty naturally belonged with the ancient immortal court.

Lu Yun frowned slightly. There were many rumors regarding the four ancient celestial masters, but no one knew the cause of their demise. They were incredibly secretive figures that even Empress Myrtlestar knew very little about.

The four masters came from the human, divine, monster spirit, and demon races, respectively. They'd always been shrouded in mystery, with perhaps no one but the ancient immortal emperor knowing the truth about them.

What stunned Lu Yun even more was that the Monster Celestial Master had predicted the future, then chosen to bury himself alive to safeguard a wisp of fortune for the immortal court!

This was clear proof that the four celestial masters were proficient in feng shui... or at least, the Monster Celestial Master was. By burying himself alive, he'd attempted to leverage a special kind of layout to steady the immortal dynasty's fortunes so that it would survive the oncoming cataclysm.

But that layout had plainly been wrecked—someone had modified the entire celestial master tomb's layout. For its part, the ancient dynasty had long been destroyed, and its immortal emperor was now ashes in the wind.

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"Fengbo, Yushi, Thunder God..." Lu Yun bowed his head in thought. The shadow of the Tome of Life and Death flickered in his eyes, and his feng shui compass floated by his side to aid him in deducing this destiny-bolstering layout.

A feng shui layout that employed live burials and sacrificial goods of connate divine spirits was one that could rebel against fate, allowing an entire faith—or an immortal dynasty—to exist forever.

"The three of you weren't the only ones buried, correct?" He suddenly opened his eyes and looked up at the river of stars in the netherworld's sky. After a round of inference, he'd pieced together the tomb's original layout. In the process, he'd discovered that it was intimately related to the power of the stars.

"Master possesses unparalleled wisdom." Kui wasted no time in flattering him. "Inside this tomb, the three of us are nothing but minor characters. The real centerpiece is the three hundred and sixty-five star divinities of the immortal court.

"The star divinities are connate divine spirits born from three hundred and sixty-five major stars in the outer realms. Each possesses an ingress realm cultivation, and when they all act together, they can manifest a myriad of cosmic phenomena that can vie with emperor realm powerhouses."

Chapter 547: Refining the Giant Lungs

Three hundred and sixty-five star divinities!

They were the strongest forces of the ancient immortal dynasty. Though they were only ingress realm existences, they could threaten the immortal emperor himself when fighting in concert!

Lu Yun quailed slightly at the revelation.

"Star divinities who can manifest a myriad of cosmic phenomena?" Inspiration struck him.

He was familiar with the concept, thanks to the cosmic feng shui method recorded by his sect. A cosmic manifestation was a sea of stars, not something that could be summed up by three hundred and something celestial bodies.

“If that was really the case, there was probably some enmity between the Monster Celestial Master and the ancient immortal court, so he deliberately engineered its fall.”

Hearing his new master’s murmurings, Kui looked up in shock, wanting to contradict him. But it didn’t have the courage as it was now one of Lu Yun’s Infernum.

“Star divinities who can match an emperor-level powerhouse when acting together... As well as Fengbo, Yushi, and you, who were peak principal realm existences, half a foot in the emperor realm yourselves... Altogether, that made up roughly half of the immortal court’s strength.”

Lu Yun cast a glance at Kui. “The Monster Celestial Master buried all of you together with himself before the cataclysm arrived. The immortal dynasty might’ve stood a chance if it could call upon every resource at its disposal, but it didn’t have a prayer with you people gone.”

Kui fell silent. It hadn’t experienced that great battle for itself, and the immortal court had become history by the time it’d reawakened. Even the immortal emperor it’d always revered as unparalleled had perished for good.

If Kui, Fengbo, and Yushi had still been there, with all four of the celestial masters and the complete regiment of the star divinities, it might not have been impossible to save the day.

“In any event, you stay here and cultivate... While you’re at it, you can also give pointers to the other Infernum.” Lu Yun waved Kui off. As if it’d been pardoned from a death sentence, the latter hastened to bow and cautiously withdrew.

“Now, how am I supposed to leave?” Lu Yun couldn’t help but feel a little vexed. “Should I turn into dust, or maybe something else? But Scarlet Ape’s staff is too heavy. It’d crush me dead even if I transformed into air.”

By air, he meant an actual gaseous substance, but even air was composed of material particles that would be destroyed by Scarlet Ape’s staff, killing Lu Yun in the process.

“Or perhaps I should turn into gaseous sand so that I can be sucked away by the lungs’ layout again...” He quickly considered many possible means of escape. “It’s too bad that Violetgrave’s sealed inside hell. I can’t summon the corpse puppet inside the sword.”

That would’ve been the best solution, but the power of hell had grown alongside his rise in cultivation. Treasures containing additional consciousnesses, like Qing Han’s Scroll of Shepherding Immortals or his own Violetgrave, were sealed upon entry as a self-defense mechanism.

“The only way is to become a grain of gaseous sand and be sucked away by the lungs before the staff lands on me.” Lu Yun’s brow furrowed lightly.

“Hmm?!” His expression abruptly stiffened and with a wave of his hand, pulled Xing Chen and Qing Yu tumbling awkwardly into hell.

He hastily sent Qing Yu into the resurrection layout on the floating peak, where her replica immediately merged into her body.

“What a close call, I almost died! What the heck was that?!” Qing Yu opened her eyes and looked at Lu Yun, her face flush with trepidation.

“I’m not sure... but I think I saw Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi!” Lu Yun’s eyes lit up. “It looked like they’re trapped inside a giant cocoon of light.”

Their replicas possessed complete consciousnesses of their own, since a cultivator’s tremendous mental capacities made splitting their awareness into three an entirely normal occurrence, to say nothing of merely two.

“Right! I think I also saw my cousin wink at me!” A smile emerged on Qing Yu’s lips.

She’d been worried sick ever since Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi had gone missing, afraid that some misfortune had befallen them. But now, her fears could finally be put to rest. Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao were simply trapped; their lives weren’t in danger.

“The true identity of the Ancient Tree of Life is a massive feng shui layout!” Lu Yun realized. “And I also saw a great tomb there!

“Fruits of Life aren’t enough to eradicate your body’s issues entirely. For that, we need to refine the entire tree! The key to refining the Ancient Tree of Life is located inside that giant tomb!”

Although it wasn’t a connate spirit root, the Ancient Tree of Life boasted of an unusual power that no connate spirit root had ever possessed, hence why it was dubbed the number one man-made spirit root.

The poison inside Qing Han had burrowed deep into her bones and become part of her body. Once it activated, it would seep into all of immortal dao. Only the spirit pearls of the four divine spirits, combined with the Ancient Tree of Life, could thoroughly cleanse her of the fearsome poison curse.

Their replicas had gone searching for the Ancient Tree of Life in the Endless Desert, but they’d met a fearsome attack that’d nearly destroyed them.

This was Lu Yun’s first failure after coming to the immortal world. He’d been utterly powerless when faced with the strange, ancient tomb.

“The Ancient Tree of Life’s been transformed into a fearsome tomb. I wonder what’s buried inside.” Lu Yun fell pensive. “Maybe it’s for...”

“Lu Yun! Now that your replica’s here, why don’t you refine the lungs into his body? After that, you can have him go back out instead of you,” Qing Yu proposed with a smile, particularly worry-free at this moment.

Lu Yun slapped his forehead with a smile. “That’s right!”

His replica was created from the sacred relic of the shamans, the Nine Yin Soul-Parting Wood. It was exceptionally sturdy to begin with, and if it were further strengthened by the fearsome metal energy inside the lungs, it might possibly withstand a strike from Scarlet Ape’s staff.

“My replica’s only an artificial body. Though I can simulate internal organs and deceive dao immortals, he’s not a true living entity. But if he can incorporate the lungs, he might be able to evolve into one!”

Xing Chen also looked at the giant lungs with a glint of excited agitation in his eyes.

Qing Yu broke away from the envoy group that was still researching their unique art. As the flash of a hazy halo engulfed her figure, she landed by Lu Yun's side.

On the floating peak, the small nun looked at Lu Yun and Qing Yu, loneliness flashing through her eyes.

"You..." Lu Yun stared at Qing Yu in disbelief. "You're not affected by the environment here?"

"The immortal dao also exists here!" Qing Yu smiled. "Its projection here is slowly maturing into a genuine immortal dao. Thanks to that, I'm not affected by hell's death energy!"

Lu Yun nodded gently, then looked at Xing Chen.

Rumble!

His replica's figure slowly enlarged, ultimately growing to be as big as the giant lungs.

Ray after ray of cosmic energy descended from the netherworld's sky, and before long, all of hell was bathed in a sea of silver. The power of the Cosmic Sea that had fused with hell was on full display.

Whoosh!

The next moment, Qing Yu sprang into action as well. Two connate treasures, the Cosmic Skycarver and Cosmic Eyes, manifested together and merged with the Cosmic Sea, producing an enormous silver vortex that appeared in the sky above and ruthlessly bore down on the giant lungs.

Opening his mouth wide, Xing Chen swallowed the energy of the stars alongside the lungs.

Chapter 548: Connate Yang Metal

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

A series of percussive sounds resembling war drums echoed from Xing Chen's body as his chest heaved violently. Terrifying cracks snaked through his skin, presenting quite the macabre sight.

Endless starlight streamed down on him, forming a protective shield against the giant, powerful lungs while the organ continued breathing.

The lungs were a formidable imitation of the world's lungs. Though Xing Chen's body was sturdy, he was still a returned void realm cultivator. Having him devour the lungs was akin to a snake swallowing an elephant—no, a more appropriate analogy would be an ant ingesting a dragon.

If not for the cosmic energy around him and the power of the three great connate treasures, he would've exploded instantly.

"No wonder Violetgrave said that only by possessing the Tome of Life and Death am I able to refine the lungs." Lu Yun fixed his eyes upon Xing Chen with a slight frown.

The Tome of Life and Death did indeed exist in Lu Yun. While it protected his body, though, it didn't protect his replica. If Lu Yun devoured the lungs himself, the book would've emerged and refined the lungs immediately.

To protect his replica, he would have to activate the Tome of Life and Death himself, which was something he couldn't yet do, given his level of strength. In other words, most of the time, the book protected its owner by reflex. What little power Lu Yun could generate by activating the book was too weak to even matter.

"I hope the three connate-grade treasures will be able to suppress the lungs." Lu Yun took a deep breath and closed his eyes, his consciousness plunging into his replica.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The lungs released increasingly greater power within Xing Chen's body, and the ominous rumbling now resembled thunder more than mere war drums. Even the air in hell was affected, flowing in rhythm with the lungs' breathing.

Many of the Infernum and newborns in hell fell under its influence as well. Their breathing adjusted to be in sync with the lungs.

"Hm? Their breathing..." Lu Yun paused. "It seems capable of strengthening the organs and the muscles! Is this... a breathing method?" Inspiration flashed through the darkness.

"Most immortals today focus on tempering their nascent spirits and inner energy. Very few put in any effort to train their bodies. Therefore, immortals are usually physically weak—much more so than monster spirits, demons, and divines.

"The immortals of the Primeval Era were in a better condition, since they at least had solid foundations. Immortals of today, though, are born flawed. Even after ascending to immortality through the void realm, their constitutions remain a great weakness!"

Lu Yun recalled the many immortals that'd been devoured by yin spirits before they could even make a move during the invasion in Azure Province. Even dao immortals had been chomped down on before they could fight back, once the crimson spirits closed the distance.

"Their weak physique is the problem! The rhythm at which the lungs breathe can move the organs and train the muscles and bones, improving one's physical prowess!" As Lu Yun breathed in unison with the lungs, all of his muscles and bones began trembling slightly in response to the training.

"It really is a breathing method!" He cracked a smile. "It doesn't matter if it's not an effective training method yet, since it isn't part of a complete system. Once my replica refines the giant lungs, he'll be able to perceive the complete system and create one, or even many, breathing methods, thus giving birth to a new cultivation path!"

However, things weren't looking too good for this new cultivation path at the moment. Xing Chen's body had bloated like a giant balloon, and it looked on the verge of being burst by the giant lungs.

The overwhelming might of the organ had pierced through the cosmic power. With the Tome of Life and Death in his hand, Lu Yun summoned hellfire in an attempt to control the giant lungs.

“Thankfully, the lungs are damaged. If they were whole—” he cut himself short.

If the lungs were intact, Xing Chen would’ve exploded and died the moment he devoured them. Even in their damaged state, the lungs were incredibly powerful.

Bit by agonizing bit, Lu Yun lost his control over the replica as the latter inflated.

“He’s gonna burst.” Lu Yun smiled wryly. Qing Yu gripped his hand tightly, her expression nervous and her forehead covered in sweat. She’d been keeping a steady hand on the Cosmic Eyes and Cosmic Skycarver, but she was running out of strength.

Bam!

A tremor passed through hell as a flash of dark light scattered the surrounding cosmic power. The Cosmic Sea returned to its form as a scroll of faint silver and drifted back into Qing Yu’s hands, along with the eyes and blade.

Bam!!

Another stunning explosion sounded out before Lu Yun and Qing Yu could react and a giant coffin suddenly appeared over Xing Chen’s head. Black light cascaded from it and enveloped Xing Chen.

In an instant, the area was flooded with black.

“That...” Qing Yu widened her eyes at the Enneaworm Coffinbearers, shaking her head in disbelief. “That’s the coffin that dragged the lungs into hell.”

“I don’t know what it is, either,” Lu Yun said with a wry smile. “But it often shows up and solves problems I can’t solve myself.”

When he’d encountered the Nine-Phoenix Casket in the Sword Barrow, it’d been the Enneaworm Coffinbearers that’d tamed the casket and brought it into the netherworld as well.

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Under the influence of the black light, the giant lungs in Xing Chen’s body slowly assimilated and modified his body, creating yin and yang organs.

Clink!

A metallic sound rang from Xing Chen, followed by surging metallic brilliance. A keen presence billowed out from him, depicting him as the greatest sword in the world.

“Hah—” Xing Chen tipped his head back and howled at the sky, sending out a sharp metallic energy from his mouth.

“That’s connate yang metal energy of the Mastery of the Five Elements!” Lu Yun’s eyes lit up.

That death art could summon the power of the five natural elements out of nothing, and Xing Chen could now control the attribute of metal!

“Natural yang metal energy is one of the keenest energies in the world. Even incorporating a strand of such energy will transform a man-made treasure, enabling it to rival a connate-grade one! That’s what permitted the Sugato Sword to become the greatest man-made treasure, capable of cutting down connate-grade treasures!”

Yin wood of the east, yang metal of the west, yang fire of the south, yin water of the north, and yang earth of the center were the greatest elemental powers in the world. However, very few throughout the history of the world of immortals were ever able to wield such power.

The Azure Dragon King’s Yi Wood Cleansing Thunder was an application of yin wood. Apart from him, the other four divine kings hadn’t developed the same mastery over their corresponding elements. That was why the Azure Dragon King had been the most powerful among the four cardinal tribes, and why it’d been the only divine king to survive the divine downfall.

Lu Yun didn’t expect Xing Chen to be able to tap into the power of yang metal with the Mastery of the Five Elements straight after incorporating the lungs. That was something he himself couldn’t yet do with the death art.

Chapter 549: Fragments of Hell

“What a pity, the connate yang metal that Xing Chen shot out just now is nothing more than extremely diluted energy. He’s nowhere near materializing real yang metal.”

It was indeed a little unfortunate. If Lu Yun had access to true yang metal and refined it into flying swords, or perhaps fashioned immortal armor, it might be possible to take the golden Scarlet Ape’s staff head-on.

“No matter, his energy is comparable to terrifying rays of unstoppable sword energy. Nothing will be indestructible in front of him! My replica has nothing to fear even from a dao immortal.” Lu Yun’s lips curved up in a smile.

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Meanwhile, Xing Chen sat down cross-legged, his chest moving up and down in a steady rhythm as his body gradually merged with the lungs.

The Enneaworm Coffinbearers floated above him, radiating a black light that flowed steadily into Xing Chen’s figure. In doing so, it sealed the lungs’ power and kept it in harmony with the replica’s body.

But sealed or not, the giant lungs’ strength was truly too great.

Though a mere replica, Xing Chen had been refined from the shamans’ sacred treasure, the Nine Yin Soul-Parting Wood, bequeathing him tremendous potential.

While the greatest part of the lungs’ power had been sealed away, what little was left of it was extraordinarily pure, far surpassing Xing Chen’s current strength. Thanks to this pure energy, his strength and realm began to increase explosively.

As a replica, Xing Chen didn’t need to slowly build his foundations or grasp comprehension of cultivation realms. As long as he could access sufficient power, his strength could rise at a rapid clip. His cultivation

had already reached peak returned void realm in the first place. And now, thanks to the giant lungs, it was increasing once again.

Hummm...

Xing Chen shook as a black hue flared from his figure.

“He’s... ascended to immortality!” Lu Yun’s eyes sparkled. After absorbing the lungs’ power, Xing Chen made the final leap and became an immortal!

Inside Xing Chen, Lu Yun’s second nascent spirit also began changing from a cultivator’s nascent spirit to an immortal’s nascent spirit, while the energy coursing through his body evolved into immortal force.

Cultivation was impossible inside hell, whether for Lu Yun or for his replica, but the lungs’ phenomenal power had thrust Xing Chen directly into the immortal realm. And it hadn’t stopped there—the replica’s cultivation was still rising exponentially.

True immortal, empyrean immortal, august immortal... golden immortal!

Eventually, Xing Chen’s growth halted at the golden immortal realm.

“From a void realm cultivator to an immortal, and a golden immortal to boot! In the current world, he’s already an absolute powerhouse! At the very least, I don’t need to be afraid of arcane dao immortals anymore!” Elation appeared on Lu Yun’s face. Although his own body wasn’t an immortal yet, Xing Chen’s newfound strength was another major asset in his arsenal.

“That said... the golden and silver scarlet apes are clearly beyond the dao immortal realm. There’s no telling if Xing Chen can withstand their blows!” Apprehension still lingered in his heart.

Meanwhile, Xing Chen was in the middle of meditation. His chest rose and fell in accordance to the breathing method, strengthening his body, forging muscles and tendons, and strengthening his newly formed respiratory system even further.

“When seen from the outside, breathing methods look very different from conventional cultivation, but they serve the same purpose in the end. It’s entirely possible for immortals or cultivators to use both at the same time, comprehending the dao while enhancing their physique. And if you match a boxing method on top of that for inner and outer cultivation...”

Unable to stop this train of thought, Lu Yun fell into deep contemplation. All the dangers of the outside world disappeared from his mind as he singlemindedly analyzed this new discovery.

Xing Chen’s breathing already followed an embryonic set of rules that would one day become a comprehensive cultivation system. However, his breathing contained the sharpness of the metal attribute, which left traces of the element in his body after this tempering process.

“There’s roughly nine different types of spirit roots in the immortal world. The types are the five basic elements, plus wind, thunder, yin, and yang! Ranking above the five elements are immortal spirit roots and celestial spirit roots, and variants like Qing Yu’s accursed spirit root and poison spirit root.

“This breathing method fits those spirit roots.” Lu Yun was lost in thought. “That said, if I want to develop a comprehensive breathing system for the five elemental spirit roots, I need to refine the four

organs—namely the heart, liver, spleen, and kidneys, and absorb the properties of the five elements contained inside them as well.”

“Lu Yun.” Qing Yu suddenly interrupted his thoughts.

“Hm?” Lu Yun looked at her, a little confused.

“Have you noticed? When you came inside this time, time didn’t stop in the outside world.” Qing Yu was a little puzzled. “Time was frozen the last few times you returned here.... but not this time.”

Lu Yun blinked. “But...” With a wave of his hand, the Gates of the Abyss slowly opened a crack, allowing him to peer into the outside world.

Scarlet Ape’s staff was frozen in mid-air as if sealed by something, not moving one inch.

“What’s going on?” Qing Yu frowned gently. “Do you remember when our replicas were at the Ancient Tree of Life? You’d clearly come back here already... but time didn’t stop for them outside. They ran into that danger.”

Realization crossed Lu Yun’s face. “I think there’s only one possible explanation for that.”

Qing Yu looked at him, her complexion betraying her excitement.

“Hell! The place where the Ancient Tree of Life has taken root is also a fragment of hell!”

In order to restore the netherworld, Lu Yun had to continually raise his own cultivation level and master the Tome of Life and Death, then use the book’s power to restore hell.

There was also a second way: he could find the fragments of hell and merge them with the one he had.

Near the end of the Primeval Era, the human hell was smashed to pieces, just like what had happened to the primordial immortal world.

However, the immortal world’s fragmentation hadn’t been thorough enough and had given birth to the twenty-four facets instead. Connected by the four great seas, they still formed a singular world. In contrast, the fractured hell had been scattered across the multiverse. The biggest fragments had become a world unto their own, and the smallest ones mere specks of dust.

The hell currently in Lu Yun’s possession was likely to be the biggest shard of them all. His cultivation was currently too low, but once it reached a certain stage, he would journey the multiverse in search of the shards.

Merging the different shards together would make hell more powerful, indirectly adding to Lu Yun’s power and enhancing his strength as well.

“That makes sense. Xing Chen is only my replica and doesn’t have the Tome of Life and Death on him, nor can he sense the presence of hell... It looks like a trip to the Boundless Desert is in order as soon as possible. But first I have to solve my current predicament!” Through the Gates of the Abyss, Lu Yun looked again at the big, jet-black staff with a grimace.

“You know, you could take the Black Emperor outside with you!”

Chapter 550: Severe Wounds

“Good idea!” Lu Yun’s eyes shone at Qing Yu’s suggestion. Though positive that the cannon would be destroyed by Scarlet Ape’s staff, it would save his life in the process. Given the options of sacrificing a treasure and surefire death, he naturally chose the former without a shred of hesitation.

Moreover, the cannon could be remade even if destroyed. The necessary raw material just so happened to be the Divine Seaquell Staff in Scarlet Ape’s possession. No matter how mighty the staff was, it would at most destroy the cannon’s internal structure, which wouldn’t prevent it from being reforged.

“There’s no rush right now.” His mood was now much more relaxed. “Let’s wait for Xing Chen to finish his meditation first.”

“I’ll go back to my research then!” Qing Yu suddenly leaned in and planted a kiss on his cheek. Smooch! Then she was gone again, reappearing on the floating peak.

Slack-jawed, Lu Yun rubbed his cheek and chortled foolishly like an idiot. “This chick is marking her territory!”

It took him a long while to recover his wits. Qing Yu naturally knew of everything that had transpired between him and the little nun, and since the latter was present, Qing Yu wouldn’t cede an inch and had declared her possession straight away.

The little nun glanced at Lu Yun with a bit of frustrated suffering in her gaze, then went back to the research, ever so slightly moodier than before.

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Days turned into years, and a full century flew by inside hell.

In those hundred years, Qing Yu and the rest sank into meditation, exchanging insights via their nascent spirits. Lu Yun deployed a great formation around the floating peak with immortal crystals to supplement the vitality that Qing Yu and the little nun required.

Cultivators could feed off the energy of the world. Even without food, they wouldn’t starve to death as long as they obtained sufficient energy. Immortal crystals contained immortal energy, which was formed by high level energy of the world and was enough to sustain Qing Yu and the little nun.

Despite that, the environment inside hell was a peculiar one. The immortal dao here was a projection instead of a complete path. Other than the Envoys of Samsara, not even Lu Yun himself could cultivate inside.

In any case, a hundred years of seclusion was nothing to speak of for cultivators and immortals alike. While the contemporary world’s history of a hundred thousand years might appear long and illustrious at first glance, it was but a fleeting moment for many immortals.

According to legend, some immortals back in the primordial era would seclude themselves for dozens of millennia at a time. Even in modern society, many immortals often entered closed door cultivation for several thousands of years at a time.

In comparison, a hundred years didn’t seem all that long.

Of course, once Lu Yun left the netherworld, time inside hell would fall in sync with the outside world again. It would be as if no time had passed at all, and not even their lifespans would be affected.

“Success!” Xing Chen opened his eyes, excitement sparkling within. By now, the giant lungs had been fully refined and fused with the replica’s body.

“That’s the feeling! This strength is weaker than what the corpse puppet can make use of, and isn’t comparable to when my real self is enhanced by the power of hell... but those are borrowed powers and this strength is my own!” Mirth colored Xing Chen’s face.

Boom!

He suddenly punched the air and generated an explosive sound that nearly tore apart space itself. Space in the fractured hell wasn’t as stable as in the world of immortals, but ordinary golden immortals, or even dao immortals, would still be hard pressed to rip into it.

“An all-out punch from me can blow up at least an ordinary aether dao immortal! That was also just a punch with no combat arts, immortal techniques, no nothing!”

Ever-lingering apprehension about his personal safety could finally be put to rest. He could now confidently stand tall in the world of immortals. With battle strength sufficient to rival an arcane dao immortal, he was a genuine powerhouse at the top of this world. While his real self was still weak, he now had a trump card to at least guarantee his safety at the bare minimum.

He glanced over at the girls. They were still deep in meditation, hazy rays of light radiating from their figures a clear indication that they’d reached a crucial stage.

“I can save them some time if I stay in here, but the link between hell and the outside world will be completely severed if I do that. If I go outside, I can act as a medium to establish a faint connection between the two worlds. This way, the immortal dao outside will acknowledge their newly created method to deduce combat arts.”

Otherwise, even if Qing Yu and the little nun were successful in their pursuit, the resulting product would only be a ‘method’, rather than an independent school of thought.

A new method would at most be remembered by men, but a brand-new school of thought would be forever etched into the immortal dao itself and benefit them in countless ways.

“It’s time to head out.” Lu Yun sprang into action and merged with his replica. He had to exit in person, or else time would freeze for Xing Chen the moment he left through the Gates of the Abyss.

It had nothing to do with Lu Yun’s consciousness, but with the Tome of Life and Death in his possession. After merging with his replica, he brought out the Black Emperor.

“My thoughts can’t keep up with Scarlet Ape’s speed, so this is the only way! Ten billion immortal crystals for a fully-powered shot!”

Boom!

Lu Yun adjusted the cannon’s aim, then combusted ten billion immortal crystals for fuel and fired the cannon at maximum power.

A terrifying column of white light spewed from the cannon's mouth. At the same exact instant, Lu Yun and Xing Chen's combined body set foot inside the celestial master tomb.

Boom!!

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"What?!" Scarlet Ape's eyes shot wide with astonishment and its face spoke volumes about its incredulity. The vast and terrible power facing it slammed right into the iron staff in its hand.

Caught off guard, the ape was sent flying by the explosion.

Bang!!

At the same time, its great iron staff landed heavily on the Black Emperor's mouth. With frightening force, it destroyed the cannon's formation runes, talisman runes, and the weapon's internal structure. Following which, the cannon smashed heavily into Xing Chen's chest.

Puff!!!

Fresh blood vomited furiously from the replica's mouth as his body crashed heavily against the wall behind him, instantly turning into flattened flesh. The Black Emperor hurtled after him and smashed him again.

This second blow drilled a hole through Xing Chen and nailed him firmly to the wall of bones. If Lu Yun's real body had been the one carrying the cannon... he no doubt would've been pulverized to bits by now.

His real body had detached itself from Xing Chen earlier on. Still, Lu Yun's face was pale and a thick streak of blood flowed down his lips, a testament to the severe wounds he'd also suffered.

He lifted a hand and sent his replica's body, replete with a big hole in the middle, back to hell together alongside the ruined cannon.

With another wave, he summoned three hundred more weapons of war, all of their pitch-black cannon mouths glowing with white brilliance and aimed squarely at the two scarlet apes.