

Necropolis 581

Chapter 581: Bloodline Success

Seeing the sword river curling around Lu Yun, Wu Tulong turned grave, but an intense fighting spirit overflowed from the depths of his eyes. The golden spear shook gently in his hand, producing a faintly discernible dragon cry.

Dragon soul!

A dragon soul was unexpectedly sealed inside the spear!

Given the formidable might Lu Yun could sense from the soul... it was likely the soul of an ancient skydragon, its colossal strength sealed inside the spear and bequeathing the weapon strength enough to destroy the world.

The projection of a pale golden dragon emerged from the spear and coiled around Wu Tulong, gently burning like a golden flame.

"Alas!" Lu Yun heaved a long sigh. "Wu Tulong, senior brother Wu, I, too, dearly wish to battle you, but now's not the time."

Rumble!

Space shook as a black cannon appeared beside Lu Yun. He'd previously burned a measly billion immortal crystals to fire at the fur seals, a far cry from the cannon's limits.

"You!!" Indignation and frustration descended when Wu Tulong saw Lu Yun vigilantly withdraw his sword form and take out his weapon of war.

Although Wu Tulong was also a mere tribulation away from becoming a void-ascended immortal, his cultivation level still wasn't enough to ward off a shot from a weapon of war. For many, such weapons were a great invention that hadn't existed back in the Primordial Era. If they had... perhaps the immortal dao wouldn't have been severed, and the world of immortals wouldn't have fragmented.

"Lu Yun, are you admitting that you're worse than me? That you're afraid of fighting me?" Two golden flames burned in Wu Tulong's eyes as his lips curved up with a hint of disdain.

"There's no need to goad me." Lu Yun shook his head. "I know what you're trying to do. If we start fighting, it'll cause the yin dragon vein to run berserk and ruin my disciple's efforts. For my disciple's sake, I can only have you suffer some indignation for now."

He waved a hand, causing white light to glint from the cannon's mouth. If not for Wu Tulong agitating the dragon vein, Lu Yun might truly have gone another round with him... But the presence of a dragon soul would resonate with the yin dragon vein and stimulate the vein to break free of the Dragonspike Litany and Dragonshift Method keeping it in check.

"Don't move, or I'll kill you." A murderous glint flashed through Lu Yun's eyes. "You might be a worthy opponent, but... there are more geniuses appearing everyday in the world of immortals now. Many among them would make as good an opponent as you."

Wu Tulong's face sank. With a harrumph, he turned on his heels and left; he could see Lu Yun's determination. Had he stayed a moment longer, the Dao Flower's guardian would've surely fired the cannon and blasted him to death.

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Lu Yun sighed with relief at Wu Tulong's departure. Deep down, he didn't want to kill the man. The terrors of soul planting were a known quantity, but Wu Tulong had defeated it head-on with staunch will alone! Such a feat wasn't something an ordinary man could do.

Despite Wu Tulong's departure, Lu Yun didn't lower his guard. He could still sense several mighty consciousnesses in the vicinity, ones that made regular passes every now and then.

Without a doubt, there were still others eyeing the yin dragon vein.

The yin energy inside the vein had dwindled by now, so it wasn't impossible for a powerful immortal to carry it off with their own power. However, given the deterrence of the weapon of war, none of these people dared show themselves.

The Arcane Yin Fruit had already been sent to hell and was in the middle of merging with the flattened pulp that was left of his replica. But the process was rather slow, and results overnight were out of the question.

On the third day, the yin energy below the lake surged once more from underground, sending the body of energy into a boil.

Boom!

A series of explosions came from below ground, followed by a disembodied black dragon soaring into the air, howling a draconic challenge to the skies.

"I see... so Zou Longxiu's lineage of extreme yin turns out to be from the dragons!" Lu Yun stared in surprise.

In the world of immortals, the blood of dragons was an apex lineage, possessing monstrous strength. Among them, extreme yin dragons were a rare bloodline. But for all its potential, it still was a little inferior to an ice mo bloodline, so mos had always suppressed the bloodline and even excised it.

Even so, the blood of an extreme yin dragon was no trifling matter. What was left of it had constantly vied for supremacy with the ice mo blood in Zou Longxiu's veins and weakened him as a result.

However, devouring the yin dragon vein had instantly brought the yin dragon bloodline to parity with his ice mo bloodline. More importantly, Lu Yun had given his disciple the Scaled-Dragon's dual cultivation method so that he could combine his two supreme bloodlines.

As the black dragon roared in the air, a disembodied white ice mo also rushed out and slowly fused with the dragon. A terrifying aura gradually rose in the sky.

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"So powerful!" Some dao immortals lying in wait nearby paled at the sight.

“This strength’s already reached the limits of the peerless immortal realm. It’s the strongest one can be beneath the dao immortal realm! Sadly...” sighed a dao immortal from the Yellow Springs monster court. “Sadly, void-ascended immortals are already appearing in the world, or else Zou Longxiu would have been the number one heavyweight below the dao immortal realm.”

“What do you mean, sadly?” another dao immortal countered. “He’s Lu Yun’s disciple now, so Lu Yun will definitely etch a formation of heaven and earth for him.”

“Let’s go. Zou Longxiu might have betrayed Yellow Springs Land, but he’s still a former comrade of ours.” There was a tacit understanding among the monster immortals from Yellow Springs Land.

Although Zou Longxiu had betrayed them, he hadn’t made himself an enemy of theirs either. There was still some affection left between both parties. And if Yellow Springs Land wanted to obtain formations of heaven and earth, they would have to go through Zou Longxiu.

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“Thank you, master! This disciple has found success due to master’s aid!” Zou Longxiu knelt in front of Lu Yun and kowtowed with gratitude.

His appearance was very different at this moment. His previously snow-white hair had become as black as ink, a sign that his extreme yin bloodline had perfectly fused with his ice mo blood. The combination of the two made Zou Longxiu extraordinarily powerful, so much so he could almost go toe-to-toe with void realm cultivators.

“Get up.” Lu Yun nodded. “Now, leave this tomb and go back to Yellow Springs Land.”

“Eh?” Baffled, Zou Longxiu looked back at his master with incomprehension.

“Don’t worry, the Yellow Springs Monster Emperor won’t make things difficult for you.” Lu Yun pondered for a moment. “This is a letter in my own handwriting. Give it to the emperor, he’ll know what to do.” He handed a jade slip to his disciple. “Go on, don’t fail your master’s first mission for you.”

“Understood!” Zou Longxiu’s figure trembled as he quickly accepted the jade slip before turning around and leaving.

After learning the Dragonshift Method, it wasn’t very difficult for him to leave the celestial master tomb. As a matter of fact, telling him to leave was another way the tomb raider sect master was testing him.

Chapter 582: Two Yu Hengluos

“What the... the four evil coffins destroyed Witherdew Major?!” Lu Yun realized with a start after Zou Longxiu’s departure. He didn’t know the exact details, but did hear from Canghai Chengkong that a terrifying storm of black lightning had slaughtered all of the immortals in Witherdew overnight.

Canghai Chengkong had remained outside the tomb all this time. With his name written in the Tome of Life and Death, he could contact Lu Yun at any time.

Three days were enough for the world of immortals to be turned completely upside down. After losing all of its immortals, Witherdew Major immediately became fruit ripe for the picking for factions all over the world.

Not only did the courts of the other eight majors, ten lands, four immortal seas, and the four oceans make their moves, but even a few reclusive clans emerged from their territories to lay claim to Witherdew Major.

An era of chaos had well and truly arrived.

Lu Yun wasn't powerful enough to protect himself under the circumstances. He'd thought that Kui and Xing Chen would be enough to establish his footing in the world, but now he realized how very wrong he was.

Similar to the abrupt emergence of the fur seals with their complete immortal dao, even more powerful factions might suddenly appear on the morrow.

Lu Yun had committed Violetgrave's earlier words to heart: the corpse puppet wouldn't dare run rampant even after she regained her freedom. After all, there was no shortage of people who could extinguish her in the world of immortals.

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"This thing..." Lu Yun picked up the giant water jar laying on the ground.

It was most likely the personal treasure of the demon celestial master, and thus it'd be unwise of him to send it straight to hell. The four celestial masters from the Primordial Era were the epitome of unpredictability.

With the water jar in his arms, Lu Yun took the Path of Ingress to Yuchi Tianhuang.

Bing Xuan and Bing Ling had driven the old fur seal away. When Lu Yun found his Infernum, only ten thousand of Yu'er's army of corpse divines had survived. That awful fatality rate sent a chill down Lu Yun's spine. Only ten thousand out of the original hundred thousand soldiers had survived a savage slaughter!

Nevertheless, he allowed the soldiers passage into hell. The power within the realm immediately transformed them into Infernum.

Yu'er, or Xuan Yu, had been the apple of the Black Tortoises' eye. The primordial divine tribe had been erased, though, while the tribe today had gone into hiding, away from all prying eyes.

"Milord!" Yuchi Tianhuang spoke up. "I sensed the energy of the Skyqilin and Skyturtle Pearls earlier! Both have been claimed by others."

"I see." Lu Yun nodded in acknowledgement.

The kumpeng, qilin, turtle, and scarlet ape nests should've been destroyed when the yin and yang tombs merged. He hadn't immediately searched for them because he didn't have a clue regarding the whereabouts of the pearls, and thus he didn't know where to start.

He wasn't at all surprised to hear that the two pearls had been taken in the interim.

"Who took them?" Lu Yun asked after taking a deep breath.

“The Skyqilin Pearl has been claimed by the Lin Clan, while the Skyturtle Pearl seems to have fallen into the hands of the Ling Clan.” Yuchi Tianhuang organized his recollections and continued in an uncertain tone, “However, a group of mysterious figures suddenly showed up and went on a killing spree. They were the ones who slaughtered Yu’er’s soldiers!”

Xuan Yu nodded. She’d had an army of nearly a million corpse divines. No matter how powerful, Ge Yanxia and her brood couldn’t have rivaled their collective strength. They’d first lost almost all of their members to mysterious enemies before the fur seals chased after them.

“This subordinate isn’t sure if those who gained the two pearls have been killed by the mysterious figures as well.” Fear flashed through Yuchi Tianhuang’s gaze.

“They’re natives of the underworld,” Xuan Yu said suddenly.

“Natives?” Lu Yun’s breath hitched upon recalling the ruins he’d encountered in the underworld upon gaining entry. There’d once been a prosperous civilization here, but had been instantly destroyed by something. The natives were likely the survivors of that glorious age.

“Correct!” Xuan Yu took a deep breath. Upon becoming Lu Yun’s Infernum, she’d regained her memories and cultivation from the Primordial Era. The transformation left her no different from regular immortals.

“The natives were extremely difficult to deal with. The immortal emperor couldn’t do anything other than deploy a great number of immortal soldiers every year to man the defensive posts along the border of the underworld, preventing them from invading the world of immortals.”

Lu Yun nodded; this was new to him. Although Su Xiaoxiao was from the Primordial Era as well, she was merely a golden immortal and hadn’t served the immortal court. There were many things she didn’t know about geopolitical matters.

“Were there any yin spirits in the underworld back in your time?” Lu Yun asked, a theory forming in his mind.

“There... there weren’t!” Xuan Yu shook her head. “The underworld was the underworld. Vast, but barely populated. Poor in resources, but rich in secrets. Yin spirits... there were never any sightings of the kind.”

“That’ll do. You may return to hell.” Many possibilities came to mind, but Lu Yun didn’t know where to start.

“This subordinate is very familiar with the celestial master tomb, sir,” Xuan Yu said hurriedly, reluctant to take her leave.

“There’s no need. I’m about to leave as well.” Lu Yun waved a hand dismissively. “Tianhuang, teach Xuan Yu the Heavenly Formation of Black Tortoise. There is to be a difficult battle ahead of us, and the battalions of the Scaled-Dragon King and Beigong Yu won’t be enough.”

“Understood!” Yuchi Tianhuang tugged Xuan Yu away with him and the two returned to hell.

“The Skyturtle and Skyqilin Pearls have been nurtured by the tomb for a long time. They’ve probably become sentient. It won’t be that easy to acquire them.” Lu Yun inhaled deeply. “I’ll leave after getting the Path of Ingress.”

He summoned his branch of the Path of Ingress and made his way to the burial chamber housing the main treasure—therein lay Wayfarer’s flesh and blood. Yu Hengluo had volunteered to stay and guard the body.

“I have to resolve what happened to Yu Hengluo, too. She was hurt in that room, so the solution must be there as well.” His branch of the path transcended layers of space and quickly took Lu Yun to the chamber, but what he saw there made his scalp go numb.

“There you are, Sect Head!” said a lilting voice. Yu Hengluo sat cross-legged on the ground, bamboo stick in her hand. She quickly rose to her feet when she spotted Lu Yun. The bronze lantern remained intact before the sarcophagus, faint Emerald Mistfire crackling within.

“Yu Hengluo... You’re alright?” Lu Yun projected his consciousness into hell, where Yu Hengluo’s body lay trembling on the ground.

Chapter 583: The Universe-Encompassing Palm

Lu Yun could feel a headache coming on. Inside hell, Yu Hengluo had reattached her skin and facial features to become a complete person once again, albeit one still riddled with heavy injuries. When he used the power of hell to inspect her... she was indeed Yu Hengluo!

But the young girl inside the chamber in the outside world was also Yu Hengluo!

He was dead certain he wasn’t mistaken. Two Yu Hengluos? What the hell was going on here?

“Are you alright?” He pulled himself together and rushed toward her, scanning the girl up and down. “Did anything unusual happen here?”

He also carefully observed Wayfarer’s projection, as well as the bamboo pole in Yu Hengluo’s hand. The girl shook her head vacantly.

“Two spaces seemed to have fused together here just now. My master disappeared after that.” Yu Hengluo pointed at the sarcophagus. Its lid had been pried open, Wayfarer’s flesh and the Skinning Spike long gone.

“Nothing else? Are you sure?” Lu Yun took a deep breath and asked again. Yu Hengluo merely stared at him in confusion, baffled by his line of questioning.

Lu Yun shook his head. In the end, he refrained from telling her what had happened at the Timelight Tower. This burial chamber had gone through earthshaking changes in the meantime.

Though this wasn’t the main crypt where the Monster Celestial Master was buried, it was nevertheless a core annex, a hub for the entire tomb.

“Sect Head, you have to be careful!” Yu Hengluo’s voice suddenly echoed in his mind. “There are quite a few ill-intentioned people hidden nearby. If not for their fear of this sarcophagus, they would’ve already charged inside.”

Now that Wayfarer's flesh was no longer inside the sarcophagus, it'd grown even more uncanny. Floating in midair, dark red blood seeped out of it and dripped a macabre painting onto the ground.

"Where's the Path of Ingress?" Lu Yun murmured to himself, disregarding the immortals hidden in the dark. He could clearly sense the treasure's existence right inside this burial chamber, but couldn't pinpoint its specific position.

"It's with me." A figure strode out of the darkness and looked at Lu Yun with a smile. "The Path of Ingress is in my possession. If you want it back, trade for it with the Sugato Sword."

"You?" Lu Yun recognized the speaker at first glance.

The man wore dark blue heavy armor over his tall figure. His head was disproportionately big, his eyes resembled mung beans, and he wielded a big iron hammer in his hand.

Lu Yun knew this man. To be more precise, he knew this monster spirit—Ding Lei, the North Sea's Admiral Turtle.

Ding Lei had eventually severed his own cultivation to participate in Destiny City's Sovereign Ranking Battles, where his talent had shone for all to see. But he'd then gone missing afterward and no one knew of his whereabouts.

Lu Yun hadn't expected to run into this old turtle here, of all places. He could indeed sense the aura of the Path of Ingress on the newcomer. So it would seem the monster spirit isn't lying.

"You recognize me?" Ding Lei blinked in consternation, his face clouding over. Even Beigong Xuan, the former monster emperor of the North Sea, wouldn't have been able to recognize him.

"The North Sea's Admiral Turtle. Tsk tsk, aren't you afraid of being torn to pieces by the monster immortals of the North Sea after betraying the monster court?" Claspng his hands behind his back, Lu Yun fixed the man with a chilly stare.

You want the Sugato Sword? Quite the ambitious one, aren't you?

Ding Lei's face fell. He hadn't expected Lu Yun would truly see through his disguise, but he didn't deny things, either. Instead, he lifted his hand palm up and revealed an illusory white path between his fingers.

Lu Yun narrowed his eyes. "The Universe-Encompassing Palm. That's a primordial art!"

As the name implied, this art could manifest its own universe in one's palm. In a sense, it was similar to Su Xiaoxiao's seed storage.

While not a combat art with incredible offensive potential, it also wasn't something ordinary immortals and cultivators could master... At the very least, Su Xiaoxiao herself had been unable to grasp it back when she'd been alive.

However, Ding Lei could use it to confine the Path of Ingress, a clear sign he'd obtained an ancient inheritance.

Lu Yun couldn't help his surprise.

“The monster court?” Ding Lei gently shook his head. “The court’s long been destroyed. The North Sea is now ruled by Levitating Island’s sacred land. I simply didn’t want to submit to them, so it’s by no means what you’d call betrayal.

“But if you want the Path of Ingress... bring out the Sugato Sword.” The look in his eyes was grim as tremendous waves of energy exploded from him, making Lu Yun’s heart palpitate.

“You’ve... already undergone your tribulation!!” Lu Yun cried out subconsciously. “But the celestial master tomb’s cut off from the world...”

“Hahahaha!” Ding Lei laughed heartily at Lu Yun’s incomprehension. “Who told you I ascended to immortality inside the tomb? Can I not enter after my tribulation?”

“Give me the Sugato Sword and I’ll give you the Path of Ingress. Or, I’ll kill you and take the Sugato Sword from your cold hands.” The smile dropped from his face as he strode toward Lu Yun with deliberate steps.

As if it’d come to life, the Path of Ingress inside the Universe-Encompassing Palm barrelled left and right like a white dragon, but no matter how hard it struggled, it couldn’t escape the palm’s confines.

“Fine. I’ll...” Facing Ding Lei bearing down on him menacingly, Lu Yun took out the Sugato Sword, but before he could finish his sentence, the turtle’s left palm suddenly slapped his way.

The attack’s momentum gave Lu Yun the impression he was about to be crushed by a great mountain. He turned pale with fright. There was no time for him to react except to cross his arms in front of his chest and take the brunt of the blow with his body.

Boom!

Blasted into the air by the impact, he crashed heavily into the sarcophagus.

“Who the hell was it who said the Universe-Encompassing Palm isn’t an offensive art?!” Lu Yun spat out a mouthful of blood. He’d suffered severe damage from the blow just now!

“Sect Head!!” Yu Hengluo cried out in alarm. She hastily lifted her bamboo pole and brought it down on Ding Lei, its verdant light turning into countless illusory stalks of bamboo that landed ruthlessly on the turtle.

“Get lost, ant!!” Ding Lei shook his right hand and dispelled the Universe-Encompassing Palm sealing the Path of Ingress, then smacked Yu Hengluo with a palm strike.

Bang!

Blown away like a ragdoll, she fell bonelessly to the ground.

“Hehehe...” The moment she touched the ground, a crimson figure flashed into existence and grabbed her, then immediately disappeared again. Likewise, the sarcophagus behind Lu Yun, together with the bronze lamp sitting in front of the coffin, vanished under the influence of a special power.

“Yu Hengluo!!” Lu Yun fought to get back on his feet, then looked at the spot she’d previously stood, about to chase after her.

“You should worry about yourself, first.” Ding Lei laughed loudly. His hands enlarged to the size of mountains and he sent Lu Yun reeling back with a prodigious slap.

“Ding Lei, you must be tired of living!!” Lu Yun fumed as a dense network of sword energies erupted behind him.

Chapter 584: Living Dead

Seeing the crimson figure snatch Yu Hengluo gave Lu Yun a bizarre sense of apprehension.

Fury exploded from his heart, and he boosted the power of the Sugato Sword through burning immortal crystals and charged Ding Lei with almost a billion rays of sword energy.

“The Sugato Sword! Well met!!” Ding Lei laughed. With a twist of his right hand, his Universe-Encompassing Palm erupted again, creating a minor world and slamming into the energy of the Sugato Sword with overwhelming might.

Bam!

The sword energy scattered into the wind. The attack Lu Yun had launched with a hundred million crystals had been countered by a single palm-strike!

Lu Yun stumbled a few steps back and crashed into the sarcophagus again, a heavy weight on his chest. He was helpless against a giant turtle?!

“What the heck?!” He stared at Ding Lei in shock. The Universe-Encompassing Palm was too powerful, and Lu Yun couldn’t match its power even with the Sugato Sword.

“Hahaha!” Ding Lei brayed with laughter, sending out another strike with his palm. His technique was imbued with the weight of a mountain, and Lu Yun would be crushed if it landed.

Jaw clenched, Lu Yun summoned the black water jar and swung the demonic treasure at Ding Lei’s palm.

Bam!

An earth-shattering explosion rang out, the great impact embedding Lu Yun into the wall of the sarcophagus. Ding Lei was knocked off his feet as well, his right hand crushed to paste. He skidded a great distance before finally coming to a stop.

“What is that?!” Teeth-numbing noises echoed in the dark as Ding Lei’s hand grew back.

The pain was tremendous, but it didn’t faze the turtle at all. Back in the Sovereign Arena, Lu Yun had taken his skeleton apart and skinned him to refine a shamanic instrument. Having a hand grow back was nothing in comparison.

His horrified gaze penetrated the darkness and landed on the black water jar in Lu Yun’s hand. He could hear the sound of waves coming from the mysterious-looking treasure.

“Hehehe, take another hit from my jar, you bastard!” Lu Yun struggled to free himself from the coffin. Slapping several healing talismans on himself, he lifted the water jar and charged at Ding Lei.

“Die!” screamed Ding Lei.

Deploying the Universe-Encompassing Palm again, he turned his hands into the size of mountains, holding hundreds of millions of worlds in his palms. The riposte clashed with Lu Yun's water jar; shockwaves from their collision shook the entire chamber.

Lu Yun's attack was all raw power and no finesse. He used no combat art, but instead matched Ding Lei's power with the might of the water jar alone.

And yet, he'd managed to deter the turtle.

Even Lu Yun himself was caught off guard by the sheer strength found in the water jar left behind by the Demon Celestial Master. It enabled him to match Ding Lei, a void-ascended immortal, as a mere cultivator!

Ding Lei was a stone turtle, one of the most powerful lineages in the world. He was much more powerful than even void-ascended true immortals; his Universe-Encompassing Palm would be able to kill an average void-ascended true immortal with a single slap.

Without taking the last step into immortality, Lu Yun should've already lain in defeat. Black demonic energy leaked from the giant water jar to imbue his body with great might. Thus rejuvenated, he wielded the water jar with increasing ferocity, sending Ding Lei running for shelter.

Is this how the water jar is actually supposed to be used?

At that thought, the water jar in his hand sent out a wave of disgruntlement, a clear sign that the treasure had developed its own spirit. Lu Yun swiftly corralled his thoughts and focused solely on the battle at hand.

The Universe-Encompassing Palm can't break the Sugato Sword, though. There must be something on Ding Lei that can counter the sword's power. I can't allow him to escape!

Lu Yun swung the water jar at Ding Lei with all his might.

The monster spirit was struggling to keep up. His palm technique grew ever weaker until it suddenly popped violently with the sound of bursting bubbles.

The resulting explosion left Ding Lei's hands bloodied and torn. The turtle screamed in terror and transformed back into its true form as a stone turtle, taking a prone position on the ground and retracting its head and limbs.

Clank!

Lu Yun leapt into the air and swung the water jar at the shell. A metallic clang rang at the collision, and the vibrations from impact ran up his arm and numbed his teeth.

"So hard!" Lu Yun had broken Ding Lei's shell back in the Sovereign Arena, but he'd now failed to leave a scratch, even with the mysterious water jar.

"Surrender the Path of Ingress, anything to do with the Sugato Sword, and the cultivation method for the Universe-Encompassing Palm, Ding Lei," he boomed before the mountainous turtle, "and I will spare your life."

“Hehehe!” Ding Lei sneered from within the turtle shell. “Kill me if you have the ability! I’d like to see if you can break through my defense.”

The turtle shell had been refined into his personal treasure, and its impressive defenses could stymie even dao immortals.

“You asked for this,” scoffed Lu Yun. He put away the water jar and splayed his hand.

Swoosh!

Emerald Mistfire surged and overwhelmed Ding Lei with deadly waves of heat. The monster spirit blanched within its shell—no defense would protect him from immortal fire!

“Lu Yun!” a voice demanded from the shadows. “Is Pill Fairy Yuying’s Panorama of Clarity in your possession?”

A man dressed in gold strode out from the dark. He was all hard lines and sculpted features, and his eyes glowed faintly of gold as they settled on the immortal fire on Lu Yun’s palm.

The Panorama of Clarity, Portrait of Emptiness, and Profile of Harmony had merged into the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals long ago. However, that wasn’t common knowledge, as Qing Yu never displayed the scroll in public.

There was a sense of decay about the mysterious man. Clearly, he hadn’t seen sunlight for a long time.

“So what if it is?” Lu Yun manifested the water jar again.

“I’m not taking the Emerald Mistfire from you. Give me the Panorama of Clarity and I’ll let you live.” The man paused, then added, “Or you’ll be seeing Yuying very soon.”

He plainly didn’t know Yuying had been resurrected, but he recognized Lu Yun.

“The Exalted Immortal Sect?” Two beams of black light shooting from his eyes, Lu Yun gazed at the man in gold in front of him. However, disbelief then colored his expression as a tremor of shock ran down his spine. “No, you’re not a member of the sect. You’re a living dead...”

Chapter 585: Mausoleum Keepers

A living dead.

The gold-clad, golden-eyed man in front of Lu Yun was a living dead, a living soul sealed inside a dead body!

He’d met such existences in the past. For example, the tomb keepers inside Huangqing’s tomb, but those had been living souls trapped inside zombie flesh. In contrast, the one in front of him was a corpse that was alive, not a zombie.

“A mausoleum keeper, you’re a mausoleum keeper for the underworld!” Lu Yun cried out, immediately guessing the man’s identity. This was one of the natives Xuan Yu had spoken of!

Violetgrave had once said that the underworld was in fact a giant mausoleum, a place where, apart from ghosts, only mausoleum keepers could survive. Lu Yun had hypothesized the existence of such guardians when Xuan Yu had mentioned natives, but he hadn't expected one would appear of its own accord.

The gold-clad man started lightly before flashing a smile. "Sure enough, the rumors weren't false. You really do have some skill to guess my identity, Lu Yun.

"Since you know who I am, hand over the Panorama of Clarity. Believe me, keeping it on you will only bring you trouble sooner or later." The man's faintly golden eyes now flashed pure gold, and a power that couldn't be explained circulated around him as he made his way toward the human youth.

"Since you know who I am, you should also know that... someone like you isn't enough to stop me." As Lu Yun's words fell, a cannon appeared beside him.

Dong! Boom!

Three billion immortal crystals went up in smoke the second the weapon of war appeared, and a giant pillar of light spewed forth to ruthlessly bombard the gold-clad man.

At the same time, Lu Yun spun around without a shred of hesitation, grabbed Ding Lei, and stuffed the giant body inside the water jar. Without even resorting to the Path of Ingress, he immediately deployed the Wandering Step and darted toward the tomb's exit. The mausoleum keepers posed far too great a threat!

When even Xuan Yu's soldiers had been slaughtered almost to the last by these guardians, Lu Yun wasn't deluded enough to think he could face them on his own.

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"Young lord!!" Color drained from the faces of the other mausoleum keepers nearby, and they hastily moved forward.

However, the cannon's pillar of light had struck too fast. Three billion crystals were a full-powered shot, and the discharge obliterated the gold-clad man. Not even a speck of dust was left behind.

"Kill, kill, kill!!" a keeper raged. "Do everything in your power to hunt down and kill Lu Yun! ...no, kill any intruder!!"

In no time at all, the entire celestial master tomb... the whole of the underworld boiled over with action. Countless mausoleum keepers rushed out of the darkness to hunt outsiders, their slaughter dying the tomb with crimson light.

Boom!!

White brilliance suddenly flared within the tomb, heralding the appearance of a purple-clad man out of nowhere. With a strong stature that towered into the skies, the man's fearsome aura immediately flooded the underworld. As it happened, he was the one who'd carved out the Path of Ingress in the abyss with a single punch.

"If thou darest slaughter the innocent, I shall mete out punishment upon thy entire clan!!" A majestic voice boomed throughout the tomb, causing all of the mausoleum keepers to kneel on the ground and shiver in fear.

But apart from the keepers... none of the outsiders, be they immortals or cultivators, could see the man's figure. Lu Yun was the lone exception. He'd already fled outside the tomb and happened to be right below the figure's feet.

"Son of a bitch! Can't kill the innocent, but they can kill me?!" Lu Yun couldn't help but swear. The cannon's full-powered shot earlier had disintegrated the gold-clad man.

As far as weapons of war went, that cannon had only been the most primitive, but three billion immortal crystals were nevertheless enough to blast an arcane dao immortal to death.

He'd had no other choice, in any case. The gold-clad man had clearly been intent on attacking, and Lu Yun was far from his match. He would've been dead in an instant.

"But at least I know the guy's not dead. Well, of course! How can someone who can carve out the Path of Ingress with a single punch give up the ghost so easily?" Looking up at the purple-clad man's imposing figure, Lu Yun shrank even further in on himself. This kind of personage wasn't someone he could currently hazard any sort of guess at.

"Hmm?" His eyes lit up at the sight of a small, snow-white fox with a little bell dangling from its neck darting out of the tomb and disappearing after a bound and a leap.

"Little fox!" A smile appeared on his face. Altering his appearance and bearing with Shapeshifting, he ran off closely behind the fox.

The purple-clad man's figure didn't fade away until roughly a dozen breaths later, finally affording sighs of relief for the underworld's mausoleum keepers.

"Lu Yun harmed the young lord. We can't let him get away no matter what. Pass down my orders to seal off the underworld and use any means necessary to capture him!" a man whose eyes also shone gold roared furiously as he floated in the air.

"At once, sire!" The entire underworld instantly became astir.

Surging forth from every corner of the underworld, countless mausoleum keepers set foot out of the shadows and made for the outskirts of their domain. At the same time, the barrier separating the underworld from the world of immortals flared with golden light.

Some immortals who wanted to pass through the barrier to return to the outside world realized, to their great dismay, that their way home was now blocked. However, the yin spirits clinging to the barrier weren't affected. From time to time, some still slipped through the barrier and made their way into the world of immortals.

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"It's just the death of one of the young lords. Do they really need to make such a mountain out of a molehill?" In the deepest parts of the underworld, within a sinister palace hall teeming with yin energy, a gold-robed, golden-haired, and otherworldly handsome man yawned lazily. "He died because he

wasn't good enough. If we cross that lordship's bottom line again, we mausoleum keepers won't have it so easy anymore."

The man shook his head with resignation.

"Holy Lord Ashu, things aren't like that!" a black-robed man beside him explained respectfully. "The young lord who died found clues to the Panorama of Clarity. He was killed by the treasure's holder."

"The Panorama of Clarity?!" The golden-haired man sprang to his feet. "Do you speak of the same Panorama of Clarity that was in Pill Fairy Yu Ying's possession twelve hundred years ago?"

"Indeed!" The black-robed man smiled when he saw Holy Lord Ashu's agitation. "The treasure is now with a cultivator called Lu Yun. The holy lords on the fringes of the outer underworld aren't trying to avenge the young lord, they're after the treasure."

"The Panorama of Clarity, Panorama of Clarity..." Holy Lord Ashu's eyes gleamed pure gold as he looked up at the jet-black sky of the underworld, a sinister smile flashing across his face.

"If they want to fight over it, let them do as they wish." He elegantly sipped from a cup of blood-like liquor that had appeared in his hand.

"Holy Lord Ashu, will you not vie for it yourself?" The black-robed man blinked, subconsciously adding, "The Panorama of Clarity is the only way for us to leave this boundless underworld."

Chapter 586: I'm Not Me

Thanks to deterrence from the purple-clad man, the mausoleum keepers emerging from the darkness halted their butchering of foreign immortals and cultivators. Even so, those trapped inside the underworld were terrified and unnerved when they realized they could no longer pass through the barrier and return home.

"That formidable existence forbade us from killing the outsiders, but said nothing about imprisoning them... Men, apprehend all of the immortals in our domain!" coldly ordered a man in golden robes and a crop of lush, golden hair. His eyes were golden like the others, and he was a holy lord as well, one of the strongest beings among the mausoleum keepers.

A terrifying aura emanated from him as he hovered in the air, sending shivers down the spines of the immortals inside the underworld. Even the omnipresent yin spirits scattered in a panic. With a gaze like lightning, he swept each and every immortal and cultivator below.

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Lu Yun chased after the small fox to an uncharted area, somewhere no longer among the outskirts underworld.

"Who is it?!" Suddenly on high alert, the little fox stopped in her tracks and peered back vigilantly.

"It's me." Lu Yun restored his true features and showed himself.

"Oh, it's you... You really scared me there!" The fox patted her chest with fluffy forepaws.

“Where’s Jing Huaci?” Lu Yun looked at the bell hanging from the fox’s neck, a little puzzled. There was nothing else on her body, so the bell was the only thing that caught his eye.

Moreover, he was certain that this Miao was the one he knew, not the Monster Celestial Master or the monster spirit ancestor.

“She... she’s gone to Vastspace Mountain.” The fox heaved a sigh of relief. “Remember, after you go out, never, ever mention anything that happened here to me, or the consequences will be very dire!”

Despite the fox’s childish voice, there was a strangely grave timbre to her voice.

“If you don’t explain yourself clearly, I can’t guarantee that I won’t let it slip in a moment of ‘carelessness’.” Lu Yun shrugged. “Plus, if my hunch is correct, you’ve already dealt with Empress Vastspace’s soul fragment, right?”

The small fox’s big blue eyes filled with helplessness.

“I’m not me!” she explained, her voice despondent. “There’s another scary guy inside of me.”

“What’s the relationship between that scary fellow and you talking about what’s going on here?” Lu Yun was confused by the answer.

“The scary fellow’s the memory of this place!” The little fox grew increasingly solemn. “After I was buried in the celestial master tomb, the colossal resentment I absorbed here gave birth to a scary demonic existence in the depths of my spirit. It’s me, but at the same time, it’s not me either.

“The ‘Miao’ you saw earlier was, in fact, her. She... is me, and at the same time, isn’t me. You can say she’s a part of my experiences and memories. In those memories, I was an evil demon who could destroy everything in the world. To awaken her would be a terrible disaster for the entire world of immortals.”

“Multiple personalities?” Lu Yun blinked.

The little fox shook her head gently. “I am not me.”

Lu Yun blinked in even greater bewilderment.

“Will Jing Huaci be fine in Vastspace Mountain?” He crouched down and looked at the little fox. After some hesitation, he’d decided not to delve deeper into the matter. There were too many secrets at stake here.

“Your six good-for-nothing friends, as well as Jing Huaci, all possess supreme bloodlines and are endowed with the strongest potential in this world. They need a teacher to guide them!” the fox admonished sternly. “Empress Vastspace harbored evil thoughts, but Empress Timelight’s inner demon makes for a pretty good teacher.”

“What’s with those two anyway?” Lu Yun frowned. “From what I’ve gathered, all the great emperors died at Emperors Fall, their true spirits erased. None should have survived.”

“You’ve already come to a conclusion, you just want me to validate your theory.” The fox shrugged, imitating Lu Yun’s mannerisms.

He nodded wordlessly. "Empress Timelight really does possess the power to travel through time. She probably wanted to escape Emperors Fall, but in spite of her efforts, she ended up running into another disaster."

"Exactly." The little fox nodded. "Some things are preordained. Those two empresses might have avoided Emperors Fall, yet they ended up dying here instead. They couldn't evade their fates in the end."

"What about the true spirit of Empress Vastspace hiding in Vastspace Mountain? Is it also dead?" Lu Yun blinked.

"Yes," sighed the fox. "Do you remember the purple-robed fellow who appeared earlier? Apart from intimidating the living dead, he also destroyed her soul fragment before it could escape."

"As for Empress Timelight... She's become an inner demon, which is no different from dying. She doesn't even know who she is anymore."

"You... should never, ever try to change the past or alter the future. Everything has long been predestined, and fate isn't something an individual can change." The fox's bright blue eyes fixed Lu Yun with a stare.

"You know something, don't you?" Lu Yun looked at the fox, his face suddenly still. The image of Yu Hengluo came unbidden to his mind. Two Yu Hengluos, both of which were Yu Hengluo... but one of them was gone.

The fox fell silent. "I'm going to sleep now. You should worry about how to leave instead. What's depicted on the Panorama of Clarity is an artistic concept that nurtures the divines. That concept can also turn the living dead into gods and free them from the underworld." The little fox yawned wide, then blearily closed her eyes. "Remember, don't awaken my memories of this place."

Lu Yun chuckled wryly. He grabbed the furball and stuffed her inside his clothes, the golden bell on her neck tinkling as he did so.

"Is leaving the underworld supposed to be difficult? Taking everyone with me though, now that's a fun challenge." His figure shifted, once again taking on another appearance.

"No need to transform, I've already seen you." A frivolous tone suddenly reached his ears. Startled, he instinctively moved his feet and headed in another direction with the Wandering Step.

"This art of yours is pretty good. Sadly, your cultivation is too weak." The voice stayed by Lu Yun's side even as he moved.

Lu Yun stopped in his tracks. Given the man's strength, it'd take little more than a wave of the hand to deal with little old him. Instead, he observed the newcomer.

Seemingly in his late twenties, the man sported long golden hair, handsome features, a heroic countenance, and a pair of pale golden eyes that were now sizing him up. This was a holy lord, one stronger than the ones he'd met earlier.

In fact... Lu Yun was aghast to realize that he sensed the same kind of pressure he'd once felt from the Azure Dragon King.

“Allow me to introduce myself.” The holy lord smiled. “My name is Ashu.”

Chapter 587: The Key Of Life

“Ashu!” Lu Yun carefully studied the sinfully handsome man. Rather than being alive, he was another living dead. However, the man had reached the apex of his existence. A tiny fraction more would make him a true living being.

A holy lord!

Holy lords were the strongest existences among mausoleum keepers. That was even more true of Holy Lord Ashu, who was many times more powerful than the ones currently looking for Lu Yun.

Lu Yun sensed an aura from the man as strong as that of the Azure Dragon King. This was a powerhouse at the principal realm, at a bare minimum! To think a character of this level existed in the underworld!

But there was no denying it; Ashu was indeed an immortal who’d reached the principal realm.

“The Panorama of Clarity is on you, isn’t it?” The holy lord’s gentle voice was strangely magnetic, and one couldn’t help but feel well-disposed towards him.

“It isn’t.” Lu Yun took a deep breath. It’d be impossible to get away if Ashu were to suddenly spring an attack on him. There was an insurmountable gap between him and this opponent, one that not even the Tome of Life and Death could surmount.

“Really?” Ashu blinked, then carefully observed Lu Yun again. “Indeed, you don’t lie... But unless I’m mistaken, it should be with someone very important to you.”

Lu Yun looked down and stayed quiet. To find clues from nothing more than minute changes in his expression... this Ashu was even more redoubtable than he’d feared.

“A few fools have sealed off the underworld, so you can’t leave right now.” Ashu promptly set aside the Panorama of Clarity and instead broached the current situation.

“And you can help me leave?” Lu Yun looked up again at the man.

“I can.”

Lu Yun was surprised at how easily this holy lord agreed.

“However, I’m leaving with you.”

“You? Leave with me?” Lu Yun frowned. “You’re a living dead, so you can survive only in here. If you try to leave, you’ll be destroyed by the yang energy in the outside world.”

“It seems that you’re quite informed.” Ashu nodded. “I’d initially planned to kill you outright, then search your soul for the Panorama’s whereabouts. But I changed my mind when I saw you.”

Lu Yun stayed silent.

“I’m very interested in the way you breathe. I tried to mimic your breathing rhythm just now, but it’s not quite the real thing. I have a hunch that I won’t have to fear yang energy if I were to acquire your breathing method.”

A hint of keenness appeared on Ashu's face. The greatest difference between the living and the dead was breathing!

The living dead here could make their hearts beat, make their blood flow, and have their bodies generate warmth. The only thing beyond their reach was breathing! A living dead who'd learned to breathe would truly become alive again. But no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't replicate genuine breathing.

Ashu had copied Lu Yun's breathing tempo moments ago and was greatly surprised to discover that it reawakened his long-dead lungs and generated a long-forgotten feeling of harmony in him.

A ray of hope had dawned for him then, hope of leaving this place. But his attempt had been mere imitation, hence why he'd changed his mind. He intended to grasp the essence of this breathing method, instead.

The Panorama of Clarity could only help him become a divine spirit, but with this breathing method, he could revive his dead body and resurrect in the truest sense of the word.

Lu Yun's breathing method was the one he'd developed based on the rhythm of the lungs of the world. He'd been inspired by not only the giant lungs on the altar, but also the breathing from the lungs' layout itself.

While the method was still in its infancy, it nevertheless contained a most fundamental truth of the world. As things stood, he'd become so accustomed to the breathing method that it'd become second nature.

"How will it benefit me if I teach you?" Lu Yun eyed Ashu warily. After all, the man had just spoken of killing him and extracting the memories from his soul. There was nothing to prevent the holy lord from proceeding in the same way with the breathing method, if he so wished.

"Heh..." Ashu smiled in response. "I can help you leave. I can likewise open the barrier and let everyone out."

"Nothing else?" Small dots of black light flickered at Lu Yun's feet. The moment this Holy Lord Ashu showed a hint of malice, he was primed to use the original death art, Boundless Step. With it, he could cross five hundred kilometers in a single step; not even a principal realm powerhouse like Ashu could stop him from getting away.

"Hmm... I can give you something else as well." With the flip of a hand, the holy lord summoned an emerald-green sapling into his palm.

Lu Yun's eyes immediately landed on the sapling, veins bulging on his forehead. "The Ancient Tree of Life?!"

His breathing became ragged. He and Qing Yu had dispatched their replicas to the Ancient Tree of Life, so he couldn't be more familiar with the tree's aura.

This mere thumb-sized sapling emitted the purest aura of an Ancient Tree of Life. In fact, it was even purer than the one Lu Yun had previously seen!

“No, it isn’t the Ancient Tree of Life, but a Key of Life,” Ashu explained. “Just like the Timelight Tower or Vastspace Mountain that was once here, the Ancient Tree of Life is a treasure that belonged to one of those pitiful emperors. Meanwhile, this Key of Life is the tree’s distilled essence and can be used to claim the tree.”

With that said, the holy lord offered it to Lu Yun, who stayed vigilant and didn’t take it.

“There is a trace of the tree’s aura to be found on your body,” Ashu explained with a smile when he saw Lu Yun’s reaction. “That is why I know that you or someone you’re in contact with have already gone looking for one. But without this key, you won’t be able to take it away with you.”

“According to what you say, the tree’s the treasure of an emperor. Aren’t you tempted at all?” Lu Yun still refrained from taking the key. In fact, he’d already begun burning a karmic fruit and was poised to run at the first hint of danger. Due to his heightened tension, he’d failed to notice Ashu’s wording of ‘pitiful emperors’.

“Tempted?” Ashu casually tossed the key to him. “Compared to empty material possessions, I’d much rather be alive.

“Take the key, I know you need this thing. Teach me your breathing method for it, it’s something I need in turn. After that, I’ll open the barrier so all of you can leave safe and sound.” Ashu’s smile slowly faded from his lips.

“Why don’t you kill me and take it for yourself?” Lu Yun took a deep breath and asked a question that wasn’t entirely one.

“Because this method isn’t yet recorded in the immortal dao.” Ashu explained leisurely. “You’re the inventor. To kill you would be to cut off the method’s origin and forever limit it to being a minor technique, never to become a grand dao. And I, my dear, have very little use for it if it isn’t a dao.”

“Alright, I’ll teach it to you,” Lu Yun agreed after some thought. “But you have to swear upon the world that you won’t become my enemy upon leaving the underworld!”

Chapter 588: Heavenly Tribulation

“Easily done.” With a smile, Ashu swore a solemn oath upon the world.

Lu Yun let out his breath. For those who’d reached Ashu’s realm, what they feared most was the world itself. Their every word and action brought about corresponding reactions from the world. To betray this kind of oath was to be sentenced to death by the universe itself.

Therefore, these powerhouses would never casually swear such an oath.

Thus reassured, Lu Yun taught his breathing method to Ashu. When the holy lord tried to breathe in accordance with the technique, a trace of delight appeared between his brows.

“Anyway... since we’re done here, I’ll be taking my leave!” Lu Yun sighed imperceptibly with relief, ready to bolt.

“Not so fast!” Ashu stopped him. “I must stay by your side and go out with you. Mmm... being near you feels very comfortable.”

The aura of hell emanated from Lu Yun, after all. While a living dead, Ashu was inherently a creature of the netherworld and thus naturally attracted to hell's presence.

For his part, Lu Yun belatedly recalled the first condition Ashu had mentioned earlier: departing the underworld with him.

"Suit yourself." He nodded. "You can stay with me, but don't go causing me problems. The world of immortals is vast and there are many little-known powerhouses hidden within its corners."

"Hehehe!" Ashu bobbed his head quickly like a pecking hen. "I know about them. Without them, the world of immortals would've long since been destroyed."

Lu Yun looked at Ashu, but the holy lord declined to elaborate. He rubbed his forehead at the absurdity of the situation. At the same time, his previous trace of anxiety had somehow vanished without a trace after teaching the breathing method to Ashu.

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"It's Lu Yun! He's finally come out!" When Lu Yun appeared in the underworld's outer reaches, his presence was immediately noticed by the mausoleum keepers. A dense crowd immediately surged in his direction and surrounded him. Meanwhile, three gold-clad holy lords descended from the sky above, immense greed and yearning plain on their faces.

After a young lord had been killed by Lu Yun's cannon, his men had circulated the human's appearance through the underworld so that mausoleum keepers could recognize him at first glance.

"Lu Yun, this seat can spare your life if you hand over the Panorama of Clarity." This particular holy lord's eyes almost shone with tangible light as he stared at Lu Yun, trying to detect the presence of the Panorama on him.

As for Lu Yun, he could tell that these three holy lords were far weaker than Ashu. His new sidekick looked identical to a living person in all respects, whereas not even the Spectral Eye was required to see that these three holy lords were living dead.

"Why waste your breath? Just seize his soul and be done with it!" Another holy lord reached out for Lu Yun's head.

Bang!

A dark-golden ripple flashed through the air and decimated the holy lord's right arm into fine powder.

"Who?!" The three holy lords finally noticed the presence of someone else standing beside Lu Yun.

"Aren't you three trash quite something?" Ashu sneered. "How dare you try grabbing one of my own from right beneath my nose?"

As his words fell, dark-golden ripples of light spread from his figure, causing the three holy lords to stiffen at the sight.

"Yo-you're a powerhouse from the depths!" The three backed off, eyes previously shining bright golden now a pale white.

“Open the barrier!” Ashu ordered, his voice grim. “Or I exterminate your entire clan!”

The three holy lords hesitated.

“We refuse!” one of them suddenly roared back. “You might be a powerhouse from the depths, but what does it matter? For us, the Panorama of Clarity is a matter of—”

Bang!

Before he could finish his sentence, Ashu blasted him with a fist, reducing the offender into a powdery cloud of golden fireworks.

“You might as well die, since you won’t listen.” Ashu’s expression turned callous.

“Sire, don’t, we—” The two remaining holy lords shivered in terror. As fellow mausoleum keepers, they hadn’t expected Ashu to kill one of his peers so nonchalantly!

The title of holy lord carried with it an important connotation. It was a sign of great authority in the underworld, the power with which to command a legion of mausoleum keepers.

However, even if both were called holy lords, those in the outer reaches couldn’t compare to the ones from the underworld’s core. These two surviving holy lords were merely equivalent to origin dao immortals from the Primordial Era.

Ashu struck again without giving them an opportunity to speak. Two dazzling streams of golden light flashed out of his hands and erased the other two holy lords from existence.

“Open the barrier!” Ashu’s hard voice spread coldly through the outer reaches. “If anyone is presumptuous enough to reactivate the barrier again, they can expect their entire clan to be exterminated!”

Some nearby holy lords who’d yet to approach in time shuddered violently, then tripped over themselves to unseal the barrier. After that, they took the mausoleum keepers under their personal command and retreated with their tails between their legs, unwilling to bother Lu Yun any further.

Lu Yun clucked his tongue with astonishment. Ashu’s aura of violence was incredibly dense. If it’d been just a tad stronger, he would’ve wiped out all of the nearby mausoleum keepers.

The principal realm is the realm of the Azure Dragon King and Cangyin... Just how strong is it, really? He couldn’t help but shiver, uncertain whether bringing a heavyweight of Ashu’s level to the world of immortals would be a mistake or not.

“Shall we?” Ashu turned back and flashed a brilliant grin at Lu Yun. But to Lu Yun, his smile now looked a little uncanny.

Immortals and cultivators alike looked at each other in confusion, completely mystified by the turn of events. In fact, they couldn’t even detect the holy lords’ existence.

“The barrier’s open, let’s get out now!” an immortal shouted as he dashed toward the exit.

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The barrier was in a poor state, riddled as it was with a myriad of cracks through which many yin spirits tried slithering through. Once those yin spirits reached the world of immortals, they became abnormally savage and destructive.

“Finally back!” After reaching the vast waters of the East Sea, Lu Yun took a long, deep breath, a comfortably warm current of energy coursing through his being.

In contrast, Ashu trembled violently at his side. Black smoke wafted from his figure, as if he was being burned by a nameless flame. As Lu Yun expected, the yang energy of the world of the living was attacking Ashu’s body.

While Ashu’s soul was alive, his corporeal shell was dead. At his core, he was a dead creature that belonged to the house of the dead, the world of yin. Despite their dead bodies, a living dead nourished by yin energy was no different from a living person. But when exposed to yang energy, they would inevitably catch fire.

The stronger the living dead, the denser the yin energy inside them... But when their strength reached a certain point, it wasn’t impossible for them to completely ward off yang energy altogether.

Ashu plainly wasn't there yet. Only when he hastily put his newly acquired breathing method into practice did the thick smoke around him gradually abate.

“This won’t do, my essence is too powerful. I’ll have to resist the yang energy at all times!” With a thought, he immediately sealed away his essence, as well as ninety-nine percent of his cultivation, finally putting a stop to the yang energy’s onslaught.

To Lu Yun’s eyes, the previously genteel and mild Ashu was now covered in a roiling layer of ghostly aura. His skin was ghastly pale, and his figure blanketed in a layer of black energy.

That’s more like how a living dead should look like.

“So I’m being haunted by a ghost...” A little ill at ease, Lu Yun could only shrug.

Boom!

A heaven-shaking noise came from somewhere far away, bolts of lightning to be seen flashing in that direction.

“A heavenly tribulation! Someone’s going through their tribulation!” Lu Yun cried out despite himself.

“Let’s go take a look!”

Chapter 589: To Stand Guard

A heavenly tribulation! After weathering such a trial, cultivators would ascend to immortality!

Almost three months remained until Lu Yun’s own, so for him, there was still a certain mystique to these tribulations. Although Huangqing, Feinie, Yuying all possessed memories of passing theirs, they’d faced vastly different ones from those of this day and age.

Nowadays, the path of cultivation had been mended with the return of the void realm, so the intensity, and even the form of heavenly tribulations had greatly changed. Therefore, he urgently needed to observe one and familiarize himself with them.

He'd seen Mo Yi go through hers, but... what kind of person was she? One who'd coasted through her tribulation with the turn of a hand and then left by tearing a rift through space, that was who.

He made his way toward the thunder and lightning with the Wandering Step.

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Pitch-black clouds ensconced an area fifty kilometers across like a lid, terrifying thunder and lightning rampaging amidst them.

Numerous immortals and cultivators had gathered for the occasion. Quite a few of the latter had plunged the depths of the celestial master tomb and reaped a primordial legacy from its many opportunities. Now poised on the threshold to immortality, they wouldn't miss a chance to study a void ascension tribulation for anything in the world.

The subject of their scrutiny was a young man roughly eighteen years old, clad in a set of green robes flapping in the wind. Sword in hand, he hovered in the air and stared unblinking at the brewing tribulation of thunder and lightning.

He was a little nervous, as a matter of fact. His trial had come too abruptly, and far ahead of schedule. He wouldn't have picked this location to endure his tribulation otherwise.

"Most people nearby are up to no good. They're waiting for the tribulation to arrive so they can interfere and prevent me from achieving success!" His palms were slippery with sweat from the pressure of having to defend himself on two fronts. He had to guard against the tribulation with one eye, and be ready to respond to possible ambushes with the other.

To enter the ranks of void-ascended immortals was to lift the curtains on the next act of the times. The earlier one reached immortality, the greater their advantage. No matter who, no one was willing to see the emergence of a formidable rival. Therefore, the immortals nearby made no secret of their murderous intentions. As soon as the lightning struck, they'd kill this powerhouse-in-the-making before he could succeed.

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"Just who is this young man?" someone whispered.

"He wasn't one of the prominent geniuses at the Sovereign Ranking Battles. He seems to have been relatively unknown before today."

"These kinds of people are the scariest. They usually keep their heads low, but they'll become an overnight sensation at a critical juncture."

This young man had certainly participated in the Sovereign Ranking Battles to reach his height of today. But he must've been one of those who kept a low profile and stayed out of most struggles, so no one knew of his name.

At the same time, some void realm cultivators who were also on the verge of becoming immortals felt rather envious. They, too, could sense their impending tribulations.

A void realm cultivator's tribulation was different from the ones in olden days.

With the absence of the void realm, cultivators who'd reached peak transformed spirit realm could force the arrival of their tribulation to break through. If they survived it, they'd set foot into the true immortal realm.

But after reaching peak returned void realm, one was fated to grapple with the heavenly tribulation. Cultivators could sense its inevitability, as well as how long they had before the day of reckoning. They had to spend their time wisely on advance preparations before the appointed hour arrived.

Once upon a time, when to face the tribulation was at the cultivator's own discretion. They only needed to increase their cultivation to a certain degree before dictating when they would face their trial, but now, it was something preordained by the immortal dao.

"It looks like he's here all by himself. There's no one to stand guard over him..." A peerless immortal looked at the young man with naked malice.

The young man shuddered when he heard those words. He wished nothing more than to whip around and flee back to the underworld not too far away.

Lightning bolts in the sky flashed ever brighter and the terrible thunderstorm looked ready to rip apart space itself. Meanwhile, the previously lid-shaped tribulation clouds shifted into a massive vortex. The tribulation, it seemed, was finally finished amassing its power.

Bang!

Space suddenly trembled.

A young man clad in white appeared out of nowhere, black water jar in hand. About seven meters wide and ten meters tall, the jar elicited dull thumps when it connected with the air. "Who says there's no one here to stand guard for him?" Lu Yun's lips curved slightly upwards. "Little brother, you just focus on your tribulation. If there's anyone who dares disturb you... this young master will smash them so completely that their own mother won't recognize their bone dust!"

As the jar's demonic energy enveloped Lu Yun, his aura belched balefully outward and swirled into a giant vortex. Like the advent of a demonic titan, it made all of the nearby immortals flinch.

The young man shook when he saw Lu Yun, a trace of happiness appearing on his face.

"Many thanks for your assistance, senior brother Lu!" he shouted. Every cell in his body on high alert, he stared at the rumbling lightning above.

Soon after, Lu Yun sensed immense goodwill from the young man flowing into the Sal Tree of Life and Death inside his dantian. The tree shook slightly, the bright yellow tinge on it growing more pronounced.

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“Lu Yun, don’t go sticking your nose in someone else’s business!” A returned void realm cultivator lambasted with a frosty glare. “We’re not in Dusk Province anymore, and there’s no inheritance tower here. Do you really want to make an enemy out of all the immortals in the world?”

This cultivator had obviously participated in the great battle of Dusk Province. When Lu Yun had activated the inheritance tower, he’d almost pissed himself in fright and took off running. Ever since then, he’d been nursing a grudge against Lu Yun.

Moreover, he was also at peak returned void realm and had already sensed his upcoming tribulation. No formations of heaven and earth were needed for him. In fact, though no one ever brought it up other than as hushed whispers, all void realm cultivators fervently wished for Lu Yun’s death.

If formations of heaven and earth were never to appear, then the future... and even the present would belong to them!

But with formations of heaven and earth readily available, the nigh-obsolete immortals would obtain the power of void-ascended immortals as well. For void realm cultivators, this created an enormous hindrance that would nullify all of their advantages.

For that reason alone, these returned void realm cultivators wanted nothing more than for Lu Yun to die.

“Hehe.” Lu Yun couldn’t help but a grin as he scanned the surroundings with an eagle eye. “I really do feel like pissing off all immortals in the world today. Don’t like that? Feel free to step forward!”

Swish!

Many immortals backed off in unison, unwilling to come to blows. After all, they still needed his formation of heaven and earth. In contrast, quite a few void realm cultivators took to the air, raring to fight.

The last time, Lu Yun had used the ancient lord’s inheritance tower to scare them off, a pill that these geniuses found repulsive to swallow. Now that they’d obtained great benefits from the celestial master tomb, many of them sensed their upcoming tribulations. They were about to become immortals! When they ran into Lu Yun next, they were going to show this former number one youth sovereign who was boss.

“I’m not scared of you.” A dazzling golden avenue slowly extended from the void, admitting a young man holding a golden spear wreathed by subtle dragon howls.

Wu Tulong.

Wu Tulong was here again.

“Lu Yun, dare you fight me?” He brandished the gleaming spear in his hand, pointing it straight at Lu Yun.

Rumble!

Just then, the roiling, churning clouds in the sky transformed into a giant wave of lightning and descended from the heavens, ruthlessly pouncing on the young man.

Chapter 590: The Giant Beast In The Sea Of Lightning

The crowd froze when the tribulation unveiled itself in its full glory. What they were witnessing went beyond anyone's comprehension.

Terrible bolts of heavenly lightning intersected in the sky and formed giant waves. Generally speaking, lightning pouring down like water was already a phenomenon alarming beyond belief. But currently, thunder and lightning was frothing and roiling in the sky and brewing into colossal waves!

"This is terrible, this is awful... He's going to fail. My soul would be destroyed if this lightning even touched me!" a golden immortal murmured to himself from several hundred kilometers away, floating in fear and trembling in awe of the spectacle.

He wasn't the only one; even peerless and dao immortals were terrified, as the giant waves of lightning were beyond horrifying. For those who'd never experienced the void realm, a slight brush would be all it'd take to seal their fates.

For their part, the many void realm cultivators who'd been eager to challenge Lu Yun now abandoned the idea in favor of meticulously observing the tribulation instead.

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"In my opinion, we should wait for the tribulation to pass. It won't be too late to fight then." Lu Yun glanced at Wu Tulong, his tone serene. The latter nodded and retracted his spear, then stared at the tribulation with bright eyes, not blinking even once.

As for the others, the presence of Lu Yun standing guard was ample deterrence. This gave the young man enough breathing space to wholeheartedly focus on the tribulation at hand.

Green robes flapping in the wind, his sword blossomed with the radiance of the moon. A resplendent full moon rose behind him, the manifestation of a fearsome combat art from the Primordial Era—a flawless ancient art.

Boom!

The moment the moon appeared, a thousand giant waves rippled forth and neutralized an entire wave of lightning. However, the moon also shook from the impact. Many cracks snaked along its surface, but its integrity remained. The young man heaved a long sigh of relief, his forehead covered in sweat.

"Look, there's a creature in the sea of lightning!" Someone suddenly pointed up at the ocean of lightning mirroring the East Sea's waters below.

The sea of lightning had swelled into furious billows dozens of kilometers tall, and a colossal creature floundered amidst the waves. From it, one could sense the aura of a prehistoric beast. Meanwhile, waves of lightning still relentlessly bombarded the young man.

The moon behind him had been dispelled and his sword took to the field instead, materializing as a curtain of moonlight that doggedly resisted the tribulation. The young man's strength was astonishing! Even when compared to the former ten lords and thirty-six champions, he would be ranked among the very best.

A wave was churned to pieces everytime it crashed into his sword curtain. But the lightning came in endless, relentless waves, and it took only a few moments for the sword curtain to shatter as well. The sword returned to its master's hand, keening in sorrow.

This result was anticipated, and the young man promptly summoned a formation tower that instantly deployed a giant defensive formation to block the lightning smiting down from the heavens.

Taking advantage of this brief reprieve, the young man hastened to swallow a few pills to recover his energy.

There were ninety-nine waves of lightning in total, and it took everything the young man had to block them all. Heavily injured at the end of this round of exertion, blood dribbled from his mouth and his face was wan. His once elegant green robes were charred ashes, his sword melted by the lightning, and the formation tower now nothing but charred rubble.

But after the ninety-nine waves were spent, the sky still didn't clear. Rather, a stifling atmosphere spread throughout the land. Even immortals and cultivators as far as fifty kilometers away felt an unbearable oppression.

"The giant beast born amidst the tribulation clouds is about to attack," Wu Tulong suddenly murmured.

Shocked, Lu Yun looked carefully into the depths of the lightning sea beneath the tribulation clouds. A titanic black creature twisted in it, bolts of fine lightning densely strewn about the surface of its body.

The young man's gaze remained firm. With the flip of a wrist, a snowflake-like weapon appeared in his hand. Snowflakes drifted in the sky, imbuing his charred green robes and turning it into a brand new snowy garment draped over his body.

"He's from Witherdew Major's Xue Clan!" someone exclaimed when he saw the snowflakes and the young man's transformation.

"No wonder he doesn't have a senior to protect him... the Xue Clan's been exterminated!"

All of the immortals in Witherdew Major were dead, punished by a chaos tribulation. The Xue Clan had been a top-tier clan in the major and had had a crippled origin dao holding down the fort. But when even a flawless origin dao immortal like the Witherdew emperor had died, the same went without saying for the Xue immortals.

Now, other than a handful of individuals who'd been away from Witherdew Major on that fateful day, the clan's immortals had all perished. In other words, the clan itself was no more.

While some cultivators were still alive, including void realm ones, it was far from enough to sustain the existence of a full-fledged clan. This young man was undoubtedly the Xue Clan's final spark of hope. If he could become a void-ascended immortal, there might be a chance for the clan to be reborn from its ashes!

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In the sea of lightning, the giant beast's aura grew with each passing second. Everyone had guessed by now that the final challenge of this heavenly tribulation would be this very beast born from lightning.

Roar!!

A lengthy howl echoed from the sea of lightning as the black beast ponderously swam down from the skies, gradually revealing its appearance. An enormous fish several hundred meters long, its two giant fins gave rise to fearsome lightning gales with each beat, as if fleshy wings. There was also a single gray horn on top of its head that discharged heavenly lightning.

“A kun!” some immortals cried out. “This is a kunpeng, just like the true body of Beigong Yu, the North Sea’s once-Kunpeng King.”

Beigong Yu had once been the North Sea’s foremost monster king. Enveloped by a dense air of blood and violence, he’d killed too many immortals to count. Such a peerless monster king had been a daunting figure for many immortals; therefore, they naturally knew of his true nature.

However, kunpengs possessed two shapes, the kun fish and the peng bird. Beigong Yu had been the one and only kunpeng in the modern age, so next to no one knew of their detailed characteristics. They all thought a kunpeng was merely some kind of giant fish.

“It really is a kun ... a thunder kun!” Lu Yun became grave. “But this thunder kun is purely kun shaped, it can’t become a peng bird.”

A thunder kun wasn’t a genuine kunpeng, but a spirit born from thunder and lightning!

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“Roar!!” A tremendous challenge came from the thunder kun’s mouth as its giant frame twisted in the air, swimming swiftly toward the young man with undulating motions and accompanied by a giant cloud of lightning.

The young man turned solemn, a breeze of snowflakes stirring to life when he suddenly howled in return. At the same time, a full moon slowly rose from the dance of snowflakes.

Snowflakes and the bright moon!

The young man had combined his clan’s trademark combat art with a primordial art, exploding the product now with tremendous force.

“Split!” he shouted furiously. With snowflakes as the hilt and the moon as the blade, he slashed ruthlessly at the giant beast.