

Necropolis 611

Chapter 611: One Punch, One World

A terrifying cacophony of growls and shrieks, as well as the clatter of chains dragging on the ground, traveled from the unexplored abyss of hell. The three coffins hovered in the air, radiating light of three different colors to suppress the rioting depths, where a pair of stark-white eyes gazed back silently upon them.

Lu Yun's nine Envoys of Samsara stood in midair, hellfire burning around them to form a protective circle around the netherworld's civilization. Xing Chen had returned to the netherworld as well, his eyes fixed on the unknown abyss. He could sense the pale eyes boring holes into himself.

Chains and black shackles abruptly snaked out from the void, followed by humanoid beings dressed in tattered clothes that were marked with the character zu for 'pawn'. A pungent smell of decay wafted about them.

"Grr!" one of the humanoid beings snarled, unleashing the power of an origin dao immortal as it charged into the known space of hell.

Wham!

The three coffins trembled as a phoenix croon, qilin screech, and turtle roar echoed through hell. Powerful soundwaves reverberated off of each other, crushing the terrible beings into pieces.

However, there were too many of them. The endless horde of monstrous prisoners threatened to overwhelm hell. They even assembled into strange formations to offset the power of the coffins.

Chains and shackles rattling in their hands, the humanoid beings gradually advanced through the perimeter set up by the coffins and encroached upon the sole spot of light inside hell.

The coffins were incredibly powerful. A slight shift from the Nine-Phoenix Casket was enough to crush all of the charging prisoners. Not to be outdone, the Enneaqilin Coffinbiers and Ninefooted Turtle Cist barrelled straight into the darkness.

"Kekeke—" Grating laughter rang out as the void around the pale eyes crumbled away, revealing a ghastly white figure. "Bold of you little matchsticks to stand in my way."

It wasn't a skeleton, but a being of flesh and blood. Bizarrely enough, its flesh and blood were as white as bones and covered in strange patterns.

It sent the Nine-Phoenix Casket flying with a single move, then lifted its leg to stomp down onto the Ninefooted Turtle Cist. While its fellows were under attack, the Enneaqilin Coffinbiers slammed straight into its chest.

Boom!

The impact of the collision threw the coffin clattering back to the ground, its nine qilins shattered, prone, and unmoving.

Crack crack crack!!

Applying greater force, the white figure flattened the Ninefooted Turtle Cist into the earth beneath its feet. Blood seeped out from the resulting cracks.

The figure stalked out of the darkness.

“Last time, I was restrained and so suffered an injury from your sword. Let’s see what you can do this time.” Its eyes burned with white flames.

Xing Chen could tell that it was Hadal Bonefire, but one several times more powerful than that of Jiangchen Xie’s. They might as well be completely different flames.

Back when Lu Yun had experimented with his sword techniques in hell, he’d invented his fourth technique, Endless Cosmic Ocean, and injured a powerful being within the void. That must be the white figure they were facing now.

With a wave of Xing Chen’s hand, starlight showered down from the sky and transformed into boundless sword energy. He’d conjured a hundred and eight thousand sword atlases with the power of the Cosmic Sea, each of which contained ten thousand rays of cosmic sword light.

A total of a billion and eight hundred million strands of sword energy circled around Xing Chen.

Amplified by the power of hell, the great might of the heavenly lungs and heart enabled him to tap into the full power of the Cosmic Sea.

“I was able to injure you last time, so I’ll be able to kill you this time.” Xing Chen waved a hand and coalesced the sword energy into real flying swords, their vibrations weaving a humming symphony.

The white being stared at Xing Chen, its expression unnatural. It didn’t expect him to be capable of such great strength.

“How is this possible?! Even if you’ve gained control over what’s left of hell, you shouldn’t be able to tap into its power. Why would hell recognize you as its master?!” The white figure staggered back.

“Nothing is impossible,” Xing Chen grinned wolfishly.

Swoosh!

All billion and eighty million flying swords swung at the same time, unleashing a wave of blinding cosmic light.

Hum.

Hell itself seemed to split beneath the attack. The sweep disintegrated the pawn-ranked prisoners before they could even make a sound. Silver starlight flooded all parts of the netherworld, blinding white overwhelming everything. Even Lu Yun’s Envoys of Samsara temporarily lost their vision.

After an unknown period of time, the light dissipated and everyone regained their sight.

Crackle crackle crackle.

There seemed to be something breaking apart.

“My Hadal Bone Mountain remained intact even in the battle of Emperors Fall, but you shattered it with a single blow.” The white figure sounded incredibly weak. It had both arms extended, like it’d been holding something, and a thick pile of bone powder was gathered at its feet.

Xing Chen’s face was pale. The power of hell flooded into his body to replenish his strength, but the mental toll the attack had taken couldn’t be recovered so easily.

“Die!!” The white being took a step forward and threw a punch with enough power to destroy heaven and earth, seemingly trapping Xing Chen in a small world. He hadn’t just isolated space, but had thrown his quarry into another world entirely! The white being had created an entire world with a single punch!

“Sir!!” Lu Yun’s nine Envoys of Samsara sprang into action. Hellfire surged from their bodies and formed a protective barrier, facing the punch with the power of hell.

Bam!!

All nine of them died and returned to the Tome of Life and Death. Together, they had failed to withstand even a single punch!

“Die!!” The fist continued advancing even after destroying the nine envoys, bearing down on Xing Chen’s body.

Lu Yun realized to his horror that the attack was aimed at not only Xing Chen, but also himself—a causal power had connected him to his replica. If the punch landed, he would be killed along with Xing Chen!

Bam!

Before he could think of a response, the punch came.

Great destructive power rippled in all directions, but it concentrated and violently converged into a minor world before it could spread, amplifying the power of the punch.

Boom!

A second explosion rang out as the white being shook and flew backward off its feet. A scrawny-looking figure stood hunched over before Xing Chen, his fist extended after throwing a punch.

Ge Long.

Chapter 612.1: The World Will Know No Peace Without Lu Yun’s Death

Ge Long was short and scrawny, his back slightly hunched over, but at this moment, he looked incredibly imposing. Faint black flames even circled around him—not hellfire, but another fire with great destructive power.

His attack threw the white being back into the void deep within hell, never to be heard from again. Everything seemed to settle down.

.....

“You...” Xing Chen stared dumbly at Ge Long. He didn’t expect the old servant to explode with such prodigious battle strength.

“Who the hell are you?!” Lu Yun demanded after a deep breath. This Ge Long was definitely not the once-grand steward of House Ge, the one who wanted to kill Lu Yun to avenge his granddaughter!

Lu Yun had never put much thought into when the old man had appeared in Yuying’s tomb out of the blue. He’d always thought that Ge Long’s continued existence and strength originated from the Tome of Life and Death.

How very wrong he’d been!

Ge Long showing up in Yuying’s tomb marked the defining moment in which he was something else entirely. Something Lu Yun didn’t know about. His was a power that the current Tome of Life and Death couldn’t grant.

“Hehehe.” Ge Long bowed and smiled his usual servile and overly fawning smile. “This old man is your servant, sir.”

Xing Chen stared dumbly at Ge Long, at a loss for words. The Sal Tree of Life and Death wasn’t in Xing Chen’s body, but he could tell through his connection to Lu Yun that the attitude Ge Long projected was completely genuine.

“You need not lose confidence in yourself, milord. If your heart and lungs hadn’t been in conflict with each other, your sword dao would’ve been able to kill that thing.” Ge Long continued merrily, “Once you incorporate the remaining three organs into your replica, there will be very few in the world who can rival you.”

Xing Chen felt an urge to smack his face. He was lucky enough already to have acquired the two organs, all five were out of the question!

Even if the other three organs had already been created, they must be in the possession of personages he couldn’t afford to earn the enmity of. For example, the heart had been in Ashu’s possession. The holy lord was a mighty figure in the underworld, and there was no telling how great his strength would be if completely unleashed.

The liver, kidneys, and spleen must be in the hands of great powerhouses like him as well.

Noting Xing Chen’s expression, Ge Long said knowingly, “This old servant doesn’t know where the kidneys and the spleen are, but the liver will be yours if milord can acquire the Ancient Tree of Life.”

Xing Chen started.

“The liver is in the tree!” Ge Long declared with great certainty.

“How do you know?” Xing Chen frowned.

“Because the Key of Life was born from the liver,” responded the old servant who wasn’t who he appeared to be.

Xing Chen didn’t intend to follow up on that line of inquiry. Although Ge Long wasn’t lying, he was very adept at skirting the real issues at hand. Further questioning wouldn’t result in any real answers.

“The dangers to Dusk Province haven’t been resolved yet,” Xing Chen changed tack. “Go help.”

“This servant... this servant would have to seal my core like Ashu if I am to leave hell, or trouble will follow.” Ge Long hurriedly shook his head. “Besides,” he pointed with resignation at the unknown abyss of the netherworld, “that thing has broken out of its restraints. This old servant has to stay here and keep watch, or it’ll destroy hell during this early stage of its recovery.”

“Alright then.” Xing Chen shook his head and turned to leave. Another battle had started outside, one that he had to intervene in.

After his departure, a pair of fearful, stark-white eyes slowly materialized.

“You, it’s you...” The white being from earlier was left with only a pair of eyes, ones that looked out with a shocked and fearful gaze. “You, you’ve become someone else’s servant...”

Ge Long shot it a glare and didn’t pay it any more attention. He dropped down to the ground, picking up the shattered shards of the coffins.

The three coffins had been destroyed by the white being’s world-creating punches. Strangely enough, the Blood Sea and remains that should’ve been found within them were nowhere to be seen. It was as if the three coffins in hell had always been empty.

Black fire surged in Ge Long’s hands again, enveloping the three coffins. They emerged anew, whole and complete, landing at the boundary of light and darkness in hell and setting down as a line of defense.

“They’re your coffins!” The pale eyes widened. “You’re dead, this isn’t the real you. You’re just a fragment of lingering obsession...”

Sheer relief washed over its gaze, dispersing some of its fear and shock.

Ge Long looked up and summoned a flash of starlight from the Cosmic Sea overhead with a wave of his hand, sending it barrelling into the darkness with a roar.

The eyes vanished with a final cry.

Gone was the humble and servile look Ge Long wore when facing Lu Yun; in its place was a particularly aloof expression.

“Neither copper, iron, nor steel; under Mount Sumeru it lies hidden. Refined not with reversed yin and yang; no edge sharpened by water and fire...” he chanted softly.

Hum!

Three swords of different colors shot into the three coffins within the endless darkness.

.....

Impending doom still loomed over Dusk Province.

The Blood Sea in the sky grew thicker and more viscous as it slowly descended to the earth. Mysterious giant monsters howled and brandished their claws within the scarlet depths, itching to charge out. They had one common goal: destroy the damaged, but slowly recovering projection of the Dao Flower.

The Enneawym Coffinbearers had gone silent after entering the sea of blood, but everyone could sense a great battle occurring between two enormous beings deep within the sea. Immortals of different clans fled from Dusk Province to the North Sea.

“Blood Sea... It really is the Blood Sea!” someone screamed in terror. “Forty thousand kilometers of a sea of blood is hovering over the province!”

Many saw a red cauldron turned upside down over Dusk Province, pouring out a scarlet sea that enveloped the land. Monsters rained down from the waters like beans spilling out of a bag, charging at Lu Yun with mad abandon.

They were strange looking, some resembling monster spirits and others resembling humans. But most were crippled; there were a few left with only a head or an arm. Lu Yun was their only target. To all the other living souls in Dusk, the monsters were only harmless illusions.

This was Lu Yun’s tribulation for establishing his dao, the truest test set forth for him.

Wielding the great water jar and the Sugato Sword over his head, Lu Yun waded through blood as he fought the terrible monsters.

No one could help him. Not even the human demon, the restriction of Dusk Province, could touch the monsters. Very soon, Lu Yun drowned in the endless swarm of Blood Sea monsters.

“I’ll help you!” Qing Yu screamed, charging into the Blood Sea with the Cosmic Skycarver and the blazing Scroll of Shepherding Immortals. However, the Blood Sea was an intangible illusion, a mere dream to her. She almost went out of her mind when she flailed around and hit nothing at all.

Hum.

At this moment, a violet sword slash cut through the void and threw the monsters back, slicing them in half.

Xing Chen emerged from hell with a hundred and eight thousand flying swords, hacking away at all the monsters around him.

He’d ascended to immortality from the void realm. Although he hadn’t undergone a tribulation, nor had he manifested any phenomenon when ascending, he was more powerful than the void-ascended immortals. The heart and lungs within him possessed power far greater than any heavenly forces.

Chapter 612.2: The World Will Know No Peace Without Lu Yun’s Death

“The Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, an amalgamation of the three paintings!!” Outside Dusk Province, the dao immortal of the Exalted Immortal Sect straightened up in shock and consternation. “The Scroll of Shepherding Immortals can awaken our ancestors. We will then return to the world of immortals as her master!”

He appeared to be human, but his body harbored a great reserve of divine energy. He was an Exalted Divine—the very tribe that had once destroyed the immortal dao, etched their divine patterns into the Dao Flower, and established the ancient divine court.

It was widely believed that the Exalted Divine Tribe had gone extinct, but in reality, their bloodline had been passed down to this day, kept alive somewhere in some corner in the world of immortals.

“My youths!” snarled the divine. “Follow me into Dusk Province and kill Lu Yun! The world will know no peace until Lu Yun’s death!”

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

Terrifying killing intent surged as the battlecry rang.

Immortals of the Exalted Immortal Sect came together with one united will. They knew what they were fighting for. Without any hesitation, they unleashed their greatest battle strength and charged into Dusk Province!

At the same time, the Exalted Immortal Sect back in Exalted Major began gathering its numbers. Transportation formation upon transportation formation lit up, depositing countless immortals into Nephrite Major who promptly marched into Dusk Province.

The bugles of war were blown, something that hadn’t even happened in Witherdew Major as of yet. No one fathomed that the fires of war would flare in a tiny Dusk Province, forty thousand kilometers across, first.

Stunned and at a loss, no one else dared make a move. Even the Lin Clan and the Unsullied Sea, factions friendly with Lu Yun, didn’t dare intervene. The Exalted Immortal Sect was determined to destroy Dusk with one swift assault.

The Dusk restriction against immortals seemed to be affected by the Blood Sea as well; the human demon’s manifestation was locked in midair, unable to move. Hundreds of thousands of immortals from the Exalted Immortal Sect had poured into the province without repercussion.

“Master!!” A thin man stepped out before the Exalted immortals, a pitiful figure compared to the great army.

“Turn back please,” Zhao Zhicheng begged. “You can’t win!”

Their leader was an imposing man donning a dao robe and a tall cap. He was Zhao Zhicheng’s master, the head of the Exalted Immortal Sect.

“Bastard!” snapped the sect head. “How dare you betray the sect?!”

“This disciple doesn’t wish to see the sect’s eighty thousand years of foundation destroyed in one day!” Zhao Zhicheng knelt down in midair and kowtowed repeatedly. “Please withdraw with the army, master!”

“Kill!!” There was nothing in the sect head’s eyes but the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals. Once they killed that woman and acquired the treasure, the Exalted Divine Tribe would gain new life!

A traitor was completely insignificant, compared to the scroll.

Bam!

The hundred thousand immortals of the sect advanced with reckless abandon, their combined aura hurling Zhao Zhicheng off his feet.

“Fellow daoists of the Exalted Immortal Sect, House Donglin will not be left behind in a crusade to destroy Dusk Province and slay Lu Yun!” Another group of immortals emerged from another direction—House Donglin.

Zhao Fengyang had disposed of their ancestor, Dong Lin, with a slash, leaving Donglin Taihuang, the self-proclaimed top genius of the world, someone with less than a hundred years of cultivation under his belt, spearheading the house.

He was a short, chubby, and ugly-looking man, but he was extremely powerful. He’d now ascended to peak arcane dao immortal realm and plucked his ninth arcane dao fruit.

“You mustn’t harm the woman of the cosmic constitution, though,” he added hurriedly when he sensed the killing intent from the immortals of the Exalted Immortal Sect.

“Fine,” the sect head assented coldly. “But that scroll of hers belongs to my sect!”

“Deal!” Donglin Taihuang added a condition of his own. “The Sugato Sword and the great water jar will be House Donglin’s!”

“Agreed.”

“Kill!” Two armies of immortals converged and charged into the heart of Dusk Province together.

.....

Qing Yu watched the overwhelming army of immortals with an impassive look on her face. Her Cosmic Skycarver, by contrast, radiated fierce killing intent. She knew what they were after.

Bam!

But before she could do anything, an explosion rang out, followed by the rise of a golden sun. It radiated a sharp, sword-like golden brilliance and slammed viciously into the incoming immortals.

“A connate-grade treasure!” Donglin Taihuang screamed. “It’s the Arcane Golden Orb!”

The orb was aimed squarely at the immortals of House Donglin. There was no one in the world that the attacker, Qing Taxian, hated more than the Donglins.

If not for them, his daughter wouldn’t have had to disguise herself as a man for most of her current life. She wouldn’t have had to shoulder anguish and pressure that would’ve destroyed anyone else. The Qings wouldn’t have made Lu Yun an enemy, and their forefather wouldn’t have had to kill himself to resolve the clan’s misfortunes.

Without their forefather and their host of powerful dao immortals, the Qing Clan was no longer a top faction in the world. In fact, they had no choice but to seek shelter in Dusk Province and rely on the protection of the restriction against immortals in order to survive.

Patriarch of the Qing Clan, Qing Taxian, threw all reservations out of the window when he saw House Donglin. He called upon the Arcane Golden Orb without hesitation when he saw their members charging in.

Bam!

Like a blinding sun, the dazzling orb landed amid House Donglin's army, disintegrating tens of thousands of immortals.

"I'll kill you, you piddling has-been!!" Donglin Taihuang shouted, pained. Among the army were the true elites and pillars of their house, and half of them had been killed by the connate-grade treasure's all-out blow.

Connate-grade treasures were extremely powerful, as they were the foundations of peak clans. No clan would bring out their connate-grade treasures unless they were on the verge of destruction. Their use often marked the battle as the clan's final stand. If the treasure was destroyed, so too was the clan.

House Donglin's ancestor had been killed, but they still possessed their connate-grade treasure and their arcane dao immortals. Thus, they were still considered a peak faction. No one had expected Qing Taxian to attack with the Qing Clan's ultimate treasure.

.....

"A connate-grade treasure!"

"The Qing Clan's ultimate treasure!!" Spectating immortals could no longer stay on the sidelines when the latest treasure appeared.

Although Qing Yu was wielding the Cosmic Skycarver, the Witherdew immortals who knew about it were all dead. No other immortals knew what it was, and the treasure hadn't yet demonstrated its strength as a connate-grade treasure.

The Arcane Golden Orb, on the other hand, was well known. It was the core connate-grade treasure of the Qing Clan, once a peak faction. Everyone knew its function and value.

Bam!!

Before Donglin Taihaung could attack Qing Taxian, the air trembled as giant hands probed out of the sky, fishing for the soaring orb. The crippled origin dao immortals were striking again, emerging from their hideouts after Zhao Fengyang's threat.

Qing Taxian's expression darkened. He was but a peerless immortal, and it was already difficult enough for him to activate a connate-grade treasure. The heavyweights making a grab for the treasure swiftly dealt him serious injuries.

At one point, a giant brown hand grasped the orb, but it was quickly knocked away by the other hands. The dao immortals spectating outside Dusk Province could no longer stay still, either. Connate-grade treasures were there for the taking!

.....

“Do you really take Dusk Province as a lamb ready for the slaughter?” Qing Yu’s beautiful eyes narrowed dangerously when she saw Qing Taxian injured and the dao immortals outside the province charging in. “Situ Zong!”

“Understood!” The air trembled as a gray orb emerged in the sky, slamming into a hand making a grab for the Arcane Golden Orb.

Bam!

The hand shattered with a ghastly scream. That attack had come from the Pelagic Orb, another connate-grade treasure!

A maddened frenzy of greed descended upon everyone, including the immortals of House Donglin and the Exalted Immortal Sect. Their previous targets had only been Qing Yu and the treasure in her possession, but after the emergence of the two more connate-grade treasures, the two clans couldn’t help but be drawn into the fray.

.....

“Three connate-grade treasures! Outside of the two orbs, the Formation Orb is in Dusk as well!” There remained many immortals outside Dusk Province who hadn’t gone into action. They sucked in a collective breath of shock. With three connate-grade treasures, Dusk Province would become one of the greatest sacred lands in the world if it survived this battle.

Scarlet Ape, who’d always seen Lu Yun as an enemy and wanted to regain his lost chunk of the Divine Seaquell Staff, stayed its hand as well. It stared unblinkingly at the Blood Sea in the sky with black iron rod in hand and the fiery cape over its shoulders.

“The blood nurtures the will of the human emperors,” it muttered. “Why would the human emperors move against Lu Yun with such a tribulation...?”

.....

“This is bad!! Let’s go, let’s go!!” Immortals spilling forth from the floodgates suddenly shrieked with panic and whipped around. Even the immortals of House Donglin and the Exalted Immortal Sect halted in their tracks.

Pitch-black fortress ships slowly sailed out of the void, dotting the sky and obscuring the sun. They were all lord grade!

Chapter 613.1: Tribulation of the Sacred Land

A total of ninety-nine lord-grade fortress ships sailed through the sky like a patch of heavy clouds. Their shadows replaced the crimson pall that the Blood Sea had cast over the land and draped pure darkness over the province.

Everyone’s hearts sank. They’d all witnessed the power of a lord-grade fortress ship with their own eyes, and the crystal cannons it came with were a shared nightmare of all immortals in the world.

Such cannons had once claimed crippled origin dao immortals!

Some immortals turned and fled as soon as they caught sight of the fortress ships. There were already two connate-grade treasures exerting dominance from the sky, the fortress ships were the last straw.

Dusk Province was an invincible bastion!

.....

“Don’t panic!” roared an elite of the Exalted Immortal Sect. “The crystal cannons and the lord-grade fortress ships are powerful, but they aren’t impossible to deal with. Charge into the cities of Dusk, I don’t believe that Lu Yun and Qing Yu will risk destroying their own cities!”

As he spoke, he turned into a flash of golden light and streaked toward one of the big cities.

Bam!

Dazzling golden light surged from the city in reaction. A vast, powerful formation lit up as the three hundred and sixty-five cities were connected to one another. The dao immortal of the Exalted Immortal Sect was thrown back.

In the air, the crippled origin dao immortals had given up on the two connate-grade treasures.

The Pelagic Orb had become one with Situ Zong, never to be separated. He was the treasure, and the treasure was him. Its overwhelming water-attribute energy stumped even the crippled origin dao immortals.

Granted a short reprieve, Qing Taxian resonated his Arcane Golden Orb with the Pelagic Orb, creating two intertwining barriers of light in the air to form an invincible iron wall.

The presence of the connate-grade treasures exuded a fatal attraction. Those who refused to give up and began their attempts anew were shattered by the barriers. Meanwhile, the crippled origin dao immortals had shifted their focus to the ninety-nine fortress ships.

They’d manifested the giant hands with the world’s energy, so the hands weren’t part of their bodies. Their destruction wouldn’t harm the immortals at all. In other words, the hands were their combat arts.

White beams of light arced across the sky from the crystal cannons on the fortress ships, crushing the great hands.

Kyaaa!!

A piercing avian shriek rang through the sky. A giant golden bird descended from heaven with a tremendous aura, claws gold and sharp like blades.

“The Great Peng!” Empress Myrtlestar frowned, standing beside Qing Yu. “That kind of divine bird went extinct a hundred thousand years ago.”

She had trouble believing what she was seeing. There had been records of the divine bird in the Primordial Era, and the Great Peng Method left by the bird had been passed down by certain factions—the Exalted Immortal Sect being one such example.

However, Empress Myrtlestar had never dreamed of seeing the divine bird itself—existing only in primordial myths—descending upon the world of immortals.

Descending with tremendous presence, the Great Peng grabbed one of the fortress ships and punctured its defenses with terrifyingly sharp claws.

Crackle!

One of the lord-grade fortress ships that had taken the world by storm was torn to pieces.

“Kill!” Invigorated, the immortals of the Exalted Immortal Sect swiftly assembled into battle formations and projected another Great Peng. Theirs was merely the manifestation of a battle formation, though, and a pale imitation of the authentic beast.

Wham!!

The Pelagic Orb bore down with great connate power, the great waves it brought about in the air forming a standalone world—the Pelagic Realm.

Under its might, the Great Peng Formation collapsed and fell apart. Many members of the Exalted Immortal Sect supporting it were killed. At the same time, the main canons of the fortress ships roared to life. Dozens of thick beams of white light scored a direct hit on the Great Peng.

However, the divine bird blocked the shots with flares of radiance from its glowing golden feathers!

The countermove shocked onlookers. The main cannons of the fortress ships could annihilate even crippled origin dao immortals, but now they failed to shake even the fluff off the bird’s feathers!

The Great Peng mounted a berserk charge into the formation of fortress ships and tore through more than a dozen ships, but then suddenly flew away like it’d been startled and made for the two connate-grade treasures in the air.

Here came the Divine Glory.

The Black Emperor was already charged, and the Formation Orb of Yin and Yang embedded in it glowed black and white. Panicked, the bird grabbed the connate-grade treasures with its sharp talons.

“If you dare activate the Formation Orb and that crystal cannon, I’ll raze Dusk Province to the ground even if I have to detonate myself!”

Neither Qing Taxian nor Situ Zong could defy the divine bird. The bird could break them as easily as it would two eggs. Clenching the connate-grade treasures, it looked piercingly at Qing Yu. It could tell that the horrifying fortress ship was under the unusually stunning girl’s control.

Although the fortress ship was powerful enough to threaten the bird, the bird was no helpless prey and could still detonate itself before its death. The resulting fallout would be enough to destroy Dusk Province and even neighboring provinces.

“Kekeke—” Suddenly, a peel of grating laughter rang out. A pitch-black iron rod fell from the sky and slammed into the Great Peng’s back.

Wham!

The giant bird with a wingspan of three thousand meters was shoved into the ground, and the two orbs fell into a furry hand.

Scarlet Ape had finally made its move. Now three thousand meters tall, it stepped on the bird with one foot, grasping its giant iron rod with the other. Its fiery eyes landed on Qing Yu with a vicious glint of mirth.

Silence descended over the land. Scarlet Ape was the center of everything in the area. Even the Blood Sea and the monsters within paled in comparison to its presence.

“You!” It pointed at Empress Myrtlestar. “Dare you fight me?”

It hadn’t recovered its full strength when Empress Myrtlestar drove it away in the North Sea dragon nest. Seeing her again made it itch for a rematch.

“Kyaa!!” The Great Peng beat its wings frantically beneath Scarlet Ape’s foot.

The bird was the guardian divine beast of the Exalted Immortal Sect, residing within a secret ruin left behind by the ancient Exalted Divines. It harbored a complete immortal dao within it. It was noble, mighty, and sacrosanct! However, Scarlet Ape was too strong for it to break free.

Scarlet Ape bared its teeth at Empress Myrtlestar, its urge to fight soaring. It could sense the unique demeanor she held herself with.

Boom!!

Suddenly, an ancient red tree blazing with fire fell from the sky and slammed into Scarlet Ape. Caught off guard, it quickly jumped out of the way.

The tree disappeared in the blink of an eye, seemingly nothing but an illusion. Seizing the opportunity, the Great Peng took flight and hovered beneath the Blood Sea, staring coldly at Scarlet Ape. It was a flawless origin dao immortal, born to dominate over all others as a top powerhouse of the world.

However, it’d first been deterred by Divine Glory, then stomped into the ground by a scarlet ape! The humiliation drove it to near madness.

Scarlet Ape didn’t spare it a single glance.

Chapter 613.2: Tribulation of the Sacred Land

A blazing ancient tree slowly drifted down from the sky, taking root in Dusk Province.

A nine-headed phoenix bathed in dark-red flames roosted on its branches. The flames abruptly flickered in unison and flared up around the phoenix. When it next emerged, it had transformed into a slender girl roughly seventeen years of age. Donning feathers of the seven colors, bright eyes and teeth gleamed in her face. Her existence alone was an ethereal breath of fresh air.

At the center of her brows, though, was a crimson pattern, which imparted to her a ghostly presence.

“It’s you.” Scarlet Ape’s eyes blazed. When the seal of the dragon nest had broken open, it’d missed many opportunities because of its fight with the nine-headed phoenix, Ghost Dragon, head of the Ingress Island, and the head of the Dark North Sword Sect. Moreover, it hadn’t recovered its full strength until recently.

“It’s me.” The girl smiled. “You may call me Ghost Phoenix.”

As she extended a hand, the Fire Parasol Tree trembled and turned into a sapling, then landed in her palm.

A ripple of water traveled through the air, from within which emerged another figure. It was Ghost Dragon; he stared at Scarlet Ape with his hands behind his back.

The Great Peng was filled with dread; any of those three could easily kill it. They exceeded the origin dao immortal realm and were firmly in the ingress realm!

I thought that with the daoist nun of Violetsky leaving and the nine celestial emperors abdicating their thrones, I'd be the strongest in the world of immortals, with complete freedom to do anything I wanted...

As the aura about the three monsters grew increasingly powerful, fear overtook the Great Peng's gaze. Their presence had frozen everything in the area, paralyzing it like a fly caught in amber.

"Looking to pick a fight with me?" asked a mild voice.

Boom!

The combined energy of the three monstrous beings shattered, lifting a great weight from the Great Peng's body. Despite its liberation, it still didn't dare move a muscle.

A violet figure glided across the sky like something out of a dream. Above her head floated the Cosmic Eyes exuding soft, silver starlight. Empress Myrtlestar crooked a finger at Scarlet Ape.

"Let us fight higher in the firmament." She streaked into a ray of violet and soared heavenward. Scarlet Ape scoffed before following suit out of the world of immortals, leaving Ghost Phoenix, Ghost Dragon, and the Great Peng as the only powerful beings in Dusk Province.

The divine bird didn't dare move a muscle, and immortals from different clans who'd invaded Dusk shuddered with fear as well. Crippled origin dao immortals were further intimidated into inaction.

Dusk Province was peaceful again, save for Lu Yun and Xing Chen's bloody fight with the monsters crawling out of the Blood Sea.

This was Lu Yun's tribulation; no one could land a hand.

.....

"Who would've thought that such powerful beings existed in the current world of immortals?!" The immortals taking refuge over the North Sea were chilled to the bones. Realization was setting in that they might have underestimated the conflict arising in Dusk Province.

"The Exalted Immortal Sect is right, though," someone worried. "Considering what kind of person Lu Yun is, and his usual style, him establishing the sacred land will undermine the foundation of the peak clans."

"There's nothing to worry about. The projection of the Dao Flower is on the verge of collapse. As long as we break the projection, his sacred land won't be recognized by the world or living spirits. He won't be able to do much by himself," someone said in a vicious tone. "Besides, Lu Yun has yet to overcome his tribulation. There's still a chance to kill him."

That got everyone's attention.

An immortal tribulation.

There were a good number of void realm cultivators, and nearly as many void-ascended immortals in the world now. A majority, however, had died in their tribulations.

Heavenly tribulations were no trifling matter.

To cultivators, tribulations were blades hanging over their heads. No one could be absolutely certain that they would be able to overcome theirs. The more potential one possessed, and the greater their talent, the more powerful their tribulation.

Many of the nine lords and thirty-six champions of the Sovereign Meet, great personages who'd left their marks on the world of immortals, had met an untimely demise in just that way.

"Lu Yun is incredibly talented, it's no exaggeration to call him the greatest cultivator of the world of immortals. Do you remember how the Exalted Immortal Sect went after Pill Fairy Yu Ying, twelve hundred years ago?"

That struck a chord.

Although Yu Ying hadn't died in their eyes, what the sect had done was chilling beyond comparison. They'd sent numerous cultivators about to face their tribulations into Yu Ying's, sacrificing them to increase hers to the maximum.

"Lu Yun won't survive his tribulation," a dao immortal from Thundergale Major said with a vicious curl of his lip. "No cultivators need to be sacrificed this time. I have a better idea. Things are too unpredictable at the moment, but Dusk Province will be destroyed when Lu Yun weathers his tribulation."

.....

In the end, the Exalted Immortal Sect retreated and House Donglin fled. Donglin Taihuang survived, albeit with serious injuries.

The danger, however, persisted.

Ghost Phoenix and Ghost Dragon looked gravely at the almost tangible Blood Sea. The monsters that should've been illusions to anyone outside Lu Yun were gradually turning physical as well.

"Lu Yun's tribulation is ending, but Dusk Province's tribulation will soon follow." Ghost Phoenix's delicate eyebrows drew close together in worry. "We aren't residents of Dusk Province, so we can't defend it against its trial."

Lu Yun's tribulation had struck for him raising his banner of dao, while Dusk Province's tribulation was for it becoming a sacred land. Only after overcoming it would the province be considered a true sacred land.

"We don't have to intervene," said Ghost Dragon. "The projection of the Dao Flower is more than enough proof that Dusk Province has the foundation to become a sacred land."

He looked up at the two connate-grade treasures in the air.

The Pelagic Orb and the Arcane Golden Orb had shifted away from Scarlet Ape and were glowing brilliantly, countering the power of the Blood Sea.

Rumble!!

The Blood Sea suddenly surged and poured straight down into Dusk Province. If it landed, the forty-thousand-kilometer-wide province would become the second Blood Sea in the world of immortals.

Hum.

Black and white seared the eyes as the Formation Orb flew out from the Divine Glory's bow. The heavenly power of the province entered the orb, turning Dusk Province into various shades of monochrome. A beam of light soared through the sky, preventing the Blood Sea from crashing down. Within the great city built not long ago at the center of Dusk, a giant scarlet flower bloomed—a Hell Flower!

The flower blossomed to such a great size that it covered all of Dusk Province. Traces of blood extended from it into the Blood Sea as the flower began to... absorb the water! When the scarlet waters irrigated the flower, it became ever more vibrant and beautiful.

Lu Yun's tribulation had ended, but Dusk Province's tribulation was proving to be even more terrifying as the Blood Sea continued its descent. Although it'd been slowed by the Hell Flower and three connate-grade treasures, the monsters from the Blood Sea rushed out like a swarm of locusts.

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Beams of light lit up the sky and disintegrated the monsters, shaking the entire province with crystal cannon discharges.

However, the cannons could cover only a small part of the large province. Many monsters fell through the cracks of the defense and landed on the ground. A great disaster was in the making.

The crystal cannons couldn't be aimed at the ground, or their great power might sink the entire province.

"Demonic whelps from the Blood Sea? Die!!" rang out a powerful howl. Five giant fiendish shadows soared into the sky from the Skandha Range, destroying all of the monsters in their way. The five sovereigns of the Star Demon Sect!

"Grrr—" Earth-shattering roars ripped out from the southern territory of Dusk Province as the Black Tortoise joined the fray with heavy steps, shooting out large water balls to kill the monsters.

The lord-grade fortress ships had retracted their cannons. Giant oars swinging, the ships rammed into the creatures from the Blood Sea.

Qing Yu sprang into action as well. The Cosmic Skycarver burst forth with the aura of a connate-grade treasure while three starstones and the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals orbited around her, scintillating, dazzling, and blinding.

She looked like a goddess descending from the nine heavens.

Her embittered bamboo replica had shown up as well. Just as powerful as Qing Yu, her every move was executed with great force.

.....

The battle lasted for a full month. In the end, all of the monsters were slain and the Blood Sea dispersed. The sky slowly reverted back to its normal state.

Bam!

The second everyone believed the battle was over and Dusk Province had overcome its tribulation, a giant skeletal foot fell from the sky and stomped on Lu Yun.

The Venerated Sacrosanct Demon Sovereign had finally come.

Lu Yun still had the Demon Sovereign Cauldron in his hand, but the Sugato Sword had fallen to the ground. He didn't have any strength left in him.

"No!!" Qing Yu almost screamed blood. She used the last drop of strength left in her to spring to Lu Yun, but the foot was too fast. She couldn't match its speed in her exhaustion.

"Oh, he's dead for sure. Lu Yun's finally going to die." There was a collective sigh of relief when the foot was about to step on Lu Yun.

Slap!

A slap sounded.

"I've been waiting for you, you old rack of bones!" sneered a derisive and vicious voice.

Slap!

Slap!

Slap!

A series of slapping sounds rang out from the sky.

Chapter 614: Fighting Over the Weapon of Dao

The Venerated Sacrosanct Demon Sovereign, most powerful demon of the Primordial Era, had died of a broken dao heart at the hand of the primordial immortal emperor and been buried in the underworld.

Though the Firmament Palace had chosen him to join their ranks, the demon sovereign had refused and caused a world of mess in doing so, but they couldn't do anything to him in return.

Seizing the opening when the yin and yang realms of the celestial master tomb came together, the demon sovereign returned to life as a great powerhouse in the world of immortals. He was at least a flawless origin dao immortal, yet someone of his level was being slapped around, unable to fight back!

Those who knew his background were stunned. Why was a newcomer intervening in Dusk's affairs?

"Moldy skeleton, sad sack of bones! Who do you think you are, calling yourself a demon sovereign?" Lu Feng taunted brazenly as he slapped the demon sovereign silly.

Currently, the demon sovereign had grown flesh and blood and assumed the form of a handsome man. The skeletal foot was a combat art he'd deployed with his Hadal Bone Method.

Snarling with fury, none of his arts or techniques could be brought against the strange young man. There was a strange power in Lu Feng that countered his Hadal Bone Method.

"Grrr!!" With a final snarl, the demon sovereign turned into a ball of surging white fire and vanished into thin air.

Dusk Province's sky was finally clear again.

Dazzling golden light radiating from three hundred and sixty-five great cities had protected the land from any harm. The enormous desolate willow had retreated back into the Skandha Range, as had the five sovereigns of the Star Demon Sect.

Lu Yun collapsed to the ground, panting heavily. Everyone was exhausted by the month-long battle. A shattered Xing Chen returned to hell to recover, and more than half of the ninety-nine lord-grade fortress ships bore some form of damage from the Great Peng, leaving less than thirty intact.

If not for the ships unleashing fire and brimstone, Dusk might not have survived its tribulation. Up in the air, the Enneaworm Coffinbearers absorbed the remaining sea of blood while glowing faintly of crimson.

Qing Yu snuggled close to Lu Yun, looking at the coffin up in the air. "Have you noticed that the coffin looks like a sword?"

As she intently studied the entity in the skies, she didn't see nine dragon corpses lifting a coffin, but a sword that shone with tremendous killing intent in all directions.

Lu Yun followed her gaze and took a closer look with the Spectral Eye.

"You're right..." He frowned. He'd noticed the changes to the coffin, but he hadn't realized it'd turned into a sword.

"Oh? Dammit!" Suddenly tense, Lu Yun shot to his feet and stumbled away. Some of the immortals who had fled Dusk had returned and were gathered together, looking for something.

"Got—" An excited man started rejoicing, but stopped as he held onto the ancient spear, his expression panicked. "My storage treasure isn't high level enough. I can't put the dao treasure away!"

He hurriedly jumped onto his sword for a speedy escape, but others had seen his find and killed him as soon as he took flight. The spear—the dao treasure wielded by the crimson monster—clattered back to the ground. It'd dropped there after the monster's suicide.

Lu Yun hadn't had time to spare for the spear back then, but the many immortals outside Dusk Province had immediately set their sights on it. Now that the Blood Sea was gone and the battle ended, they poured in to squabble over this powerful treasure.

When Lu Yun arrived, the dao treasure had already changed hands many times. Even a good number of void-ascended immortals had joined in the fight.

"Piss off!!" He snarled at the immortals moving toward the border of Dusk as they fought over the treasure.

"You should stay far, far away if you don't want to die, Lu Yun," scoffed a void-ascended immortal. "Otherwise, I can't guarantee that I won't accidentally kill the master of the future sacred land!"

The projection of the Dao Flower was slowly recovering from its damage. Once the projection was whole again, Lu Yun would be able to establish his dao. With Dusk Province overcoming its tribulation, it would become a true sacred land recognized by the immortal dao, once he did so and incorporated the Dao Flower into himself and the province.

Lu Yun could indeed be considered the master of the future sacred land.

However, the man had spouted off the title more as mockery. Everyone knew that the great factions and clans of the world wouldn't allow a true sacred land to emerge. It was only a matter of time before they went after Lu Yun.

Not now, not openly, of course. Three great beings, Ghost Phoenix, Ghost Dragon, and the mysterious young man who'd driven away the demon sovereign with simple face slaps, still remained near the great central city of Dusk Province.

Moreover, there were still two battles going on in the outer reaches of the world. Although the human demon had retreated, it could very well reemerge at any time. Every immortal keenly recalled how the giant pair of eyes had disintegrated several dao immortals with a single glance.

Lu Yun had too many powerful allies.

"If you want him dead, just do it," Lu Feng said with a smirk. "As long as no one attempts to tip the balance of the world, we won't protect him."

Mo Yi had left for Ling Province in the southern part of Nephrite Major to acquire the Skyturtle Pearl, while Lu Feng remained in Dusk Province so that the great powers casting covetous glances their way wouldn't dare draw close.

"Truly?" A void-ascended immortal perked up. Lu Yun had suffered grave injuries and looked ready to collapse at the slightest breeze. It was the perfect time to kill him!

"If you useless trash can kill him, then he can't be the master of a sacred land." Lu Feng stopped Qing Yu from going to Lu Yun's aid with a wave of his hand.

Lu Yun snorted and didn't dignify his brother's words with a response. Before the immortals could attack, he charged at the one who'd acquired the ancient spear.

“Come at me then!” After a startled pause, the immortal yelled and activated the dao treasure to launch a time attack.

A dark cyan spear pierced through the sky toward Lu Yun’s forehead, transcending the restrictions of time. However, the immortal blanched to find that the spear had drained him of all power. His inner energy should’ve been inexhaustible, with its connection to the world, but his reserves were dry!

The spear’s might plateaued.

Thud!

Black light hit the immortal squarely in the chest and rendered him into dust. Lu Yun took a step back and called the spear to him with a simple grabbing motion. In his other hand was a sharp black axe.

Spatial Reincarnation.

Chapter 615: Heavenly Army Approaching

Face pale and chest heaving, Lu Yun scanned the premises with cold, steely eyes. Immortals reflexively turned away from his chilling gaze, intimidated by the keenness within.

“Why should we be scared of him?” someone called out, the source of their faint voice impossible to pin down. “He’s exhausted after fighting for a month straight. We should work together and kill him now!”

That still didn’t compel anyone into action.

Lu Yun had cut down a powerful void-ascended immortal, one whose ascension had come with a magnificent phenomenon, with a swing of the axe. The immortal had been unable to even fight back!

What they didn’t know was that a dao treasure would drain its wielder of all energy if activated by force, leaving them with no strength to fight after an attack.

If the immortal hadn’t attacked with the dao treasure, Lu Yun wouldn’t have been his match without the Demon Sovereign Cauldron, which, unfortunately for him, Lu Yun had pulled out by now.

The water jar of a cauldron had no feet and fit upside down over Lu Yun’s head, its pitch black demonic energy becoming part of the youth. Emanating a foreboding aura, he resembled a bonafide demon lord in this state.

“Your cultivation really has deviated, Lu Yun...” The crowd took a collective step back, cowed by Lu Yun’s powerful response. Seeing the Dusk governor manifest the cauldron instilled even greater apprehension in their hearts.

Moreover, five hundred kilometers away at the center of Dusk City, the inheritance tower radiated blinding light. Should Lu Yun activate the tower again, none of them would make it out of here alive.

“I am the head of the Star Demon Sect, a demonic fiend through and through. What is this about me deviating?” There was no trace of exhaustion in his voice anymore; he’d recovered via entering hell and restoring his stamina and willpower. After consuming a few immortal pills, his inner energy had been completely replenished as well.

He didn't fear these immortals at all. In fact, they'd gotten cold feet and considered retreating as soon as Lu Yun laid hands on the ancient spear. Lu Feng was right; they were a disparate mob that posed no threat. If even trash such as them could defeat Lu Yun, he was unfit to rule over the future sacred land.

True geniuses of the world of immortals wouldn't have entered Dusk at this moment to vie for the dao treasure.

He was still known as the top youth sovereign in the world of immortals, his title unchallenged. Real geniuses would issue a proper, open challenge once Lu Yun had recovered fully and ascended to immortality. They wouldn't engage in this crap of skulking around opportunistically.

"Piss off!" snapped Lu Yun. As if being pardoned, the immortals fled with great relief. "Useless," he lowered his head and muttered, lips curled into a scoff.

"Lu Yun!" A thunderous noise split the air as a giant face emerged in the sky, looking down at Lu Yun. "Hand over the dao treasure."

The presence of an origin dao immortal radiated from the face, unfurling out over the land and covering all of Dusk Province.

"And who the fuck do you think you are?" Lu Yun derisively huffed at the latest would-be contender.

Offended, the giant face paused before continuing, "I am Venerated Elder Undone Earth of the Immortal Martial School from Enlightened Major."

"Immortal Martial School of Enlightened Major..." Lu Yun frowned. That was where Wu Tulong hailed from.

Sword Divine had tried planting a soul seed in Wu Tulong. Even though the attempt ended in failure, it'd also proven that the guardian spirit of the Immortal Martial School was loyal to Sword Divine.

"Hand us the dao treasure, Lu Yun!" Undone Earth continued gravely. "When we entered the void to pluck an origin dao fruit, it was this dao treasure that destroyed our fruit and crushed our nascent spirits. This dao treasure is very important to the entire world of immortals.

"As the future master of the sacred land, you should lead by example and hand over the dao treasure for the sake of all living beings!"

What an utterly noble front.

Lu Yun sensed goodwill gathering to the giant face from all directions. They weren't grateful to Elder Undone Earth, per se, but his words did resonate with them. Obviously, the sources of this goodwill were all advanced or peak arcane dao immortals.

"Please hand over the dao treasure for the sake of everyone in this world!" repeated the elder.

Heated gazes landed on him like physical weights. Increasing numbers of immortals had gathered in the province during the month-long tribulation, and they still remained near Dusk at this moment.

The spear in Lu Yun's hand was crucial. Over the past eighty thousand years, countless arcane dao immortals had fallen to it. The majority were killed, and only a few returned to the world of immortals with damaged origin dao fruit.

"If you're making this request on behalf of all living beings, why don't you come to me in person?" Lu Yun said with a half smile, putting the cauldron away with a wave of his hand and shouldering the spear.

"You've manifested a face in the air to look down on me, the master of the future sacred land. Do you have no respect for Dusk Sacred Land? Since you're asking me for a favor, show yourself and kneel down before me!" Frostily delivering his words, he punctuated the last statement with a swing of the black axe, bringing it down on the giant face with a flare of black light.

Crackle!

A flash of lightning stabbed through the air to offset the axe's power.

"Are you declaring yourself an enemy of all the immortals in the world?" Elder Undone Earth demanded coldly, tamping down the fury in his heart.

"An enemy of all the world's immortals?" sounded a chilling voice. Qing Yu broke out of Lu Feng's hold and made her way to Lu Yun's side with graceful steps. "So be it."

She turned around and looked piercingly at the immortals in and outside of Dusk Province. "Dusk is your enemy now. What are you waiting for? Come on in and destroy the province, why don't you?"

Everyone's breathing slowed, their expressions changing rapidly.

"That won't do, Fairy Qing Yu. An old man from the Immortal Martial School cannot represent the entire world of immortals," laughed a candid voice. "Otherwise, if we of the East Sea court wage a war and destroy the Immortal Martial School, wouldn't we be destroying the entire world as well?"

Clad in a set of dark cyan armor and wielding a broadsword, the speaker was a man who looked impressively noble and imposing.

"Xiangliu Hongtu, first prince of the East Sea Court. Well met, Sir Lu Yun, Fairy Qing Yu." From tens of thousands of kilometers away, Xiangliu Hongtu raised a cupped fist salute at Lu Yun and Qing Yu.

Members of the East Sea had arrived in Dusk Province back when the auction started, but hadn't participated as Lu Yun had gifted them with the items being auctioned beforehand.

Though their members hadn't entered Dusk during the tribulations, they'd slain many would-be invaders headed for the province, easing a great deal of Qing Yu's burden.

His statement silenced everyone; the East Sea court's power was beyond measure. No factions in the world, apart from the most powerful Primus Major, could rival them.

When it'd been the top clan of the world of immortals, the Lin Clan might have been able to challenge the East Sea and rival the Primus Court, but the secession of House Donglin was a great blow to the clan, leaving them with only seventy percent of their strength. They'd become somewhat of a recluse after the event.

“Hahaha!” A great fortress ship sailed over the North Sea. The ninth prince of Primus Major, who’d disappeared for a month, was here again.

Standing at the bow of the ship, the prince demanded, “On behalf of the world of immortals, Primus Major hereby demands the dao treasure from you, Lu Yun! If you dare resist, this will be your doom! What can the East Sea court do about it?”

Bam!

An explosion traveled from behind the fortress ship. Countless battle formations lit up and manifestations of divine beasts roared in the air, unleashing terrifying auras.

Heavenly soldiers of Primus Major! An army of heavenly soldiers was on the borders of Dusk to threaten Lu Yun!

Glowering, Xiangliu Hongtu summoned ten lord-grade fortress ships with a wave of his hand. The ships lined up in opposition to the endless supply of Primus soldiers.

“Have you tired of living, Yu Wenteng? I spared your life once, how dare you now taunt me in person?” He was a peerless immortal, but there was a great power of heaven and earth about him. He was no void-ascended immortal; his power came from a formation of heaven and earth etched into his body.

The thousand immortals who’d won the auction had left Dusk Province after receiving their formations and didn’t dare show themselves when the great tribulations hit. They’d come to the auction with a mission; formation masters of various factions were waiting in concert to study their newly-obtained formations of heaven and earth.

Meanwhile, Xiangliu Hongtu’s formation had been etched earlier by Lu Yun, and he was very familiar with its capabilities.

.....

Xiangliu Hongtu stood before the ten fortress ships, staring coldly at the oncoming Primus soldiers.

Yu Wenteng, the Primus prince, was completely fearless. When the army finally reached the border of Dusk, the seawater beneath their feet rose and roiled, soaring thirty thousand meters above the ground.

“Get out of the way. You can’t stop the Primus army with so few men,” Yu Wenteng declared with a cold expression. “You don’t have enough crystals to propel those ten ships, do you?”

That hit a nerve; Xiangliu Hongtu had given most of his crystals to Lu Yun. Although he still possessed a few hundred million, that wasn’t enough to tap into the true power of the ships.

He couldn’t afford to start a battle, however reluctant he was to admit it. Otherwise, the ten ships would all be taken by Primus Major.

The army loomed along Dusk’s border, ominous and threatening.

“Surrender the dao treasure, Lu Yun, or heavenly soldiers will destroy Dusk even if they lose their lives in doing so.”

“Grrr!” Divine beasts manifested by the battle formations roared incessantly, scaring immortals in the vicinity into quick retreat.

Within Dusk, members of the Chen, Qing, Lu, and Xue Clan were pale as a sheet and looked at the situation with appalled horror.

Primus Major was the greatest major in the world of immortals, and their heavenly soldiers the most powerful. They were already at the border! Once they marched in, none of the clans would survive.

“Lu Yun...” a Qing dao immortal with sealed cultivation spoke up in a trembling voice, “It’s probably better to surrender the dao treasure...”

“Shut up!” Qing Taxian took form out of the void. “Anyone who says another word will be punished for being a traitor!” With the Arcane Golden Orb over his head, he hovered on top of the Qing city and shouted, “Surrender the dao treasure? What are you useless pieces of shit going to do with it?!”

His voice reached a great distance, amplified by the connate-grade treasure.

“The traitorous formation masters in Dusk once stole the almost complete formation of heaven and earth. How long did you pieces of trash study the formation, hmm? And you concluded that the formation was impossible! What a joke.

“Do you think the dao treasure will magically enable you to defeat the monster guarding the dao fruit tree?” His voice practically dripped with mockery.

Many turned red with embarrassment. It was true that they’d originally deemed a formation of heaven and earth impossible after they acquired its blueprint.

As he spoke, Qing Taxian hurled the Arcane Golden Orb at Undone Earth’s giant face in the sky.

Chapter 616: For the Sake of All Living Beings?

Wham!

The Arcane Golden Orb shattered the giant face with connate power. Outside Dusk Province, color drained from the face of an old man and he threw up a mouthful of dark blood.

“He really is able to activate a connate-grade treasure on his own. How is this possible...?” Disbelief flashed through Elder Undone Earth’s eyes.

The giant face was only a projection of heavenly qi he’d created with his combat art, rather than being an integral part of him, yet Qing Taxian’s attack had bypassed his combat art and injured him. That was something only a connate-grade treasure could achieve!

Qing Taxian was but a peerless immortal.

“He’s not drawing on outside help, he’s tapping into the treasure’s power on his own! What’s going on here?!” roared the elder in frustration. Even he, a crippled origin dao immortal, had trouble deploying the Immortal Martial School’s connate-grade treasure, let alone a peerless immortal.

It didn’t make a lick of sense. More importantly, Qing Taxian’s power was currently suppressed to the august immortal realm.

.....

Qing Taxian paid no more attention to the defeated elder. With a wave of his hand, the Arcane Golden Orb returned and hovered over his head, spewing forth blinding light.

Situ Zong had soared into the air as well. Cultivation suppressed to the august immortal realm, he unleashed the power of the Pelagic Orb over his head. Its discolored light cast the land below in gray.

The two connate-grade treasures shone down on Dusk Province, turning everything in the area a mixture of gray and gold. The giant eyes of the human demon manifested as well, staring unblinkingly at the Primus soldiers marching in from the north.

Yu Wenteng scowled darkly. Two connate-grade treasures with their power completely unleashed were too great a threat to him.

“The dao treasure is important to all beings in the world of immortals, Lu Yun. It’s bigger than one person!” Yu Wenteng reprimanded. “Remember the invasion of yin spirits that destroyed Azure Province? Such a calamity can strike the world of immortals anytime!”

“Right.” Lu Yun nodded. “I resolved the invasion of yin spirits in Azure.”

Yu Wenteng paused, struck dumb by the rejoinder.

An elderly man by Yu Wenteng’s side spoke up in a chilling tone, “Over the past eighty thousand years, the world of immortals has seen many generations of celestial emperors of the nine majors—”

“Shut up!” interrupted Lu Feng. Expression dark, he glared at the old man with eagle-like eyes and snapped, “I’ll kill you if you say another word.”

“Hahaha!” Yu Wenteng scoffed. “Lu Feng, isn’t it? Do you come from that place as well? Have you not realized yet how bad things have become?”

“The nine celestial emperors ended their terms prematurely to fill the gap. Even the Purple Firmament, maintaining order in the world of immortals all this time, has retreated as well...” Yu Wenteng took a step forward as he spoke. “Do you really think those secrets should be kept so closely still?”

Lu Feng fell silent.

Emboldened by the man’s lack of response, Yu Wenteng shouted, “Surrender the dao treasure for the sake of all living beings!”

“For the sake of all living beings? How noble,” Lu Yun snorted. “If that’s the case, then Primus Court should hand over the connate-grade treasures reinforcing your rule, first. After all, the treasures can crush any and every yin spirit and ghost.”

“Ludicrous!” Yu Wenteng sneered. “Connate-grade treasures are far too important. How many in the world do you think can use...”

Hum.

Hum.

Before Yu Wenteng could finish, two beams of iridescent light shot into the sky from Dusk Province, contrasting and resonating with one another. The aura of two connate-grade treasures rushed across the land with overwhelming might.

Humiliation struck the prince like a ringing slap in the face.

“There are a great many talents in Dusk who can use connate-grade treasures.” Lu Yun put a hand behind his back. “Besides, there are so many of you. Who should I give the dao treasure to?”

He brandished the spear in his hand. As the spear had become one with Lu Yun’s nascent spirit, so did its power of time, which granted Lu Yun another combat art—Time Reincarnation.

He hadn’t fully mastered the combat art, though. Like Spatial Reincarnation, he needed the medium of a dao treasure to use the combat art.

“Whoever hands over their connate-grade treasures first will get the dao treasure,” Qing Yu said with a smile, batting her eyelashes. “If it’s for the sake of everyone in the world, a connate-grade treasure is only a reasonable price, isn’t it?”

She shifted her gaze to Yu Wenteng.

Face impassive, Yu Wenteng lifted his right hand. Once he dropped it, hundreds of millions of heavenly soldiers would charge into Dusk. He didn’t want to continue talking. The longer the conversation went on, the less he had the moral high ground or even a way to save face.

Rumble!

A thunderous noise rang from above the sky as a gold figure fell down and splashed heavily into the North Sea bordering Dusk, instantly crushing many Primus soldiers to death.

“Grrraw!” Scarlet Ape exploded out of the water, howling and spinning the iron rod in its hands.

“You’ve lost.” An elegant, opulently classy Empress Myrtlestar kept Scarlet Ape under control with a single glance. Having melded the Cosmic Eyes into her own, she conjured an endless wave of starlight with her gaze. “Stop this futile struggle. If I can defeat you, I can also kill you.”

She waved her hand and dropped the fiery cape belonging to Scarlet Ape into the North Sea.

Many more Primus soldiers were smashed to death by the resulting fiery deluge.

As easily as that, the Primus soldiers lost their calm, orderly battle formations scattering as endless waves swept them off their feet.

“You!” Yu Wenteng’s fury set his eyes ablaze. The clash between the powerful figures had destroyed Primus Major’s morale, and his men no longer possessed the courage to fight!

Noting Empress Myrtlestar’s triumphant return, Ghost Phoenix and Ghost Dragon nodded at her from the center of Dusk before turning and vanishing without a trace.

“Kekeke—” Scarlet Ape grimaced and grabbed its cape. Throwing a vicious glare at Empress Myrtlestar, it disappeared into the North Sea.

It knew she'd only spared it because of its dao partner, the silver scarlet ape currently residing on Levitating Island. Even more powerful than the golden ape, it would destroy heaven and earth if it made a move.

Empress Myrtlestar wasn't its match, at least not yet.

"Some might refrain from getting involved in the conflicts of this world because of undue concern for the measly rules and balance of the world of immortals," said Empress Myrtlestar. "However, I care not about any of that. If the heavenly soldiers of Primus Major ever set foot in Dusk, I will take the Primus Court down!"

Bam!

She made a backhand strike and left an enormous violet-gold handprint in the sky. Heaven and earth trembled in its wake; she'd shattered part of the world of immortals!

The pitch-black hole in the shape of her hand led directly to the cosmos outside the realm.

Chapter 617: An Invitation from Yellow Springs

That battle marked the final curtain call of everything and the retreat of Yu Wenteng with his great army of Primus heavenly soldiers.

Empress Myrtlestar's punch was a terrifying demonstration of force, punching a hole in the sky that led to the cosmos outside the realm. Even the nine celestial emperors would've had trouble doing that. It required tremendous raw power and an unimaginable mastery over heaven and earth to do something like that.

Soon, Empress Myrtlestar's identity was revealed and shared throughout the world. That graceful woman who'd dominated Scarlet Ape was Empress Myrtlestar, one of the emperors of four cardinal directions from the Primordial Era! Only the immortal emperor held a higher rank than they!

The news took the world of immortals by storm.

With an era of chaos on the horizon, it was unthinkable that a primordial empress would descend upon the world and... support Dusk Province.

.....

"Outside of me and Little Yu, very few knew about Empress Myrtlestar's identity. How did information get out?" Lu Yun and Qing Yu shared a dumbfounded look.

Empress Myrtlestar was an enigma and a secret weapon, her origins not to be speculated upon, but she'd now been casually revealed to the world.

Scarlet Ape was from an era before hers, a senior to Empress Myrtlestar. It couldn't have known who she was. As for the fur seals, they were wild beasts who had never seen an emperor in the Primordial Era. They wouldn't recognize her even if she stood right before them.

"No need to guess." Empress Myrtlestar manifested and handed the Cosmic Eyes back to Qing Yu. "I know how the news got out. Heavyweights from my time have come back to this world. I demonstrated

my power to the world of immortals to see if there are any other survivors from my time. It would seem that the answer is in the affirmative.”

Qing Yu fell silent.

“That explains it.” Lu Yun nodded. “The ancient immortal court foresaw the great war fifty thousand years before it broke out and made preparations accordingly to sustain the dynasty. If the court noticed beforehand, then other heavyweights of the world of immortals must have as well.”

He was reminded of what Fengbo had mentioned about signs before the great calamity.

During those ten thousand years, numerous heavyweights around the world of immortals had either gone missing or died. But perhaps they hadn’t died, just simply sealed themselves in some special environment instead, waiting to awaken after the calamity passed.

Not even the immortal court, the greatest faction in the Primordial Era, had been confident in their ability to survive the great calamity. They’d resorted to refining living souls into bone bricks to build the celestial master tomb.

The elites of the time surely would’ve done something as well.

Empress Myrtlestar being known to the world would do much more harm than good to her and Lu Yun. It was very likely that someone from her time had awakened. She was an incomplete soul, able to deploy her power only through the Cosmic Eyes, a primordial connate-grade treasure. This was also her weakness.

If exploited, she might be in grave danger. If the elites from her time could recognize her, they must be able to see through her current condition as well.

As expected, news then spread that Empress Myrtlestar had died in the Primordial Era. The manifestation in Dusk Province was merely her lingering soul fragment.

The world of immortals erupted again.

Scarlet Ape grabbed its iron rod and was about to head to Dusk to stir up trouble, but its silver dao partner swept it to the ground with the whirl of a staff.

A sense of apprehension permeated Dusk Province; the clans worried that the elites of the world would invade again.

To establish a sacred land, Lu Yun had to teach them a lesson so thorough that they wouldn’t dare make a move against Dusk. Otherwise, the sacred land would be a poor imitation of the real thing with the entire world of immortals opposing it.

“I’ll teach them a painful lesson if they dare invade again.” Lu Yun’s lips twisted into a cold sneer. By his side was a faint golden figure.

“They’re unlikely to invade again, but what you have revealed to the world is too alluring.” The figure shook his head. “If I hadn’t decided to join you, I might not be able to stop myself from attempting to rob you.”

The figure was the Azure Dragon King. He'd refined five dragon veins—including the ancestral vein—which fully restored his tattered body. Although his strength hadn't yet returned to its peak, he was now more powerful than Empress Myrtlestar.

Dusk Province didn't need additional dragon veins, or an ancestral vein. With Su Xiaoxiao planting Violet Orchids and Hell Flowers all over Dusk Province and Lu Yun transforming its feng shui, a few great dragons were being fostered underground. They would be dragon veins as soon as they matured.

Lu Yun had obtained the dragon veins and accepted Nephrite's ancestral vein for the Azure Dragon King. Once recovered, he would be a tremendous asset in battles.

Besides, he had Kui, now residing in hell, and his last chance to wield the power of peak origin dao immortal realm. He really didn't fear anyone.

Empress Myrtlestar had returned to the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals to rest. Having parted with the Cosmic Eyes, her soul was a little brittle.

Lu Yun, Qing Yu, and their followers had moved out of Dusk City into the unnamed great city at the center of Dusk Province. Matters of the capital and the province at large were entrusted to Zhao Zhicheng.

The man had earned Lu Yun's great approval. The last time the Exalted Immortal Sect had invaded Dusk, he'd chosen to try to stop the sect, rather than join them.

The central city was now densely populated, even more so than Xiankan. Judging by nothing but the state of this city, Dusk was already shaping up to be the future sacred land.

What could be found in the marketplace were things that many could only dream about having—void realm methods, ancient talismans, ancient formations, even some flawless primordial combat arts. Whatever one sought, one could find.

The Azure Dragon King stood by Lu Yun and Qing Yu's side, marvelling at the scene.

"How much longer will it take for the Dao Flower to heal?" Qing Yu asked with a frown, staring at the Dao Flower from the top of the city wall. The flower's recovery was slow, and it was floating northward.

"About a month and a half." Lu Yun's expression was dark as well. It seemed that the Dao Flower's complete recovery would coincide with his tribulation.

More alarmingly, the Dao Flower would have drifted out of Dusk Province then. Once it crossed the border and reached the North Sea, it would be even more difficult for Lu Yun to refine it.

The restriction in Dusk prevented many immortals from entering, but they wouldn't have anything to worry about once the flower exited Dusk's borders.

The projection of the Dao Flower was a great treasure, and just because it was a projection didn't mean it didn't share properties with the real thing. Acquiring the flower would enable one to further comprehend the immortal dao and make a great leap in strength.

Even immortals who hadn't experienced the void realm would be as powerful as void-ascended immortals after refining it.

All eyes in the world were now on the slowly healing projection.

.....

“Sir,” Zhao Zhicheng transmitted to Lu Yun’s mind. “Yellow Springs Land has sent a messenger. You are invited to the Yellow Springs Court.”

Lu Yun’s eyebrow arched. As expected.

Chapter 618.1: Never Backing Down

Hum!

Somewhere within Dusk City, a golden pillar of light shot into the sky before transforming into an imperial edict.

A deafening, majestic voice rolled through the province like a surging wave. “By the order of this emperor, Lu Yun of Dusk Province is to present himself in Yellow Springs Capital for an imperial audience within three days!”

Aloof, indifferent, and highly superior, this voice belonged to none other than the emperor of Yellow Springs Land. Against all expectations, a decree from the monster spirit ruler of one of the ten lands had come as soon as Lu Yun’s dao-establishing tribulation had ended.

Afflicted by an adverse environment and thin levels of natural qi, Yellow Springs Land boasted of few powerhouses beyond their emperor.

But while it ranked dead last among the ten lands in terms of strength, the emperor himself was without a doubt the strongest existence in all ten monster courts. If not for the poor conditions hampering his dynasty’s development and the close ties between the ten courts, he likely would’ve gone on a rampage long ago and unified the ten lands with his power alone.

Of course, titles such as “monster courts” or “monster emperors” were what outsiders called them. Locals knew them as celestial courts and celestial emperors, just like in the nine majors.

While no one had expected the Yellow Springs emperor to be so openly confrontational, it wasn’t so shocking a turn of events, either. After all, Yellow Springs monster king Zou Longxiu had publicly defected to Lu Yun’s side, even becoming the young man’s disciple later down the road, so it wasn’t all that strange for someone as high-handed as the Yellow Springs emperor to act this way.

Although it was a mere edict, it nevertheless demonstrated the supreme, unassailable authority of an emperor. At the same time, it was a slap at Lu Yun’s face.

True, the young man’s attempt to establish a sacred land had attracted the projection of the Dao Flower, but his efforts had nearly failed. And while he was being hailed as the master of a future sacred land, Dusk Province wasn’t one yet. Such an imperial edict was nothing more than a parade of bluster and prowess.

.....

“He’s forcing my hand,” Lu Yun murmured as he stood atop the city walls and gazed at Dusk City five hundred kilometers away.

Since this emperor had detained Zou Longxiu, Lu Yun had no choice but to go and get to the bottom of the matter. His second disciple was very important, and he’d already shared the legacy of the tomb raiders with him.

“We might as well go and find out what this emperor is up to. At worst, we’ll turn his place upside down and into a right mess.” Aware of the Zou Longxiu matter, Qing Yu glanced at the edict with displeasure.

“It’s not that simple.” Lu Yun shook his head gently. “There is indeed a place called the Yellow Springs in hell. Meanwhile, Yellow Springs Land is named after the Yellow Springs River that runs through it. I suspect some sort of connection between the two.”

“Lu Yun.” The Azure Dragon King fidgeted uncomfortably beside the youth. What the two humans were discussing obviously touched upon Lu Yun’s deepest secrets, secrets he wanted no part of.

He was currently in Lu Yun’s camp simply to witness the birth of a sacred land, but being privy to any secrets would tie him to the young man for good. It was the very position that Empress Myrtlestar now found herself in.

Though she’d obtained sustenance for her damaged soul and begun to heal, she relied on Lu Yun to truly come back to life. It was why she’d displayed the true force of an empress at the border between Dusk Province and the North Sea, even shattering space itself to deter Primus Major.

At this stage, she was firmly in the same boat as Lu Yun and Qing Yu.

“A few days ago, I saw azure dragons roaming near the province’s borders. Some of my tribe must have survived the war a hundred thousand years ago, so I’m going to head to the ancestral lands and take a look.” Without further ado, the Azure Dragon King departed in a stream of light.

“What a shrewd old fellow.” Lu Yun grinned as Qing Yu poked his side.

Hum!

Another pillar of golden light shot into the sky from Dusk City. A second edict!

“By the order of this emperor, Lu Yun of Dusk Province is to proceed immediately to Exalted Major Palace for an audience!” With the boundless voice came an oppressive power that spread throughout the province.

Yet another simple, plain declaration reinforced by a tyrannical, imperial aura that one couldn’t avoid. For these figures, Lu Yun was a gnat of no importance, a mere edict sufficient to command his abject obedience.

Hum!

Shortly after, the third, fourth, and fifth edicts followed suit. With the same authoritative tone, they likewise summoned Lu Yun to an audience. In next to no time, a full nine edicts filled the sky, their aureate hue bathing the province’s forty thousand kilometers in gold.

Apart from Nephrite Major and the now-destroyed Witherdew Major, the celestial emperors of the other seven majors had all sent an edict. Added to that the Yellow Springs emperor and the Untroubled Sea dragon king's edicts, nine glowing golden scrolls glittered with unbridled arrogance.

Rather than truly wanting to meet Lu Yun, they meant to humble the young man. Even if Lu Yun established a sacred land, all would know that these emperors remained the true masters of this world!

No one could eclipse an emperor's might.

.....

"Milord, you can consider going to Exalted Major." Ge Long's fawning voice suddenly sounded by Lu Yun's ear.

"Exalted Major?" Lu Yun blinked in surprise.

Still inside hell, Ge Long sat cross-legged near the four evil coffins and used voice transmission to communicate with his master.

"No, to be more precise, I mean the Exalted Immortal Sect. There's a treasure inside the sect's Exalted Divine Tomb. Milord, if you can obtain that item, Dusk Sacred Land will be as solid as Mount Tai." There was a trace of reverence in Ge Long's voice.

"The Exalted Divine Tomb?" Lu Yun's eyes shone bright as he recalled the two Exalted Divines who'd buried Su Xiaoxiao on Levitating Island. Without question, some Exalted Divines were still alive in the world of immortals. And Sword Divine... might be one of them.

For Lu Yun, Sword Divine's existence was a bone stuck in his throat. The man was mysterious, powerful, and constantly plotting against Qing Yu, trying to plant a soul seed in her. Lu Yun had yet to find a way to deal with him thus far, but perhaps a solution awaited inside the tomb of the Exalted Divine Tribe.

Theirs was the tribe that'd once severed the immortal dao and engraved their divine runes on the Dao Flower, instituting divine dao as the one prevalent dao of the world.

Although divine dao had ultimately fallen, no one could deny the magnitude of the tribe's strength. Likewise, the Sword of Chaos they'd left behind was beyond terrifying. A resurgence of these people would herald untold chaos across the world of immortals.

.....

"Very well, we're going to Exalted Major then!" A smile appeared on Lu Yun's lips. "Alright, I got it." His response to the edicts traveled throughout the province, so mild it seemed he was addressing an insignificant trifle.

"Hmph, to act so unconcerned in the face of nine imperial decrees, this Lu Yun must be tired of living!" Inside Dusk Province, quite a few immortals were waiting for Lu Yun to make a fool of himself. Not even the master of Destiny City or Levitating Island's monster sacred land could withstand simultaneous pressure from nine celestial emperors.

Possessing unfathomable power and influence, the celestial courts had dominated the world of immortals for close to eighty thousand years. It was too tremendous a history to just be brushed aside.

Moreover, that they thought nothing of acting so brazenly was proof of their absolute confidence. Perhaps the emperors of the seven majors had already integrated their heavenly mandates within themselves and reached origin dao immortal realm.

Even as flawless origin dao immortals, celestial emperors with or without a mandate were two different things altogether.

Lu Yun's irreverence was more than excuse enough for them to descend on Dusk Province in person, and even the immortal restriction, the fearsome human demon, would crumble in front of such might.

"I think Lu Yun's merely putting up a front to preserve the face of the master of a future sacred land," some people sneered. "Let's see how he gets himself out of this predicament!"

Many were assuming that he wouldn't dare set foot outside the province. As a result, going against the edicts would give the nine emperors ample justification to punish him in person.

But even if he decided to go, which court was he supposed to choose? Any edict he obeyed would offend the other eight. Therefore, most people thought that Yellow Springs Land would be his most likely destination.

"Go back and tell the Exalted emperor that this seat will pay him a visit in three days." Lu Yun's response left quite a few people dumbfounded.

Exalted Major? What was he trying to do?

A month ago, the Exalted Immortal Sect had spearheaded the invasion of Dusk Province! Lu Yun's next words subsequently set the entire world astir.

"Yuchi Hanxing, select a million soldiers from the Dusk Phalanx and ten lord-grade fortress ships. Depart for Witherdew Major immediately. Your mission is to seize the major's 'Serenity Province'."

Chapter 618.2: Never Backing Down

"I hear and obey!" Yuchi Hanxing's affirmative reply rang out. Soon after, the formation in Sword Pavilion of southern Dusk Province lit up as a million soldiers stepped inside. Even the giant Black Tortoise followed the soldiers into Witherdew Major's Serenity Province.

In fact, the divine beast had been drafted into the Dusk Phalanx by now. The current Dusk Phalanx was quite different from what it'd once been. Instead of cultivators, every soldier was an immortal, all of whom... bore a formation of heaven and earth!

Additionally, Dusk Phalanx's combat prowess had grown exponentially after undergoing Lu Feng's training. In particular, Yuchi Hanxing's constitution had been awakened with Lu Feng's help, which quickly increased her cultivation to arcane dao immortal realm. This was before taking into account two even more fearsome monsters, namely Yuchi Hanxing's parents, Yuchi Tianhuang and Xuan Yu, as well as Xuan Yu's almost two hundred thousand primordial soldiers.

By now, they'd all become Lu Yun's Infernum and Xuan Yu's name had been written in the Tome of Life and Death. As long as she existed, the ghostly soldiers would never die.

This was merely the force's internal strength. What the world at large dreaded most were the ten lord-grade ships. Each of them equipped with a main cannon and thirty-six immortal crystal cannons, they were simply flying citadels of war.

While quite a few factions had ordered lord-grade ships of their own, each one came at an exorbitant price, so those factions could afford one at most, even if they were to empty their coffers.

And though crystal cannons could be bought, the ones Lu Yun sold were auxiliary grade with a maximum output of three billion crystals. Ones that could fire off ten billion crystals weren't up for sale.

.....

Those most excited about Dusk Phalanx's expedition into Witherdew Major were the members of the Xue Clan. Serenity Province had been the clan's former domain, so there were still quite a few clansmen there reluctant to leave.

Not to mention, an important part of the clan's wealth was hidden somewhere in the province, riches they hadn't had time to retrieve when disaster struck. So, with Lu Yun's tacit agreement, Xue Chujiu tagged along behind the soldiers.

In any event, the Dusk Phalanx incursion into Serenity Province was a major event that shook the world.

Exalted Major had dispatched troops to the province to vie for control with other factions. By now, the area was almost entirely theirs. But now, Lu Yun was suddenly trying to wrest it away from them! And more importantly, he'd accepted the Exalted Emperor's summons for an audience three days hence!

Lu Yun had never been the sort to back down. Unyielding and unbending, such was his nature.

For their part, the other eight parties involved fell silent. All eight emissaries took their edicts with them and left with their tails between their legs. None of them were certain that Lu Yun wouldn't suddenly arrest them and burn them at the stake.

The man was mad, purely and simply insane! No one could predict what he would do next, especially since his actions clearly bespoke a lack of respect for the nine celestial emperors. By using the Exalted Emperor, he was face-slapping all nine of them.

He entertained Exalted Major's emissary over the next three days. When time came for them to travel, the apprehensive and overwrought peerless immortal declined to travel with Lu Yun and hastily took his leave.

"What a coward." Lu Yun chuckled and grabbed Qing Yu's hand. "Let's go together. I'm curious to see if the Exalted Immortal Sect will dare try anything when we bring the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals with us."

This time, he needed Qing Yu with him to strike fear into the Exalted Immortal Sect and deter them once and for all, as their continued little machinations were proving quite the irritation.

"I'm going with you." Holy Lord Ashu suddenly appeared in front of Lu Yun.

"You're back! Did you win or lose?" Lu Yun hastened to ask, his eyes bright.

“Yin Jiuying is no ordinary existence. As a primeval divine beast of extreme yin, a jiuying, he’s almost impossible for someone of the same level to defeat.” Ashu shook his head. “That being said, he’s now become a corpse beast.”

“Didn’t you say you wouldn’t do anything to help us?” Long aware of Ashu’s existence, Qing Yu looked at the holy lord with confusion.

“If you were to die, my dear, I’d have no choice but to go back to the underworld and give up resurrecting my body.” Ashu’s eyes were filled with powerlessness as he muttered to himself, “But who would’ve thought you’d stir up so much unholy trouble? First the emphasis on supplemental paths, then the establishment of your sacred land, and now you’re sticking out your tongue at the entire world... Be certain that I’m going to stay far, far away from all this nonsense as soon as you perfect that breathing method!

“Also, be aware that the Exalted Major isn’t so harmless a place!” Ashu’s expression suddenly turned incomparably grave. “It’s where the Exalted Divines’ emperor fell! The tribe’s former divine court is in Exalted Major, and I suspect that the current Exalted Major’s Zhao Clan possesses the bloodline of the Exalted Divines.”

The resting place of an emperor!

When the great emperors died during the war of Emperors Fall, wherever their final resting place was came to be known as a Last Repose.

Dusk Province was the human emperor’s Last Repose, and Exalted Major was the Exalted Divine emperor’s Last Repose. According to Ashu’s calculations, the specific position was the Exalted Immortal Sect’s ‘Mount Exalted’.

“Is there anything you don’t know?” the astounded Qing Yu asked.

“Once you’ve lived as long as I have, you too will know everything.” Ashu glanced at her and fidgeted a little awkwardly.

As a dao sovereign of the Dao Flower, Qing Yu exuded the aura of the immortal dao, and there was another Dao Flower inside her nascent spirit that overflowed with exuberant life force.

Ashu’s soul was very attracted to this life force, but his body was uncomfortably repulsed by it. For him, it was a very contradictory and confusing sensation.

“Alright, we’re heading out. Let’s not make the Exalted emperor wait.” Lu Yun smiled.

.....

Tranquility reigned in Exalted Major.

The word exalted hinted at time without end and space without borders, at the eternal and the everlasting; that the Exalted Divines had named themselves after such a word bore witness to its strength.

On their journey to Exalted Major, the rotund Li Youcai traveled with Lu Yun, Qing Yu, and Ashu. While he was a court official, as before, he now worked for Dusk Province. He possessed no real authority, but his life was peaceful and carefree.

In fact, he'd thought of fleeing Dusk Province many times, but every single miserable attempt had ended with him being hauled back.

Dusk Province might look rich and powerful on the surface, but for many, it tottered on the verge of collapse, like a great edifice without foundations that might collapse at the slightest gust of wind. Therefore, it was no wonder that someone as craven as Li Youcai wanted to leave.

But Lu Yun had expressly ordered a tight watch be kept on him. The man possessed a special constitution that made his body perfect for an immortal ghost to possess. Some yin creatures were troublesome for Lu Yun to deal with in person, without exposing his methods or trump cards. Having Yueshen act instead made things much easier for him.

However, an immortal ghost like her setting foot inside someone else's tomb would bring terrible misfortune... Therefore, Li Youcai was a crucial piece. By entering a living body, an immortal ghost could fully utilize its full power. It could also use the body's yang energy to conceal its ghostly aura.

To date, Lu Yun had yet to determine the exact nature of the fat man's constitution. After being possessed by an immortal ghost, he remained as lively as ever, as if nothing had happened. In fact, Yueshen had once expressed that her power somehow grew when she possessed Li Youcai's body!

Therefore, Lu Yun now looked after him with great care. The man's cultivation had long broken through to the golden immortal realm, and he'd been granted a formation of heaven and earth.

Apart from Li Youcai, Lu Yun had also dragged along the little fox and the two Lin brothers, Lin Yu and Lin Xuan, on this adventure. The little fox had, of course, been more than unwilling, but the creature carried too many secrets on her. Throwing her into a divine tomb might yield unexpected gains.

As for Lin Yu and Lin Xuan, they were experts at formations. They'd recovered from the injuries sustained against Lu Feng and used the opportunity to comprehend formations without foundation, becoming formation grandmasters in one fell swoop.

Lu Yun brought them along this time so that he could teach them the ways of feng shui and raise them as future pillars of his sect. To that end, simply imparting secret methods and ancient records was far from enough. He had to teach by example and let them apply theory to practice.

By the same token, when he'd taught Zou Longxiu the Dragonshift Method, he'd had his disciple personally subjugate a yin dragon vein. More importantly, he wanted to bring the Lin Clan over to his side.

Supporting a sacred land required more personnel than he had at his disposal. At first, he'd planned on persuading Yellow Springs Land, but given the Yellow Springs emperor's attitude, he had no choice but to set his sights on the Lin Clan.

He made no secret of his intentions to the two brothers. They'd proved extremely receptive to the idea, so much so they immediately decided to act on behalf of their clan and join the future sacred land.

Now that they'd become formation grandmasters and reached the extraordinary realm of creating formations without foundation, their voices carried extreme weight in the clan. Of course, the clan itself also made its stance clear: it was perfectly willing to join Dusk Sacred Land... provided that Lu Yun successfully established his dao, at least.

The restoration of the Dao Flower most likely entailed a great tribulation, and the timing was very likely to coincide with Lu Yun's own immortal tribulation.

.....

As its name implied, Center Province was Exalted Major's most central province. In the middle of this province sat Mount Exalted, known as the foremost mountain in the world of immortals.

Legend had it that Exalted Major was named after the mountain. At its foot were located both the Exalted Immortal Sect and the Exalted Celestial Court. At the same time, it was also where the Exalted Divine emperor had fallen, according to Ashu's calculations.

Center Province's territory stretched over several hundred thousand kilometers, and its teleportation formation was located close to the border. But as soon as the group stepped out of the teleportation formation, they immediately spotted a tall mountain piercing through the clouds.

"Mount Exalted, the greatest mountain in the world... Every time one sees its peaks, one gains a different insight," Lin Yu couldn't help but exclaim at the faraway sight. Clearly, it wasn't their first visit.

"This mountain is simply a mountain of dao." There was a hint of bespelled reverence in Lin Xuan's eyes.

"It would be best if you refrained from losing yourselves in the mountain's dao." Ashu interrupted the two brothers with a harrumph. He'd altered his appearance and masked his ghostly energy for the trip.

The two brothers looked at the holy lord in confusion.

"This mountain nurtures divine dao, the dao of the ancient divine court." Ashu fixed the mountain with a stare and licked his lips. "If it ever crumbles, the primordial divine court's final hope will be forever extinguished."

With a fierce shudder, Lin Yu and Lin Xuan no longer dared look at the peaks in the distance. Before Lu Yun could comment, Exalted Major's emissary walked up to them. But this time around, there was a hint of condescension on the emissary's face.

"Are you the one called Lu Yun?" Hands clasped behind his back, a dao immortal floating in the sky looked down at the young man. "Since you've here, follow this seat to meet His Celestial Majesty."

1. Xue Chujiu is the surviving Xue genius from now-destroyed Witherdew Major who LY protected during his tribulation.

Chapter 619: The Lineal Tomb

If there was one person in the world whose each and every move could attract the attention of all, it was Lu Yun. Master of the future sacred land with a host of treasures to his name, each one powerful enough to turn his peers green with envy!

In the eyes of many, him setting foot inside Exalted Major was no different than a lamb venturing into a tiger's mouth.

The dao weapon protecting the dao fruit tree was in Lu Yun's possession. Perhaps he didn't usually carry it around with him, but if Exalted Major captured him, ransoming the brat for the weapon didn't seem out of the question.

And now that he was already inside the major, his fate was sealed.

Other than the imperial court, the Exalted Immortal Sect was another powerful presence within the major. Just like twin pillars supporting the sky, they worked in tandem to bolster the faction.

Among the nine majors, Primus Major was deservedly ranked number one, while the number two laurel jointly belonged to Citrine and Exalted Major.

On the surface, the Exalted Court and Exalted Immortal Sect didn't get along and frequently undermined each other, but everyone knew that for the pretense it was. If both were to one day act with a common goal, even Primus Major would have to consider giving way.

.....

The Exalted Court's emissary turned on his heel after saying his piece and left without further ado. While quite a few immortals had come to receive Lu Yun, they didn't exhibit any particular courtesy. In fact, they looked more like a regiment sent to escort a prisoner.

Their lack of manners was easy enough to understand. In three short days, Exalted Major had sustained heavy losses in Witherdew Major, its soldiers defeated at every turn by ten lord-grade ships. Serenity Province, once theirs for the taking, had been wrenched from their grasp.

Now that the chief culprit had arrived, these immortals would've unsheathed their flying swords and dismembered him into a thousand pieces at the drop of a hat, if not for the celestial emperor's orders.

Instead, the delegation of immortal officials resorted to their flying treasures with nary a word and took to the air toward Mount Exalted.

Rather than trying to ingratiate himself with plainly hostile people, Lu Yun stuck to bantering with Qing Yu along the way. He'd already guessed that his arrival would throw Exalted Major into disarray. They probably hadn't imagined he'd really show up, and were likely now debating how to deal with him.

After traveling for an hour or so, the dao immortal emissary suddenly came to a stop.

"It's getting dark, so you should rest here for now. His Celestial Majesty will receive you tomorrow on the morn." Without waiting for Lu Yun's reply, the official summarily disappeared beyond the horizon, his men in tow.

Li Youcai looked up blankly at the blinding sun hanging high above them. "Is it getting dark?" he muttered foolishly.

"Of course not. It's all a show from the Exalted court to put me in my place." Lu Yun sneered at the opulent manor in front of him, a trace of chill on his lips.

“What’s the matter?” Qing Yu asked subconsciously when she noticed something amiss with his expression.

“This is a lineal tomb, one that kills without drawing blood.” Lu Yun had been prepared for a trip fraught with danger, but the presence of Ashu by his side bolstered his confidence. To think that Exalted Major would use a lineal tomb to kill him!

A lineal tomb was a place of eternal rest, in which lay coffins of familial ancestors. But it only took a small alteration to turn such a tomb into a lethal weapon.

The tomb in front of him had once housed the remains of a great clan’s ancestors, but it’d been abandoned for a long, long time and slowly transformed into an ill-omened place, a natural killing layout.

The manor seemed opulent on the surface, but through the Spectral Eye, he could see the blood and gore that stained the place, remnants of untold numbers of living creatures that’d died here. By arranging for Lu Yun’s group to shelter here for the night, Exalted Major’s officials were obviously intent on having the structure do their dirty work for them.

But who was Lu Yun? Someone this easily frightened? He glanced around the surroundings and spotted furtive figures darting past. Chuckling, he calmly led his group into the residence.

“The manor looks magnificent and the decorations are all sumptuous, but why does it feel so cold in here?” Lin Yu couldn’t help but shiver once they were inside and hastily scrutinized the surroundings.

“This place is filled with yin energy and thinly-veiled murderous intent. It must be the Lineal Tomb Killing Layout as described in the secret archives of the tomb raiders.” Without undue haste, Lin Xuan leafed through a thick paper book in his hand and compared the writings with their environment. “Look over there. Yin energy converges in that spot, while yang energy is repelled. It’s fine enough in the daytime, but ghostly creatures are sure to run amok once night falls.”

Compared to Lin Yu, Lin Xuan was a little more interested in feng shui layouts. The secret archives of the tomb raiders in his hand was a book Lu Yun had written according to the classics of his sect, one that also integrated everything he’d experienced during his time in the world of immortals.

Rather than jade slips that could be read with one’s consciousness, Lu Yun had a preference for books made of paper.

“Over there, you say...?” Blinking, Lin Yu shook his head and smiled wryly. He really didn’t understand the ways of feng shui.

“Unless I’m mistaken...” Paying no heed to his brother’s expression, Lin Xuan looked around and declared in a solemn tone, “there’s a ghost king here! An extraordinarily dangerous ghost king. This residence actually turned into ruins a long time ago, everything we see now is an illusion that the ghost king’s created by combining the tomb with the land’s feng shui. We fell into the ghost king’s trap the moment we came inside!”

With an imperceptible smile, Lu Yun nodded gently at Lin Xuan’s words. His pupil was very close to the truth.

“It’s not an illusion,” he corrected. “As a medium of the underworld, ghost kings wield power over life and death and extinguish heaven and earth. Strictly speaking, this place’s become a separate world of its own. Just like the tombs of the yin and yang realms, it occupies the same space as the outside world, but on a parallel plane. Everything here is real.”

Lu Yun looked around them. “Although this ghost king is formidable, it can’t isolate its domain from the yang energy of the world, yet. It’s daytime, so it must be hidden somewhere, observing us. Night will be when it reigns supreme.”

A circulation cycle had formed in this minor world, one that combined various feng shui of extreme yin to repel yang. The ghost king wasn’t truly afraid of what little yang energy there was left, just instinctively reluctant to show itself during the day.

The explanation made Lin Xuan increasingly excited, while Lin Yu couldn’t help but shudder. As for Li Youcai, his wide figure curled into a ball and hid behind Lu Yun.

“Ho-how about we leave?” the trembling Li Youcai offered.

“Exalted Major’s powerhouses will slaughter you if we take half a step outside this manor.” Qing Yu glanced sideways at him. If he weren’t so useful, she would’ve kicked him out already.

“What should we do now?” Lin Xuan carefully observed the surroundings while constantly referencing the book in hand to assess the situation.

“Honestly, everything will be easily resolved as long as we find the ghost king’s corpse. And if this ghost king was this strong in life...” Lu Yun was still one Envoy of Samsara short. He could feel that the quota of ten envoys allowed by the Tome of Life and Death wasn’t a random, meaningless number.

Thus, before he ascended to immortality, he planned to gather all ten envoys.

Chapter 620: Ghost King

Dusk fell, but not one that heralded the arrival of night. Rather, it was the gathering of a mass of dark clouds that blotted out the sun.

A sinister wind began to blow inside the manor, filling the complex with an eerie, ghostly aura.

Lu Yun’s group shivered at the rising atmosphere, Ashu being the sole exception. In fact, there was even a hint of enjoyment on the holy lord’s face.

“The ghost king here is very powerful. Everyone needs to be careful,” Ashu calmly warned after a glance at the dark clouds above.

His was a special existence. Not a man, not a ghost, and not a zombie, but a living dead, a mausoleum keeper. If he were determined to conceal himself, very few people would be able to sense his presence, ghost kings included.

It wasn’t because of his strength, per se, but due to the enormous amount of ghost energy he’d absorbed from the underworld. In fact, this ghost energy was the greatest hindrance to his revival.

.....

“Everyone, stay put and don’t go into the rooms. They’re all inhabited by malicious ghosts.” After warning his companions, Lu Yun took out numerous formation stones. “Lin Xuan, help me set up a layout.”

“Very well!” Lin Xuan’s eyes sparkled at the prospect. Feng shui layouts and formations were two sides of the same coin, but being able to set up a specific layout was an extremely important step for him.

“Lin Yu, I also have a task for you. Arrange a formation of pure yang over there, but don’t create them without foundations. Formations without foundation are effective in the short run, but they can’t be maintained for long.”

“At once!” Lin Yu didn’t understand feng shui and wasn’t all that interested either, but his mastery of formations had advanced by leaps and bounds in this period. He’d now surpassed Lin Xuan in that domain. He immediately took the formation stones and began inscribing formation runes of pure yang.

“Wh-why do I get the feeling that I’m being stared at by a pair of eyes?” Li Youcai trembled uncontrollably.

“Hmm?” Sensing something amiss, Lu Yun momentarily paused his efforts to lay down the layout and looked back at Li Youcai. The fatty’s figure suddenly shook like a leaf in the wind, and his skin, previously as smooth as a pearl, turned ashen gray.

“No!” Lu Yun cried out in alarm.

Qing Yu was even faster to react. Starlight emerged from her figure and condensed into a great purple-golden handprint that bore down on Li Youcai.

Whoosh!

A cloud of black smoke evaporated from the rotund Li Youcai and amassed in the air as a ghostly face that dissolved Qing Yu’s handprint. With a muffled groan, she fell back a few steps, each step breaking a stone brick underfoot.

“Don’t be distracted, continue laying down your formation or layout!” Lu Yun took a quick step forward and threw a punch at Li Youcai, his fist wrapped in enough hellfire that it would instantly obliterate an ordinary ghost.

Hell’s aura made weak ghostlings tremble in fear and brought strong ghosts to their knees... But when facing perversely strong ghosts, it only served to bring out even more of their savage nature.

In the past, when Feinie had been a ghost herself, she’d disregarded hell’s aura entirely and rendered Lu Yun powerless, despite his best efforts. Ultimately, he’d subdued her physical body instead.

In comparison, the ghost he currently faced had evolved into a terrifying ghost king, a being akin to zombie kings, an existence far beyond Yueshen and the former Feinie.

Boom!

Lu Yun’s punch landed ruthlessly on Li Youcai, generating a faint ripple that spread outward, but the fat man didn’t budge an iota. As for the raging hellfire, it was extinguished upon coming into contact with the man’s body.

Dark-golden runes lit up on Li Youcai's now-ashen skin.

"Sacred Origin Runes!" Eyes widening, Lu Yun quickly realized these runes were part of the formation of heaven and earth inside Li Youcai.

Obtaining the Exalted Divine Tribe's Sacred Origin Runes was what'd made his formations of heaven and earth reach true perfection. Later down the road, the formation had progressed even further thanks to Qing Yu's formula dao, and no longer needed to be engraved and integrated into someone's flesh with such painstaking care.

As long as he inscribed a single formation, he could now bestow them en masse. It was this method that'd allowed him to etch formations of heaven and earth for the entire Dusk Phalanx and sell a quota of one thousand in the previous auction.

Apart from the Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons, the core of a formation of heaven and earth was the Sacred Origin Runes. Those came straight from the Exalted Divine Emperor and embodied the tribe's supreme regality. In fact, the divine runes that'd been inscribed on the Dao Flower were very likely to have been Sacred Origin Runes.

And now, those very same runes had been compelled to manifest on Li Youcai's skin.

"Sacred Origin Runes..." Li Youcai also noticed the phenomenon. He lowered his head and reluctantly looked at his hands. When his deathly pale eyes landed on his 'own' hands, a glint of revulsion flashed across his face.

Lu Yun looked back at the two staring Lin brothers. They ducked their heads, hastily inscribing formation runes or arranging the feng shui layout, eyes glued to their tasks.

"Hahaha!" A bloodcurdling screech came from Li Youcai. His body gradually floated in the air, his wide, plump body a picture of unnatural grace and nimbleness.

Swoosh!

Suddenly turning incorporeal, he darted into one of the rooms inside the manor. Qing Yu came to Lu Yun's side, standing side by side with him.

"This ghost king really is powerful." Her arm was still numb from her earlier clash with the ghost king's face.

"Li Youcai's constitution is special, so possessing him increased the ghost king's power." Lu Yun took a sharp breath. He hadn't expected the ghost king to possess someone as soon as the dark clouds gathered, and had therefore been too slow to react.

"The ghost managed to force out the Exalted Divine emperor's Sacred Origin Runes, so it must be intimately connected to the emperor." Qing Yu knitted her brows, a little uncertain. "Since Mount Exalted is where the Exalted Divine Emperor fell..."

"It can't be the emperor himself," Ashu cut her off. "Nothing was left of the Exalted Divine emperor, nor of any emperor who died during the Emperors Fall, for that matter. Even becoming a ghost was impossible."

“But it might be the emperor’s descendant.” Lu Yun opened his Spectral Eye to scan the signs of life and death inside the manor, but the place was shrouded in a dense fog that the Spectral Eye couldn’t pierce through.

“I see, so the ghost king wasn’t the one who summoned the dark clouds. It was the Exalted Immortal Sect’s doing...”

As omnipotent figures who could call the wind and conjure the rain, conjuring a few clouds was a trivial matter for immortals. With a wave, the feng shui compass appeared in Lu Yun’s hand.

“A dragon sleeps in mountains coiled, those deathly cliffs with mysteries roiled!

“Danger shies if mountains hide, dragons of yin do here bide!”

Hum.

The embryo of a minor world emerged by Lu Yun’s side, inside of which coiled a jet-black dragon: a yin dragon vein. Astonishingly, a yin dragon vein snaked underneath this giant lineal tomb, one on the cusp of becoming an ancestral vein!