

## Necropolis 621

### Chapter 621: Ancestry Bridge, Road of the Dead.

Curled up in Qing Yu's arms all along, the little fox suddenly burrowed out and jumped on top of Lin Yu's head. The youth was in the middle of deploying a formation of pure yang, so his location was the densest in yang energy and made it impossible for ghostly energy to coexist with him.

Crouched on his head, the little fox stared warily at the yin dragon vein inside the embryonic world beside Lu Yun. A close imitation of life, the dragon vein resembled a genuine black dragon brandishing scaled claws.

"There's something sitting on top of its head!" The little fox's misty blue eyes stared fixedly at the yin dragon vein before shaking her head. "It feels very familiar, I must have seen it somewhere before."

"It's a palace!" More or less done with his layout, Lin Xuan paused his work and looked in the same direction. "The palace is a coffin!"

With a mild nod, Lu Yun retracted the luopan, slowly collapsing the embryonic world.

"The palace is the outer coffin, the ghost king is buried at the heart of it." Lu Yun let out a long breath. "In life, the ghost king was no doubt an emperor's descendant, and an extremely noble one to boot."

No mundane emperors would use a palace as a tomb; it would be far too extravagant for them.

"It must be related to the Exalted Divine emperor," the fox offered weakly. "If there's anyone left in this world who can use a palace as a coffin, it'd be a direct descendant of their emperor." Confusion filled the little fox's eyes as her thoughts were thrown into disorder again.

I really want to toss this little thing inside the celestial master tomb.

Inside that tomb, the fox would recover her past selves. The ancient monster celestial master or the monster spirit ancestor would certainly recall something. Alas, her current self was a confused ditz.

"A direct descendant... someone put them here to turn the place into a killing tomb layout."

Possessed by the ghost king, Li Youcai had vanished into the depths of the manor. As the heavy clouds above brought more darkness down upon the surrounding region, faintly discernible ghostly howls began to echo through the air.

The little fox's soft white fur bristled at the sound. All of her limbs froze stiff, and she tumbled down from Lin Yu's head and landed in his arms with a thunk.

She'd literally been frightened into fainting.

Without a complete soul, she wasn't equipped to handle this kind of shock. But even so, her true identity was too formidable to die of such a simple scare. Moreover, Lu Yun had nurtured her soul with his sect's soul fostering art. The more shocks of this nature she received, the more beneficial it actually was for her soul.

Resigned, Qing Yu walked up to the fox and stuffed the stiff furball back against her chest. As she did so, she caught Lu Yun glancing at the fox in envy. When understanding dawned on her, her cheeks flushed bright red.

“Success!” Lin Xuan shouted in excitement at this time. He’d deployed his first feng shui layout all by himself without help from anyone else! A sense of achievement rose in his heart, and it seemed his understanding of feng shui had improved yet again.

“I’m also done!” In front of Lin Yu, a golden column of light shot to the dome of the sky and disintegrated the sea of dark clouds.

Before the immortals hovering in the clouds for surveillance could react, they ended up deader than dead from the blast of pure yang.

“What a powerful yang formation... H-how...” Lin Yu himself was stunned. Such a formation wasn’t exactly a new achievement for him, but in the past, its strength wouldn’t have been nearly this great.

As the blast of yang energy subsided and the sky cleared up again, the eerie manor overflowing with yin energy also regained its former appearance. While still cold and ghastly, the phantasmal wails were gone.

“Alright, everyone stay put!” Lu Yun strode inside Lin Xuan’s layout, his hands dancing a few times in the air to fix some imperfections. For his part, Lin Xuan couldn’t tear his gaze away as he engraved each of the weak spots and Lu Yun’s gestures on his heart.

Hum!

The feng shui layout shook fiercely and morphed into hazy blue light. Spectral Eye wide open, Lu Yun formed a series of hand seals to activate the layout.

A mottled bridge abruptly came into existence. Connecting the sky to the land, it moved toward a certain direction. As it happened, Mount Exalted lay in that very direction.

“Sure enough, the Ancestry Bridge can locate this tomb’s descendants!” Lu Yun smiled gently.

This feng shui layout was called an Ancestry Bridge. It bore no offensive abilities whatsoever, but possessed a special function: it could calculate the location of a lineal tomb’s descendants.

Lineal tombs housed the remains of a bloodline’s ancestors to bless their progeny, but some ended up abandoned for various reasons. Deprived of their later generations’ incense and offerings, the wrathful dead inside would transform the tomb into a killing layout.

That very thing had happened to this particular lineal tomb, turning the one buried inside into a ghost king. And the Ancestry Bridge, as it happened, had located someone belonging to the ghost king’s lineage.

If the bloodline was severed, the Ancestry Bridge would be broken. Instead, the bridge extended toward Mount Exalted, proof that a descendant existed there.

The Exalted Divine Tribe!

The one buried inside this lineal tomb was unquestionably an Exalted Divine, a direct descendant of the Exalted Divine emperor.

“I see. Without the mountain’s protection, the tomb would’ve long cursed the Exalted Immortal Sect and Exalted court to extinction.” Looking at the irregular splashes of color and rust on the Ancestry Bridge, Lu Yun swallowed hard. “It seems that the divines live on not only due to the Sword of Chaos forcibly maintaining the race’s last hints of fortune, but because Mount Exalted is fundamentally interfering with things!”

Without the mountain, the lineal tomb alone would’ve wiped out the last of the divines, even without the Skandha Range’s curse. Lineal tombs were double-edged swords. They could bless a lineage, but could also destroy it forever.

The Exalted Divine Tribe wasn’t just a divine tribe like the others. It represented those who’d ruled over all the divines. Even powerful tribes like the cardinal divines—the azure dragons, white tigers, vermilion birds, and black tortoises—were their subjects.

In that sense, the lineal tomb of an Exalted Divine ancestor was the tomb of one of the entire divine race’s ancestors.

Crack crack crack!

A sharp sound suddenly rang in the air.

Crash!

The Ancestry Bridge shattered with a bang.

“It’s unhappy.” Lu Yun’s lips curved up in a smile. “But knowing exactly what you are makes it easier for me. Come on, let’s go meet that fellow!”

Taking large strides forward, he stepped into the hall that Li Youcai had disappeared into.

“I’m not going!” Just as Qing Yu was about to follow him, the little fox inside her clothes woke up and resisted with every fiber of her being. “I’m staying here even if I die!”

“Lu Yun can protect you if you come with us. But if you stay outside... once we go in, you’ll be left here all by yourself.” Qing Yu’s gentle voice sounded full of sympathy, but her words were in fact a veiled threat.

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan had already scampered cheerfully after Lu Yun. Fully confident in their abilities, the two brothers were like an excited pair of monkeys at the prospect of exploring the ancestral tomb of an Exalted Divine ancestor.

Meanwhile, Ashu had left their company at some point, his whereabouts currently unknown. The little fox could only curl up in Qing Yu’s embrace and cover her eyes with her fluffy paws, resigning herself to her fate.

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“What in the heavens happened just now?” the immortals near the manor clamored in shock.

A moment ago, a column of golden light had shot into the sky and disintegrated the dark clouds they'd summoned, killing the immortals shuttling amidst the clouds!

"Hmph, don't concern yourself with it. Lu Yun might have a few tricks up his sleeve, but they matter very little. By entering the lineal tomb, he's already forfeited his life!" an immortal sneered. "In the past, many arcane dao immortals joined forces to explore that place, but they all ended up dead."

"But His Celestial Majesty's summons..." Some of the other immortals felt somewhat uneasy. Their emperor had summoned Lu Yun, yet they'd misdirected the young man into the ominous tomb. If the emperor were to look into the matter, they'd be hard pressed to justify themselves.

"What are you afraid of? We're acting at the behest of the Exalted Immortal Sect's Lord Zhao Chong." The first immortal smiled. "Furthermore, they went into the tomb of their own volition. What does it have to do with us?"

While that was technically true, some people couldn't help but worry.

"What if Lu Yun brought the dao weapon with him?" someone suddenly asked in trepidation.

His question silenced them all.

"In that case, you people will have to go into the tomb and bring it back." A tall figure suddenly descended from the sky. It was the same dao immortal who'd received Lu Yun at the teleportation formation: the Exalted Immortal Sect's Zhao Chong, also known as the Exalted emperor's junior brother.

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An evil breeze gusted inside the great hall. Visible to the naked eye, the black wind had almost coalesced into raw malice.

Even Qing Yu was a little fretful, so Lu Yun dropped the feng shui compass into her hand so she could use its power to slice through the wind. As for the two Lin brothers, they worked in tandem to lay down one formation after another through the technique of formations without foundation.

"The entrance has disappeared!" Lin Yu exclaimed in alarm when he looked behind him.

The doors through which they'd come through were nowhere in sight. Instead, there was only deep darkness there. Moreover, their surroundings were still changing; tidy tables and chairs were slowly fading away, replaced by intense darkness.

"Don't look back." Lu Yun's tone was grave. "The layouts here have evolved into a Road of the Dead, which is what we're currently on. Once you set foot on it, you can't turn back no matter what happens. The only way out lies forward."

"A Road of the Dead... Are we headed to the world of the dead, then?" Lin Yu couldn't help but shudder.

All legends related to hell had been erased from the world of immortals, but the land of the dead was still part of common folklore.

“A Road of the Dead is a type of feng shui layout,” Lin Yu explained as he leafed through the thick book in hand while studying the surroundings. “Logically speaking, such a road should lead to the world of the dead, but I think that world itself might be a layout. If it’s a layout, then it can be unraveled.”

“The dragon vein should lie at the end of the road. Or rather, inside the palace coffin atop its head.” Lu Yun slowly proceeded forward. “Be careful, this Road of the Dead is full of danger. Malicious ghosts will abound, so be careful not to let them possess you.”

Lu Yun was tempted to summon Yueshen, but he ultimately decided against it after remembering the ghost king.

In life, the ghost king had been an Exalted Divine, someone more powerful than Yueshen’s living self. In death, a ghost king was also stronger than the immortal ghost Yueshen had become. Whichever way one looked at it, she was no match for the ghost king.

If not for the ghost king occupying Li Youcai’s body, Lu Yun could have used hellfire to deal with it. Alas, it’d even activated the Sacred Origin Runes on Li Youcai’s formation of heaven and earth. Hellfire was basically useless against it now. The only way to deal with it was to find its corpse.

## **Chapter 622: A Corner of Hell**

In the impenetrable darkness all around them, the only source of light was the feng shui compass in Qing Yu’s hands. Lin Yu and Lin Xuan’s formations had long been shattered by the yin wind from the darkness.

Everyone gathered at her side, pressing inward from the horror of the unknown and the frenetic howling of the yin wind that seemed to be right by their ears. The nightmarish circumstances around them weighed down on their hearts; the little fox was fully ensconced and shivering in the folds of Qing Yu’s clothes.

With a flick of his fingers, Lu Yun sent forth six beans. They turned into motes of light, then expanded into soldiers that trudged into the darkness.

Death art: Bean Soldiers.

Lu Yun’s mastery of the art had reached a new zenith. The soldiers he summoned now were the same cultivation level as he was. As long as they didn’t die and weren’t dismissed, they could exist indefinitely with no time limit.

When the soldiers entered the darkness, things abruptly quieted down. The ghostly wailing suddenly screeched to a halt.

“Son of a... what the hell is this?” a coarse voice boomed.

Ker-crack!

The sound of a splitting watermelon echoed, but nothing followed it.

“Dead,” frowned Lu Yun. The soldier who’d spoken just now had been slain by something—in one hit, from a blow to the skull. The other five quickly followed suit.

“Let me go take a look.” Qing Yu furrowed her slender brows.

“Don’t!” Before Lu Yun could respond, the little fox in her bosom objected vehemently.

Qing Yu ignored her and allowed another self to emerge from her body with a mist of emerald sparkles.

The embittered bamboo replica.

Lu Yun and Qing Yu had both come here in their real bodies. Xing Chen had stayed behind in Dusk Province, while Qing Yu’s embittered bamboo replica had returned to a spirit root to suppress the poison curse inside her.

Now that it was refined, it could reemerge at any time.

“Hold on.” Lu Yun pulled her replica back with a shake of his head. “I know what the thing in the darkness is. Don’t worry, it’s nothing to be worried about.”

He waited for her to put the embittered bamboo away, then took the feng shui compass back to make use of its power.

Hum.

Golden light erupted from the luopan, illuminating a winding path in the murk.

The Road of the Dead!

Sometimes called Yellow Springs Path, it led to the netherworld and passed all throughout that realm. There had once been such a path in hell, but that one was long gone. Here, heaven and earth had seen fit to spawn another.

No more than a meter wide, the path meandered all over the place. In fact, it seemed to float in midair—the space on either side leading to an endless abyss filled with ghastly shadows.

The Lin brothers traded a fearful look before shivering in unison.

“Come on!” Still holding the luopan, Lu Yun set foot on the Road of the Dead. “Remember to never leave the light of my compass. To do so will invite certain doom.” He stared fixedly at the darkness straight ahead. There seemed to be a gigantic beast hidden there, lying in wait for unwary prey.

Four people and one thoroughly spooked fox shuffled sluggishly along the Road of the Dead.

Grrn-thunk!

A muffled creaking and thumping sounded from the darkness, like the sound that might accompany the opening of a set of gates.

“Can it be... the fabled Gates of the Abyss?!” Flipping through the thick tome in his hand, Lin Xuan looked rather incredulous. Considering what path they were on, the gates had a good reason to be here. They served as the first checkpoint to the underworld, given that the Gates of the Abyss separated the realm of the living from that of the dead.

“Yeah, I’d say so.” A smile crept onto Lu Yun’s face. He felt the Gates of the Abyss inside hell vibrate with anticipation, resonating in the presence of its fellow.

His Gates of the Abyss were incomplete, shattered in that outstanding, prehistoric battle. The gates in the darkness ahead were a manifestation of the resulting fragments.

“No wonder, no wonder... no wonder the Road of the Dead appeared here. This is a corner of hell!” Lu Yun trembled violently with excitement. The pale shadow over his heart was replaced by sheer delight.

If he could claim ownership of this fragment, he would be able to repair and strengthen the hell that he ruled and with it, strengthen the six paths of his nascent spirit. Perhaps he wouldn't even need a dao weapon to use Time or Space Reincarnation then!

Those particular methods were far stronger than his current sword dao. Not that Lu Yun had given up on the latter; his Xing Chen incarnation devoted all of his time to its study. After obtaining that arcane yin fruit, Xing Chen was a living being in his own right. Lu Yun's singular will controlled two autonomous bodies.

In the midst of his excitement, Qing Yu placed a hand on Lu Yun's arm. A calming breeze wafted through him, bringing him back to his senses with a shudder.

“I almost fell for it!” Lu Yun was alarmed by the experience.

The thing in the darkness could affect people's hearts and minds. His heart had stumbled just then, and the thing had amplified that fault to an unlimited degree. He signaled his return to safety with a small pat of the hand, which seemed to relieve Qing Yu.

Rumble.

A loud noise ground in the distance. It sounded like something had fallen upon the road, blocking their progress.

“Milord!” a deafening roar split the air as a stone giant slowly lumbered into view. It was at least fifteen meters tall and towered in their way like a small mountain. It also had a face identical to the bean soldiers Lu Yun had summoned moments prior.

A tomb with carven stone accumulates yin and malevolent spirits. In the presence of life, stone spirits are formed. Beware of such monstrosities.

Stone spirits.

Lu Yun had seen them back in Yuying's tomb. After his maid touched it, it'd turned into Wanfeng.

However, that particular spirit had been stiff and incomplete, unable to move much on its own. This one, on the other hand, was all but completed. It had a body of stone, but appeared very much like a living creature. When his bean soldier had made contact with it, it'd stolen some lifeforce and taken on this new look.

“Hmm...” Lu Yun was taken aback by this development. “My bean soldiers possess a lifeforce too? What are they, really? Where do they come from?”

That line of thought took him down a familiar lane of memory and a strange sense of déjà vu; he was sure he'd seen something like them somewhere in this world. His fleeting thoughts were cut short by the stone spirit slamming down its granite fist.

“Accumulated yin and malevolent spirits, eh?” Undaunted by his opponent, Lu Yun strode forward. Holding his compass with one hand, he produced a talisman with the other. Aureate light glittered upon it as enigmatic runic squiggles erupted with pure yang.

Boom!

The talisman plastered itself neatly upon the stone spirit’s fist. A rippling wave of intense heat was accompanied by the stone spirit’s frightful shriek.

It discovered to its great chagrin that the yin miasma and malevolent spirits inside itself were being melted away.

Crack crack crack!

The stone spirit’s body slowly disintegrated into rubble.

“Why wouldn’t I prepare for something that I’ve seen before?” His first encounter with the stone spirits had been a messy affair, so he’d extensively studied them afterward in order to create talismans that specifically countered them.

“Let’s keep going.” Lu Yun continued leading the way. His compass shone brightly, sweeping aside the darkness ahead.

After an indeterminate period of time, the shadow of an enormous gate gradually loomed out of the gloom. It was identical to the Gates of the Abyss that he possessed, save for its illusory, projected nature.

This time, he kept his wits about him and wasn’t affected by his revelations. Opening his Spectral Eye, he began searching for gate’s fragments scattered nearby.

“This corner of hell has already melded with the void. I must start by looking for remnants of the gate,” he muttered to himself.

### **Chapter 623: Victim of One’s Own Misdeeds**

A corner of hell was hidden in the space behind the Gates of the Abyss! The gates that the fragment projected was an entrance to that corner of hell. If Lu Yun could find the fragment’s location, he would be able to return the corner back to hell proper.

Right now, although his own gates sensed the call of the fragment, it was nowhere to be found. It was as if the shard lay hidden within fold after fold of space.

“It’s the palace coffin!” he suddenly realized. “The fragment of the gate has been forged into a palace coffin for the Exalted Divine royal. The royal in question was buried in hell... no wonder this lineal tomb is so terrifying.”

A typical lineal tomb that turned into a weapon tended to curse those of the lineage, not exude such an intense aura of terror. If that Exalted Divine royal was buried in a corner of hell, then it only made sense that the manor outside would manifest hellish power.



If such power was altered and fused with the environment around it—and the ghostly force of the dead royal factored in—the result would surpass hell and evolve in a different direction.

The current Lu Yun could feel that power, but he was incapable of significantly affecting it. The hell that his Tome of Life and Death commanded was only the fragment in his possession.

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The Gates of the Abyss towered majestically over them. Despite its illusory nature, it radiated a cold, almost animalistic aura that was much more befitting of a savage netherworld monster.

The Road of the Dead twisted its way in. Right in front of the gates was a patch of reddish dirt, as if stained by the blood of living creatures.

“There’s bodily remains here.” Qing Yu came to a halt. She lowered her head toward the corpses strewn about, frowning down at them.

“Arcane dao immortals from Enlightened Major... why did they die here, of all places?” Lu Yun’s Spectral Eye filled him in immediately. “They were killed by a stone spirit...”

Among other things, his death art told him about their cause of death. These immortals had died to a stone spirit before making it to the gates. The stone spirit that’d murdered them was much stronger than the one he’d encountered before.

“Careful, there’s more than one stone spirit here,” he cautioned the others.

The four humans were already huddled up. Within Qing Yu’s bosom, the little fox didn’t dare show its head.

“Wait a minute... if those people from the Exalted court delivered us here, maybe they don’t know I have the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals on me?” A question popped into Qing Yu’s mind. “If I’m to die here, the scroll will never make its way back to the outside world, right?”

Though neither she nor Lu Yun knew what the Exalted Immortal Sect needed the scroll for, it was plain to see that the treasure was very important to them.

“They’re just small fry. How would they know what’s important and what’s not? By now, the senior council of the court and sect have likely already punished them and are trying to rescue us as we speak,” Lu Yun snorted in derision.

It was as he predicted: outside, Exalted immortals from both the sect and court had already arrived at the lineal tomb and were setting up a formation of pure yang to extricate them safely.

Those of Zhao Chong’s subordinates responsible for the fiasco had already been executed under the Exalted emperor’s palm strike.

If Zhao Chong himself weren’t the emperor’s junior brother, he would’ve met the same fate. Even so, he was obligated to enter the lineal tomb and personally look for the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals.

The Exalted Divines didn’t care about any dao weapon, they wanted the scroll!

Zhao Chong wanted to cry. Though he was the Exalted emperor's junior brother, he'd only just plucked his first aether dao fruit very recently and wasn't privy to Exalted Major's key secrets. Moreover, the Exalted emperor hadn't sent him to receive Lu Yun. He'd acted entirely of his own volition.

"Senior brother..." A pale Zhao Chong glanced helplessly at the Exalted emperor.

"Call me 'Your Majesty'." The emperor remained expressionless. "If you don't bring out Qing Yu's scroll, everyone in your bloodline shall die, from your youngest grandson to your origin dao ancestor."

He was strongly repressing the urge to smash his junior brother to death on the spot. Their master, a crippled origin dao immortal, had already expelled him moments ago. Though Zhao Chong didn't know the truth, he'd disobeyed the emperor's orders by barring the official who was to receive Lu Yun. That alone warranted a death sentence.

In the Exalted Immortal Sect's last attack on Dusk Province, very few had known the purpose of their expedition. Most had only been following orders. Unlike most sects, their members possessed faith and conviction that bordered on zealotry.

"...understood." Zhao Chong took a deep breath. When an artificial sun of pure yang rose above the lineal tomb, he and his kin charged straight in.

"Dammit, they've already gone in..." The empty courtyard turned his expression exceedingly ugly.

"The doors of this hall are open. They probably went this way..." Zhao Chong's chest heaved several times. He grit his teeth, then plastered several Pure Yang Talismans to himself. "Come, we head that way!"

He had no idea that all of the doors here led to the same place.

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Lu Yun's group of four and one fox had already set foot into the Gates of the Abyss. As soon as they did, the ghostly wailing redoubled in intensity. Pallid shadows streaked through the air all around them.

"Close your eyes. Don't look at them!" Upon seeing that Lin Yu was nearly taken captive by a vicious ghost, Lu Yun threw a Principal Nineheavens Talisman to dispel it.

Forced to reform a considerable distance away, the ghost glared at Lu Yun with crimson eyes.

"The Principal Nineheavens Talisman can't slay the ghosts here..." Lu Yun drew a sharp breath. Since this place was a corner of hell, it had the same effect on ghosts that actual hell did. A vicious ghost inside hell, especially one without order, was nearly immortal.

He tried to call on the Tome of Life and Death and found that though the book showed a desire to subjugate this corner of hell, it needed his help. However, he didn't yet have the strength to do so.

The young man stuck several Principal Nineheavens Talismans to the others with him, and his feng shui compass glowed ever brighter.

"Don't use hellfire here." Qing Yu warned, sensing what Lu Yun was about to do. "If you do," she transmitted, "I've a feeling you won't ever be able to retake this corner of hell!"

## Chapter 624: Why, Why Is He Alive Again?

Lu Yun gasped, instantly retracting the hellfire he was about to unleash.

“That’s right, this place has fused with only a corner of hell. It isn’t the real thing!” Cold sweat beaded across his forehead.

Hell was defined by the presence of hellfire. A hell that contained hellfire would spawn an independent set of laws and generate natural energy all by itself. If Lu Yun used hellfire here, the unknown power might steal it for itself and create a new world with the flame.

Once that happened, he would no longer be able to fuse it back into the original hell at all. Even if he somehow subjugated this place later on, it would only be a second hell that was divorced from the first.

Moreover, this locale was under the dominion of that ghost king. The nourishment of this corner of hell had likely strengthened it to unimaginable levels.

Lu Yun didn’t possess a complete hell, either. Technically speaking, he only had the most crucial fragment. That, combined with the Tome of Life and Death, was the reason it’d become the principal part.

In the era of human dao, hell had been immeasurably large. It had ruled over all life and death in the multiverse. As such, there were sure to be countless fragments strewn all over its past domain, some much larger than Lu Yun’s.

For example, he knew that the Ancient Tree of Life had taken root in one such fragment, but the tree’s vigor had dispersed any hellish presence that Xing Chen could have detected.

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“Qing Yu, take my compass and look after the brothers.” Lu Yun handed his luopan to Qing Yu once again. The girl nodded, then silently incanted the Dragonsearch Invocation and took over.

Lu Yun had taught her the Dragonsearch Invocation, Dragonshift Method, and Dragonspike Litany a while back inside hell; she was more than capable enough to wield the luopan’s might.

The young man took a deep breath. A tricolor flame appeared over his body, the combination of Emerald Mist, Lucent Void, and Daevic Sky. Though the three fires weren’t quite hellfire, they burned with the utterly destructive essence of pure yang. Even the ghosts here would be burned to nothingness before they could approach.

Under the tricolor flame’s protection, Lu Yun slowly shuffled out of the luopan’s range.

His Spectral Eye saw ghosts everywhere around him. Those who dared edge toward him were turned to ash after coming just a bit closer.

“There are both normal and immortal ghosts here. The souls of those who die in Exalted Major’s Center Province are drawn here by this corner of hell.” Lu Yun frowned faintly.

The Gates of the Abyss divided the worlds of the living and the dead. The dead, drawn naturally by the path outside, would eventually make their way here.

But this corner of hell wasn't actually hell; there was no cycle of reincarnation to be had. The souls became immortal ghosts, only to be infected by the yin dragon vein underground and turned into vicious ghosts.

"What kind of lineal tomb is this? The manor outside is just another set of Gates of the Abyss, so entering the manor means reaching the underworld."

The darkness of the void here was filled with the presence of death. Even the tricolor flame couldn't penetrate the gloom with illumination.

Lu Yun opened his Spectral Eye to cut through the haze. The roiling aura of death gradually became clear to him, and he could see Li Youcai.

The fatty was standing upon a boulder shortly ahead. He looked much thinner than before; instead of a mountain of meat, he was now something much more commonly presentable. His skin was a ghoulish shade of white and his eyes were pitch black, the whites of his eyes disappearing in favor of nightmarishly large pupils.

"You're the ghost king." Lu Yun strode toward Li Youcai. "But you're not the master of this lineal tomb."

He'd gotten it all wrong. He'd thought that the ghost king and the master of the tomb were one and the same... but a meeting with the former had finally overturned his mistake. This corner of hell didn't belong to the ghost king. At most, he was an Exalted Divine who'd been buried here—there was something far more frightening behind him.

The young man inhaled sharply and drew the axe of dao with one hand, preparing the hand seal of the Yi Wood Cleansing Thunder method with the other.

"Kakaka—" The sound of grinding wood came from Li Youcai's mouth. "Those who disturb the princess' rest... must die," he declared coldly.

Boom.

An incredible amount of ghostly energy formed into a stark white hand, which bore down upon Lu Yun.

Crack!

Yi Wood Cleansing Thunder was channeled through Lu Yun's Thunder Palmstrike, and black lightning rose up to resist the hand.

At the same time, Lu Yun quickly backed off. The dao weapon in his right hand glowed with azure light. He disappeared on the spot, only to reappear over Li Youcai's head a moment later.

Boom—

The blade of the axe slammed down upon Li Youcai's cranium.

Clang!

Lu Yun's right hand went numb, and a sudden flashback to his childhood visited him. He'd once swung a blunt axe into a block of granite, resulting in very similar sensations to his hand. Blood welled up in his mouth. He spat out a glob of crimson, even as he was sent flying back.

“Such strength!” He applied a healing talisman to himself to address his numerous internal injuries.

A large gash was visible upon Li Youcai’s head as gray matter and blackish blood poured out from the wound. The axe had torn open his consciousness and dispersed his spirit; Li Youcai’s true self had been killed in a single blow!

However, the fatty was still belly laughing with amusement.

“Humans are cruel as ever. Murdering their own with such readiness... Kakaka...”

Thump!

The ghost king’s departure returned Li Youcai to his original form, and he collapsed to the ground as a fleshy mountain.

Wiping away the blood from the corner of his mouth, Lu Yun offhandedly used Resurrection on Li Youcai’s body. The rift in his skull and his broken spirit rapidly began to heal, and the fatty’s breathing miraculously resumed.

“How can this be?!” The ghost king hidden in the void jumped out once more. A dead person had come back to life in front of its eyes! Such a thing was outside of its comprehension, even as a king of ghosts.

“Why, why is he alive again?!” the ghost king shrieked with surprise while a spark of hope entered its hollow eyes.

### **Chapter 625: Nurturing a Flame**

Just like any undead creatures, ghost kings were obsessed by a certain desire: to live!

Thus, the ghost king’s long-dormant emotions surged out of control when it saw Lu Yun bring someone back from the dead.

“Let me live!” it screamed as it glared at Lu Yun with malevolence. Two black flames lit up in its eyes, flames that showed signs of evolving into hellfire.

Lu Yun flinched and blood drained from his face. Someone’s using the ghost king to nurture true hellfire!

With the birth of hellfire, this corner of hell would become a genuine hell. More importantly, it was located inside the world of immortals, and thus would slowly gnaw away at the greater world. In the future, it might even assimilate all of Exalted Major.

Hell possessed prodigious power, and without a complete immortal dao it would be impossible for the world of immortals to resist its properties and fundamental laws. Were this hell to take form, Exalted Major would end up even more bleak and miserable than Witherdew Major.

In comparison, Lu Yun’s hell was a genuine fragment of hell, but located in a separate plane. It used the Tome of Life and Death as a fulcrum and Lu Yun himself as a gate to connect it to the outside world.

Not only was this ghost king not the master of this corner of hell, but it was only a tool for its true master, one to give birth to hellfire.

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“Let me live!!”

Boom!!

Denying Lu Yun time to think, a pair of giant ghostly claws fell from the sky and tried grabbing him. With a start, he hurriedly dodged to the side, causing the claws to thud into the ground and shake the entire area.

The impact rattled the Road of the Dead and sent fissures snaking across it.

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“What’s going on?!” Disoriented by the sudden earthquake that’d struck as soon as they’d stepped into the hall, Zhao Chong and his men began to panic. Even the ghosts roaming around them disappeared after the upheaval.

“Did Lu Yun cause this?” Zhao Chong couldn’t help but gulp.

“Milord, there’s a road up ahead!” the immortal scouting the way reported in a trembling voice when he returned.

His pale face was devoid of blood, a telltale sign that he’d been possessed by a ghost. Thankfully, the ghost had been scared away by the ghost king’s strike, or this immortal would likely be dead by now, his yang energy sucked dry.

“A road? What kind of road?” Zhao Chong’s tone was heavy. Were it not for the lives of his family and clansmen being at stake, he’d long have run away.

In recorded history, no one other than the very first Exalted Emperor had escaped this place alive. In fact, records concerning this ominous tomb had been found in many other tombs throughout Exalted Major. Even in the ancient times, those lucky enough to make it out alive had been struck by sudden death not long after.

“In response to milord, it’s a small, zigzagging stone trail, but it’s riddled with holes like it’s been smashed by something.” With a deep breath, the immortal realized something was amiss with his body. He hastily fished out a yellow-orange pill from his storage ring and gulped it down. It was a Pure Yang Pill, an imperative part of one’s equipment when exploring an ancient tomb.

Yin energy vied with ghostly energy in ancient tombs, a mixture that even immortals found difficult to endure. However, immortals far and wide had been excavating ancient tombs for the past hundred thousand years, ever since the divines had come to power at the end of the great immortal war.

In the process, they’d naturally gained some experience and learned a few tips and tricks. This Pure Yang Pill was one of them. Once consumed, it expelled yin energies from the body.

“I heard that Lu Yun displayed astonishing skill when he rescued many trapped immortals in the North Sea dragon tomb... Maybe he’s the one who left this stone trail behind?” Zhao Chong’s eyes lit up. “Let’s go and take a look!”

A Road of the Dead was a path of nothingness, so it was very difficult to spot for those who belonged to the world of the living, immortals included. However, this particular road was born from a corner of hell.

It only bore the shape of one, and the dense ghostly energies contained in the ghost king's earlier blow had exposed its true appearance.

"It's indeed a trail... but when you say stone..." Zhao Chong crouched down and carefully studied what the scout had called stones with an expression that turned increasingly grave.

"Does this look like stone to you? These are clearly bone fragments!" His face betrayed his shaky mood. "The road ahead is dangerous. If we continue treading it, we're almost certain to lose our lives. But I have a treasure on me that might keep us alive..."

He took a deep breath. "Let's go! If Lu Yun can walk this road, why can't we mighty immortals of Exalted Major do the same?!"

Brimming with confidence, he set foot on the Road of the Dead with bold strides. A breeze of yin brushed past his skin in the next moment. With a subconscious shudder, he hastened to take out a Pure Yang Pill to dispel the yin energy that'd seeped inside him.

As for his companions, they heaved resigned sighs, well aware that their chances of survival were minimal now that they'd come here. Turning back was impossible, so the only way left was to forge ahead. If they truly managed to find Lu Yun and Qing Yu and obtain what the emperor wanted, perhaps the emperor would bring them out with the power of his heavenly mandate.

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As the Gates of the Abyss closed, the ghost king transformed into an evil wind and sank into Lu Yun's body.

"Let me live, let me live..." Its voice echoed tirelessly in Lu Yun's head, the sinister, eerie sound chilling to the core. He doggedly protected his mind with the Tome of Life and Death to keep the ghost king from invading his consciousness. If the ghost king seized control of his mind, his body would no longer belong to him.

"You have, to show me, your corpse, if you want to live!" Lu Yun struggled to speak. This ghost king was so powerful that it was impossible to resist!

In its current state, the Tome of Life and Death could injure it, but not erase its existence for good, because something similar to hellfire existed inside it.

"Corpse, corpse..." the ghost king mumbled. Lu Yun felt his body lighten as it left him.

"Bring your people and follow me... Do not try to deceive me, or I will kill all of you!" the ghost king's cold voice reverberated in the air.

"Come with me!" Lu Yun looked back and called out to Qing Yu and the others.

Qing Yu followed him without delay, the two Lin brothers in tow. Even without the ghost king's threat, Lu Yun wouldn't dare leave them behind. In this space where hell and the lineal tomb coexisted, there had to be fearsome existences lurking around besides the owner of the tomb and the ghost king.

The road twisted and turned deep into the darkness. Near the end, even the light from the feng shui compass was dulled by a thick aura of death, its illumination reduced to a distance of three meters.

“Lu Yun, there’s something wrong with your compass,” Qing Yu suddenly leaned against him and quietly breathed into his ear.

### **Chapter 626: The Corpse On the Throne**

The ghost king took point, its colossal supply of energy permeating the air. Even Zhao Chong and his subordinates, who’d been gingerly picking their way along the path to the netherworld, were captured.

But for some reason, the ghost king kept them trapped in a subspace and prevented them from reaching Lu Yun.

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“Do you mean it’s flawed?” Lu Yun asked in surprise.

“Right, it is!” Qing Yu focused her voice to transmit directly to Lu Yun, who frowned in anticipation of what she was going to say. “The luopan should’ve projected a real world, not the prototype of one. The problem lies with the Ten Orientations Stone.”

Having mastered the formula dao of her own invention, she’d studied the compass when activating it with the Dragonsearch Invocation earlier and identified a critical flaw.

“I believe the real Ten Orientations Stone should be a combination of both yin and yang,” Qing Yu said softly. “What you’ve acquired is a yin stone, which results in the compass having only one property. Only by combining the two can the compass project real worlds.”

Lu Yun was silent for a moment, then asked with a frown, “Are there really Ten Orientations Stones of pure yang in the world?”

Such stones were native to hell, where most things were of the greatest yin. Of course, there were no longer any treasures in hell after it’d been shattered. They had all been destroyed, scattered to the different majors and different worlds, or looted by those who had invaded hell.

“I should be able to theorize a pure yang stone once I ascend to immortality,” Qing Yu said with a slight frown. “I believe I’ll be able to synthesize one with various other materials.”

Lu Yun stared at her, speechless. He wouldn’t even dream about synthesizing a pure yang Ten Orientations Stone. She... reminded him of mad scientists back on Earth.

“Here we are!” Lu Yun came to a sudden stop, snapping back to attention.

A vast darkness loomed before them, so deeply impenetrable that it made one despair. Without the golden light radiating from the luopan, Lin Yu and Lin Xuan would’ve lost their minds.

“Where are we?” Lin Xuan took a deep breath. He was trembling, but in excitement rather than madness. He’d become obsessed with the dao of feng shui and different layouts, even more so than Lu Yun. He saw their current location as a giant feng shui layout—it was a dream come true to explore such a specimen!



Though he was a beginner in feng shui, and still relied on constant reference to the secret texts of the tomb raiders, he showed great potential in the art and had already easily grasped many feng shui layouts.

Lu Yun cast his Spectral Eye at the darkness before them. Gone was the death energy that had suffused the area, replaced by thick yin energy instead. He could see a palace made of white bones on the other end.

“Bone bricks!” Lu Yun’s face darkened when he got a good look at the structure. The palace was built with bone bricks!

Bone bricks were the product of refining living souls while alive through a forge of earth and sky. The resulting bricks were incredibly sturdy, thanks to the great resentment condensed in them. Very few things other than hellfire could damage such bricks.

He inhaled sharply, quite surprised to see the bricks again.

“This is the palace coffin!” A palace coffin of bone bricks... Though Spectral Eye was active, he still had trouble gleaning any information of death with the coffin of bone bricks obscuring his view.

Rumble.

A grating noise came from the darkness, sounding like a door creaking open, followed shortly by an outpouring of heavy decay that almost knocked Qing Yu and the Lin brothers off their feet. Their minds were confounded by the force, while Lu Yun hurriedly directed three talismans into their bodies to drive out the energy.

This wasn’t poison, nor was it yin or vicious energy. The door had simply remained shut for too long and countless aeons of decay and desolation had accumulated behind it.

The resulting energy wasn’t something regular living souls could withstand. The little fox’s eyes had rolled toward the back of her skull, but she was in a better state than Qing Yu and the two brothers.

Swoosh!

Lu Yun waved a hand and summoned Emerald Mistfire to his palm, purifying the area of the presence of decay.

Face pale, Qing Yu panted heavily.

“Is that the tomb qi recorded in the archives?” A trembling Lin Xuan flipped through the heavy book, looking for descriptions that matched the energy Lu Yun had dispersed.

“It isn’t.” Lu Yun shook his head. “That was just some decaying energy.”

The ghost king hovered above the palace coffin, its dark eyes staring coldly at them.

Rays of light shone through the darkness when the door to the palace coffin swung open. Lu Yun’s gaze settled on the origin of the light at the center of the palace. Therein rested a dark gold throne, where a tall and slim skeleton sat primly in its seat and reached the ground.

It was the remains of a woman.

However, the lower half of the corpse wasn't weren't separate legs, but a long spinal column that looked like a snake's tail.

An Exalted Divine!

Lu Yun still couldn't see her information, but he was certain she was an Exalted Divine in life. He also noticed the short sword that'd claimed her life buried in the center of her skull.

"Why... why do I feel like the body on the throne is alive?" Lin Yu asked hesitantly, fearfully.

"The palace is a coffin," Lin Xuan explained seriously. "In the coffin, the dead are the living. We are the ones who don't belong here."

Before Lu Yun could step into the palace coffin, the ghost king descended suddenly from the sky and snapped coldly, "You, wait outside!"

He finally got a good look at it. It appeared to be a burly man with matte black skin, a black cape flaring over its shoulders.

Li Youcai walked out from behind Lu Yun, now possessed by Yueshen. Nine faint crimson figures trailed after her; she'd summoned her bloodcorpses.

Also standing by Yueshen's side was a young woman dressed in a pale yellow chiffon dress. Looking roughly eighteen, her features were as delicately traced as those of a painting, and her skin was as fair as snow. The barest hint of crimson light sparkled from her eyes.

It was Diexi.

She'd ascended to the dao immortal realm and plucked an aether dao fruit, and her evolution had also reached its peak. The zombie king had come back to life as a living woman, but she was still the ruler of all zombies, in essence, placing her on the same level as the ghost king.

As soon as she appeared, the ghost king came to a sudden stop and turned around to stare at her.

### **Chapter 627: Emperor's Daughter**

The ghost king threw Diexi a vicious glare with its empty sockets.

Diexi retaliated in kind with her widened almond-shaped eyes.

She'd just plucked her first aether dao fruit, but the pecking order of the yin realm was determined differently from that of the yang realm. As a zombie king, she was on equal footing with the ghost king, so it was very wary of her.

"It's you." The ghost king's eyes glowed faintly. "You're back. What a surprise."

Diexi paused, then blurted out, "Do you know who I am?"

"Humph." The ghost king huffed and floated into the palace coffin like it weighed nothing.

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“This throne is made from the core of a sun,” Lin Yu muttered, his eyes bright with excitement. “It’s a great treasure, and one of great yang at that!”

“A sun’s core? No wonder it glows even in this place.” Lu Yun humored Lin Yu with a response, but his attention was on Diexi. The ghost king knows her?

He thought back to Diexi’s origins. She’d been transformed into a zombie king in the tomb for the living, which originated from the Abyss of Divine Burial under Dusk Province. When he’d first encountered her, she hadn’t yet made a complete transformation, so a trace of death energy lingered between her brows.

Did she have something to do with the Exalted Divines? Or did she come from this place as well?

Diexi looked around blankly with sheer confusion. She couldn’t remember anything about her living years and had been trapped in the sunless abyss upon regaining consciousness, unable to step out of the tomb for the living.

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan weren’t surprised in the least by the newcomer’s sudden appearance. They’d long heard about her. Back when Lu Yun was still a weak cultivator, it’d been Diexi who’d kept the immortals at bay and prevented them from ruining Dusk Province.

“It’s so familiar.” Diexi’s delicate eyebrows drew close together. “I think I really have been here before... come!”

She waved a hand.

Swoosh!

The short sword driven into the head of the corpse on the throne flew neatly into her hand with a flash of dark crimson light.

Lu Yun and his companions, the little fox in Qing Yu’s arms included, stared at Diexi in shock. Yueshen shuddered in fear within her Li Youcai container. The short sword had been used to slay the individual on the throne, but Diexi had summoned it with a simple wave of her hand.

Had she... killed the woman before her own death?

The flying sword was dark red throughout, and fluttered around the zombie king like a butterfly.

The ghost king shuddered when it turned around, trembling, but it continued to advance to the heart of the palace, where three dark coffins lay beneath the throne. Two of the three had been opened; the ghost king walked toward the third, where its own body lay.

“Are you leaving as well, Liu Chen?” a plaintive voice sounded from the throne. The corpse had turned into a beautiful woman in palace attire.

Everyone’s breath hitched at the stunning sight. Looking roughly nineteen, her features were delicate and her skin fair as snow. Her snake tail had transformed into human legs and were partially obscured by the silk of her dress.

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan were almost drooling, captivated by her beauty. The little fox popped out of Qing Yu’s collar, quietly judging the woman. “Hmm, not as beautiful as me. Or the ugly thing.”

When the little fox had first encountered Qing Yu, the girl had disguised herself as an extraordinarily ugly youth. The moniker had stuck, and the fox kept calling her 'ugly thing' even after Qing Yu had assumed her true form.

With the veil of mist shrouding Qing Yu's face, it was also difficult for ordinary people to get a clear look at her.

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"Your Highness, I..." the ghost king paused as a great wave of sorrow overwhelmed it.

"You're all I have now. Are you leaving me as well?" the woman sighed faintly.

"Ahhh!" Beset by emotional turmoil, the ghost king tipped its head up and screamed, releasing a puff of dark energy.

Swoosh!

Black flames blossomed and set it aflame.

"This servant is guilty, Your Highness!" It slowly dropped down to its knees and disintegrated into ashes. A ball of black flame materialized out of the air and entered the ghost king's coffin.

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

Something in the air burst as soon as the ghost king was destroyed. A group of men appeared out of the blue and dropped to the ground—the ghost king's captives, Zhao Chong and his subordinates.

"Where are we?!" Zhao Chong scrambled to his feet, looking around cautiously. As soon as his gaze landed on the woman on the throne, he was sent into a trance.

"You are of our kind." She extended her hand and pointed, sending a dark golden pattern weaving through the air that buried itself in Zhao Chong.

"Gah!" Before Zhao Chong could recover, a piercing pain shot through his head. Dark golden patterns crawled through his body and enveloped him like a net.

Sacred Origin Runes!

The black flames in the air entered him as well, setting his eyes ablaze.

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"Dammit, the woman has evolved beyond a ghost king and reached a different level." Lu Yun shuddered.

"Run, run at once! We can't put up a fight against her!"

There was something else he didn't put into words.

Only the Exalted Divine Emperor's close relatives would be able to instantly deploy his runes, which meant the woman who'd suddenly come back to life was either the emperor's daughter or granddaughter. There was definitely less than three generations of separation between them!

She was more likely to be the emperor's daughter, in Lu Yun's opinion.

"Have I... Have I made a mistake?" Diexi clutched her short sword, her face pale.

"This has nothing to do with you! The ghost king awakened her when it tried to take back its corpse. If you hadn't retrieved the short sword, it would've become her weapon and none of us would be able to escape!"

The emperor's daughter had been buried and trapped on the throne. If Zhao Chong hadn't been a descendent of the Exalted Divines, she wouldn't have been able to etch Sacred Origin Runes on him. If she'd gotten ahold of that vicious weapon, Lu Yun and the others would've all died at her hands.

"You're not getting away!" A transformed Zhao Chong faced them. His skin had lost its vitality and turned gray after the dark golden runes lodged into his body. He took flight and manifested a fiery black blade, swinging it at Lu Yun's head.

### **Chapter 628: Crimson Light to the Skies**

Tomb keepers!

Lu Yun could clearly identify that the emperor's daughter had turned Zhao Chong and his men into tomb keepers. Though alive, their souls had been sealed into zombie flesh. Moreover, after the ghost king's destruction, Zhao Chong had inherited its role of nurturing hellfire. His attack contained the full strength he'd achieved in life, the power of a dao immortal with one aether dao fruit.

For Lu Yun, an attack of that level was an immense threat; the fiery blade was keen enough to end his life. With Sacred Origin Runes as core and hellfire as blade, the strike fell with world-ending momentum.

Clank!

Dark red light flashed in front of Lu Yun and shattered the blade strike. Sent reeling by the collision, Zhao Chong crashed heavily into the wall behind him and slumped to the ground in a daze.

Diexi's fluttering shortsword hovered in front of Lu Yun like a shield before darting back into her hand like a bloody butterfly.

"Zhao Qing, I won't mind killing you again if you try to stop me." Her voice could freeze one to the bone. Once made of downy-yellow silk, her dress was now woven with coarse, washed out fabric. It looked old-fashioned, yet also very neat. Even her long hair, normally black as night, had turned grey.

Dense corpse energy emanated from her figure and kept the fearsome yin energy in the vicinity at bay. Two dots of scarlet light roamed in the depths of her eyes, her bloody gaze giving rise to innumerable mountains of corpses and a boundless ocean of blood.

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“This isn’t Diexi, it’s her sword!” Lu Yun inhaled sharply when he realized something was amiss with the zombie king. The strength she now wielded didn’t come from herself, but from the shortsword in her hand.

He opened the Spectral Eye to look upon her. But as he did so, she imperceptibly glanced in his way and sent a sharp pain through his eyes. Hastily turning his gaze away, he realized with great shock that she’d now exceeded the ghost king and reached an entirely new level of existence, just like the woman sitting on the imperial throne.

Zhao Qing, the emperor’s daughter, quietly observed Diexi and ultimately heaved an inaudible sigh. Meanwhile, Zhao Chong took his men with him and returned to the palace coffin after getting back on his feet.

Rumble!

The palace coffin’s gates shut with a resounding bang, and the world returned to darkness.

“A corner of hell... it’s the three coffins in front of the throne!” Lu Yun mumbled to himself as he studied the darkness in front of him. “If I can obtain these coffins, I can take back this fragment of hell!”

“You won’t be able to.” Diexi’s voice reverberated inside the darkness like a phantasm. “The three coffins are one with the throne coffin. This throne coffin is carved out from the core of a star, and to budge it with just the few of you is beyond impossible.”

“Are you Diexi, or someone else?” Qing Yu looked back. Two beams of light, as blue as the firmament of the world, shone from her eyes and pierced the darkness.

Seeing Qing Yu’s gaze, Diexi couldn’t help but frown.

“Diexi, you say? Is that what I’m currently called?” She looked down at the short sword in her hand and sighed gently. “Let’s go, I’ll help you take the three coffins.”

Disregarding Qing Yu’s question, she turned her head to the side and studied the palace coffin’s vague outline in the darkness.

“You’re the spirit of the sword,” Lu Yun suddenly said in astonishment. “Diexi was created from the body of an ancient zombie and the spirit of a sword, then nurtured into a zombie king!”

To be more precise, Diexi was the sword’s name!

Lu Yun shivered when he reached that conclusion. Turning a sword spirit into a living entity? This kind of ability was nothing short of the power of creation itself!

A sword spirit was nothing but a spirit born from an object. Although it possessed self-awareness, that didn’t make it a true living entity. However, someone had transplanted this sword spirit into a corpse and turned it into a zombie king, one that shed death to come back to life, discarded yin to gather yang, and became a supreme existence.

At the very least, Lu Yun didn’t possess this kind of ability.

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Diexi glanced at Lu Yun. All of a sudden, an overwhelming field of crimson light illuminated the surrounding space and turned it into a world of blood. In front of them, the sinister palace coffin came into view as skeletons successively crawled out of the crimson light and swarmed in its direction.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

A series of deafening explosions echoed in the air as the skeletons relentlessly assaulted the palace coffin's gates in an attempt to pry it open.

Rumble!!

The land shook, as though something had landed from above and trampled the group of skeletons right in the middle.

Countless skeletons transformed back into crimson light and returned to Diexi's eyes. However, she remained as impassive as ever and quietly remained where she was, turning the crimson light of her eyes upon the palace coffin.

The skeleton of a giant beast descended from the sky and wantonly rampaged through her illusion of mountains of corpses and seas of blood, relentlessly destroying the skeletons. It resembled a giant skeletal lizard, but there was an enormous pair of skeletal wings on its back. Countless skeletons crumbled to dust each time they beat.

"Hadal Bonefire! Hadal Bonefire is burning in this beast's eyes!" Shaken, Lu Yun fell back a few steps. He could see the shadow of the demon sovereign on this skeletal beast. Although the demon sovereign had failed to ambush him and been sent packing by a few slaps from Lu Feng... he still dreaded this enemy waiting in the wings.

"Does the demon sovereign also come from here?" While Lu Yun was lost in thought, Lin Yu and Lin Xuan laid down a formation to protect this area.

More precisely, Lin Yu arranged a defensive formation while Lin Xuan deployed a feng shui layout specially meant to alter the environment and enhance the potential of Lin Yu's formation. Superimposing the two brought out every bit of strength from the defensive formation. Meanwhile, the little fox had slipped out of Qing Yu's clothes at some point and now jumped on top of Lu Yun's head.

"It's a saurian dragon!" the fox explained in a furtive whisper. "This giant skeletal beast used to be the king of the saurian dragons in life. To think it ended up dying here!"

"Do you know where we are?" Lu Yun hastened to ask. He could vaguely sense that this place wasn't simply a corner of hell; it definitely hid other secrets as well.

"Right above us is Mount Exalted, the Exalted Divine Emperor's Last Repose!" The fox's tone was extremely solemn, and the bell hanging in front of her chest chimed melodiously, as if awakening some long-buried memories.

"But we took the wrong way in. We should've taken the entrance at the foot of Mount Exalted, then gone through a series of divine tombs. That way, we could have avoided disturbing these scary fellows and arrived here safely."

Her words reminded Lu Yun of the yin and yang realm tombs inside the celestial master tomb. While part of the same whole, they represented two different sides of the same existence.

### **Chapter 629: Life and Death Spike**

The truth dawned on Lu Yun. They'd come here via the Road of the Dead and thus naturally arrived in the world of the dead due to its influence.

He wasn't as powerful as the emperor's daughter, Zhao Qing. If she were to sense the presence of the Tome of Life and Death on him, she'd certainly take it away by force. After all, this was someone who used a ghost king as a medium for fostering hellfire so that she could create a genuine hell, proof she possessed an uncommonly strong knowledge of hell.

Therefore, Lu Yun didn't dare recklessly call upon the power of hell or the Tome of Life and Death in her presence.

Shortsword in hand, Diexi was locked in close quarters combat with the skeleton of the giant saurian dragon king. However, she was proving to be outmatched. Her illusion of blood and corpses was as frail as paper in front of the dragon; it ripped whenever it touched the undead creature. Moreover, her physical attacks barely left a scratch on the giant skeleton's bones.

It was only to be expected, since she faced the king of all saurian dragons. When alive, it'd been an existence on the same level as the primeval human king, and while its strength had declined since, it was still a force to be reckoned with.

Lu Yun wasn't entirely sure how strong Diexi had now become, but he could tell she far exceeded the origin dao immortal realm.

"We need to go, don't waste time with it!" With a thought, the Path of Ingress extended from his feet to Diexi's position.

After a moment of readying itself, the treasure exploded into action. After wrapping around Qing Yu, Lin Yu, Lin Xuan, Li Youcai, and the rest, the group simultaneously vanished from the premises.

Hadal Bonfire burned dreadfully in the saurian dragon king's eyes at the unexpected development.

Crash!

The skeleton's bones abruptly collapsed into a pile of bone fragments on the ground, then decomposed into bone dust and quickly faded from view.

A sigh came from deep within the palace coffin.

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For many people, taking the Road of the Dead backwards was an impossible task that couldn't even be dreamed of. To set foot on the Road of the Dead was to abandon life!

...but would Lu Yun ever be stymied by trivialities like these?



With a gentle tremor, the Tome of Life and Death ensconced the group inside a hazy halo while the Path of Ingress transformed into an avenue of white light that pierced through the void and brought them back to the manor before they could blink.

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan stared blankly into space, not daring to utter a word. Everything they'd experienced just now was outlined in the feverish haze of a dream.

Diexi had returned to her normal appearance, her clothes transforming back into a downy-yellow chiffon dress. The crimson light faded from her eyes, making way for a clear gaze.

But unlike before, there was a hairpin in the form of a scarlet butterfly perched on top of her head. When the fox's limpid blue eyes landed on the hairpin, a trace of fear flashed through them.

"Just now... where in the heavens did we go?" Lin Yu muttered with a subconscious shudder. "We were in a tomb!" Slightly pale, he tightly gripped the thick book in his hand and rifled through its pages.

"It must have been the heart of a tomb, but that tomb isn't located here... This manor is merely one of the entrances," he gulped audibly. "This place is like a hunter's trap."

Boom!

The moment his voice fell, a wave of pure yang exploded in the sky and ruthlessly bombarded the manor below. A terrifying density of pure yang surpassed the fiery sun in intensity. If it were to land, all of the yin energy inside the manor would be expelled and the lineal tomb destroyed.

Roar!!

An ear-splitting roar shook the sky as a tall, indomitable figure materialized and charged forward with an explosive punch at the pure yang energy.

Zhao Chong!

His appearance was vastly different from before. While postmortem spots mottled his now ashen-gray skin, his eyes were as clear and lively as those of a living man.

A tomb keeper.

Now that he was a tomb keeper, he had nothing to fear from pure yang energy. His fist rippled with waves of black energy as he easily dispelled the terrifying power of pure yang. Following which, he silently floated above the lineal tomb and peered down at the Exalted emperor with cold eyes.

"Zhao Chong! What are you doing?" The emperor's face darkened and his sword-straight eyebrows bunched together.

"How brazen and impudent! Zhao Chong, you shall not display such insolence to His Majesty!" Numerous immortals from Exalted Major swore in anger when they witnessed the man casually disperse the emperor's yang energy.

"Lu Yun and his people are not dead, and the thing all of you want is still there." As an official of Exalted Major and the emperor's junior brother, Zhao Chong hadn't lost his self-awareness, despite his recent transformation into a tomb keeper.

With a wave of his hand, the lineal tomb's gates flew open and an irresistible force pushed Lu Yun's group out of the manor.

Expression flickering through various changes, the emperor suddenly realized something. "You..."

Before he could complete his sentence, Zhao Chong's figure scattered in the air with a bang. A layer of hazy smoke blanketed the lineal tomb, making its outline fuzzy and indistinct.

"You have traveled a long way to be here, Governor of Dusk Province. Forgive Us for not appropriately welcoming you at first light. Please come rest on Mount Exalted." Well accustomed to his post, the Exalted emperor's face betrayed none of his inner thoughts as he smoothly changed his stance and greeted Lu Yun with a smile.

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The sky finally began to darken when Lu Yun arrived on Mount Exalted. The emperor didn't show any signs of summoning him for an audience and simply arranged rooms inside the Exalted Immortal Sect for the visitors.

But for Lu Yun, the real surprise was that, though he sensed clear hostility from nearby immortals after his arrival, he didn't notice any palpable greed. From his point of view, apart from the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals on Qing Yu, there were many other treasures in his possession. Any one of them would make the world of immortals go mad.

And yet he didn't sense such desire from either the Exalted Immortal Sect's dao immortals or the imperial court's senior council, as if they weren't interested in those items at all.

"Maybe the only things they want are the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals and the dao weapon?" Lu Yun grimaced.

If that were the case, it could only mean one thing: Exalted's internal strength must be much greater than it appeared to outsiders, enough that they could disregard his treasures. Be it lord-grade fortress ships or weapons of war... the Exalted Immortal Sect likely feared neither.

"The Exalted Immortal Sect and Exalted Major itself must be joined at the hip. Their fortunes are closely intertwined." Lu Yun opened the Spectral Eye and swept his gaze over everything within five thousand kilometers, be it feng shui, terrain, or environment.

"This is a very fearsome enemy... I have to destroy this sect, or I'll be at their mercy once they decide to act against me!"

Qing Yu grew uneasy at Lu Yun's soliloquy. She wasn't concerned for herself, but that misfortune might befall the young man. "Destroy the Exalted Immortal Sect... Are you thinking of...?" Lu Yun had taught her everything he knew without reservation, so she had an inkling what he was planning.

Lu Yun's sect possessed a malicious feng shui formation made to kill. While it couldn't be described as world-ending, per se, it could sunder someone's fate and destroy an entire dynasty. It was labeled Death Spike—a singular spike to decide life and death!

Back on Earth, a thriving dynasty had once gravely humiliated a grandmaster of his sect. As a result, the grandmaster in question planted a Death Spike inside their imperial capital for vengeance. Not long after, the vibrant and prosperous dynasty met with a sudden ruin.

Now Lu Yun wanted to lay down the same layout inside the Exalted Immortal Sect on Mount Exalted to destroy the sect's fortunes!

### **Chapter 630: Accident**

Lu Yun's sect possessed three ultimate techniques: the Dragonsearch Invocation, the Dragonshift Method, and the Dragonspike Litany.

The Death Spike was a most malicious art derived from the Dragonspike Litany, and had been classified as a forbidden art by the sect ancestor. In all of history, it had been used only twice. Once to destroy the aforementioned dynasty, and a second time to eradicate a tomb-robbing sect hostile to Lu Yun's.

Death Spike was a very strange layout as even a feng shui master of equal expertise would be hard pressed to notice it without mastering the forbidden themselves. This layout was harmless to dragon or earthen veins; it severed only fate.

In this instance, to 'sever' meant to cleanly cut off with no recourse. Once inserted into the land, the layout caused massive bloodshed within forty-nine days!

Lu Yun wasn't one to casually use such a sinister killing layout, but the notion of a coalition between the Exalted Immortal Sect and Exalted court was too dreadful to contemplate.

Taken as a whole, Mount Exalted and its surrounding terrain formed an 'imperial cradle'. This so-called imperial cradle was a place that gave birth to emperors and kings, a land rich with blessings and good fortune.

The Exalted Immortal Sect and Exalted court were both located here. One was light to the other's darkness, yin to the other's yang, offense to the other's defense. Like the sun and the moon in the sky, they illuminated the entire world.

Lu Yun couldn't let this come to fruition. Once the notion of using the Death Spike came to mind, it was impossible to shake off.

"Lu Yun... there's billions of immortals in the Exalted Immortal Sect and court... Mount Exalted itself might be destroyed by the Death Spike. You have to think this through!" Qing Yu was greatly alarmed by the prospect.

"No, I'll only destroy the Exalted Immortal Sect's fortunes and cause its decline." Lu Yun gently shook his head. "The genuine Death Spike layout culminates in a spike 33.33 meters tall, but I'll just refine one that's 3.33 meters tall. It'll be enough to damage the sect's foundations without going further."

He, too, was wary of attempting the true Death Spike. Such an action would incur too great a karmic debt. Though he was protected by the Sal Tree of Life and Death, the tree was currently in the process of evolving, so there was no telling whether it could shoulder retribution of such a scale.

He'd also learned Qing Yu's formula dao. While he hadn't reached her heaven-defying realm of using raw materials to synthesize whatever was needed, it wasn't a problem for him to deduce some methods, combat skills, and secret arts.

For example, to write the book in Lin Xuan's possession, Lu Yun and Qing Yu had worked together through formula dao to perfectly derive the ancient teachings of his sect's forefather.

Likewise, Lu Yun had employed formula dao to cobble together a simplified version of the Death Spike. However, he didn't know how much power the simplified version retained, and Qing Yu couldn't theorize the result either.

Now that Lin Yu and Lin Xuan had fully committed themselves to Lu Yun's side, he meant to gradually disclose some of his secrets to them. As it happened, he needed help from them to set up the Death Spike. It wasn't a layout deployable by one person.

One brother could arrange the formation and the other the feng shui layout, making for a complementary pair. For his part, Lu Yun would be responsible for the main body of the layout.

As for Li Youcai and the little fox, they were sent to the Exalted Immortal Sect's various pointless banquets in lieu of their party. Previously unrivaled to begin with, the fox's illusions had progressed even further after returning from the celestial master tomb. Her human guise would be a challenge to see through, even for dao immortals.

Lu Yun could imagine how flustered Exalted Major and the Exalted Immortal Sect were at the moment, undecided on how to handle him. They'd probably never entertained the possibility that he'd truly set foot into Exalted Major.

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To kick things off, the two Lin brothers deployed their skills in coordinated action and blanketed the group's residence in an illusion formation meant to confuse the senses. Then they set out to alter the local environment—Lin Yu with formations and Lin Xuan with layouts—while Lu Yun mobilized the three immortal fires to refine the Death Spike.

The spike itself was made from bronze, an ingredient not particularly rare in the world of immortals. However, since it was used in ritual ceremonies and sacrifices, that made it quite valuable.

In the past, he'd refined the palace mausoleum with the metal. Back then, the Panorama Pavilion had gathered tons of kilograms of it, and there was quite a bit left inside his storage ring.

Three immortal fires flared to life at the same time and tirelessly worked at the pile of bronze that was more than thirty meters tall. While the metal melted, Lu Yun's hands flew in a series of quick gestures and steadily imbued the metal with spirit seals to mold it into a spike roughly three meters long. Such was the way of refining items in the world of immortals.

Back on Earth, he would've had to hammer the metal with elbow grease, instead. The spike was the core of the feng shui layout, but it also had to be deployed in combination with secondary formations prepared by helpers.

In the past, the grandmaster had mobilized all available hands in the sect to barely manage a Death Spike layout. That had been during the peak of the sect, and the grandmaster had taken advantage of favorable circumstances and underhanded means to get away with hammering the spike into the imperial palace grounds.

Lu Yun was now in a world of immortals replete with immortal arts and wonders galore, so there was no need for him to act so furtively. Without a doubt, the Exalted Immortal Sect was constantly monitoring him, but even so, his disciples were formation grandmasters in their own right whose works could easily fool the surveillance.

In particular, Lin Xuan's feng shui layouts would be very difficult to spot even for formation grandmasters of the same level. Not even the Exalted emperor would expect Lu Yun to be so brazen as to deploy a killing layout right under his nose.

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Rumble!

Thunder suddenly roared in the sky as jagged bolts of lightning ripped through it. Dark, heavy clouds covered all of the firmament over the Exalted Immortal Sect, bolts of lightning writhing in their midst.

"What's the matter?" Everyone inside the sect simultaneously shot to their feet and looked at the sky.

"Is someone undergoing their tribulation here?" The sectmaster sprang up from his seat, an unsettled expression on his face. "Is it Lu Yun? What in the heavens is that kid doing?"

Thanks to her illusions, the little fox currently appeared in human form as a man with lush silver hair down to his lower back, one blessed with otherworldly handsomeness. Impressively enough, it was the same appearance as her Monster God form back in the North Sea.

In front of her, Li Youcai was drinking and chattering merrily with court officials and sect immortals in a perfectly harmonious atmosphere, oblivious to the changes in the sky. This was all due to the fox's illusion, and even the two aether dao immortals on surveillance duty had been duped.

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"Shit!" When Lu Yun thrust the Death Spike into the ground, a sheen of cold sweat glinted on his forehead. "I forgot there was a divine tomb under Mount Exalted! With the layout set up on top of the tomb..." He blanched at the possible consequences.

It wouldn't have mattered had it been an ordinary tomb, but herein lay a tomb where rested a divine dynasty. Below the tomb snaked a yin dragon vein, and on top of the dragon's head was a palace coffin and a throne coffin where an imperial princess was buried.

Thus, the Death Spike had triggered a lightning tribulation.