

Necropolis 651

Chapter 651: Altar, Sacrificial Goods

As punishment devices, the shackles kept the akasha ghost firmly imprisoned. There was a strange power at the other end of the chains, one that answered to a strange set of rules. The moment the shackles clasped shut, the hissing, struggling akasha ghost abruptly turned docile. Its gaze that'd brimmed with infinite resentment clouded over with dullness.

Lu Yun blinked in confusion; he hadn't expected the process to go so smoothly. Were akasha ghosts supposed to be this easy to subdue?

"Gather!" With a wave of his hand, the Gates of the Abyss boomed open and pulled the ghost inside.

"Milord, stop immediately! We can't let the ghost inside!" Ge Long's voice suddenly echoed in Lu Yun's skull. With a violent start, the master of hell hastened to close the gates, but it was too late.

An extraordinary aura erupted from the supposedly captive ghost. Caught off guard, Lu Yun found himself thrown violently backward, the chains slipping out of his hand in the process.

Before he could gather his senses, the akasha ghost had forced its way past the Gates of the Abyss and barged into hell.

"Milord, please do not return to hell before the seat of the tenth Envoy of Samsara is filled, no matter what happens. Or else... hell will have a new master."

Lu Yun's eyelid twitched.

Hum! Hum! Hum! Hum!

The four immortal swords that Ge Long had given him flew out and streaked into hell as four smears of varied light. Lu Yun stood frozen in place, an unsettled expression on his face. He desperately wanted to go back and take stock of the situation, but Ge Long had firmly vetoed that idea. Returning was out of the question, or hell would fall into enemy hands!

Lu Yun could sense that, instead of a single akasha ghost, there was now a throng of them inside the netherworld. He blinked in confusion, unable to wrap his mind around what had just happened.

Why would a lone akasha ghost attract more of its ilk once inside hell? Also, the Gates of the Abyss might be the entrance, but the other ghosts couldn't have possibly gone inside through them.

"Well... let's go, I guess, we can head inside the Exalted Tomb!" After some internal struggle, he decided to put the matter aside, since there was nothing to be done at the moment. Meanwhile, the akasha ghosts ran amok, slaughtering the yin spirits and assorted ghosts residing inside to the last...

Or rather, the true spirits of their victims scattered all over hell, transforming into Hell Flowers or hiding inside the Tome of Life and Death, waiting for the crisis to be defused to come back to life.

What gave Lu Yun the greatest sigh of relief was that his envoys and most important Infernum like Ruyi, or allies such as Zombie King Diexi, were either residing in Dusk Province or had gone to wage war in

Witherdew Major. None of them were currently inside hell, otherwise the losses would have been much more substantial.

“Thankfully, Yueshen’s soul has already fallen apart, so her true spirit is now a Hell Flower...” After observing her, he secretly gathered the Hell Flower that was her soul and sent it inside the Tome of Life and Death where it could make a quick recovery.

In ordinary times, Lu Yun could summon the power of hell with a mere thought, but upon reaching for the familiar netherworld, he was aghast to find a terrifying force suffusing the atmosphere. It made his heart quail and forbade him from proceeding further. Moreover, a vague impression arose from the Tome of Life and Death, warning him not to go inside hell.

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“What’s the matter? Why are there formations here? Did someone unearth a treasure?!” A herd of freshly transformed fur seals had arrived. Seeing Qing Yu floating in the air and the formations nearby yet to fade away, they immediately beamed with delight.

“Lady Mother said there’d be treasures here. Sure enough, she was right!” Nearly five hundred in number, the fur seals were all Ge Yanxia’s children and mates.

“It’s ours now, take it away, take it away!” Without even figuring out what was truly going on, the group charged forth in a great brouhaha.

“I only need one of them alive. Kill the rest!” Lu Yun had planned on taking a few of them as sacrificial offerings to begin with. To think they’d come knocking and serve themselves up on a silver platter!

The creatures were extremely strong as each of them was a primordial immortal with strength enough to match a void-ascended immortal. However, they were nothing but the basest of wild beasts at the heart of things, and had no notable cultivation methods or combat arts to call their own. Apart from rare cases like Ge Yun or Ge Yanxia, most used their teeth and limbs to fight.

So, despite their impressive cultivation realms, their battle prowess was nothing to speak of. At most, their thick skins and layers of flesh made it easier for them to endure beatings.

Qing Yu frowned at the sight of a black, fetid mass surging her way. She wasn’t really keen to take the field herself; these creatures were remarkably disgusting.

“Hmph!” Sprawled on Lin Xuan’s head thus far, the little fox suddenly sprang up with a snort. A flash of silver glinted in her eyes.

Sliding to a stop, the pungent tide dissolved into fur seals sizing each other up with strange expressions. Without another word, they leapt and tore savagely at each other. After a short while, there was only a single one left alive; the rest had all been reduced to mincemeat.

“Let’s go find a sacrificial altar!” Before Lu Yun and Qing Yu could say anything, the little fox hopped off of Lin Xuan’s head and slipped back into Qing Yu’s arms. “Sure enough, this place still feels the most comfortable!”

Lu Yun gave her a dirty look.

“So you do know the feeling of fear, hmm?” He smiled coldly.

“What’s there to be afraid of here?!” The fox snuggled firmly against Qing Yu, refusing to budge come hell or high water.

Qing Yu smiled wryly. Even through the thick layer of starpower, she smelled jealousy in the air.

“Alright, let’s look for an altar. Don’t let someone else beat us to it again!” She dispelled the cosmic energy around her and dimpled at Lu Yun.

The latter felt rather powerless. Ge Long had mentioned that the four swords would lead him to the treasure inside the tomb, but... they’d gone back to the old servant for now and hell was unavailable. Lu Yun could only rely on himself for the time being.

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Wrapped in mental fog, the lone surviving fur seal stumbled after Lu Yun’s group like a walking corpse.

Li Youcai had awakened. Since Yueshen hadn’t recovered yet, the man was conscious and in control of his body again. In between cries and wails of self pity, he pulled out various delicacies from his storage ring and gorged himself on delectables.

In his own words, if he had to die, he’d rather die with a full belly.

After roughly two hours, Lu Yun finally found another altar, one much bigger than the previous one. A full kilometer wide, it looked like a miniature mountain, and the human-shaped sculpture at its center was many times bigger than the one before at more than twenty meters tall.

This time, he clearly sensed a tendril of life force from its surface. While still extremely faint, it was much more intense compared to the last altar.

“Bring the sacrifice to the altar. We’re heading down inside the tomb!”

To be frank, entering the divine tomb via such a method wasn’t very reliable. Once inside, all possible exits would be blocked off. Even if they successfully slew the demon fetus, the fate of everyone inside would still be in the hands of the Exalted celestial emperor.

But Lu Yun wasn’t that worried. He carried a branch of the Path of Ingress on him that could pierce through space and ignore all formations.

Chapter 652: Trap

Guided by the little fox’s illusions, the fur seal slowly set foot on the altar.

Hum.

The pentacolor light radiating from the altar trembled slightly, shattering the powerful seal into a bloody mist, giving it no time to even register its death.

Rumble.

A door opened up above the altar, opening wide to reveal a pitch black void. Ancient, desolate energy surged from the portal, forming an enormous storm expanding in all directions.

“Who’s there?!” Suddenly on the alert, Lu Yun’s eyes shone with sharp light. The Spectral Eye picked out a faint figure flickering into existence on one side of the altar, charging straight into the storm and darting into the giant doorway.

The abrupt turn of events caught him off guard. He hadn’t expected someone else would be lurking around the altar, waiting to claim the fruits of others!

Thankfully, the doorway didn’t close after that single figure entered. The Exalted celestial emperor had mentioned that up to five hundred people could enter at the same time. Since only one had entered thus far, there were plenty of slots left for them.

“Get inside!” exclaimed Lu Yun.

Rumble!

The doorway suddenly swung shut, and a tremor passed through the altar as the pentacolor lights winked out. The man was a lone wolf who hadn’t brought anyone to sacrifice and had pulled up the bridge behind him!

Lu Yun’s expression sank ominously; the interloper had shut down the portal from the inside.

“Dammit, we’ve been duped!” Lin Yu’s eyes blazed. As a genius of the Lin Clan, he’d always been the aggressor if there was any bullying to be found. This was the first time ever that the tables had turned on him!

“I know who he is!” said Qing Yu. “He’s from the Yin Clan of Exalted Major. Their natural combat art enables them to conceal themselves in the void. At its maximum, the combat art can even hide them from dao immortals.”

The Yin Clan wasn’t a large tribe in Exalted Major. Although they were masters of stealth, they were weak in all other aspects. Otherwise, that Yin immortal wouldn’t have searched for an opening to exploit, rather than hunting down other immortals to use as sacrifice.

Their weaknesses were clear, but so were their strengths, making it easy for Qing Yu to investigate beforehand and identify the full list of their combat arts and techniques. That Yin immortal was likely Yin Qingran, the oldest son of the Yin patriarch. He was a genius who’d already ascended to immortality from the void realm.

“The Yin Clan, hmm... I’ll remember this.” Lu Yun’s lips curled into a cold smile.

Yin Qingran’s action signified his clan’s hostility toward Lu Yun. If he’d come with friendly intentions, he would’ve shown himself and asked to enter the divine tomb with the rest of the group. With Lu Yun’s personality, he wouldn’t have declined.

The man’s goal was clear and singular: to prevent Lu Yun from entering the divine tomb. Even now, only a select few present at the beginning knew why the Exalted celestial emperor had opened up the divine tomb. The treasures within were what everyone else thought the main focus was.

The world of immortals was in chaotic disarray. Clans and factions focused only on fighting among themselves, scrabbling over resources, treasures, and face. Exalted Major was unstable as well—case in point, some factions had already openly rebelled.

If their celestial emperor then announced the existence of a demon fetus in the region, many Exalted factions would likely just move out entirely. Witherdew Major would be the best place for them to settle and start anew.

Likewise, most of the immortals present were kept in the dark as to what they were here for. In the eyes of the Exalted celestial emperor, these immortals were nothing but cannon fodder. Irritation floated to the fore when Lu Yun realized he'd been used as a pawn as well.

An akasha ghost arrived on schedule, followed by a giant foot that crushed the altar and left a giant footprint in its wake. This time, Lu Yun didn't go after the ghost.

Akasha ghosts were sentient beings. They knew who Lu Yun was now and what he was capable of. They would be even more prepared this time, making him even less of a match for them if he tried again.

Fortunately, there was a plethora of altars all over the Last Repose. It was as if they'd sprouted out of the ground.

"Have you noticed something, sir?" Lin Xuan asked suddenly when Lu Yun found the third altar.

"What is it?" Lu Yun turned to his disciple.

The Lin brothers were now fully committed to Dusk Province and had become her resident experts. Though they'd sworn complete loyalty to Lu Yun, it'd be rather odd if they called him 'milord', so they called him 'sir' like the Envoys of Samsara.

"The layout of the footprints, and thus the altars, isn't random. There's a pattern to it!" Lin Xuan took out a jade slip from his storage ring—a map he'd been working on since entering the realm. It marked the locations of all the footprints and altars.

Although he couldn't figure out what was the matter, he'd sensed something amiss all the same. Lu Yun took the jade slip and injected his consciousness into it. His brows drew close together after a moment's perusal.

"Do you notice anything, sir?" Lin Xuan asked eagerly. Qing Yu, the little fox, Lin Yu, and Li Youcai all turned to Lu Yun.

"It seems that entry through the altars isn't advised. We have to find another way!" Lu Yun sucked in a breath, his expression flickering through various changes. He even felt a little grateful that Yin Qingran had shut down the doorway earlier. "I believe the altars correspond to the locations of the burial chambers within."

The collection of tombs, in fact, formed a large mausoleum. The footprints and altars all over the Last Repose corresponded to the burial chambers within the mausoleum, so it'd be suicide to enter via the altars.

No one who'd ever entered the tombs that way had survived their expedition, which meant that far from entrances... this was all a trap. The Exalted Divine Tombs were a trap!

"Get on the Path of Ingress!" Lu Yun stopped hesitating and activated the treasure.

By now, the branch was an independent treasure and had turned into a real Path of Ingress under his control. The Nephrite court wouldn't be able to collect his branch even if they were to bring the main body of the treasure itself.

Everyone jumped on the white path without hesitation.

Previously, Lu Yun wouldn't have been able to enter the divine tomb even with the Path of Ingress, since he didn't know where it was. After using an altar, it had enabled him to pinpoint the tomb through the presence from the doorway, despite Yin Qingran's intervention.

Boom!

The Path of Ingress transformed into a white dragon brandishing fangs and claws, pierced a hole in the air, and vanished without a trace.

Chapter 653: World Gates

Ugly cracks tore through a dark crimson sky. They healed into scars that tore open and scabbed over and tore open again and again in a horrifying cycle. The vast land was covered in crimson mud with fist-sized bubbles constantly popping on its surface, within which various crimson creatures swam and lurked.

These were the Exalted Divine Tombs, the resting place of the divine race back in the Primeval Era of human dao and the primordial divine court. The elites of the Exalted Divines and all other divine tribes were buried here.

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Lu Yun and his companions traversed the scarlet world on the back of the Path of Ingress. Although there was a space-restriction formation here, the Path of Ingress was such a special treasure that it overrode all formations, rendering the restriction ineffective against it.

"So this is the great tomb of the divine race?" Lin Xuan paged through his tomb raiding archives, looking for any feng shui layouts that were a possible match. After a good while, he looked blankly at Lu Yun. He wasn't identifying any structures that could be labeled as burial or feng shui layouts.

"This is the Ichor Bog," Li Youcai suddenly said. "The mausoleum is on the other side of the pond."

Yueshen had recovered through the power of the Tome of Life and Death and assumed control of Li Youcai again. His heavyset body dropped down from the path and landed on the bubbling crimson pond below.

"Have you been here before?" Lu Yun and the others followed suit. Strangely enough, they didn't squelch into the pond despite the moist look of the earth. Instead, they were insulated from the mud by some sort of power.

"I have." Yueshen nodded.

She had once numbered amongst the twenty-four divine kings of the divine race—the senior council of her kind that employed great authority. Over the twenty thousand years of divine rule over the world of immortals, Yueshen had explored her fair share of strange places.

The Exalted Divine Tombs had been maintained with particular care. When she'd first visited, however, there had been none of the giant footprints that now littered the Last Repose outside.

"This pond was created from the congealed flesh and blood of countless lives," Yueshen said faintly. "Perhaps the flesh and blood of those sacrificed to the altars are added to it as well."

A shudder ran down Qing Yu's spine.

"What are those vein-like things down there?" Lin Yu asked, staring at the living souls moving about the pond.

Yueshen took a closer look and answered, "Blood vessels, probably."

Lin Yu shut his mouth.

"The mausoleum of the Exalted Divine Tombs is in that direction," Yueshen said, pointing in a certain direction.

"Have you remembered something again?" Qing Yu asked with a frown, sensing Yueshen's change in mood.

Yueshen nodded and turned to Lu Yun. "I have."

She'd regained more of her memories the longer she spent recovering in hell, but there remained many things she couldn't remember. Once she'd been resurrected through the Tome of Life and Death as an immortal ghost, though, she could recall everything.

"Ruyi and I were once the greatest goddesses of war in the divine court," Yueshen said faintly. "Our duty was to protect the world of immortals and the thing under Mount Exalted. However, we failed our duties in the end."

Everyone turned to Yueshen in surprise.

Yueshen's full name was Jixiang Yueshen, and Ruyi's full name was Ruyi Wushen. Their names combined to form a phrase of auspicious sentiments and good fortune. According to known history, the two divine kings hadn't been great warriors and had only represented the divine race's fortunes.

When Lu Yun discovered that someone had refined Ruyi into a sarcophagus to bury Yueshen alive, he'd concluded it'd been a curse on the entire divine race. But now... it seemed that something else was afoot here.

"Wait, what did you say?!" Lin Yu exclaimed with wide eyes. "Protect the world of immortals? The divine race protected the world?" That contradicted everything he'd ever known about history.

Hadn't the divine race plagued the world eighty thousand years ago and enslaved all lives for a full twenty thousand years? Since when did they become guardians of the realm?

"The divine race swore to protect the world following the last wishes of the primordial immortal emperor... We were to stop the invaders from entering through the World Gates." Yueshen hummed bemusedly. "Judging from the present world, the divines must have succeeded."

“The World Gates...” murmured Lu Yun. “So there really is such a thing!” He’d seen the gates before in Su Xiaoxiao and Cangyin’s memories, but hadn’t known then what he’d been looking at.

The gates were shut tight in their memories. If they were to open, great disaster would follow. Whatever it might be, however, remained a mystery. Perhaps... the destruction of the primordial world of immortals had something to do with the World Gates?

“Invaders? What invaders?” Lin Xuan asked, noticing another point Yueshen had made. “Did these invaders destroy the primordial world of immortals?”

“I’m not sure how the primordial world was destroyed, I hadn’t been born yet.” Pensively, Yueshen gave the Lin brothers a onceover before glancing at the little fox in Qing Yu’s arms. “While I don’t know what the world was like a hundred thousand years ago... eighty thousand years ago, the world of immortals during the divine race’s rule was the only safe harbor in all the realms. All of the other worlds were either long destroyed or gasping out their final breaths.”

The revelation sent the group reeling.

“Yin spirits!” Lu Yun swiftly connected some dots between what he knew of the world. “Are all of those other worlds solely populated by yin spirits now?”

There was a large seal at the heart of the tomb under Dusk Province, and a similar tomb could be found in the Azure, Crimson, and Argent Provinces in Nephrite Major. Every once in a while, a great swarm of yin spirits would emerge from the tombs.

The invasion in Azure Province had ended at Lu Yun’s hands, and the ancient tomb transformed into a bronze palace to seal the rift. He’d thought the four tombs suppressed an unknown world, but based on Yueshen’s words, the four cracks must lead to other worlds in the multiverse!

“That’s right.” Yueshen nodded. “The worlds beyond ours have all been occupied by yin spirits. Ours is the only world free of such a blight, but that may change very soon.”

“The previous generations of the nine celestial emperors must have dedicated their lives to guarding the fissure of the world,” Lu Yun murmured.

The previous celestial emperors had been the most powerful rulers over the past eighty thousand years. Their reputations were unmatched, yet they’d abruptly announced closed door cultivation and abdicated their thrones before fully grooming their successors first.

It seemed the truth was coming to light, and they hadn’t disappeared in an attempt to ascend to the ingress realm, but to guard a rift to the world of immortals.

“The World Gates!” Yueshen took a deep breath. “If my guess is correct, the celestial emperors of past generations all headed there at the end of their time.”

Chapter 654: Ichor Bog

The World Gates!

Yueshen had mentioned the name more than once, a testament to how important it was to her.

Hell possesses the Gates of the Abyss, so it's not surprising for the world of immortals to have something called the World Gates, Lu Yun thought to himself.

The past was a tangled mess that only grew knottier the more one tried to unravel it. He'd thought that all the enmities and grievances of that long-gone era would have returned to dust after the end of those times, but it seemed that things were far from simple.

In the Primordial Era, there'd existed an Abyss of Divine Burial to seal away the divines. It was now split into four parts scattered across different regions of the world, while a new Abyss of Divine Burial had emerged in the underworld.

Despite generally accepted history, the divines had actually protected the world of immortals eighty thousand years ago. Certain people had continuously plotted their downfall—the likely culprits now seemed to be the shamanic divines.

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“What about Mount Exalted? You divines didn't protect it only because it was the divine emperor's Last Repose, did you?” Qing Yu asked while Lu Yun was lost in thought.

Yueshen stayed silent and glanced again at Lin Yu, Lin Xuan, and the little fox. She was aware that Lu Yun was the master of hell and had long pledged herself to his cause, so much so that she refused to be brought back to life and would rather remain an immortal ghost.

Subconsciously, the only ones she trusted were Lu Yun and Qing Yu.

“Speak your mind, everyone here is one of our own.” Qing Yu smiled gently.

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan beamed with joy. This was a clear sign that Lu Yun and Qing Yu had well and truly accepted them. Inside the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, Empress Myrtlestar and the Dragon and Tiger Princes were all ears, also eager to learn the secrets of Mount Exalted.

“It's the Exalted Divine Emperor's true spirit.” Yueshen heaved a sigh. “Since the beginning of the divine court, the divine race constantly strove to revive our emperor of the Exalted Divine tribe. Year after year, generation after generation... we finally succeeded in the end.”

“What?!” Lu Yun jumped in alarm. “The Exalted Divine Emperor's true spirit... has been resurrected?” His eyes grew round as he naturally understood the implications therein. “Let's get this straight—do you mean that the demon fetus inside the Exalted Divine Tombs is the emperor's true spirit?!”

Yueshen stayed silent, but that was a form of acknowledgement in itself.

Deep powerlessness flooded Lu Yun's heart and mind. That the emperor's true spirit had come back to life as a demon fetus... that spelled terrifying doom for them all! Even in its current state, the demon fetus wasn't something that contemporary immortals could contend with. Qi Hai... had probably identified it a long time ago, but he'd kept the truth to himself.

If he'd been upfront with the Exalted celestial emperor, the latter likely would've abandoned Exalted Major and taken all his citizens to Witherdew Major. He would gain a short reprieve in doing so, or perhaps even a chance of survival, slim as it were. To stay in Exalted Major was equivalent to forsaking one's life.

“It would be a world-ending disaster for our realm. Whatever the case may be... we have to stop it from happening!” Qing Yu’s eyes gleamed with resolve.

“Yes.” Lu Yun nodded as well. The birth of the fetus would lead to the destruction of the entire world and its transformation into a demonic land.

Currently, the world of immortals was the lone sanctuary left in the multiverse. Even if one wanted to flee from the demon fetus, there was nowhere one could go.

Earth?

Humanity’s ancestor planet? Lu Yun had a feeling that Earth existed somewhere in the realm of immortals. When he’d first arrived here, he’d noticed that the positions of the celestial bodies in the sky were identical to those observed on Earth. Therefore, there was no guarantee that Earth would escape the advent of such a monster.

“The demon fetus hasn’t been born yet, so our chances aren’t totally nil. Empress Vastspace’s true spirit was wiped out before she came back to life, wasn’t it?” He glanced sideways at the little fox. The bell hanging on her neck glinted with a golden luster that was barely perceptible.

All of a sudden, Lu Yun thought of Ge Long.

There was a certain treasure hidden inside the divine mausoleum. This treasure... might very well provide a way to keep the emperor’s true spirit in check. After all, it was a true spirit and nothing more. Until the fetus arrived in this world, it wouldn’t wield the strength that the emperor had once possessed in life.

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Numerous serpentine creatures twisted within the bloody swamp’s boundless expanse, somehow presenting an eerie and uncanny sight.

Lu Yun’s group hastily rushed forward on the Path of Ingress. Space was extremely strange in this area. Here, the Path of Ingress could only sustain flight at best, not pierce through the space’s confines.

Boom!

A deafening roar came from the swamp below as a great hand stretched out of the morass to grab at the Path of Ingress. The hand of bloody mud was more than sixty meters wide, and the fresh blood dripping from it created a harrowing sight.

“Oh no you don’t!” Without undue panic, Lu Yun brandished Violetgrave and unleashed a dazzling ray of violet sword light that cleaved the hand in two.

Screech!!

A great number of scarlet serpentine creatures hissed when the great hand was cut apart, then scuttled away in every direction. Impressively, the hand had been formed by a pile of the creatures.

Glug, glug, glug!

Their retreat was followed by a strange sound from the gory bog. Pockets of scarlet gas wafted out of the swamp's air bubbles to fill the surrounding air.

Hum!

Under Lu Yun's feet, the Path of Ingress shook as it glowed with a vast expanse of white light and repelled the scarlet gas. It was a lethal poison, something even more toxic than corpse poison.

"Be careful, there must be foreign presences inside the mausoleum," Yueshen suddenly said. "The divine emperor's true spirit was born from a divine fetus. His transformation into a demon fetus must be the doing of certain people."

She couldn't help but worry, as anyone who could transform a divine fetus into a demon one would hardly be weak. If they'd stayed behind, not even Lu Yun would be their match. Her master nodded gently, but there was also a glimmer of hope deep in his heart. Princess Zhao Qing was also here!

If the divine emperor's true spirit had indeed been demonized, she wouldn't sit back and do nothing. Moreover, she was someone who owned a corner of hell. By coming here, Lu Yun wasn't only after the treasure Ge Long had mentioned, but Zhao Qing as well.

He had no idea what would happen once he assembled all ten Envoys of Samsara, but according to Ge Long, he could solve the issue of the akasha ghosts invading hell when all ten seats were accounted for. Needless to say, the envoys had to be far more than simple subordinates to the master of the netherworld. So, for his final envoy, Lu Yun had settled on Zhao Qing!

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Like a giant curtain suddenly whisked open, the world of blood and gore abruptly vanished from their line of sight, only to be replaced by darkness without end.

"Did any of you notice something just now?" Lin Yu's voice betrayed his trepidation. "I think I saw an eye... I think we just flew out of an eye!"

He looked back behind him, but there was only darkness as far as he could see.

Chapter 655: Reversing Yin Yang, Earth Topping Sky

"Don't look back." Lu Yun reached out and physically turned Lin Yu's head around. There really was an eye behind them, and yes, they did seem to have flown out of it just now. The eye and Ichor Bog had both vanished at this point, and it was taboo for tomb raiders to turn around in a tomb, whether they were entering or leaving the structure.

Endless pitch-black filled their vision, but their consciousnesses weren't hindered. That was much more important than vision to immortals and cultivators, thus they weren't too bothered by the lack of light. In fact, Yueshen felt a lot more at ease here.

"This really is a mausoleum... and the burial chambers do correspond to the footprints and altars in the Last Repose." Lin Xuan rattled out his findings as he flipped through his book and scanned the pages with his consciousness. "What a terribly powerful mausoleum! It rivals the bronze palace that Sir Lu set up in Azure Province."

He couldn't see anything, but his consciousness was able to cover a few kilometers around him, feeding him insights about the layout.

The bronze palace was a grand influence over the world that used the power of heaven and earth to create an invincible seal for the crack beneath it.

The mausoleum in front of them was a grand influence as well.

"Mm." Lu Yun nodded and activated the Spectral Eye to see everything like it was still daytime for him. Nothing could escape his notice. "Be careful... There's something terrible in the mausoleum that eludes my consciousness. Stay close to me and don't fall behind." He headed into the deepest part of the darkness.

The Exalted celestial emperor had handed each of them a map of the mausoleum and marked a specific meeting point. After all, it was impossible for just a few people alone to kill the demon god fetus.

Besides, Lu Yun had realized that the fetus wasn't at the ground level of the tombs, but deeper underground.

"...it's sealed by the palace coffin!" His brows twitched.

Swoosh!

With a shake of his wrist, he shot out violet sword light from his palm. A piercing scream sounded out when he connected, slaying a figure that'd become one with darkness.

"What was that?!" Both Lin Yu and Lin Xuan shuddered. Their consciousnesses hadn't found anything, but the scream of anguish they'd heard after Lu Yun's attack couldn't have been more real.

"Some kind of yin spirit," Qing Yu said. "Go, I'll protect the two of them."

She knew Lu Yun needed to head off by himself after entering the mausoleum. The bigger the group, the more noticeable they would be. He was also grooming the Lin brothers to be the future pillars of his sect, so they had to undergo some tempering before they could spread their wings.

Qing Yu had come along on this expedition to protect them. More importantly, someone even more powerful was with her—Empress Myrtlestar.

"Alright." Lu Yun nodded at Qing Yu and vanished into the vast darkness.

"Let's go." Qing Yu turned to the Lin brothers. "We'll meet up with the Exalted celestial emperor."

As for Li Youcai, Yueshen had already taken his body to who knew where. She was looking for something in the mausoleum.

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The luopan in Lu Yun's hand radiated soft golden light in the dark, the only source of illumination in the vicinity. He scanned the living and dead within five thousand kilometers, spotting burial chamber after burial chamber containing powerful spirits.

“Ingress, primordial, principal... There’s still a realm beyond the three major realms!” He could see yet another superior realm, according to information from the dead. “The supreme pure, jade pure, and grand pure realms!”

After the principal realm came the realm of three purities. The primordial immortal emperor was a jade pure immortal!

“Emerald Mistfire, Lucent Voidfire, Daevic Skyfire... Are the three founders of immortal dao the three of the Daoist trinity? Given how closely these cultivation realms mimic Daoist philosophy...” Lu Yun was reminded of myths on Earth about the Three Pure Ones.

“It has to be them... but there aren’t any tales about hell in the world of immortals, nor is there knowledge about the Three Pure Ones or feng shui. Clearly, someone has somehow erased all of it with tremendous power.”

As for Earth... Qi Hai had once called Earth the ancestral planet of the human race, and the dao of feng shui its unique heritage. Many secrets remained to be uncovered in this area.

“It doesn’t make sense, though. According to legends passed down to modern times, the primordial divine court destroyed immortal dao and replaced it with Sacred Origin Runes etched in the petals of the Dao Flower. Then why does the cultivation of the divines buried in these tombs still follow the progression of immortal dao?” Lu Yun frowned. He was certain that the dead buried within the tombs were the elites of the ancient divine court.

In his eyes, the construction here was crude. Apart from the mausoleum encompassing everything, the individual tombs had all formed naturally according to the identities of their owners—much like how the coiled mountains had formed around the tomb that interred Huang Qing.

The mausoleum structure limited the feng shui of the individual tombs, so the layouts posed no threat to Lu Yun. What he had to worry about were dead men walking, the zombies.

The burial here had been done too crudely to properly bury these elites. Many of the divines would’ve become zombies, and after their countless years of existence, they were surely on the level of zombie kings, or something even more powerful.

Lu Yun had to find the yin dragon vein and Zhao Qing, the emperor’s daughter that was buried above the dragon vein’s head.

"To seek a dragon of mountains coiled,

Those deathly cliffs with mysteries roiled.

Danger shies if mountains hide,

Reverse yin yang and earth top sky!"

Hum.

With the Dragonsearch Invocation active, a faint golden light flickered in Lu Yun’s eyes. Instead of disassembling, as the yin luopan was prone to do, a world emerged in his eyes. Everything within the mausoleum was projected into that world.

“Reversing yin and yang, earth topping sky... That’s it!” Lu Yun’s eyes lit up. “The demon fetus lies in the tomb of the Exalted Divine Emperor, while his daughter was buried in the sky. Sky and earth, yin and yang. Those opposing forces should’ve supported and balanced each other... But after the divine emperor’s true spirit transformed into a divine demon fetus, Zhao Qing’s been keeping it under control!”

He’d spotted the key to the tomb. It wasn’t that Zhao Qing couldn’t move off of her throne and out of the palace coffin, it was that she mustn’t do that. If she moved, her counterpart—the divine demon fetus—would then be born.

“I’m running out of time, I must find her now. She should know where the treasure Ge Long mentioned is.” Lu Yun disappeared with a twitch.

Wandering Step.

Chapter 656: Revenge is a Dish Best Served Hot

Lu Yun wasn’t worried about Qing Yu. Although Empress Myrtlestar’s existence had been revealed to the world, no one would expect Qing Yu to carry the primordial empress around with her.

Hair-raising screeches occasionally rang throughout the dark mausoleum.

“Someone’s fighting over there!” Lu Yun quickly stepped behind a tombstone and looked toward the closest disturbance.

Two powerful immortals were clashing against each other; heavenly power radiated from both and their every move summoned the might of heaven and earth.

Void-ascended immortals!

Although the two were only true immortals, they were more powerful than many arcane, or even peerless immortals. Only void-ascended true immortals would possess such terrifying might.

“Yin Qingran, this will end up biting the Yin Clan in the end!” an immortal roared in frustration, retreating as he fought.

“Tsk tsk tsk, I don’t know if that’s true, but I’m certain that House Donglin is doomed.” Yin Qingran was a beardless, fair-faced man who looked to be in his early thirties. Dressed in cyan, his attacks were quick and vicious with no extraneous movement, forcing the Donglin immortal to retreat time and time again.

“Your head and nascent spirit are worth a billion premium immortal crystals!” Yin Qingran threw his head back with laughter. His weapon of choice was a narrow sword that blended into the air like a faint breeze. It danced through the air, imperceptible to the eye and consciousness.

A billion crystals was a great fortune to many immortals and would be a particular boon to the Yin Clan. The Yins were a second-rate clan in Exalted Major; a billion crystals would increase their strength by thirty percent!

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“Yin Qingran? What a funny sense of humor fate has... You plotted against me in the Last Repose, so how can I possibly let you take Dusk’s crystals so easily?” Lu Yun smirked. With a single step, he vanished from where he stood. Manifesting an unassuming, simple sixth-rank immortal sword, he struck out with sword dao.

Swoosh! Blinding brilliance shot out from the sixth-rank sword, illuminating the area.

“Who’s there?!” Both Yin Qingran and the Donglin immortal whirled with great shock. Before they could react, the sword light reached them and vanished into the sky.

Thud! One of them collapsed, nascent spirit and head gone.

Yin Qingran stood rooted to the spot, his flabbergasted consciousness sweeping over the prone form of the Donglin immortal.

Lu Yun’s bounty called for the heads or nascent spirits of members of House Donglin, assigning no value to headless corpses. As the final lifeline of an immortal, nascent spirits were the more important of the two, so there was more weight on turning in nascent spirits.

The head and nascent spirit were the most important things to an immortal. If both of them were preserved, an immortal would be able to regrow their body, even if they were beheaded. However, there wasn’t a trace of the Donglin’s nascent spirit to be found.

Poleaxed by the sudden turn of events, Yin Qingran could almost picture a pile of immortal crystals growing a pair of wings and flying right out of his reach.

“Who is it?!” he howled in rage. “Who stole my crystals?!”

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“Tsk tsk, this fella’s pretty strong, eh. He’s definitely one of the greatest geniuses in the world of immortals. If Yin Qingran hadn’t crippled him first, I wouldn’t have been able to defeat him.” Lu Yun stuck a talisman to his captive’s head and sealed it off, then tossed it into his storage ring. The man hadn’t died yet, or he would’ve entered hell as Lu Yun’s Infernum.

Hell was an absolute mess at the moment, what with a holy war taking place between Ge Long and an army of akasha ghosts. Nothing could survive there.

“The last of House Donglin’s elites must be in the area as well.” Lu Yun’s eyes flared with vicious killing intent and, with a quick thought, he made use of Shapeshifting to take the form of Yin Qingran. “Yin elites can hide themselves in the air, which I can’t do... But I have Size Manipulation!”

He shrank down to the size of a dust particle and began hunting down members of House Donglin. He wasn’t strong enough to go after the mightiest of them, but with stealth on his side, Lu Yun had no difficulty taking down newly-ascended immortals. This was but a secondary quest to him, though, not to take the place of his main mission.

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Boom!

An explosion vibrated the land as a pillar of red light shot into the sky, illuminating an area ten kilometers wide. A group of three hundred immortals erupted in whoops and cheers.

"It's open, it's finally open. This tomb belongs to an elite of the ancient divine court!" The leading dao immortal capered in victory.

Toppling the rule of immortal dao was ample proof of the primordial divine court's strength. There would be endless treasures buried with their elites, and judging from the red light piercing the sky, there must be a great treasure within this one. Incidentally, treasures of the divine race could be employed by immortals of contemporary society without a hitch.

These tombs weren't set up in the proper way of burial. They consisted simply of an underground palace divided into main and secondary burial chambers, along with an annex room.

"The tombs here are much simpler and safer than the ancient tombs outside." The immortals began digging into the soil outside the tomb with their flying swords, slowly uprooting the tombstone and unearthing the rooms underground. A giant bronze coffin lay within the main chamber, where the red light originated from.

Waves of heat flooded out of nowhere, but that only served to heighten general excitement.

"It's the tomb of a fire divine." Someone jumped into the pit to pry open the coffin.

"I would suggest you not do anything reckless," a grave voice sounded in caution.

"Who goes there?!" The leading dao immortal spun around on high alert, taking a good look at the newcomer through the crimson light.

"Yin Qingran of the Yin Clan." Lu Yun had raised his cultivation to that of a void-ascended immortal with the Demonic Sovereign Cauldron. Regular immortals wouldn't be able to determine that his strength was a temporary increase. "The divine buried in the tomb has mutated and transformed into a zombie. If you open the coffin, you'll all die."

"The Yin Clan... a bottom-tier clan from Exalted Major. Yin Qingran is a great genius, however. It's said that his phenomenon of ascension spanned three provinces in Exalted Major." The dao immortal nodded slightly. "I am Ling Chengzu of the Ling Clan from Nephrite Major."

"Ah, a senior from the Ling Clan." A plan began taking shape in Lu Yun's mind, but he remained expressionless. "Truthfully speaking, the Yin Clan has explored the Exalted Divine Tombs more than once now. We know how the zombies inside should be dealt with. How about I act as your vanguard while you keep up a formation, senior?" Lu Yun affected a servile tone, as if he were attempting to curry favor with the Lings.

Chapter 657: The Divine Fire Bead

No one knew for certain whether the Yin Clan had truly visited the Divine Exalted Tombs before, but the obsequious expression that 'Yin Qingran' wore was plain for all to see.

The Yins were nothing but a second-rate clan in Exalted Major. In fact, their status wasn't even on par with what the Chen Clan had once enjoyed in Nephrite Major. On the contrary, the Ling Clan was a peak

clan, and deservedly so. A preeminent presence in Nephrite Major, it was one of the greatest factions in the world of immortals.

After eighty thousand years of top-tier status, Ling immortals were very accustomed to looks of adoration and worship. Of course, the key to that was also because they monopolized the manufacturing process of fortress ships.

Like adding wings to a tiger, the clan had grown so formidable that even the Nephrite emperor dared not unduly suppress them.

Though the clan's business had been greatly dented by Dusk Province also selling fortress ships now, their influence remained. Destiny City had extended an invitation to them to make a trip together.

They weren't the only ones, as many major clans had also been invited to the Divine Exalted Tombs. As for why, only a handful of people were in the know. Roughly three hundred people from the Ling Clan had come this time, their only purpose to explore the mausoleum.

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"Oh?" Ling Chengzu's eyebrows quirked. His team had acted with the greatest caution inside the tomb, but even so, more than a hundred of them had died to reach this point. Therefore, he couldn't help but be swayed by the offer. If a zombie were truly to jump out at this time, they'd suffer major casualties yet again.

"Very well then. I will maintain the formation for you while you open the coffin." He was a peak aether dao immortal powerhouse with nine aether dao fruits. While 'Yin Qingran' was a void-ascended immortal, he was a measly true immortal, nothing but an ant by comparison. Ling Chengzu wasn't worried about possible underhanded tricks.

"Very well!" Without delay, Lu Yun jumped right into the tomb. The interior was a giant furnace, the heat so extreme that ordinary immortals would be instantly fried to a crisp. Along the way, he made sure to exaggerate his pains and struggles for dramatic effect, until he finally reached the bronze coffin. "It's rare to see a coffin cast from bronze..."

It was indeed a coffin—thankfully not an outer-coffin. Bronze outer-coffins and netherwood coffins were the most frightening of combinations. As for what lay inside a bronze coffin... he couldn't tell for certain, but the Spectral Eye was detecting something dreadful, along with an accompanying treasure.

"Open!" With a thunderous shout, he smashed the coffin's lid with a palm strike, sending it flying away. A bead sparkling with red and gold slowly levitated from the coffin, like a miniature sun rising in the sky illuminating the firmament with its rays.

"A Divine Fire Bead! A Divine Fire Bead from the legends!!" Ling Chengzu shrieked.

A Divine Fire Bead, a connate treasure!

As legend had it, Zhurong, a god of fire in the Primordial Era, had owned one such bead. With it, he gained mastery over all fires of the world and became a sovereign of fire. To think that a similar bead would be buried inside this divine tomb!

Roar!!

A scream of rage exploded from the coffin. A monster with three faces and four arms slowly rose from within, its figure bathed in flames like a divine spirit of fire.

“This is a zombie born from a fire divine... Friend from the Yin Clan, you must suppress this zombie at once!” Even as he spoke, Ling Chengzu leapt high in the air and threw himself at the Divine Fire Bead.

Such a connate treasure was mighty enough to become the Ling Clan’s second ultimate treasure. With it, the clan’s strength would grow by leaps and bounds, so much so that some of their self-sealed ancestors could reemerge to attempt another breakthrough to origin dao realm.

“Please don’t worry, Senior Ling. Leave this monster to this junior!” With a boisterous laugh, Lu Yun waved his hand and tossed out a golden winged coin. The coin streaked into a golden beam of light that reached the Divine Fire Bead nigh-instantaneously, securing it before Ling Chengzu could react.

Following which, ‘Yin Qingran’ vanished into thin air.

The immortals of Clan Ling stared, agog and uncomprehending. In the meantime, the burning divine zombie leapt out of the bronze coffin, roaring with enough fury to split the sky as it threw itself into the crowd of Ling immortals.

“Yin Qingran, Clan Yin!!” Ling Chengzu howled with saddened fury. “This isn’t over!”

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Somewhere far away, shrouded by emptiness, his eyes locked on more than a hundred immortals from House Donglin, Yin Qingran shuddered for a reason he couldn’t explain.

“What’s the matter?” He turned back in confusion, dimly aware that something bad had happened. But what, exactly? He hadn’t a clue.

“Forget that. As long as I can kill void-ascended immortals of House Donglin and obtain Lu Yun’s bounty, our clan shall rise.” His gaze was keen and resolute.

He wasn’t here to raid the tombs. While there were indeed treasures inside the mausoleum, any obtained by a weak clan like theirs would ultimately end up in the Exalted Immortal Sect’s hands. So for him, the reward offered by Lu Yun offered was the main focus of his expedition.

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“The Divine Fire Bead, a connate treasure!” Inside the darkness, Lu Yun hummed an obscure tune as he made his way toward the place where ‘yin and yang reverses, and earth tops sky’ with spry skips.

The Treasurefall Coin was an atypical treasure, and he’d activated it with the power of a karmic fruit. Such a combination had been too great to defy, even for a connate treasure like the bead.

Of course, it’d only been possible because the bead had been ownerless.

Had it been refined by someone already, the Treasurefall Coin would’ve proven ineffective. Lu Yun’s cultivation wasn’t great enough yet to call upon the coin’s full strength, even when strengthened by karmic fruits. In any case, the addition of the bead was an unexpected, but welcome surprise.

“It’s right over there!” He screeched to a halt and put the bead away. He’d arrived at the place where the demon fetus was nurtured, the same place where Zhao Qing was buried. The fetus was underground, while Zhao Qing was located high in the sky.

However, everything was still and silent. No activity whatsoever could be detected, and the demon fetus’ aura was so well hidden that not a trace of it could be sensed.

“You came, as expected,” a cold voice reverberated from the void. Lu Yun’s heart pounded in his chest— had he been discovered?

Just as he was about to show himself, he heard a second voice.

“Indeed, I have come.” The voice belonged to Qi Hai. “How could I not? A divine emperor’s true spirit has been demonized.”

Hum!

A gentle light spread outward and painted the space with white as pure as snow. Two tall figures faced each other from some distance away.

One was Qi Hai, and the other... Zhao Chong!

Chapter 658: The Greatest Scapegoat of Them All

Zhao Chong!

The Exalted celestial emperor’s junior brother! He’d come under Zhao Qing’s control a few days ago and entered the Exalted Divine Tombs at her command. But judging from his present tone, that general version of events couldn’t be further from the truth!

Zhao Chong must have been a ghost from this tomb from the very beginning! Or perhaps... the current Zhao Chong was no longer himself, but possessed by something else?

From Lu Yun’s perspective, the second possibility was the more likely one.

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“Liu Chen, is the princess still here?” Qi Hai asked apprehensively after a long pause of hesitation.

“Hehehe.” Liu Chen was the name of the hellfire-nurturing ghost king that’d previously been destroyed by Princess Zhao Qing. But here he was again, wearing Zhao Chong’s appearance and a smile on his lips.

“Great lord of the first capital, you are a noble human and we are lowly divines. Since when did you ever care about the princess’ well-being?” He stared into Qi Hai’s eyes, his gaze cold and malevolent.

The latter sighed, “Back then, I tried to transform the princess into a human...”

“Silence!” Liu Chen’s eyes took on a ferocious slant. “Her Highness is the daughter of the emperor, bearer of his bloodline! How dare you blaspheme against the great emperor with your deranged attempt to alter her bloodline?!”

“The emperor’s bloodline?” Mockery spread across Qi Hai’s lips. “At that time, the Exalted Divine Emperor had already been dead for years untold.” An expression of heartless indifference flashed across his face. “Just answer my question: is Zhao Qing here or not?”

“Alas!” a sigh spread through the air. A black dragon head slowly extended out of the void, and the gates to the palace coffin opened on a spotlessly white skeleton sitting quietly upon the throne.

All of the color drained from Qi Hai’s face. He stumbled backward, tears of blood trickling out of his eyes.

“How... how can this be? How? Qing’er ate the fruit of longevity and possessed a life as long as the heavens themselves... Why did things come to this? Why?!”

Puff!

He toppled heavily to the ground, vomiting blood by the mouthful.

Liu Chen stood quietly in the air, looking down with detached indifference at the man who’d once been so close to becoming the Exalted Divine Emperor’s son-in-law.

“What is the point of acting this way?” His chuckle was frosty. “When you rejected the princess, did you ever think about the consequences of your actions?”

Qi Hai looked up with a vacant gaze, his eyes glued to Zhao Qing’s skeleton and the scar from a sword at the top of her skull. It had been that very sword strike that ended her life. In life, Zhao Qing had been a divine king without equal, one of the greatest powerhouses in the multiverse. To kill her was a feat few could have achieved.

“Who was it, who did it...” Qi Hai was as pale as death itself. His eons-long resolve, his eras-long conviction... nothing mattered anymore, and everything crumbled into nothingness. If he somehow had a chance to start over, to make his decisions all over again, he would choose to live in seclusion with Zhao Qing, somewhere far removed from the struggles of the world.

Humanity...

Perhaps, through all his endless reincarnations, he hadn’t been of any help to mankind at all.

“What? Do you wish to... avenge her?” Liu Chen chuckled darkly. “In your current state, you’re nothing but trash. Her murderer could kill you by blowing in your direction. Moreover, who are you to avenge the princess?!”

“If not for you, would she have gone against her entire race?”

“If not for you, would she have been forsaken by kith and kin?!”

“If not for you, would she have ended up like this?!” Liu Chen screamed word after word, venting millenia worth of pent-up rage.

“I...” Qi Hai’s lips vibrated, but he didn’t have the faintest idea of what to say.

In the final years of human dao, the divines, monster spirits, demons, and all other races of the world betrayed mankind. However, Zhao Qing, great leader of the Exalted Divines, remained loyal to the end.

She'd held the divines at bay with her strength alone so that humanity would have a chance to survive, no matter how slim.

Alas, Qi Hai had already died by that point, returned to the wheel of reincarnation. He'd always been certain that she lived on inside the divine race's Last Repose. After all, here remained the last of the divine force left behind by the Exalted Divine Emperor. But as it turned out, she'd also died in the end.

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"Hahahaha!" Shriill laughter suddenly echoed in the sky, followed by a large group of fur seals centered around an obese humanoid figure: Ge Yanxia approached from the distance, as well as the fur seals under her command.

"The Exalted Divine Emperor was an idiot, easily fooled by a few simple tricks from the demon lord." Smugness writ large on her face, Ge Yanxia looked down at the figure of Qi Hai on the ground, then at Liu Chen floating in the air. "Sure enough, the legendary princess is here... Her body will be the lord's new body!"

Boom!!

As a black ripple wavered in front of the fur seal, her power shot from aether dao immortal realm all the way to origin dao realm!

A primordial origin dao immortal!

Riiiiip!

The clothes she wore ripped to pieces, but instead of revealing undulating layers of blubber in all their naked glory, there was a black film on her skin that resembled grease—a set of liquid armor. When Lu Yun had shot Ge Yanxia with a crystal cannon, it'd been this very liquid armor that'd saved the fur seal's life.

"Fur seals? Demon Lord?" Liu Chen's heart pounded as a terrible possibility formed in his mind. Almost all of Princess Zhao Qing's power was being used to suppress the demonized true spirit of the divine emperor. But perhaps... the true spirit hadn't been demonized to begin with. Could... it have been possessed by something else, much like his current host?

A true spirit was the core of a living creature, the origin of its thoughts and awareness. To be possessed meant that the original being was forever gone from the world, never to reincarnate again, everything that signified their existence landing in someone else's lap.

As for a method to wrest away control of a true spirit... Lu Yun had already thought of one—soul seeds.

"Children of mine, the time to prove your worth has come! Offer everything to the magnificent demon lord!" Floating in the air, Ge Yanxia shrieked with laughter. "The two of you can stay and witness the birth of the demon lord with your own eyes!"

"It's going to sacrifice the group of fur seals and feed their flesh and souls to the demon fetus... Stop it!" Liu Chen screamed at the top of his lungs. He wanted to act himself, but a terrifying power emanating from Ge Yanxia kept him frozen in place. It was as though space itself had become an enormous pool of amber, turning everything not a fur seal into trapped insects.

Boom!

Suddenly, no fewer than ten thick pillars of white light fired through the air and vaporized the group of fur seals with devastating power. Nothing was left in the wake of the terrifying blast of energy—no blood, no flesh, no souls.

Ge Yanxia looked vacantly at the empty patch of ground, so staggered she couldn't collect her wits.

A smoking crystal cannon in his hands, Lu Yun walked out of the emptiness.

Boom!

Another white column of light blasted heavily into Ge Yanxia, but a wrinkle rippled in front of it, leaving the creature unmoving.

"Who are you to dare ruin my tribe's great undertaking?!" Ge Yanxia's bovine eyes latched on to Lu Yun with extraordinary viciousness.

Errr...

Oh right, Lu Yun was still disguised as Yin Qingran. The poor man had become such a titanic scapegoat that one could almost hear him bleat.

Chapter 659: Tongue-tied, Thunderstruck

"Don't recognize me? Lu Yun casually tore off a piece of black cloth and covered his face with it.

"Behold! Thou art in the presence of Dusk Province's Lu Yun!"

Dong!

He hefted the crystal cannon off his shoulder, put it on the ground, and patted its barrel.

Ge Yanxia stared at the newcomer. Am I stupid? Am I that easy to trick?

Crystal cannons were now common goods in the world of immortals. Both the common and 'lord-grade' types could be readily obtained, as long as one was willing to spend enough immortal crystals.

This kid could be anyone. Dusk Province's Lu Yun? Hah, that kid was crystal-starved and willing to risk life and limb to gain any more.

There weren't that many in the world who dared use the cannons so brazenly. For one thing, their destructive power was too great, and for another, they consumed too many immortal crystals. Every shot required up to ten billion immortal crystals, and few were willing to spend that much unless as a last resort.

But there were exceptions to every rule—this newly-arrived pup, for example.

Lu Yun's Shapeshifting death art was a tremendously marvelous skill. Neither illusion nor disguise, it was a transformation in the true sense of the word, one that fully altered from the inside out. So, when transformed into Yin Qingran, he became Yin Qingran himself. Of course, that didn't mean he acquired his new identity's combat arts as well.

Qi Hai had already recognized 'Yin Qingran' for who he truly was, but he wasn't fool enough to enlighten Ge Yanxia.

Boom!!

Lu Yun aimed the cannon's mouth at Ge Yanxia and fired a second time. The black ripple oscillated in front of the fur seal, preventing the cannon shot from touching a single hair on her body.

"Hmph! Do you think a crystal cannon will stop our tribe's great undertaking?" Ge Yanxia sneered, convinced that 'Yin Qingran' was trying to stop it from releasing the demon fetus.

Hum!

A droning hum spread out from Ge Yanxia's figure when she returned to her true fur seal form. She grimaced savagely as she leapt out of the ripples of transformation and threw herself recklessly at Lu Yun.

Boom!

The cannon in front of Lu Yun erupted once more, a huge pillar of light streaking straight toward Ge Yanxia's ponderous figure.

Light pillar and fur seal crashed in the air, the impact generating prodigious shockwaves that actually hit the target this time. While formidable, the treasure protecting her had its limits.

"Hurry up and help me!"

The tremendous attack had broken Ge Yanxia's spatial restriction, returning freedom of movement to Qi Hai and Liu Chen. But, shaken to their core, man and ghost had been too shell-shocked to act.

With Lu Yun's reminder, Liu Chen immediately left Zhao Chong's body and returned to his ghost king state. An enormous malevolent ghost face coalesced in the air and blew out gusts of terrifying yin energy.

Meanwhile, Qi Hai scrambled back to his feet. A hundred and eight pills flew out of his hands like so many luminous pearls, forming a single string of pills that whipped toward Ge Yanxia akin to a shooting star.

The black ripple wavered tirelessly in front of Ge Yanxia, but the tremendous attacks pierced through its defenses and landed on the fur seal herself.

The creature wasn't a true origin dao immortal; she'd merely used a forbidden art to forcibly increase her cultivation. And now that she was besieged by the combined assault of two formidable powerhouses and a crystal cannon's constant barrage... it didn't take long for her to suffer heavy injuries.

Boom!!

Ge Yanxia shook off the defensive item producing the ripples. Once off her body, the treasure reverted to a giant sphere that enveloped her in a protective layer.

“Do you really think these pathetic attempts will stop my tribe from reaching our goal?” She didn’t transform back into her human form this time.

Liu Chen, Qi Hai, and Lu Yun paused their attacks and frowned at Ge Yanxia. Without a doubt, the creature still had cards left to play. As if on cue, her bloody maw yawned wide and heaved out a black water bubble, from which a giant fur seal slowly swam out.

“Mother!” The fur seal looked at Ge Yanxia with excitement.

“Son, display your prowess to your mother!” Ge Yanxia pounced on the other fur seal and, in a scene defying imagination, the two giant creatures began to... copulate in the air!

Lu Yun was at an absolute loss for words.

“What did the other fur seal call the female one just now?” His head swiveled mechanically toward Qi Hai.

“This is immoral, dissolute behavior to humans, but it’s very normal for fur seals.” Qi Hai glanced at the newcomer, certain the man in front of him was none other than Lu Yun. He’d already witnessed Lu Yun’s superb disguise skills back in Destiny City. “It’s precisely because of this that the ancient monster ancestor refused to incorporate them into the monster spirit race.”

As creatures possessed of morals and civilization, monster spirits were genuine beings of intelligence. However, fur seals possessed neither. While they could cultivate, they had no sense of propriety. As a race, they were far removed from monster spirits. The monster ancestor had once tried enlightening them, but the attempt had ended in failure.

In the air, Ge Yanxia and her child mated with wild abandon, fully unconcerned about the presence of others. For fur seals, such a thing was common as breathing.

“What are they doing?” Liu Chen looked on in disbelief. Why were they doing such a thing here at a time like this? Have they gone mad?

“Hey kid, ready your cannon... The female is trying to give birth to a litter of sacrifices...” Before Qi Hai’s sentence finished, a strange sound came from the giant sphere.

Squish!

Something seemed to have squeezed out of a creature’s body. A fur seal about three meters long and black from head to toe slipped out of Ge Yanxia’s lower body, closely followed by a second, then a third, fourth...

When the fur seals landed on the ground, they grew at lightning speed and matured from newborn pups to adults in a matter of a few short breaths. And then... they matched up in pairs and continued the mating chain. In about a hundred breaths or so, close to a thousand fur seals had spawned in the giant sphere!

A tongue-tied Lu Yun stared in disbelief and a thunderstruck Liu Chen gaped with incomprehension. As for Qi Hai... he, too, pulled a long face.

“How are they doing it? How can they reproduce this fast?!” Lu Yun’s expression sank when he realized that every one of the newborn pups was a true immortal. Connate immortals with a complete immortal dao inside them!

At the astounding rate they were multiplying... the entire world of immortals would soon belong to them.

“I-I don’t know either... it must be some kind of secret art?” Qi Hai’s throat felt dry. The scene was simply too appalling. His mind didn’t know if it was rattled, repulsed, or revolted.

“We have to wipe them out! Otherwise, whether that so-called demon god arrives or not, the world will sooner or later belong to these disgusting things!” Lu Yun gagged.

There weren’t enough fur seals yet, but once their number reached a certain threshold, Ge Yanxia would most certainly sacrifice them on the spot.

“You two, do as I say!” Lu Yun said after thinking it through. “Use your treasures and tap lightly on the sphere.”



Chapter 660: Human-Headed Octopi, Again

Inside the giant sphere hovering in the air, a large group of fur seals were frantically breeding new members. At their rate, it wouldn’t take long for their numbers to reach the threshold required for the sacrifice. Ge Yanxia would then feed them all to the demon god.

Alas, the globe formed by the ripple was too tough. It was indestructible after separating from Ge Yanxia, so much so that a fully-powered shot from a crystal cannon wouldn’t even leave a mark on it.

Qi Hai and Liu Chen also grew anxious; they could both guess what Ge Yanxia was planning.

“You two, use your swords and pound the globe at a constant rhythm!” Lu Yun demonstrated the motion, then shooed them into action. His cultivation level was too low to make the strange sphere vibrate, but that wasn’t the case for Qi Hai and Liu Chen. They were simply unable to break through the sphere’s defenses.

“What’s the point of doing this?” Liu Chen asked in confusion as he reentered Zhao Chong’s body.

“Do as he says, we might be pleasantly surprised.” Qi Hai had visited hell for some time and grown accustomed to Lu Yun’s peculiar methods and unorthodox thinking. Retrieving the hundred and eight comet-like pills, he replaced them with a flying sword. Floating up to the giant globe, he pounded it following a swift beat.

Liu Chen hesitated slightly, then requested, “You must make sure to keep the princess safe. She’s dedicating her full strength to suppressing the demon fetus and can’t afford any interference!” With that exhortation, he took to the air and pounded the sphere, copying Qi Hai’s tempo.

Last time Lu Yun had run into Liu Chen, something had caused the ghost king to lose his self-awareness and act on a muddled mix of base instincts. Interference had overwhelmed his mind in the form of chaos and confusion and he'd lost all sense of purpose.

It was at this time that Zhao Chong arrived, enabling Princess Zhao Qing to shove Liu Chen's soul into his body and use his Exalted Divine bloodline to purify Liu Chen's true spirit. Now that the ghost king had recovered his clarity of mind and found himself again, he'd once more recalled his duties.

Drifting down to the globe, he closed his eyes to grasp Qi Hai's rhythm, then frantically pounded the globe following the same tempo. Their efforts sent the void vibrating, and the globe buzzed with a deep drone that spread massive soundwaves to every corner of the premises.

Standing at the ready, Lu Yun took out close to a hundred Yu Talismans and stuck them on himself, forming a giant defensive wall that warded off the soundwaves.

Puff! Puff! Puff!

Inside the sphere, fur seals spontaneously exploded in a cascading sequence of gore and sank to the bottom of the globe as bloody pulp. Ge Yanxia stopped her mating motions and screeched in rage, but what could she do?

Qi Hai and Liu Chen were pounding the globe at its resonant frequency. The frequency of the soundwaves lacerated Ge Yanxia, inflicting significant injuries on her bulbous body. Unable to endure the violent vibrations any further, she chose to dispel the globe and tried attacking Qi Hai and Liu Chen.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Three pillars of light erupted in quick succession. Streaking through the air, they evaporated the fur seal splatters and smashed into Ge Yanxia, sending her far into the distance.

"I will get you back for this if it's the last thing I do, Yin Clan!" the fur seal's voice echoed from afar.

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Elated after killing three Donglin immortals, Yin Qingran was in the middle of placing their heads and nascent spirits inside his storage ring when a cold shiver suddenly ran down his spine.

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"It survived all that??" Lu Yun's face fell and he felt the sudden urge to call upon the Judgment of Life and Death.

For one reason or another, Ge Yanxia had accumulated great retribution, so much that the Judgment of Life and Death was sure to end the creature's life. He simply hadn't expected her flesh to be so tough even without the defensive ripple. A maximum-strength blast from his cannon had only wounded her, but couldn't kill her.

"There's something odd about that fur seal!" Qi Hai landed on the ground and looked in the direction Ge Yanxia had disappeared in, his expression solemn. "The creature is cunning, so she must have other plans in reserve. The demon god fetus might be sealed beneath our feet, but there must be methods to free it somewhere else!"

As he spoke, he looked up at the palace outer-coffin in the air and Zhao Qing's skeleton inside it. Ge Yanxia's ultimate goal was to help the demon fetus possess and take physical form through the skeleton. After all, while the fetus contained a tremendous true spirit, it lacked a corporeal body.

"This fur seal must be killed, or we face dire consequences!" Liu Chen nodded in agreement. He'd stood guard over this locale for the past eighty thousand years, ever since the divine emperor's true spirit had been corrupted, so he naturally knew what a threat the true spirit would constitute.

"We need to find the Exalted celestial emperor and bring him here. As the holder of Exalted Major's heavenly mandate, he'll naturally have a way to deal with... Oof!"

Before he could finish, a tentacle-like thing drilled out of the ground and pierced through his body from the bottom up. Liu Chen's ghostly self squeezed out of its host body, while Zhao Chong's corpse fell heavily to the ground, devoid of all breath.

Pft, pft, pft!

One after another, tentacled human heads popped up aboveground.

Human-headed octopi! The same ones that Lu Yun had once seen in Su Xiaoxiao's tomb!

These were zombies, or more exactly, a mutated variety thereof. However, the ones in front of them were far, far stronger than the ones he'd seen in the past. Wading through space as though they swam in water, they moved about with exceptional nimbleness.

"Those human heads... they belong to those sacrificed on the altars!" Qi Hai blurted out. He'd spotted a familiar face—someone he'd sacrificed with his own two hands. Glaring with infinite rancor, the head threw himself at him.

It wanted him dead!

Boom!

A pill dragging a long trail of fire sailed out of Qi Hai's upturned palm and crashed into the octopus' skull.

Bang!!

The fearsome octopus dispersed as black smoke on the air. However, increasing numbers of human-headed octopi burrowed out and mobbed the group of three.

Lu Yun brought out the Sugato Sword, the curtains of sword light drifting down from the pagoda barely managing to shield him.

"Damn it... the demon fetus has sensed our presence. It's trying to make sacrifices out of us!" Liu Chen clenched his teeth and swept up Zhao Chong's corpse from the ground, tossing it into the palace outer-coffin in the sky.

"Kid, go look for the Exalted celestial emperor... Only he can deal with the demon fetus!" he roared at Lu Yun. He knew that Lu Yun certainly had a way of leaving this place and locating the celestial emperor.

Lu Yun was rather frustrated. The initial plan was to have Xingzi destroy the fetus, but hell was currently inaccessible, so she couldn't get here for the time being. Even so, he'd already notified her. It wouldn't take long for her and the other Envoys of Samsara to travel from Dusk Province to Exalted Major.

Employing the Wandering Step, he departed without delay, the Sugato Sword floating above him. "Persist a little while longer, I'll be back soon," he urged from far away.