

Necropolis 671

Chapter 671: A Combat Art From Human Dao

Among the Yama Kings of the Ten Halls, Zhaoqing was the most mysterious. Lu Yun couldn't read her memories, nor see what she'd experienced during her life. In fact, he couldn't even share her talents.

As the daughter of a divine emperor, she was without a doubt the strongest of the ten, even though her current cultivation was only at the peerless immortal realm.

"There's no rush." Lu Yun gently shook his head at her. "All of you should first consolidate the Invincible Yama Method. There's still two big fellows waiting for us outside."

It hadn't been long since the Yama Kings had familiarized themselves with the method; more time was needed for them to fully grasp it. Lu Yun had also scanned the cultivation method and came away astonished that it contained many of the improved arts and methods he'd developed with Qing Yu through formula dao!

"It seems that the Tome of Life and Death isn't a stickler for tradition." The hint of a smile floated onto his lips.

With a gentle beckon, the floating peak that housed the resurrection layout slowly materialized into existence. It'd been driven into the ground by all the chaos earlier. When it fully took form, he released Qing Yu and the others from the Demonic Sovereign Cauldron.

"What is this place?!" The netherworld's scenery and atmosphere left Lin Yu thunderstruck.

"We are no longer in the world of immortals, this is another world altogether." Lin Xuan flipped through the book in his hand, using its contents to assess the situation.

"This is my world. You can rest safely here." Lu Yun explained with a glance at Qing Yu.

The latter naturally knew of hell. As for the little fox, she squirmed out of Qing Yu's arms and jumped on top of Lu Yun's head.

"The aura of yin is dense in this place, and I can't sense any yang energy whatsoever. Living creatures can't exist here." The little fox fell deep in thought. "Can this place be..."

She rested her stomach on Lu Yun's head and dangled her head down, peering deep into his eyes and whispered mischievously, "Can this be the world of the dead that the legends speak of?"

Lu Yun yanked the furball down and tossed her into a corner of the resurrection layout, then locked her inside.

The little bundle of fur shot an aggrieved look at Qing Yu. But aware of Lu Yun's long-nursed jealousy, she quickly looked away and pretended she hadn't seen anything.

Meanwhile, Yueshen exited Li Youcai's body and flew to the center of the new kingdom, whereupon she joined in the construction efforts. For her, this was her home. Compared to the former divine race, hell brought her a deeper sense of belonging.

Occupying the ten directions of the netherworld, the ten Yama Halls towered over the world like ten stone guardians. As for hell's completely destroyed 'City of Life', it was being rebuilt as the City of the Dead!

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A considerable amount of time later, the ten Yama Kings began to shimmer with dark golden light as exotic armor materialized on them, a sign that they'd achieved rudimentary mastery of the Invincible Yama Method.

"Master!" Zhaoqing approached Lu Yun and fell on one knee. Now that she'd taken human form, the pure white armor on her lent an air of unsullied sanctity.

"A-a-aren't you..." Lin Yu stared at her with a double take. He'd followed Lu Yun into the lineal tomb and seen the palace coffin, so he'd already met her before and knew who she was.

An emperor's daughter!

Though he didn't know what the identification 'emperor's daughter' implied, or what differentiated the great emperors of old from the celestial emperors of the current age, she was for him an incomparably terrifying figure nevertheless.

Dumbfounded, Lin Xuan also shared his brother's sentiment. How had Lu Yun recruited such an awesome figure into his service?

"All of you stay here while I go out and deal with the two big monsters." Seeing Ge Long make no move to leave the netherworld, Lu Yun didn't say anything about having him deal with the stone spirit and demon god. He'd vaguely grasped that Ge Long must be under some kind of restriction in the outside world.

And now that the ten Yama Kings had finished cultivating, Lu Yun saw no reason to tarry any longer. He would have to face the two monsters sooner or later, in any case.

"I'm coming with you!" Qing Yu stood up, her voice firm. "No matter what, I'm going to fight by your side this time. Taking shelter here is out of the question!"

Her eyes gleamed with determination. The Scroll of Shepherding Immortals had been created from the essence of God; therefore, it was bound to play a vital role inside the divine tombs that this God had left his mark on.

"We're also coming!" Lin Xuan breathed in deeply. "When we go out, we'll immediately summon the Demon-Destroying Patriarch... Isn't the demon god still a demon when it comes down to it? The patriarch specializes in quelling entities like him!"

While there was a forty-nine day limitation to the art, it was a death art that accepted time in hell as a valid counter. Their stay inside the netherworld had long exceeded that number, thus resetting the clock.

"Well then, I-I think I'll stay here," the little fox muttered under her breath and sprawled belly-up on the ground.

But Qing Yu beckoned with her hand and pulled the furball into her grasp, then tossed her onto Lin Xuan's head. The fox had half a mind to weep and bawl with the injustice of life.

"Alright then... Go into the Demonic Sovereign Cauldron for now. And remember, when we go out, your own safety comes first!" Lu Yun heaved a sigh.

Qing Yu and the others were bound to deal with many things by themselves one day. He couldn't keep them sheltered forever, and this was as good an opportunity as any for them to experience a life and death situation.

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When Lu Yun returned to the palace coffin, Liu Chen was still looking in his direction after following the demon god's gaze. But when he saw 'Yin Qingran' on his own without Zhaoqing by his side, dispiritedness settled in.

The two monsters had waded into a pitched battle and made the entire Exalted Divine Tombs their arena, shaking the entirety of Mount Exalted!

Sending the Exalted celestial emperor flying with a sweep of its arms, the stone spirit extinguished the Exalted Chart's mysterious light. Vomiting blood, the emperor shot through the air like a ragdoll before crashing heavily into a giant tombstone.

Some human-headed octopi waded through the air and immediately pounced on him, their tentacles snaking toward their prey.

Hum!

White meteors streaked through the firmament and blasted the octopi to pieces. Previously sent out of the tomb by the celestial emperor, Qi Hai had made his return. Three hundred and sixty-five pills revolved around him and a longsword glinted with frosty light in his grasp.

"Celestial Emperor of Exalted Major, you think too little of me." His expression was cold and impassive, and the sword in his hand abruptly turned invisible.

Something lacerated the human-headed octopi in the air, sectioning their bodies into many pieces that fell to the ground. This combat art didn't belong to immortal dao... but to human dao!

"You should've stayed away. It's too late now! Even more ancient tombs have broken open, and corpse demons more terrible than before are about to come into the world... Exalted Major is done for!" Despite Qi Hai's show of force, there was no joy to be seen on the celestial emperor's face. His eyes contained nothing but despair and horror.

The previous corpse demons had merely been ones arisen from the bodies of the divine court's divines. But now, buried deep underground, the dead divine powerhouses from the era of human dao had also been corrupted by the demonic energy and were gradually awakening.

Aooooooooou!!

A lengthy demonic howl started below the ground, turning the previously inky land a bright scarlet.

An Ichor Bog.

The mausoleum had unexpectedly become a swamp of blood! Crimson arms shot out of the mess and latched onto the stone spirit, trying to drag him underground.

Chapter 672: Mount Sumeru

Inside the blood swamp, the serpentine creatures formed arms that flailed relentlessly at the stone spirit and tried to drag it beneath the muck. However, the statue's strength defied imagination. With a shake of its body, it pulverized its attackers into piles of pulp.

Boom!

Shaking its four arms with a flourish, it called the power of the four primordial elements to it. Together, earth, air, fire, and water formed a majestic combat art that blasted the demon god.

The demon god growled in response, demonic aura vibrating around his being as he, too, called upon his own combat arts.

Caught in the middle, the Exalted Divine Tombs heaved and bucked into complete disarray. Above the mausoleum, the vast bulk of Mount Exalted crumbled with a deafening bang, exposing a dark red sky above the tombs.

Surprisingly, the Exalted celestial emperor found it possible to dredge up more despair from his heart, even with everything that had already happened. Mount Exalted had broken open, and the demons buried in the mausoleum since the dawn of time were about to come into this world!

Demonic howls echoed beyond Mount Exalted, and thick demonic energy swept through every corner of Exalted Major like smoke and ashes erupting from a volcano.

"Men! Assemble into formations!" Zhao Jifeng blanched. With a booming shout from their commander, the soldiers swiftly gathered into enormous battle formations.

"May the heavens help us," Zhao Jifeng murmured to himself.

Skree!

A bird's cry cut through the sky as the Exalted Immortal Sect's great peng arrived. Its wings blotted out the firmament as it quietly hovered in the air, bright golden eyes staring fixedly at the two giant monsters fighting beneath Mount Exalted.

Meanwhile, due to the corruption of demonic energy, the dead divines of the human dao era had been reawakened as corpse demons. With jerky movements, they crawled stiffly out of the divine tombs.

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"The emissary from the Purple Firmament has already left the world of immortals. She doesn't even care about her own junior sister or disciple! What a coward." A young man clad in blue strode out of the Dark North Sword Sect, his posture relaxed and confident. Bearing a sword on his back, he trod the North Sea's waves and headed toward Exalted Major.

On Ingress Island, an enormous white hand turned into a shepherd boy sitting backwards on a blue bull. Playing a tune on his flute, he followed the young swordsman to Exalted Major.

From Levitating Island, a streak of silver light glided across the vastness of the North Sea and reached Exalted Major in the blink of an eye—the silver scarlet ape, the one many times stronger than its golden dao partner!

“We can’t let the demon step out of Mount Exalted even if it costs us our lives!” Inside Destiny City, the city lord sighed before grabbing his sword and heading toward Exalted Major.

Truespirit Major.

“Jiuying, are you not going?” asked the Truespirit celestial emperor.

“I am not.” Yin Jiuying shook his head lightly.

“In that case, I shall make the journey.” The Truespirit celestial emperor stood up from his seat, nine origin dao fruits popping into existence and merging with his figure. “The demon god will turn the multiverse’s last haven into a land of demons... I have no choice but to go.”

The emperor vanished from view as he spoke, leaving the still silent Yin Jiuying behind.

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“The Skyturtle Pearl is finally mine!”

Nephrite Major, Spirit Province.

Mo Yi held a small fist-sized orb in her hand, the Skyturtle Pearl she’d spoken of. However, there was no hint of joy on her face when her gaze bore through many layers of space to land on Mount Exalted.

“Qing Buyi and Chen Xiao are still trapped inside the Ancient Tree of Life. What a pair of absolute idiots...” she sighed, then disappeared beyond the horizon, leaving the Ling Clan in chaos.

“We should also go. Let me witness the true power of a holy lord of the underworld,” Lu Feng said quietly as he looked at Ashu.

“If I recklessly draw from the core of my essence, I’ll instantly return to my living dead self. All my accumulated efforts during this time will have been in vain,” Ashu responded flatly. “The demon might transform the entire world into a land of demons... but that won’t affect me.”

“In that case, stay here then.” Lu Feng set forth, disappearing from view in the blink of an eye.

Ashu grinned. “It won’t affect me, but it’ll affect our dear little Lu Yun. If he happens to die, where else will I get the breathing method from?”

Swoosh!

He, too, disappeared.

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The crowd of mighty powerhouses gathering around Mount Exalted took Zhao Jifeng by surprise. He hadn't expected people from the world over would come at the first sign of the ancient corpse demons' emergence.

"What's going on?!" Everyone stared blankly when they realized that, while Mount Exalted had collapsed, there was a mysterious veil of light that blanketed its surface, a veil the corpse demons couldn't breach no matter what they tried.

Holy Lord Ashu stared vacantly at the veil for a moment, then turned on his heel and left without a glance backward. "We can go home and put our feet up now, there's nothing to see here. That supreme being has come. With him here, who are we to stick our noses in this?"

"Who?" Still by Ashu's side, Lu Feng looked inquisitively at the holy lord.

"Neither copper, nor iron, nor steel; under Mount Sumeru it lies hidden... Dear me, how could I forget that Mount Exalted used to be called Mount Sumeru! Ah, Mount Sumeru!" Ashu laughed heartily, then leisurely drifted away.

Boom!

Four giant swords hung in the sky, forming sword gates in the four cardinal directions. Boundless natural energy gushed in from every direction of the world and coalesced into icy sword light that tore through Mount Exalted.

"It's him, it's him, it's actually him!!" shrieked the silver scarlet ape with raised hackles. Without further ado, it spun around and left, not sticking around for another second.

"Oh, it's that ancestor. He's still alive huh?" The shepherd boy riding his bull in reverse trembled involuntarily. "Alright, we can go home now! With that ancestor here, the crisis is resolved."

"Teacher, the sword formation is strong only on the surface. It does have the will to destroy the demon, but I fear its power won't be up to the task..." The young man bearing a sword on his back hesitated.

"Will? Power? What are you talking about now? The ancestor's merely released the last bit of energy stored inside the sword formation. He'll naturally have other means at his disposal. We're going!" The shepherd boy lifted his flute and gently whacked the young swordsman on the head, then the two of them turned into streaks of light that vanished into the distance.

Those who'd left were all mighty existences of great influence originating from the primordial past. As for the eminent figures of the present age, none of them dared leave. They, too, could tell that this sword formation was at the end of its rope. Despite its majestic momentum, it didn't have the power to vanquish the demon!

Underneath Mount Exalted, the stone spirit and demon god stopped moving and stared at the sword formation surrounding Mount Exalted, a grave expression on their faces.

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"Is this the treasure Ge Long mentioned?" Somewhere on Mount Exalted, Lu Yun looked at a palm-sized picture scroll in his hand. Indeed, it was no bigger than a palm, but it'd been this item that'd released the sword formation encircling Mount Exalted.

He studied it carefully for a moment, but couldn't figure out what made it special.

"Master." Zhaoqing poked his arm, then pointed at the sky.

"Eh..." Lu Yun looked up and immediately spotted the terrifying sword formation above. "What the... Did the scroll release the formation? But I haven't activated it yet!"

Chapter 673: "Fellow Daoist"

"Master..." Zhaoqing was about to speak, but was cut off by her new master.

"Don't call me master, it sounds kind of weird. Eh, just call me 'sir' like everyone else," he corrected.

"Yes, sir." Zhaoqing stretched out a small, fair hand and gently poked his arm.

"What's the matter?" Lu Yun looked at her in puzzlement.

Her cheeks bright red, Zhaoqing ducked her head. Recalling Qi Hai's reaction, Lu Yun couldn't help but feel a bit smug.

There'd been some sort of relationship between Qi Hai and Zhao Qing. In the past, the man had almost become the Exalted Divine Emperor's son-in-law. But now that Zhaoqing had become his tenth Yama King, that relationship would forever be a thing of the past.

"Sir, this treasure is a formation diagram left by a human ancestor a long time ago and sealed here since time immemorial. The sword formation it's currently releasing is nothing more than energy it's accumulated from the land during this time. It's not the sword formation's own power," Zhaoqing explained carefully.

"Not its own power?" Lu Yun almost jumped out of his skin. Was this nothing more than the remnant of some stored energy that'd manifested itself as a sword formation? If so, how potent would the sword formation be if it were to be unleashed at full power?

The thought was too frightening to pursue.

"But the sword formation might not be enough to eradicate both threats." Lu Yun frowned.

Sword rain fell from the sky as the four vibrating sword gates unleashed rays of sword energies that assaulted the stone spirit and demon god. Unexpectedly, the two giants' reaction was to set their enmity aside and resist the formation together.

Boom!

The world shook as three hundred and sixty-five talismans suddenly shot into the sky and arranged themselves according to the constellations, fashioning a vast talisman formation from which appeared the figure of the Ninth Heaven's Demon-Destroying Patriarch.

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan had joined the fray.

They'd foregone the Formation of the Black Tortoise this time around, opting instead for a talisman formation to depict the cosmos and summon the Demon-Destroying Patriarch into existence. As a

result, the patriarch absorbed the power of the Black Tortoise and was twice as strong as the last time he'd been called forth.

"The little fox is also taking part... Wait, what's she doing?" Startled, Lu Yun noticed that the fox had slipped inside the sword formation around the mountain and was deploying a second one identical to the first! Explosive energy erupted from the superposition of the two sword formations!

An illusion? Refining illusion into reality?

However, this was closer to duplication... to think the fox possessed this kind of ability as well!

Soon enough, the truth dawned on Lu Yun. This sword formation wasn't the real thing, merely the energy of the land that'd been absorbed by the formation diagram. In other words, a simple rearrangement of nature's qi.

On top of being a grandmaster of illusion, the primordial monster celestial master had been a formation expert as well, a sublime virtuoso in both domains. Now that she'd learned Qing Yu's formula dao, she'd used it to theorize the very structure of the world's energy.

As a result, she'd summoned a vast amount of energy from the land and arranged it according to the exact structure of the sword formation, thereby creating a second copy. Both formations originated from the land, so stacking them together magnified their force many times over.

As if he too had been strengthened by the formations, the Demon-Destroying Patriarch stormed through Mount Exalted and obliterated all corpse demons that stood in his path.

Hailing from the dawn of known time, the divine tombs under Mount Exalted were a mausoleum for the entire divine race. No one truly knew how many divine powerhouses were laid to rest there, and it was very possible that the Exalted Divine Emperor's remains were located there as well. Hence, there were so many corpse demons swarming forth that it seemed impossible to kill them all.

Mount Exalted—or more precisely, the divine race's Last Repose—had been corrupted into a demonic land by the demon god's aura. In an even more appalling turn of events, the stone spirit was similarly undergoing assimilation. By now, it was even gradually beginning to follow the demon god's orders!

The combined force of the two titans thwarted the sword formations' onslaught. Worse, they struck back and cracked the formations in return!

Boom!

A white scroll barrelled out of the void and shielded the sword formations.

"God's core essence!" The demon god stiffened at the sight of the scroll.

Demon god he may be, but as a creature both demonic and divine, divine blood also flowed in his veins. Therefore, God's essence possessed a natural restraining effect on him. Moreover, a remnant of God's power was contained in the demonized tomb. A joint attack from both was extremely likely to leave the demon heavily wounded.

That wouldn't be an issue in ordinary times, but seventy percent of his true spirit had been incinerated by the Exalted Daofire earlier and he was currently under pressure from two sword formations as well. More importantly, there was also the sword formation's master to contend with!

Since the formation had revealed itself, that human powerhouse that'd once been invincible in the Primeval Era was certainly hidden nearby as well.

"We're leaving!!" the demon god snarled.

Rumble!

The collapsed Mount Exalted, together with the Last Repose and the Exalted Divine mausoleum, uprooted itself from the earth and floated into the sky.

"What, he's trying to take Mount Exalted away?!"

"Stop him!" the Exalted celestial emperor roared furiously.

Mount Exalted was the divine race's sacred land, the pillar of Exalted Major's faith. While it'd been demonized, her ruler and immortals were loath to give it up.

Rumble!

Hovering above the Exalted capital city, the Exalted Palace flared with another burst of radiant golden light that illuminated all of Center Province.

"Mount Exalted is the sacred land of every immortal in Our major. Even if it is to be destroyed, it must not fall into a demon's hands..." Full of stern authority, the Exalted celestial emperor's voice echoed throughout the land.

The power of a peak origin dao immortal erupted in broad daylight as the Exalted Palace rose high in the sky, then flung itself at a Mount Exalted slowly floating up into the air.

"Worry not, fellow daoist. Let me assist you." the Truespirit celestial emperor's voice sounded as the power of a second peak origin dao immortal shimmered into existence alongside the Truespirit Palace!

"Fellow daoist, well met. For the good of all!" Sensing the power radiating from his Truespirit peer, the Exalted celestial emperor clapped his hands and laughed heartily.

The greeting "fellow daoist" resonated in harmony within their hearts. Together, eighteen origin dao fruits pulsed with magnificent waves of energy that draped around both of them.

The heart of a celestial emperor beheld the world, rather than turn inward on themselves.

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The World Gates.

Nine former celestial emperors opened their eyes at the same time. Together, they looked in the direction of Exalted Major and applauded with jovial laughter.

"Fellow daoists, for the good of all."

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The two sword formations continued to circle around Mount Exalted even as the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals transformed into pure white light to awaken the divine power inside the mountain. Trembling, the mountain hummed with resonance.

Its surface jet-black, the fully assimilated stone spirit was now a demonic spirit. Together with the demon god, they tore apart the Demon-Destroying Patriarch's projection, leaving the sword formations teetering on the brink of collapse. With a frosty glare, the demon god glowered at the two celestial palaces flying straight at him.

"We're leaving!" With a few leaps, Lu Yun sent Qing Yu, the little fox, and the two Lin brothers into the resurrection layout in hell and resorted to the Boundless Step, disappearing far into the distance with each immeasurable step.

Boom!

As soon as he left, the two celestial emperors steered their palaces into a brutal ram of Mount Exalted.

"I couldn't save them..." Lu Yun's sigh reverberated in the air for a long time.

"Well met, fellow daoist, for the good of all."

This "fellow daoist" would never again be heard in this world as the two celestial emperors, newly-awakened to their true mantle and position, perished in fulfillment of their duties.

Chapter 674: Yellow Springs Land, Sir Yu

A deafening bang detonated in the air as black smoke wafted over all of Center Province. Mount Exalted was nowhere in sight, and neither were the two celestial palaces anywhere to be found.

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The world grieved for the deaths of the two celestial emperors.

Unlike Zhao Changkong or Tuoba Jie, the Exalted and Truespirit rulers had truly grasped what it meant to be a celestial emperor before their deaths, thereby gaining the recognition of their heavenly mandates. They'd been celestial emperors in the finest sense, and the land itself mourned their passing. The immortal dao trembled, and all beings far and wide wept with sorrow.

"I didn't expect it to be the Truespirit celestial emperor..." Outside Center Province, Lu Yun stood on the peak of a mountain and silently gazed upon where Mount Exalted had once towered into the clouds.

"They died a meaningful death... Once Mount Exalted rose into the void, it would've become a land of demons and progressively gnawed away at the world of immortals," Qing Yu said softly.

"You're right." Lu Yun nodded. "Thankfully for us all, both of them were true celestial emperors."

Only celestial emperors would be willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the world. No other powerhouses would do anything remotely similar. Instead, they'd be the first to flee when their lives were in danger, and would never stay to fight to the bitter end.

Lu Yun was no exception, either. He wasn't a villain, but neither was he anything close to a white knight of shining chivalry. Everything he did was for his own sake; such was human nature.

"To think that my Death Spike would end up destroying not only the Exalted Immortal Sect, but also all of Exalted Major..." Lu Yun's head hung low, his face wan.

The Exalted celestial emperor was dead, and the Exalted Immortal Sect destroyed. Although formidable clans still remained in Exalted Major, the major's main pillars had collapsed. Sooner or later, Exalted Major would fall into the hands of another faction. After all, it didn't have powerful guardians like Art and Zither Saints.

"Exalted Major won't be destroyed. She still has some crippled origin dao immortals left, so any would-be invaders would pay a heavy price," Qing Yu consoled. "This doesn't have anything to do with your Death Spike. The events of today were destined to happen ever since the demon possessed the divine emperor's true spirit."

Without Lu Yun, Ge Yanxia would've freed the demon god on her first try. With that, all of Exalted Major would've become a demonic land, its denizens condemned to a cruel fate. Present circumstances were the best one could hope for, and they had nothing to do with his Death Spike.

"The next ruler of Exalted Major should be Zhao Wushuang... she has the makings of a celestial emperor. Perhaps she'll grow into the greatest empress of the nine majors." With a nod, Lu Yun pushed his negative thoughts aside.

"True." Qing Yu nodded as well. "Let's go back. There are many things waiting for us in Dusk Province."

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Lu Yun had finally obtained the supreme treasure below Mount Exalted, but for some reason, whenever he thought of the two celestial emperors' final sacrifice and ramming their palaces straight into Mount Exalted, he couldn't help but fall into momentary despondency.

For his part, Ge Long briefly emerged and fused the tiny formation diagram beneath Dusken soil. Then he'd hauled a dragon vein out of thin air and placed it on top of the diagram, securing it in place.

A somber sword aura instantly engulfed all of Dusk Province, but dispersed as fast as it'd appeared, as if those living in the province had suffered a second's worth of mass hallucination.

During this period of time, Dusk Province's coffers were flung wide open and spilled forth a torrent of immortal crystals. The bounty for House Donglin had begun to bear fruit.

Naturally, many tried to cheat their way to a reward. They offered limbs severed from still-living Donglin immortals, or perhaps heads and nascent spirits belonging to unrelated parties.

But as the master of the Tome of Life and Death and possessing a nascent spirit modeled after the six paths of reincarnation, it was child's play for Lu Yun to examine the lineage of the deceased. As a result, all who resorted to skulduggery were expelled after a good beating for their nonsense.

Not only had House Donglin suffered serious casualties in recent days, but the people of Exalted Major also hated them to the bone. They'd all heard the stone spirit drone on and on about "I, Dongling

Taihuang” and what he’d do, leading them to believe that Donglin Taihuang had been the originator of the dreadful stone spirit.

But even if Lu Yun was positively throwing money out the window, he earned it back even faster!

After the matter of the bounty, the thirteen trading guilds of the world had partnered to create a merchant alliance. Headquartered right in the great city at the center of Dusk Province, the masters of the thirteen trading guilds jointly presided over the alliance.

As for the great city, it’d been baptized as... Dao City!

The name set the entire world ablaze. The scope of Lu Yun’s ambitions was finally on full display. Everything he brought out, be it cultivation methods, combat arts, crystal cannons, and even fortress ships, sold out like hot cakes.

As a result, the streets of Dao City bursted at the seams with people.

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“Dao City? Well well, Lu Yun is quite the brazen one.” A young man clad in blue stood in front of Dao City’s gates and looked at the giant signboard over the gates, perusing it with a sneer. “Why don’t they rename Dusk Province as Dao Province while they’re at it?”

“Lu Yun has quite a high opinion of himself, it seems. Let’s go see him for ourselves!” Stepping forward proudly, the young man’s four followers hastily followed suit.

Dao City was a vast city divided into two districts—an inner and outer one. The outer district was open to the public, while the inner district was arranged like a sect and remained concealed by formations.

Between the two districts towered a tall building where Lu Yun currently resided. At this moment, Zhao Zhicheng was standing in front of him with a face full of frustration and giving voice to endless grievances.

Wanfeng stood next to Lu Yun, a faint smile on her lips as she looked at her master. By now, she’d reached peak true immortal realm and was close to setting foot into the next realm, becoming a void-ascended empyrean immortal. She was one of his most trusted confidants and entrusted with heavy responsibilities as the city lord of Dao City.

Thanks to her great strength and her ironfisted rule, she’d become an influential figure in Dusk Province and the entire world at large. In fact, even the thirteen masters of the merchant guilds treated her with extreme deference.

But in Lu Yun’s presence, she remained a biddable girl, as if she were still the little naive maid from before.

“The Exalted celestial emperor sacrificed himself for the entire world. I respect him from the bottom of my heart.” Lu Yun smiled at Zhao Zhicheng. “If there are clans from Exalted Major who wish to surrender to Dusk Province, I will assign an entire city to them as long as they toe the line.”

“Many thanks, milord!” Eyes sparkling, Zhao Zhicheng made a hasty bow. At long last, he felt like he could contribute something to Exalted Major’s cause.

“That reminds me,” Lu Yun added after a short pause. “If someone tells you to become the next Exalted celestial emperor, would you do it?”

“Ah?” Zhao Zhicheng shook his head vehemently, frightened by the question. “This humble servant is your man, milord. Although Exalted Major is dear to my heart, I would never dream of betraying you!”

“Alright, you are dismissed.” Lu Yun nodded faintly.

With a sigh of relief, Zhao Zhichen slowly stepped back.

“Milord, there’s someone outside calling himself ‘Sir Yu’ who requests an audience! He says he comes from Yellow Springs Land,” one of the servants urgently reported after Zhao Zhicheng’s departure.

“Sir Yu? From Yellow Springs Land?” Lu Yun blinked. “Heh, he’s finally here.”

His eyes narrowed into slits. “Have him come in.”

Chapter 675: What an Honor, Truly an Honor

Sir Yu from Yellow Springs Land appeared to be a young man. Wrapped in a long cyan robe, he bore himself with an uncommonly noble demeanor and dashing grace. Four servants trailed behind him. Though they’d suppressed their cultivation, the presence radiating from them made it clear that they numbered among the elites of the world of immortals.

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“You honor us with your presence, Your Majesty. You honor us!” Lu Yun shot to his feet and welcomed ‘Sir Yu’ in a booming voice. “Set up a banquet, Wanfeng! I’m throwing a welcoming party in Dusk City for the celestial emperor of Yellow Springs Land!

“What an honor, truly an honor!” he continued muttering as he bounced up to Sir Yu and grabbed his hands for a hearty pump.

Sir Yu stared dumbly at Lu Yun, at a complete loss for words. Stymied by the kind of greeting on display, he was dragged to the banquet hall like a scarecrow before he could collect his wits.

Tables were quickly set for the banquet and exquisite dishes rapidly flew onto them, paired with fine wine brewed from Violet Orchids. In no time, all of Dao City and Dusk Province at large, even the entire world of immortals, learned that the emperor of Yellow Springs had come for a visit.

Caught on the back foot, the monster spirit emperor struggled for an appropriate response. He’d picked the name Sir Yu and visited Dao City in person to see what was so special about Lu Yun that his handpicked successor would call a human “master”. Moreover, the Dao Flower would soon be restored, which was the main reason for his visit.

He’d simulated many scenarios of how Lu Yun might greet him, but the possibility that his identity would be immediately revealed to the public had never entered his mind. What was the human plotting?

How had the boy figured out his identity anyway? Sir Yu from Yellow Springs Land really did exist, so it wasn’t like the emperor had pulled the disguise out of thin air. In fact, the real Sir Yu was one of his own

disciples that'd been secluded in closed door cultivation for a very long time. It should've been a foolproof plan for him to assume his disciple's identity. Who'd leaked the information to Lu Yun?

The emperor couldn't sort any of it out.

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The banquet hall was exceedingly spacious, and many immortals were invited to the gathering. All attendees were renowned figures in the world of immortals who might've been hostile to Lu Yun under different circumstances, but they weren't going to turn down an invitation right here in Dao City. After all, the guest of honor was the monster spirit emperor of Yellow Springs Land!

He was the most powerful among the emperors of the ten lands. Rumor had it that he'd broken through the arcane dao realm and plucked a complete origin dao fruit. Even without that, he'd more than proven his might to the world at large.

The heads of the thirteen merchant companies, representatives from each peak faction, and even delegates from other heavenly courts were in attendance. Hundreds of noble immortals lifted their cups in a bustling round of toasts. The Yellow Springs emperor goggled at Lu Yun, reeling from shock at the speed of how everything had developed.

"Hahaha!" Lu Yun laughed. "What an honor it is for His Majesty of Yellow Springs to visit Dusk Province! Truly an honor, an honor of honors! Servants, bring more wine!"

All kinds of delicacies and precious spirit herbs were served during the banquet, but none could take the spotlight from the immortal wine!

Wine brewed from Violet Orchids had been the imperial wine of the primordial immortal court. Rich in immortal energy, a single glass of this wine would provide one with a quantity of energy equivalent to that accumulated through months of closed door cultivation.

After discovering Violet Orchid seeds in the vault of the North Sea palace, Su Xiaoxiao had successfully planted them all over Dusk Province, which was more than enough to brew some immortal wine.

Lu Yun's command for more refreshments visibly excited the guests.

"What kind of immortal wine is this, Sir Lu Yun?" an immortal asked with a hopeful expression. "How much does it cost, and where can we buy some?"

"This wine is brewed by my Xiaoxiao and usually consumed only by my people. It's not for sale, but Dusk Province is so incredibly honored by the Yellow Springs emperor today! Hahaha! We gaze upon the greatest honor of our lives!" Lu Yun added with a laugh, "I serve this wine and throw this banquet today because I'm in the mood to celebrate!"

"Close to a thousand immortals are in attendance today and even His Majesty is here... Why don't we call this party the Banquet of Immortals?" Again, Lu Yun looked at the Yellow Springs emperor and chuckled merrily. "What an honor, truly a most magnificent honor!"

The Yellow Springs emperor ground his teeth so hard that his gums hurt. He'd almost flipped the table when he heard the name Lu Yun had given to the banquet. To add insult to injury, the boy was on a

nonstop repeat of those blasted words. They'd developed into an unholy mantra that almost caused a spontaneous cultivation deviation when the monster spirit heard them for the umpteenth time.

"Hear, hear, Banquet of Immortals it is!" echoed some immortals. Although Lu Yun hadn't yet ascended to immortality, his status in the world of immortals could rival the patriarchs of some peak factions.

"Wait!" The Yellow Springs emperor finally found his voice. "I'm Sir Yu from Yellow Springs Land. How did I become the great celestial emperor!"

"Oh?" Silence descended upon the meeting hall. Everyone lowered their cups and turned to Lu Yun and the monster spirit emperor.

The emperor stared right back at Lu Yun.

"Hahahaha!" Lu Yun guffawed loudly. "You're funny, Your Majesty. Oh, that's a good one. As the celestial emperor of Yellow Springs Land, your presence shines bright and brought glory to Dusk Province the moment you entered. You being here is such a great honor, truly a great honor!"

The Yellow Springs emperor almost threw up blood when Lu Yun wouldn't. shut up. with that inane. NONSENSE.

"Stop this at once!" Scowling, he picked up the cup before him and drained it with a gulp.

"Your presence alone lights up Dusk Province, Your Majesty! What an honor, there is no greater honor to be had!" Lu Yun chortled.

The monster spirit emperor didn't know whether to kill everyone, then lose his mind, or just skip all that and go straight into a fit of insane giggles.

Lu Yun waved a hand, seemingly lifting a giant veil. Blinding light erupted from the Yellow Springs emperor and spilled forth over Dusk Province.

Behind the veil, the land was cast in brilliant gold, turning it into a world of sparkling, stunning gold. Just as Lu Yun had said, his presence alone really had lit up the province!

Pah!

In sheer rage at the absurdity of everything, the Yellow Springs emperor finally threw up the mouthful of blood that'd been stuck in his throat all this time.

Clearly, there was a restriction in Dusk Province that could sense the heavenly mandates borne by the celestial emperors of the nine majors, ten lands, and four immortal seas. The Yellow Springs emperor recognized the aureate radiance as the brilliance of the Yellow Springs heavenly mandate!

The facets all possessed their own heavenly mandates, with those of the nine majors being the strongest and containing heritages from their predecessors. Thus, the majors maintained their superiority over the ten lands and four immortal seas.

The heavenly mandates of the ten lands contained no such heritages, and could only empower their celestial emperors and add to their strength.

Therefore, while the entire world of immortals hailed the rulers of the nine majors as celestial emperors, only denizens of the ten lands venerated their monarchs with the same title. Rulers of the ten lands and four immortal seas were known simply as emperors of their respective race to the rest of the world.

Their heavenly mandates, however, were real, and there appeared to be a formation in Dusk Province that could sense those mandates.

The presence of the Yellow Springs emperor immensely elevated Dusk Province, and Dusk also announced to the world that the emperor had come to form an alliance at the same time!

The Yellow Springs emperor almost choked on regret. Dusk had left her dirty fingerprints all over him, and there was nothing he could do to erase them! Who in the heavens would ally themselves with Dusk Province now?!

Even if he was interested, he would wait until the projection of the Dao Flower was restored before making a decision.

Chapter 676: Divulging the Secrets of Heavens

Honestly, the mandate-sensing formation of Dusk Province was pure nonsense purposefully disseminated by Lu Yun. After the alliance between the thirteen trading companies solidified, their information network covered the entire world.

He'd known early on that Sir Yu was the disciple of the Yellow Springs emperor and was still in closed door cultivation, so he hadn't even needed to engage his brain to know what was going on when the "disciple" had suddenly arrived in Dao City.

Since the Yellow Springs emperor had come in person, why not beat him at his own game and shout it from the rooftops so that everyone knew about it?

Meanwhile, Lu Yun had to overcome one last obstacle and refine the Dao Flower projection in order to establish a sacred land. Though the projection had drifted into the North Sea, his replica had been sitting cross-legged underneath it all along.

For Lu Yun, the world inside and outside Dusk Province's borders were two different battlefields altogether.

Inside his territory, he could rely on the human demon and newly-obtained sword formation, but once outside, he was on his own. Though he might have guardians, there were even more powerhouses waiting for him in the world at large.

However, the appearance of the Yellow Springs emperor would alleviate a great deal of pressure on his shoulders. Granted, there was no formal alliance between them, but how many would dare fully rule out the possibility?

As for the Yellow Springs emperor, he abruptly found himself astride a tiger with no way to dismount. Lords of major domains never entered another nation without good reason. For instance, only replicas were sent when the three celestial emperors visited Zhao Wushuang's tribulation.

Though the Truespirit celestial emperor had gone to Exalted Major in person and even brought his celestial palace, he'd gone with the intent to perish together with the demon god. A return journey had never been in the plans.

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The Dao Flower had gradually recovered as time went on, and Lu Yun's tribulation drew ever closer, an event everyone had an inkling of.

But one day before the tribulation, an unexpected guest arrived in the form of Zhao Wushuang. Riddled with injuries, body and nascent spirit critically injured, she flew on the heart of the Sword of Chaos and almost crashed headlong into Dao City.

Outside the city, Sword Divine Dongfang Hao stood on empty air. He hadn't ascended to immortality yet, but here he was, chasing a Zhao Wushuang whose phenomenon of ascension had covered the entire world of immortals!

Even so, he dared not set foot in the city itself.

"Lu Yun, hand over Zhao Wushuang." His voice was cold and indifferent, his figure shrouded in thick sword aura, as if he'd cleave the city in two at the drop of a hat.

"Dongfang Hao, you do realize you're in Dusk Province? Your arrogance won't be tolerated here. Go home, I won't kill you this time." Lu Yun stood on the city walls, his tone relaxed and carefree.

"Lu Yun, if my calculations are correct, the Dao Flower's recovery and your tribulation are scheduled for tomorrow. Do you really want to make an enemy of me at a time like this?"

Dongfang Hao's voice wasn't very loud, but it hit everyone like a clap of thunder. All kinds of transmission talismans flew out of the city the next moment to inform their various factions that Lu Yun would face his tribulation tomorrow!

Although there was no guarantee the threat was true, countless immortals prepared themselves to fight over the Dao Flower projection tomorrow all the same. In the same vein, they also wanted to disrupt Lu Yun's tribulation!

"What, weren't we already enemies to begin with?" Lu Yun snorted.

"Hand over Zhao Wushuang and I won't attack you tomorrow. What say you?" Dongfang Hao's eyes were glued to the figure of Zhao Wushuang inside the city walls, where Qing Yu was already protecting her.

"It's all the same to me with or without you. See yourself out." Having said his piece, Lu Yun turned on his heel and returned to the city.

A shred of hesitation appeared on Dongfang Hao's face, and he ultimately decided not to force the issue. Streaking into sword light, he vanished beyond the horizon.

For him, the majestic Dao City was a giant beast lying in hibernation. Even now, he could feel an aura of danger emanating from it. He wasn't afraid of coming to Dusk Province, but he dared not step into Dao City.

“Lu Yun, I hope you won’t regret this... Let us see tomorrow if you can protect those dear to you.” Dongfang Hao’s voice traveled back from far away. “After all, there are many in the world who covet your Qing Yu...”

“Dongfang Hao, you better not force me to put a bounty on your House Dongfang.” Lu Yun replied placidly. “If there’s one thing Dusk Province doesn’t lack, it’s immortal crystals!”

Outside Dusk Province, Dongfang Hao stumbled on his return trip and almost fell face first to the ground.

“Bastard!” he gnashed his teeth. He was indeed wary of such a bounty. There were many factions targeting the Dongfang Clan now, especially those whose immortals had fallen victim to soul seeds. A bounty issued by Lu Yun would exterminate the clan in no time.

However, Lu Yun also had to think twice before issuing another bounty. Recklessly smashing people with his wallet would quickly turn the entire world against him, and even the merchant alliance would be implicated.

One bounty against House Donglin was as far as he could go.

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“What are you doing here? How does Dongfang Hao have the nerve to attack you inside Exalted Major?” Lu Yun frowned as he looked at Zhao Wushuang’s sorry state.

“Dongfang Hao rules Exalted Major now.” Deathly pale, the girl panted softly with a rueful smile on her lips. “In working with Dongfang Hao, the Exalted Immortal Sect let the fox into the henhouse! The moment we fell into dire straits, he swooped in and seized control of the entire major.”

“What?! But it’s only been a few days??” Lu Yun’s jaw dropped.

It hadn’t even been a month since the death of the previous celestial emperor, but Dongfang Hao had already consolidated his authority over the entire major during this time! Just what kind of power did the man wield, exactly?

“He’s not the only one hunting me down. There are also a few arcane dao immortal survivors from the Exalted Immortal Sect,” Zhao Wushuan explained with a pained face. “Mind your safety tomorrow. Dongfang Hao’s already entered the major’s land of inheritance and I don’t know what he’s obtained there.”

While Mount Exalted had been destroyed, the Exalted Divine Tribe’s land of inheritance still existed in the form of ruins teetering on the edge of collapse. The peng originated from those ruins, and it was tradition for Exalted celestial emperors to visit the land before their coronation.

So with no one else to turn to, Zhao Wushuang had had no choice but to seek asylum with Lu Yun.

“Alright, you stay here then... Wait!” Lu Yun started. “The clan that Zhao Zhicheng recently brought over from Exalted Major... can they be spies sent by Dongfang Hao?” Cold sweat dripped from his forehead at the thought.

Dusk Province's three hundred and sixty-five cities were very important pieces that served as the foundation for the province's great guardian formation. Nothing could be allowed to happen to them.

Lu Yun trusted Zhao Zhicheng implicitly, so hadn't delved deeper into the matter, but now... Zhao Zhicheng hadn't known about Sword Divine taking over Exalted Major then.

"Don't worry, they can't be spies." Qing Yu smiled wryly. "The clan he welcomed is the Yin Clan. Your favorite scapegoat, Yin Qingran, is among them as well."

Lu Yun kneaded his forehead.

Yin Qingran...

He was now persona non grata in Exalted Major, and the Yin Clan had also been dragged into the mess along with him. In any case, Lu Yun had long guessed the nature of the relationship between Zhao Zhicheng and the Yin Clan, so it wasn't a surprise that his subordinate had brought the faction to Dusk Province after obtaining his approval.

"You must be careful tomorrow, Dongfang Hao's spread the news of your tribulation! I'm afraid that..." Qing Yu began to worry.

"Relax, a trivial tribulation won't stump me." Chuckling, Lu Yun gently tousled her hair.

Chapter 677: Ge Long's Eyes

Great waves surged across the North Sea and heavy clouds covered a region ten thousand kilometers across. Lu Yun stood below the Dao Flower. Bit by bit, the wound on the flower had mended itself.

What surprised all was that the flower's final stop was right above Levitating Island. And to add further to the shocking development, Lu Yun had chosen to face his tribulation beside the Dao Flower!

On Levitating island, two scarlet apes cursed him with every insult they had ever come across, but they didn't dare make a statement by taking a stand. Evacuating the island's monster spirits, they withdrew some distance away.

Even without Lu Yun's tribulation, they wouldn't have dared stay behind. Any region hosting the Dao Flower projection was sure to become a tragic hot zone. More than likely, Levitating Island would be ground to dust and relegated to history after the oncoming great battle.

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"That kid is truly bold, or confident, to face his tribulation here." Elsewhere in the sky, Lu Feng clucked his tongue in wonder. "I wonder what this ready-made younger brother of mine is really thinking about.

"The recovered Dao Flower will attract everyone's attention. He could have used it as a distraction and undergone his tribulation somewhere else... Does he think his life has been too easy thus far?" Lu Feng didn't understand what was going in Lu Yun's mind.

"He wouldn't be Lu Yun if he did that." Mo Yi sat on a patch of rosy clouds, extremely confident in Lu Yun despite the slight worry visible in her eyes.

“What is that?!” Lu Feng suddenly shouted in alarm, his dismay palpable as he stared at the sky and the pair of crimson eyes that’d materialized therein.

The eyes looked exactly like those belonging to the human demon of Dusk Province’s restriction, except they were colder and more heartless. One could see a terrible will pulsating within them.

“The eyes of heavenly judgment ...” Mo Yi also paled. She hadn’t expected Lu Yun’s tribulation would turn out to be a judgment from the heavens!

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“The legendary eyes of heavenly judgment! Hahaha! He’s really done for now! Lu Yun is deader than dead this time!” Many laughed merrily at the spectacle.

“I wonder what atrocities he’s committed to attract the judgment of the heavens, instead of the usual tribulation he would’ve faced.”

“Last time, it was Witherdew Major facing something of this level. Their chaos tribulation annihilated every immortal in the major, and judging by the black lighting in the tribulation clouds, this one will be similar...”

“Lu Yun can die for all I care, but why does it have to impact our Levitating Island as well!” The golden scarlet ape looked at the eyes with clenched teeth.

Their home base was bound to be destroyed in the wake of the heavenly judgment. The two scarlet apes had already begun brainstorming where to look for a new haven so they could establish another sacred land for monster spirits.

“Alas... the dao weapon is on Lu Yun. It’ll probably be destroyed as well by the heavenly judgment.”

“Lu Yun, there’s no reason for you to cling to your dao weapon in the face of certain death, is there? Hand it over before the heavenly judgment descends, for the sake of all immortals in the world!” someone suddenly shouted.

The speaker in question was a dao immortal from Nephrite Major. But Lu Yun remained stock-still, as though he hadn’t heard the demand at all. The rest of the crowd was biding their time, waiting for the governor to fail and the heavenly judgment to disperse before making their move and capturing the Dao Flower projection.

No matter how formidable the judgment, it would never damage the Dao Flower. Moreover, Lu Yun was known to be a walking treasure chest. Even if he died, those treasures might not be all destroyed. Obtaining even one or two would be an incredible boon for many people.

So everyone was waiting, waiting for the moment the heavenly judgment obliterated him.

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Dusk Province.

Her small face full of worry, Wanfeng clutched the front of Qing Yu’s robes with sweaty hands.

“Big sister Qing Yu, do you think the young master can... can survive the heavenly judgment?” She’d been fully confident in Lu Yun before, but almost broke down in tears at the eyes’ appearance.

Qing Yu patted her head with a smile. “Don’t worry. The stronger the tribulation, the more beneficial it will be for your young master.”

“Ah?” Wanfeng couldn’t make sense of the response.

“Don’t you think they look very familiar?” Qing Yu pointed at the giant eyes above.

Immense in size, they spanned from one end of the sky to the other. They were clearly visible even in Dusk Province millions of kilometers away.

“That’s right, they do look somewhat familiar!” Quickly piping in, Zhao Zhicheng bobbed his head like a good little tagalong.

“What are you talking about? You’ve never met him.” Qing Yu looked at him askew.

“Ah?” Zhao Zhicheng wished he could swallow his tongue. He’d quite missed the mark with his would-be flattery.

For their part, everyone else looked at Qing Yu in bewilderment, but she remained blithely unconcerned and even began to hum a little ditty.

“Lady Master...” The doll-like Liu Qingmiao jumped into Qing Yu’s embrace, cutely rubbing her cheek against her master’s wife. “Will master really be fine?”

Qing Yu blushed bright red at being called ‘Lady Master.’

“He’s fine, he’ll be fine. Don’t you worry about a thing,” she replied with a dry cough.

“I see now!” Zhao Wushuang abruptly recalled the sea of thunder that’d suddenly disappeared during her own tribulation. It must have all been thanks to Lu Yun, he possessed no fear of lightning at all! As for what Qing Yu had said about the eyes looking familiar, it must’ve been to soothe the anxieties of the others.

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Lu Yun stood beneath tribulation clouds set against a sky of pure black. The sea of clouds was so vast that they enveloped him, the Dao Flower projection next to him, and Levitating Island below.

Those who were calculating the right timing to disrupt his tribulation promptly changed their minds.

The judgment of the heavens was much, much more terrible than the Diabolical Tribulation of World Refinement. The probability of surviving the latter wasn’t completely nil... but the judgment of the heavens never relented until it eradicated all signs of life!

“Um... Ge Long? What are you doing up there?” Lu Yun suddenly called out. He couldn’t wrap his mind around it—why was he seeing Ge Long above the tribulation clouds? Although it was merely a pair of eyes, they indubitably belonged to his old servant.

“Eh?” the familiar voice sounded in Lu Yun’s mind, somewhat dazed. “Milord, you can recognize this old servant?”

“I can’t, but the Tome of Life and Death can. What are you doing up there?” Lu Yun asked with a frown.

“This old servant... this old servant is in charge of the heavenly judgment...”

To everyone’s complete shock, the giant eyes in the sky suddenly blinked innocently. The eyes of heavenly judgment... could blink?

Many people felt their understanding of the world begin to turn upside down.

“In charge of the heavenly judgment? Aren’t I undergoing my immortal tribulation? Why did you run up there to host this judgment or whatever it is?” Lu Yun continued to frown.

“It’s like this!” Ge Long hastened to explain. “Milord, you... you relinquished control over the wheel of reincarnation, so... so this old servant accidentally obtained the power to control heavenly tribulations! Yes, right, so very right, that’s what happened here.”

“Tell. Me. The truth!” Lu Yun grunted, somewhat annoyed.

“This old servant beat up the will of the immortal dao just now and chased it away from the eyes of heavenly judgment... then made use of the opportunity to take control of the judgment itself,” Ge Long answered carefully, as if walking on eggshells.

“You? Beat up the will of the immortal dao?” Lu Yun stared blankly at Ge Long’s eyes.

“To be more exact, the immortal dao has been taken over by someone! So I didn’t really beat up the will of immortal dao, but enacted punishment on that person’s consciousness!” A righteous tone suddenly rang in the old servant’s voice.

“The authority to deliver heavenly tribulations cannot be controlled by any one person. It would be a disaster of devastating proportions for the immortal dao. Therefore, your servant became one with heaven’s judgment to deliver peace and justice to this world!” Ge Long pontificated righteously like a model citizen.

“Man, I’m here for my heavenly tribulation, not your bullshit.” Lu Yun rubbed his forehead.

“Um... this old servant is here to help milord with your tribulation?” Ge Long finally offered.

Chapter 678: Lightning Rod

“Help me? Can you really control heavenly tribulations?” Lu Yun’s eyes gleamed with excitement.

“...no.” Ge Long chuckled wryly. “Someone’s already interfered with this one and attracted the judgment of the heavens, instead. I managed to take advantage of the opening they created and beat up the will controlling everything, then wrested control of the tribulation away from them.

“As for tribulations that aren’t controlled by the will of a living being, there’s nothing this old servant can do.” Ge Long felt a little vexed himself. If he really could manipulate tribulations, he would’ve dispatched chaos tribulations to eradicate all the nasty things in the world a long time ago.

“So you mean that... there’s someone out there who can control tribulations?” The possibility suddenly struck Lu Yun. If that were so, he would have to stay extremely vigilant. Heavenly tribulations were a sword hanging over every living creature. If someone could command them, that could bring about unimaginable consequences.

“Indeed, milord!” Ge Long nodded. “There’s someone who can do so through influencing the immortal dao. But fortunately, that person’s cultivation isn’t all that strong, so he can only affect tribulations in small ways.”

“I have to find him and kill him!” Lu Yun’s brows creased in a tight frown.

“Milord, this old servant is here to help with your tribulation. I can’t reveal myself, so I can only use the immortal dao’s aura to conceal my presence. I also have to warn you that this heavenly judgment is too powerful for your lightning-absorbing art to completely swallow,” Ge Long patiently explained.

He couldn’t expose his presence, or the fact that Lu Yun could absorb tribulation lightning. The only reason he’d managed to evict whoever it was manipulating this tribulation was because he’d put in a personal showing and summoned the will of the land.

Ge Long was a very peculiar existence. Ever since appearing at Lu Yun’s side, he’d always conducted himself with utmost caution. It wasn’t until he entered the ancient tomb at the center of Dusk Province and swallowed the cultivator-destroying monster did he fully return to himself.

“Milord, let’s discuss the one who can influence tribulations after we’re done here. This old servant can’t fully control this heavenly judgment, so we have to proceed as soon as possible!”

Rumble!!

The moment Ge Long’s voice fell, the world shook as a gigantic black bolt of lightning drew a strange and terrifying arc in the air. As it slammed down toward Lu Yun, not a single sound could be heard in the realm except for one thing: the devastation of the heavenly judgment!

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“What incredible power... So this is a heavenly judgment. Although it’s not as strong as the chaos tribulation that destroyed Witherdew Major, it’s still something that ordinary cultivators can’t withstand. Eh?! What’s that??”

Just when everyone was expecting to see Lu Yun obliterated by lightning, they witnessed a turnabout straight out of a tale.

Something that looked like an iron rod more than forty meters long had appeared beside Lu Yun. Previously aimed at the young man, the lightning suddenly deviated from its course and crashed into the rod instead.

Rumble!

The iron rod vibrated violently at the impact and absorbed the energy of the heavenly judgment, ultimately defusing it so that Lu Yun’s Thunder Palmstrike could swallow it whole.

Ge Long looked vacantly at Lu Yun. What in the heavens had happened just now?

“Milord is as mighty as ever. It seems this old servant has overthought things.” He beamed with happiness.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The third, fourth, and fifth bolts of lightning followed in quick succession, but the iron rod redirected all of them to itself.

All of the nearby immortals looked on, dumbstruck.

Lu Yun had expected something unforeseen to happen during his tribulation. While the Thunder Palmstrike could absorb tribulation lightning, it wasn't without its limitations. For one, it couldn't absorb lightning beyond a certain threshold of intensity, like the chaos lightning that'd destroyed Witherdew Major.

Therefore, he'd refined a certain item. On Earth, it'd be called a lightning rod!

The one he'd crafted was no ordinary one. He'd condensed the Thunder Palmstrike's lightning-attracting ability into 3,650 talismans and combined them with the lightning rod. In addition, the rod itself had been refined, not from ordinary materials, but from a Ten Orientations Stone!

As a material of extreme yin, the Ten Orientations Stone was unique to hell. This particular piece had been supplied by the merchant alliance.

Lu Yun had once obtained one from the Panorama Pavillion, but the merchant alliance had recently found a second one. When he'd heard the news, he'd immediately sent over a lord-grade ship to trade for the stone, then used it to craft his lightning rod.

A Ten Orientations Stone was incomparably hard itself. Making it the core of the item, he'd tempered it repeatedly with hellfire for a thousand years, meshing many other lightning-attracting materials into it.

Even without deploying 3,650 Thunder Palmstrike talismans in conjunction with it, the lightning rod could have dealt with most tribulations by itself. Incorporating the talismans on top of it was adding wings to a tiger; it could attract even chaos tribulations now!

Up in the firmament, the lightning of heaven's judgment flowed like water and transformed into an endless tide of black lightning bolts furiously smiting the rod. Lu Yun stood beside it, entirely unaffected.

It was also thanks to Ge Long curbing the judgment's power from the inside that he was having such an easy time of things. Otherwise, such a terrible judgment would've certainly evolved into a sea of lightning, or perhaps a lightning mountain.

Had that been the case, Lu Yun would've been forced to step into the breach himself and use the Thunder Palmstrike to lessen the pressure on the lightning rod.

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“Things have changed, be ready to interfere with his tribulation!” coolly ordered numerous immortals surrounding the North Sea, their expressions foreboding.

“Interfere? How exactly do we do that?!” whined some returned-void cultivators. “Don’t you see the rod absorbing the judgment lightning? Even if we go inside and amplify the heavenly judgment’s intensity, it won’t be of any use at all!”

More importantly, Lu Yun wasn’t expending any effort to resist the tribulation, so he was free to slay them with a slash through space before they could even draw near the tribulation clouds.

“How do we know without trying?” One of the arcane dao immortals grabbed a few peak returned-void cultivators on the verge of facing their own tribulations, and tossed them inside the tribulation without hesitation.

Boom!

The clouds shook the moment the cultivators landed in the area of effect and struck them with a torrent of black judgment lightning bolts, frying them to a crisp. But even so, the trial didn’t grow in intensity.

“Are you people dumb?” Lu Yun looked back at the arcane dao immortal. “This is a heavenly judgment, not your run-of-the-mill tribulation... Or did you think the cultivators you threw in deserved judgment from the heavens themselves?”

Indeed, they didn’t!

Heavenly judgments were a completely different beast from heavenly tribulations. Only cultivators who’d attained an unimaginable realm, or those who’d earned the wrath of the heavens, could inspire a reaction.

Such a judgment was the strongest of tribulations. To attempt to amplify its intensity by inserting a few people, or even a hundred others, was nothing but sheer delusion. Even without Ge Long, Lu Yun would have nothing to fear.

“Everyone, attack! Destroy the rod beside him!” someone suddenly roared.

Chapter 679: Deterrence from Levitating Island

The iron rod that could attract lightning!

That was the real key!

As long as the strange apparatus could be broken or taken away, Lu Yun would certainly be buried under the endless barrage of judgment lightning.

Therefore, the immortals in the vicinity all sprang into action and targeted the rod by the boy’s side. A plethora of multicolored sword lights and assorted combat arts quickly sailed through the air.

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“Who dares interfere!!” a furious shout exploded from the emptiness as a tall figure stepped out of the void. With a sweep of his giant metal staff, he shattered the incoming shower of combat arts and sword rays. However, immense recoil struck him as well, sending him drooping downward with blood seeping out of the corner of his mouth.

“What, is Levitating Island going to protect Lu Yun?” some immortals sneered. Although this figure was human in shape, it was in fact a gorilla, a silverback gorilla!

“!! Am! Yuan! Tong!” The silverback spat out a few human words, then transformed into a towering man with a dream-like flash of silver light.

“Lord Lu Yun is my benefactor. In life, I am Lord Lu Yun’s man, and in death, my soul is Lord Lu Yun’s servant!” Yuan Tong roared furiously. “You want to harm Lord Lu Yun? Over my dead body!”

Now a void-ascended immortal, he spun his staff in a howling circle through the air and smashed it indiscriminately into a group of immortals.

“You court death!”

The group all hailed from the Lang Clan of Enlightened Major. There existed no enmity between them and Lu Yun, but now that the governor was besieged by an assortment of factions from all over the world, they naturally wouldn’t hesitate to kick him while he was down.

The clan’s powerhouses weren’t the only ones who’d come. Even some ordinary immortals and cultivators were in attendance, attracted by the lure of easy gains. Everyone knew that Lu Yun’s death would signal the end of Dusk Province. Sooner or later, the province would be pillaged.

Sure, it was protected by a restriction that stopped the most powerful immortals from entering, but cultivators and immortals below the golden immortal realm were free to do as they pleased. Never did they think they would run into a violent silverback that’d charge headfirst at them and storm them with his staff!

The Lang Clan’s powerhouses roared in anger and several dao immortals immediately surrounded Yuan Tong.

Hum!

The air vibrated as a silver crescent moon shot into the sky. Caught off guard, the Lang dao immortals who’d already caught Yuan Tong were blasted away by moonlight.

Struggling free of his bonds, Yuan Tong activated a combat art that enlarged his frame until he stood thirty thousand meters tall. His figure gleamed with dazzling silver brilliance and his staff danced in the air, wreaking havoc in the Lang Clan’s ranks.

A charming girl with silver hair stood under the crescent of the silver moon: Silvermoon Wolfking Silverblaze had arrived.

One of the rare wolfkings born to the Silvermoon Wolves over the past eighty thousand years, she was blessed with potential even greater than Yuan Tong’s. More importantly, the two monster spirits had once followed Lu Yun on a rampage through the Sovereign World. They’d benefited immensely from it, and thanks to Lu Yun awakening the ancestral bloodlines in their veins, their strength was second to none.

After the Sovereign Ranking Battles, the golden scarlet ape had brought them back to Levitating Island and taught them with painstaking care. When the silver scarlet ape returned, she’d immediately taken the two of them as her personal disciples.

How powerful was the silver scarlet ape? She'd killed Kui with a single punch inside the celestial master tomb!

Though the two monster spirits were only void-ascended true immortals, having received personal tutelage by the silver scarlet ape made them number among the strongest of true immortals!

"You fool, did you forget what master told us? If you want to do something, do it with confidence. Look at you, you're so fearful that you don't even have the courage to kill them. How can you still call yourself a monster spirit?!" Silverblaze's gaze was as chilly as winter when she saw that Yuan Tong seemed to have some qualms about really going on a killing spree. At most, he only immobilized the Lang immortals during his wild antics.

"But if I start killing, won't that make trouble for Lord Lu Yun?" Yuan Tong asked in a small voice. "After all, there doesn't seem to be any enmity between Lord Lu Yun and the Lang Clan."

Yuan Tong and Silverblaze had long learned of Lu Yun's identity, since the golden scarlet ape hadn't kept the information from them. Now that Yuan Tong was fighting for Lu Yun's sake, he was deathly worried that the Lang Clan would blame any deaths on his great benefactor.

"You idiot!" Silverblaze erupted in a tirade. "They've already attacked Lord Lu Yun and tried to send him to the afterlife... Do you seriously think there's no enmity between them?"

Yuan Tong wasn't very sharp, and his thought process was slow compared to most people. So when he heard Silverblaze, he stared into empty space for a moment before suddenly exploding into action. Transforming back into his silverback self, he barked a challenge before careening into the Lang Clan.

"Kill, kill, kill! The deader the better, kekeke!" The silver scarlet ape capered excitedly, cheering on her disciples from the sidelines.

When it came to being blindly partial to her own, she was even more extreme than the golden scarlet ape. Earlier on, the golden scarlet ape had been about to attack Lu Yun's lightning rod, but the silver scarlet ape had swept him off his feet with her staff.

"This Lu Yun saved my life and freed me from that damned underworld, so stay put!" She bared her teeth. "If you start fighting, the taboo existences in Dusk Province will join the melee as well, and countless children in the North Sea will suffer!"

"Listen carefully!" she suddenly bellowed. "Origin dao level combatants are prohibited from meddling in Lu Yun's tribulation. Otherwise, don't blame this queen's staff for being merciless!"

Dong!

She viciously smashed a certain part of the air with her black staff and bared her teeth. "Did you not hear me? Origin dao level combatants are forbidden from making a move!"

Boom!

Space cracked at her feet and turned into an enormous black hole. In response, the silver scarlet ape yanked the cape off her dao partner and draped it over her own body.

“Monster Spirit Ancestor...” A vague figure walked out of the void. Without a doubt, it was a celestial emperor. However, he was employing a special power to hide his presence in order to conceal his identity.

“Shut your mouth!” When the silver scarlet ape heard the title the celestial emperor used to address her, she smacked her dao partner for lack of a more accessible target.

“Monster Spirit Ancestor? Kekeke. In this world, no monster spirit other than the fox deserves the title. My name is Silverlight, so that is what you should call me. As for this kid, he’s called Goldenlight.” Silverlight casually discredited her so-called monster sacred land with a few simple words. Without a monster spirit ancestor, or the ancient one’s sacred land, was her faction even worthy of being called such?

“Silverlight, are you not tempted by the Dao Flower?” The celestial emperor’s tones were cold.

“I am, of course I am! But even so, I have to let my arcane dao juniors fight for it. A battle at the origin dao level will affect the current balance of power. That chickenheart from the Purple Firmament ran away, so I have to protect this world myself!

“If origin dao immortals participate... Children!”

Fwoom!

The next moment, a full eighteen origin dao auras shot into the sky behind Silverlight, each of which represented a flawless origin dao immortal!

“Very well, origin dao combatants are forbidden from participating in this struggle!” the celestial emperor promptly declared. To think there’d be eighteen flawless origin dao immortals on Levitating Island! The number was too terrifying to contemplate.

Chapter 680: An Auction During a Heavenly Judgment

Silverlight looked up at the patch of sky above the tribulation clouds, concern flashing through her faintly silver eyes.

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Boom!

A beam of light thirty meters wide exploded out of the ocean at Lu Yun. It was a blast from a crystal cannon! Finally, such weapons were being put to use.

Shot after shot fired, targeting Lu Yun with great power. Silverlight opened her mouth, but shut it again without saying anything. The crystal cannons were his own doing. Being attacked by his own creations... well, he was simply reaping what he’d sown.

Lu Yun turned around to face the incoming light beams. Completely unruffled, he waved a hand and took a few deliberate steps. Formation runes blossomed around him and distorted the air, forming an enormous invisible formation just before the beams of light found their target.

Hum.

The crowd's jaw dropped when the attacks were easily dissolved with a slight buzz.

Crystal cannons and weapons of war had always been unrivaled and unstoppable in the world. Only an absolutely superior defense or even greater offense could offset their force. Over the past eighty thousand years since those baleful weapons had been invented, no one had ever managed to block them with a formation!

The previous barrage had originated from not only crystal cannons, but also original weapons of war!

"When the ninth prince of Primus Major shot at Dao City in Dusk Province with a crystal cannon, the attack was similarly rebuffed..." someone murmured. "Was it this kind of formation's doing as well?"

"The perfect tool necessary in every household kit for overcoming tribulations—a lightning rod," Lu Yun spoke up nonchalantly. "Pre-orders start now! Those interested may put in your orders at the merchant alliance in Dao City.

"Another item hitting shelves today is the Closesky Formation, a formation that can effectively block crystal cannons and weapons of war. Priced at ten trillion crystals each, formation disks can also be found in the merchant alliance of Dao City!"

He didn't seem affected by the tribulation at all, and looked to be having an unreasonably easy time of things. Members of various factions outside the tribulation clouds were caught off guard. Although many were after Lu Yun, he also had a good number of allies!

The merchant alliance, Lin Clan, East Sea Court, South Sea Court, Unsullied Sea, and Beicang Clan had arrived and flung themselves into the epic struggle without hesitation. They stopped their motions when they heard Lu Yun's words. Was he overcoming a tribulation or holding an auction?!

How ambitious—or perhaps boneheaded—must he be to pitch his products at this moment?!

A battle to the death had broken out beyond the perimeter of the heavenly judgment. Some wanted Lu Yun dead, others risked their lives to protect him. But the target of everyone's attention wanted to take advantage of the spotlight to market his treasures and formations?!

"What is this kid thinking?!" Some of the immortals stopped what they were doing as the absurdity of the situation drained them of the will to keep fighting.

"Also... does anyone want the projection of the Dao Flower?" Lu Yun flew up to the projection and poked it experimentally. "If anyone's interested... the starting price is a hundred trillion crystals. The flower will go to the highest bidder!"

The immortals... the immortals couldn't even begin to form a coherent thought.

"Ugh, he's really asking for it!" A Lin immortal glared in disbelief at Lu Yun, his clothes drenched in blood. He wanted nothing more than to rush into the tribulation clouds and beat the brat to within an inch of his life. His clan had already lost three dao immortals to protect this little bastard!

The majority of the immortals present, however, remained silent. They knew that if the clashes continued, many factions would truly get their ire up and become bitter enemies with no chance of reconciliation.

That was the last thing Lu Yun wanted. He'd put on this farce to stop a war from breaking out, even though battle had broken out because of him.

"Ahem!" Clearing his throat, he announced against a backdrop of tribulation lightning bolts, "We all know how frightfully dangerous the trials for a void-realm immortal are. Not only is there a terrible lightning tribulation, there's an even deadlier tribulation beast at the end!

"Some cultivators endure to the end of the lightning with their last breath, but their heavily wounded selves end up falling to the tribulation beast!

"Today, I'm pleased to announce that this is a concern of the past, thanks to the lightning rod! One rod will enable you to preserve your strength until you face the tribulation beast! You'll be able to take on that final challenge in peak condition and sweep it away. Just one rod for a tribulation, one measly rod for exponentially increasing your chances of overcoming your tribulation!

"What price do you have to pay for such a treasure? A lifetime's worth of debt? Servitude for your firstborn? Absolutely not! Each lightning rod costs only ten billion crystals! Get them while they're hot, they're more than worth their weight in gold—er, crystals! I guarantee you won't regret the purchase!

"So what're you waiting for? Put in your order at Dao City and get yours today! Are your children about to face their tribulations? Are the geniuses of your clan going to take their final test? Fret not, tribulations are no longer the thing of nightmares with a trusty lightning rod!" Spittle flying every which way, Lu Yun delivered his best Earth shopping channel impression.

"The sudden disappearance of Zhao Wushuang's tribulation in Exalted Major..." someone exclaimed.

"That's right, it was the lightning rod's doing!" Lu Yun declared proudly. "A lightning rod can absorb a Diabolical Tribulation of World Refinement and tribulations that are even more powerful!"

"Good, fantastic!" A dao immortal who'd been trying to destroy the lightning rod applauded loudly and turned around, setting a course for Dusk Province. "I'm ordering three lightning rods! This thing can absorb even heavenly judgments... a heavenly tribulation is nothing!"

Three of his grandchildren had sensed their oncoming tribulations. However, they hadn't built a solid foundation and were thus unlikely to survive their trial. They were doomed to die a dismal death.

The lightning-absorbing rods Lu Yun put on the market today represented fresh hope, so he traveled to Dusk Province without further ado to put in an order!

Those left on the scene exchanged puzzled glances with each other. How had things developed to this point?

The Closesky Formation that could withstand weapons of war and crystal cannons was even more attractive. Although it cost ten trillion crystals, it wasn't that great a price to pay for the ability to defend against weapons of war and crystal cannons.

Naturally, it was the Dao Flower that attracted the greatest attention. Though the starting bid was a hundred trillion crystals, there was no shortage of wealthy tycoons in the world of immortals who could afford that!

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“This old servant is retreating, sir. The tribulation beast is coming. You must be careful!” The heavenly judgment’s eyes dimmed and weakened. His part complete, Ge Long returned to the netherworld.

“Tribulation beast?” Eyes bright, Lu Yun declared, “The fourth auction lot, tribulation essence! Everyone knows that the last trial for a void realm cultivator is a tribulation beast. Killing it will yield tribulation essence!

“I’m sure you all know what it can do. It will reinforce one’s foundation, strengthen the constitution, and concentrate immortal energy. Today, I put my own tribulation essence on the block! A trillion crystals for one drop!”

By now, everyone watching had forgotten what words were.

“Grrrrawwwwl!” A beastly roar rang through the sky. Lu Yun’s tribulation beast was about to take center stage.