

Necropolis 681

Chapter 681: Ascending to Immortality

Lu Yun really was going a little crazy from his need for more crystals. The bounty on the entirety of House Donglin was quickly draining him of wealth. Although the marketplace in Dao City was lucrative, it belonged to the merchant alliance!

He wasn't a businessman and needed their help in his various exploits. Naturally, any profits had to be split with the trading guilds, rather than going into his own pockets alone; it was the only way for their collaboration to be sustainable.

At the end of the day, he needed more immortal crystals in order to lure the Ancient Tree of Life to Dusk Province. Now that Mo Yi had acquired the Skyturtle Pearl from the Ling Clan, the only thing he needed to lift the poison curse on Qing Yu was the tree!

The Ancient Tree of Life had taken root in a shard of hell. With the Key of Life in his possession, he could attract the tree by force-starting the key with a great amount of immortal crystals. Therefore, he needed more crystals for both Qing Yu and himself!

At least two hundred and fifty trillion crystals were required to lure the tree to Dusk Province. But in Lu Yun's eyes, that was far from enough—he needed so much more! That was why he was going so far as to hold an auction during his tribulation, and even selling off his own tribulation essence!

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"Grrrrraw!" Beastly roars boomed through the sky. The heavenly judgment had concluded, but tribulation clouds yet remained, within which an enormous beast flailed its way to the surface.

Expression dark, Lu Yun stared solemnly at the increasingly visible beast.

"What will it be? A regular kun? Or another divine beast?" The immortals in the area had decided not to intervene.

Lu Yun had essentially given up on establishing a sacred land the moment he put the flower projection on sale. As long as he didn't establish a sacred land, he posed no threat whatsoever to the other factions in the world of immortals.

"It's long and thin... seems to be a snake?"

"A scarlet snake!"

Finally, the tribulation beast emerged from the clouds. It was a scarlet snake with twenty-four pairs of wings and a single crimson horn on top of its head. At thirty thousand meters long, it was large for the immortals of the world, but just about average for a tribulation beast.

Back during Zhao Wushuang's tribulation, the beast she'd encountered had run five hundred thousand meters long and spanned all of the Divine Sea. The tribulation beasts of some other great geniuses were enormous as well, all of them spanning hundreds of thousands meters long.

And yet Lu Yun, the top cultivator and foremost youth sovereign of the world, summoned a tribulation beast that was only thirty thousand meters long? And a simple snake at that?

The snake did look bizarre and was uniquely shaped, but it was still just a snake at the end of the day!

Snakes were the lowliest of monster spirits. The only way to improve their lot in life was to activate what little draconic bloodline they had and transform into monster dragons.

Was Lu Yun's talent all an illusion? Was he not a genius, but trash relying on gimmicks and tricks? But what had that heavenly judgment been about? Had Lu Yun done something to rouse the ire of the heavens?

How much tribulation essence would a mutated snake yield, anyway? Probably not enough for even the boy himself.

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However, no one noticed that Silverlight, previously overweeningly confident of her superiority, was now trembling and shaking.

"It can't be, it can't be. Why would it appear again, and in that kid's tribulation? It's become a tribulation beast too..." Silverlight shifted several steps back, her faint silver eyes filled with fear.

"Carmine Eternal... it's still alive!" Goldenlight was stunned as well. "Tribulation beasts are all based on creatures that actually exist. They're projections created by the law of heavenly tribulations..."

"If Carmine Eternal has appeared in a tribulation, then its true form must exist under the immortal dao as well!" He tensely turned to Silverlight. "Should we run? If Carmine Eternal comes, it will devour us!"

"Run? Where to?" Silverlight shook her head. "We just have to do what we've always done. The world is on the brink of chaos, and there are signs that it may be restored to its past glories before Emperors Fall... However, it remains to be seen which clan will rise to the top this time! We stand a chance of surviving if we stay and fight. If we run, we die!"

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"Grrrrraaw!" Instead of hissing like a snake, Carmine Eternal delivered powerfully booming growls. Its twenty-four pairs of wings flapped at the same time, sending hums ringing through the air. Overwhelming scarlet light flared from its body, filling the sky and obscuring all vision.

"Let me enter the netherworld," a weak voice of a woman suddenly transmitted from the giant snake to Lu Yun.

Lu Yun started. "You aren't a tribulation beast, but an actual divine beast!"

"My injuries are too serious," the woman pleaded. "Please allow me to recover in the netherworld."

After a pensive pause, Lu Yun opened the Gates of the Abyss with a wave of his hand.

"Thank you." The giant snake vanished into hell as a flash of scarlet light and fell into deep slumber.

Lu Yun frowned at the scarlet essence it left behind in the air. There was a pleasant fragrance wafting from it, marking it not regular tribulation essence, but something even more sophisticated.

“Eh? Now that’s tribulation essence!” To his surprise, he found a pool of tribulation essence, much like the one Xue Chujiu’s tribulation had yielded, under the crimson liquid. He quickly scooped it up.

Whoosh!

A howl passed through his body as he came in contact with the liquid, lights of six colors flooding out of the top of his head and spreading in all directions.

Six paths of nascent spirits!

As Lu Yun ascended to immortality, his nascent spirits transformed into a phenomenon of ascension and scattered the crimson fog Carmine Eternal had created. Six paths of nascent spirits, six domains of reincarnation!

He was the master of reincarnation between heaven and earth!

When his six paths arose, the Tome of Life and Death shot out to disguise what was taking place. Purple energy erupted in the sky instead, spreading four hundred kilometers across as a phenomenon of ascension!

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“Look, Lu Yun’s beheaded the mutated snake and ascended to immortality!”

“His phenomenon of ascension... is four hundred kilometers of purple energy? That’s...” Many immortals gaped at being so incredibly underwhelmed. Purple energy from the east was among the top of the phenomenon of ascension, but it didn’t fit Lu Yun at all!

They expected his phenomenon to cover at least the North Sea, or even the entire world of immortals like Zhao Wushuang’s! Four hundred kilometers of purple energy was more than a few pegs under a phenomenon that covered an entire major.

“So despite his reputation, he’s really nothing but a useless weakling...”

“It’s said that Lu Yun was originally unable to cultivate because of his constitution. He only became a cultivator after consuming an Aurum Openia Pill...”

Chapter 682: Unable to Handle the Nourishment

Purple energy spanning four hundred kilometers, while not the most impressive sight to make history, was by no means trivial either. But for someone of Lu Yun’s status and talent, such a phenomenon of ascension was indeed remarkably unimpressive.

However—

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Inside the kingdom of hell.

The projections of the six paths of reincarnation covered all of the netherworld. While her kingdom hadn't returned to its Primeval Era peak, it now surpassed any single major in the world of immortals. Even the infinite black void surrounding this world was illuminated by the projections.

Therein the darkness lay a phantasmal mirage that appeared as a giant prison filled with shackles and instruments of torture. It was, however, devoid of incarcerated prisoners. They'd all entered the kingdom and been cleansed by Hell Flowers to become residents of hell.

That endless abyss was a fragment of hell, the hell from the Primeval Era of human dao.

Lu Yun had given up being master of reincarnation, but that didn't mean he'd relinquished the power of reincarnation. What he'd relinquished was... hell itself!

As a living being, to be the supreme judge of hell, to determine another's virtuous merit and retribution, to reward good and punish evil... Such power should belong to the heavenly dao alone, not to a single person!

Like Ge Long had once said, heavenly tribulations shouldn't be controlled by anyone in particular, or it would become a fount of disaster for immortal dao as a whole. Likewise, one person shouldn't rule over reincarnation by themselves, or it would bring nothing but misfortune to all living beings.

In the past, mankind's tragedy and hell's destruction... had certainly not been accidents.

In this moment, Lu Yun's phenomenon of ascension enveloped the entire kingdom of hell, his being bathed in the power of reincarnation.

The strange giant snake, Carmine Eternal, had reduced herself to a small snake about thirty centimeters long and was lazily lounging about on the ground.

Glancing up at the phenomenon, she gasped in astonishment. "He gave up his sovereignty over reincarnation, the right to dictate good and evil in the world! What amazing conviction and courage. If the Great Emperor of the Eastern Peak had shown the same resolve in the past, he might still be alive."

Whoosh!

Lu Yun's nascent spirit suddenly flew out of his consciousness and merged with the phenomenon in hell's sky. At this time, he discovered with great shock that... his mind encompassed everything within hell.

At first, the kingdom had been administered by the Tome of Life and Death. But now, it'd become Lu Yun's own, as though it were his second replica.

Unlike Xing Chen, his first replica, the kingdom of the netherworld could only remain as it was and couldn't take human form. But here, Lu Yun could do as his heart desired, ruling over all like a god.

Most importantly, his nascent spirit had transformed into the six paths of reincarnation. As long as it existed, he would never die! Even if his body was destroyed, he could be reborn into a new body through the power of reincarnation.

The qi inside him quickly began evolving into an immortal's immortal force. His strength soared, overtaking the heights he'd attained when reinforced by the Demonic Sovereign Cauldron.

Once a cultivator, he was now a true immortal! A genuine immortal through and through!

It all felt somewhat surreal. At long last, he'd become a fabled immortal of legend.

On Earth, he'd been nothing more than an ordinary mortal among the masses, an insignificant tomb raider walking the world of darkness, never to see the light of day. But in an unexpected turn of events, he'd arrived in the world of immortals and ascended to immortality himself!

Now that I'm an immortal, can I still go back?

The thought suddenly popped into his mind... to go back home, to return to Earth!

Though he didn't have any family left on Earth, and the master who'd taught him everything he knew had passed away many years ago... he still had a big group of brothers and friends waiting for him.

"Congratulations, milord. Felicitations, milord!" Ge Long flew unsteadily his way, his face devoid of color. In his current sorry state, he could easily be mistaken for a skeleton, and his entire being exuded a dense aura of death. Such was the result of seizing the heavenly judgment by force and merging with it; it'd almost cost him his life.

"Mhmm." Lu Yun nodded. With a wave of his hand, boundless vitality surged from the netherworld and gushed into Ge Long's body. But as though he were a sieve, the vitality instantly dissipated, no matter how much was poured into him.

"Worry not, milord. This old servant knows my situation... no amount of life force can restore this kind of injury." He chuckled mischievously, "Hehe, give me enough time and I'll recover on my own."

He pointed at the small scarlet snake on the ground. "Just like her, external forces can't heal our wounds."

His injury was nothing more than a relapse. He'd suffered backlash from the world when he melded with the tribulation, reopening old wounds in the process rather than sustaining new ones.

"What about this then?" Lu Yun flipped his palm over and summoned a golden fruit into his hand—a karmic fruit!

After the Sal Tree of Life and Death had evolved into the Karmic Tree, the fruits it bore were purer than ever and hellfire had disengaged from it to burn across the entire kingdom of hell, forming an immense ocean of fire that bore the weight of its civilization.

Lu Yun couldn't see what lay under the sea of flames, but he was certain that whatever was there wouldn't be any weaker than the former Tree of Life and Death. It was something that could fuel hellfire into a blazing conflagration.

"A karmic fruit!" Ge Long's eyes lit up. The small snake resting on the ground also looked up and considered the fruit, but ultimately shook her head.

"Milord, I... can't handle something this powerful in my current state!" The old servant smiled ruefully. "If I eat a karmic fruit now, the only possible outcome for me would be to explode from the surplus of energy."

“Very well.” With a nod, Lu Yun waved his hand.

The Karmic Tree previously rooted inside him flew out, then slowly drifted down and transplanted itself into the ground. In the blink of an eye, the sapling that had been no more than one meter tall stretched into a towering tree that blotted out the sky and loomed over the land like a great mountain. A pale golden sheen emerged from its leafy boughs and flowed into hell.

Cheers rose from the denizens of the netherworld when the faint radiance reached them; they’d previously existed in a state similar to Lu Yun’s Infernum. While genuine living creatures, their talents and potential were adversely affected, so much so that many among them couldn’t even cultivate. However, this pale golden light had abruptly freed them from these restraints, enabling them to cultivate and even become immortals!

Within hell, the immortal dao flickered into existence, slowly forming a connection to the outside world and developing into a complete immortal dao.

Ge Long and the small snake wore expressions of pure bliss. Clearly enough, they too had benefited immensely from the Karmic Tree taking root inside hell. The scarlet snake, in particular, made great effort to slither its way up the tree, stopping on top of a branch and falling deeply asleep.

“Alright, you stay here and recuperate... But don’t fall idle, guide their cultivation. I need to establish an army worth its salt, one that can conquer the world of immortals and even campaign beyond!” Lu Yun suddenly urged, his expression solemn as never before.

“This humble servant obeys!” Seeing Lu Yun’s expression, Ge Long also became solemn.

Chapter 683: The Demon God Reappears

Truth be told, Lu Yun felt rather depressed. The stage had been set for him to shine in a blaze of glory, but the rug had been pulled out beneath him just like that.

When it came to his tribulation, nothing of note had truly happened apart from the heavenly judgment’s initial grand entrance. He himself had been expecting some kind of rare, foreboding beast to appear, and that his phenomenon of ascension would affect the entire world, or even worlds beyond!

He wasn’t one to crave the limelight, but since he wanted to establish a sacred land, he had to become a figure that towered over the world and surveyed all from a lofty position, striking fear into the hearts of the masses.

Going against the entire world? Hadn’t he always done so? Otherwise, why would so many come out to spoil his tribulation and try to kill him?

Alas, the bulk of his phenomenon of ascension had taken place inside hell, remaining unseen by those outside. As a result, he was now an object of ridicule.

Old stories about his ignoble past began to circulate: Calamity Lu of Dusk City, a trash constitution that couldn’t cultivate, reliance on the Aurum Openia Pill to set him on the path of immortal dao, and so on...

At this rate, even if he were to establish Dusk Sacred Land, he’d still be the butt of many jokes throughout the world. All of his previous miracles were now assigned to various tricks and cheats, and his fake mask had promptly fallen after his ascension!

At least, that was how immortals now viewed him.

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The newest laughingstock of the world hovered in the air while the purple energy slowly flowed into him and tempered his immortal body.

He didn't know where the purple energy had come from, but he had the distinct feeling that it was different from that of others. Inside him, the energy was coalescing into a... second nascent spirit?

Indeed, a nascent spirit, one that looked identical to himself, apart from the purple energy surrounding it. But he quickly realized that this nascent spirit was nothing but a facade. His true nascent spirit was still the one shaped after the six paths of reincarnation.

"Alright, ladies and gentlemen, let us now begin the auction of the tribulation essence..."

Misty purple liquid the size of a fist appeared in his hand; he didn't need it to construct his immortal foundations. The Method of Life and Death was a connate method, and earlier on, the energy inside hell had already constructed his immortal foundations and molded his immortal body.

Therefore, the essence wasn't something he couldn't part with.

Boom!

Before his voice finished echoing, a great hand descended from the heavens and tried to grab the Dao Flower projection next to him.

"It's not yet time to auction this lot, dear customer. Or are you trying to take it by force, perhaps?!"

Boom!

A column of white light exploded by Lu Yun's side and vaporized the giant hand. Somewhere close by, an arcane dao immortal shrieked with anguish as his right hand disintegrated into infinitesimal particles.

With deterrence from the two scarlet apes and the unanimous agreement of the celestial emperors, origin dao level combatants were prohibited from participating in the fight for the Dao Flower projection, crippled ones included.

"Onward, kill him!" The rest of the crowd finally launched their offensive. They could keep calm in the face of tribulation essence, but a hundred trillion premium immortal crystals for the Dao Flower projection?

No one wanted to throw money out the window. They could simply force the issue with their superior strength!

"Sure enough, you've allied yourself with Lu Yun, Emperor of Yellow Springs. Are you determined to protect him even now?!" an angry yell cut through the crowd.

About to attack Lu Yun and take the Dao Flower for himself, the monster spirit emperor froze in place. He hadn't made his move yet, and even if he did, it'd be to kill Lu Yun and take the flower... Why were people suddenly saying he was protecting the brat?

But the next moment, space in front of him distorted as a barrage of treasures, flying swords, and combat arts smashed in his direction. He stared blankly for a moment, then came out of hiding with an angry shout and an explosive punch forward.

Boom!

Space shook violently as his fist annihilated countless immortals!

The world thought he'd already plucked his origin dao fruits, but that wasn't the case. Even so, his strength had reached peak arcane dao realm. In the face of his attack, not even nine-fruit arcane dao peers were his match.

Collective shock slammed into the crowd at his reaction.

"That really is the Yellow Springs emperor, and he's definitely aligned himself with Dusk Province!"

"No wonder none of Dusk Province's powerhouses came for Lu Yun's tribulation... just the Yellow Springs emperor alone is enough!" someone shouted at the top of his lungs.

"What... what's going on?" The monster emperor stared, aghast. Now that he'd defended himself, he could tell that the previous rain of attacks...had been a mirage.

But how could he explain himself now? His return punch had been very real, and it'd killed close to a thousand immortals from various clans.

"Lu Yun, you bastard!!" he seethed. A dark green halberd appeared in his hand as he swept forward and forced back more than ten arcane dao immortals!

Jingle...

The melodious tinkle of a bell sounded as a small fox, white as snow, darted past like lightning.

"You would've been safe and sound had you not drunk Su Xiaoxiao's wine, but since you did..." Hopping around nimbly, the fox skipped over millions of kilometers and returned to Qing Yu's cozy arms in Dao City. She then cocked her head and shot out a chubby paw to snag a small golden dragon from the air, draping it around her neck to cover the small golden bell hanging over her chest.

Eyes full of protest, the golden dragon looked off to the side at Liu Qingmiao. Like a koala, the little girl clung to Zhu Yan's neck.

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Chaos engulfed the North Sea.

Immortals attacked each other in a blind slaughterfest over the Dao Flower projection. Shielded by the sword curtains trailing down from the Sugato Sword above him, Lu Yun was also thrown into the thick of things.

In his hand, Violetgrave flared with bewitching violet light as it reaped the lives of all who charged his way. Anyone he killed ended up in the kingdom of hell and became his Infernum, so he didn't mind killing more of them.

“Hmm?” He froze when he realized that, unbeknownst to him, a giant shadow had appeared in the air at some point in time. The Dao Flower projection?

“Good, marvelous!”

Rumble!

The world shook as space tore apart. Stormy demonic energy oozed out of the giant rift, and a giant hand made of stone probed out of the spatial opening toward the Dao Flower.

“The stone spirit?!” Lu Yun blanched violently. “How are you still alive?!”

Mount Exalted had been reduced to rubble alongside the Truespirit and Exalted Palaces because two celestial emperors had given up their lives for the cause! The stone spirit should’ve also gone to meet its maker just like them... but it was still alive! Moreover, it’d arrived above the North Sea to claim the Dao Flower projection!

The corner of Lu Yun’s eyes split open and spurted out fresh blood. Had the two celestial emperors died in vain?!

The thought was too terrible to entertain.

“Stone spirit? Hahahaha... This noble one is the demon god!” Another hand stretched out of thin air and formed a fist to punch Lu Yun.

At the same time, a moving carpet of fur seals swarmed forth from every direction, attacking everyone in their path, be they man or immortal. Caught by surprise, an untold number of immortals suffered an early demise.

Chapter 684: The Nineheavens Pure Yang Talisman

The demon god had arrived, and the host of fur seals he’d brought with him rained blood across the North Sea.

The fur seals were too spine-chilling. As ancient beings, each of them was equivalent to a void-ascended immortal. More terrifying still was that they weren’t limited to the true immortal realm. There were empyrean immortals among them, august, golden... all the way to peerless immortals.

Since they possessed no methods or combat arts, one or two wouldn’t have been an issue. Alas, that wasn’t the case when they numbered in the dozens of thousands. Moreover, they were encased in a layer of black smoke that was demonic energy. When shaped in a unified whole, it became a nigh-indestructible barrier that no flying swords nor sundry treasures could pierce through.

The legion of fur seals charged forward without any discipline, and like a flood of steel, they left nothing but mangled corpses in their wake.

“Disperse, disperse... everyone scatter!!” a dao immortal shouted. The fur seals didn’t utilize any fancy attack formations, but anyone unlucky enough to find themselves too close to one ended up dead without reprieve.

“Hehehe...” a sinister chuckle sounded in the dao immortal’s vicinity. His blood running cold, the man whirled around and found his vision filled with an ugly, obese face, even as Ge Yanxia opened her mouth wide and swallowed him whole.

“Children, kill them all! Don’t leave anyone alive!” Ge Yanxia suddenly swung her head in a certain direction, or more precisely, at the mighty immortals waiting on the sidelines there.

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“Are we still forbidden from participating?” A celestial emperor looked at Silverlight.

“Kill!” Silverlight didn’t bother replying. Instead, she shifted into a silver blur and charged straight at the figure of the demon god in the air.

The demon god’s body had been destroyed in the prodigious collision, but the stone spirit’s body was indestructible. Therefore, the demon’s true spirit had conveniently slipped into the stone spirit, swallowed its burgeoning true spirit, and occupied its body. Together, the combination of demon god and stone spirit strength reached unfathomable heights.

Bang!

Silverlight’s staff smashed heavily onto the demon god, spraying a shower of sparks. Goldenlight joined her, the staff in his hand also smacking the stone body.

Filled with endless rancor and a nigh-infinite accumulation of yin energy, the stone spirit’s body was incomparably hard. Even though the two scarlet apes’ staves were connate treasures, they didn’t leave a scratch!

The demon’s strength beggared belief!

For their part, the celestial emperors present made no move to help the others. They hadn’t yet truly grasped what it meant to be a real celestial emperor. The deaths of their Exalted and Truespirit colleagues were still fresh on their minds and shaken to the core, none of them wanted to throw themselves headlong into danger.

“How dare two insignificant bugs attack this noble self!” the demon god snorted coldly. His four arms whipped through the air and blasted the two scarlet apes away. It was simply on another level altogether!

“Your Lordship, your original body’s on that kid!” Ge Yanxia shrieked, her thick finger pointing straight at Lu Yun.

The demon god’s body... in other words, the Demonic Sovereign Cauldron.

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In that instant, Lu Yun blinked back to hell.

“So the ancient demon sovereign and this demon god are one and the same.” He suddenly recalled the way Ge Yanxia had looked at him before entering the Exalted Divine Tombs. The demon god’s body was in his possession, so as long as the demon god came into the world, he was certain to target Lu Yun.

“Unfortunately for you, you just had to possess that stone spirit...” Lu Yun’s fingers blurred into motion as he began drawing talisman runes. He’d found a way to deal with stone spirits a while ago.

Back on the Path of the Dead in the lineal tomb, he’d used talismans to kill them. Only, the one he’d come across in the Exalted Divine Tombs was too powerful for one single talisman. Incidentally, hell had been overrun with akasha ghosts at the time, so it’d been impossible for him to go back to craft new talismans.

Coalescing talismans from the void? Talismans of that level would be utterly meaningless against a stone spirit this powerful.

Thankfully, he had ample time at his disposal now. He wanted to attempt a jumbo size Pure Yang Talisman to dispel the stone spirit’s rancor and weaken its strength. But slaying the stone spirit outright? He wasn’t conceited enough to think his talismans could achieve such an impossible feat.

He flew into the sky formed by the Cosmic Sea and absorbed the pure yang energy emanating from the Divine Fire Bead, then rolled up his sleeves and got to work.

The Divine Fire Bead was a connate treasure, so the pure yang energy it contained was also connate energy comparable to that which was found in the sun above the world of immortals. In fact, the Divine Fire Bead was now a scorching sun inside hell, and it even seemed to be merging with the Cosmic Sea.

This time, Lu Yun stayed a full fifty years inside hell.

Without a second of rest or sleep, he repeatedly sought to improve the talisman through formula dao for fifty long years, finally finding success with a jumbo-sized Pure Yang Talisman in the end.

Using the Principal Nineheavens Talisman as a blueprint, he added terrifying energy of pure yang that formed the perfect amalgam to dispel the yin energy and accumulated resentment inside the stone spirit.

“Too bad the stone spirit isn’t riddled with any retribution, or I could’ve simply used Judgment of Life and Death to kill him!”

The Nineheavens Pure Yang Talisman—such was the name Lu Yun gave to this talisman.

In the annals of the world of immortals, such a talisman had never existed; it was a brand new creation. The fabrication process was extremely complex, so much so he’d had to spend a full fifty years on the first one.

“Let’s make another two!” He spent another eighty years to draw two more talismans before exiting hell.

Time in the outside world... was still at the same point at which he’d left. With a wave of its arms, the demon god sent the two scarlet apes flying. Its four heads then turned together in Lu Yun’s direction.

“So this noble one’s body is on you... die then!!”

Boom!

The void shook as spatial tears ripped the sky. Snarling, the demon's giant frame flashed in front of Lu Yun, one of his mammoth hands already closing around the human.

"We'll see who'll be doing the dying today!" Lu Yun grit his teeth, a malicious grin on his lips.

Hum!

Three talismans bore down on the demon god like three blazing suns.

"What are those?!" The demon god turned pale with shock. From the three talismans, he could sense an aura that struck fear into his heart. This fear didn't come from his own consciousness, but from the body he occupied. The indestructible stone spirit body was afraid!

"Die!!" Even so, a bloodthirsty glint flashed through his eyes as he clenched his fist hard and squeezed the life out of the puny human!

Bang!!

Lu Yun's body, along with the misty, purple nascent spirit, exploded at the same time. A cool breeze blew past, taking his dusty remains with it and leaving nothing behind at all.

Everyone froze.

"Did Lu Yun... die? Did he die so shortly after ascending to immortality?" The crowd was dumbfounded; such an outcome was hard for them to accept. Even those who hated him to the bone and wanted nothing more than his spontaneous death found it all too unreal.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The three miniature suns that were the talismans exploded violently on the demon god, eliciting screams of agony. Wisps of black smoke arose from his figure, as though he were on fire.

"Attack!!" Reinvigorated by the sight, the two scarlet apes threw themselves at him once again. However, a hundred pillars of white light struck even faster than them: crystal cannons from Dusk Province!

Chapter 685: Ready Your Blades, Exterminate Fur Seals

The yang energy and evil-countering power within the Nineheavens Pure Yang Talismans instantly dispersed the resentment and malice inside the stone spirit. As a result, thick smoke billowed out of devastating cracks that crawled across the stone body.

Seizing the opportunity, the two scarlet apes charged forward, accompanied by a barrage of a hundred Dusken crystal cannons firing in unison.

Boom!

A vast, blinding expanse of white encompassed the world, robbing everyone of their sight.

Their vision didn't return until an indeterminable amount of time later. When it did so, a demon god riddled with cracks and dents came into view. Seven of his eight arms had broken, and two of his four heads had fallen off.

“AHHHHH!!” the demon screamed with sheer misery.

Not only did the Nineheavens Pure Yang Talismans burn his body, but they were also beginning to erode his true spirit. His doom was nigh; these were talismans Lu Yun had spent a hundred and thirty years on, after all!

Drenched in blood, the two scarlet apes landed off to the side and gasped for air.

The cape that Silverlight had taken from Goldenlight had returned to the golden scarlet ape at some point and had shielded him from damage. In contrast, Silverlight’s silver fur was matted with blood, her injuries far heavier than Goldenlight’s. Her dao partner tugged his cape off and draped it over her.

“Lord Demon God!!” Ge Yanxia screamed. “Children, don’t stop killing! Kill these lowly immortals and sacrifice their flesh and blood to the demon god!”

Rooooarrr!

The swarm of fur seals howled and tore into nearby immortals in a berserk frenzy.

“Bastards!” Seething at the sight of their clansmen falling one after another, dao immortals unleashed combat arts with wide areas of effect upon the mass of fur seals.

Roar!

A bestial snarl reverberated in the sky as a giant five-hundred-kilometer-long fur seal exploded out of the sea and stirred up a surge of stormy waves. Those very waves quickly wiped out countless immortals!

“Father!!” Ge Yanxia’s eyes gleamed.

Indeed, the newcomer was her sire, the very one who’d appeared in Exalted Major’s Divine Sea and destroyed the sea divines. And now he’d come to the North Sea, a harbinger of death, the herald of disaster.

A simple movement of its body mashed numerous dao immortals into pulpy flesh. Moreover, everyone who died here turned into crimson energy that streamed into the giant stone statue hovering in the air. The North Sea had become a giant sacrificial altar.

“Stop him!” Silverlight shouted in her hoarse voice.

“Upon your orders!” The eighteen origin dao immortals from the North Sea took to the air and sped toward the giant fur seal.

Boom!

Another hundred fur seals appeared from beneath the waves, each of them far stronger than the first wave of fur seals. In fact, all of them were dao immortals, and each of them was an existence that could rival Ge Yanxia!

Barking violently and slavering with bloodlust, they overwhelmed Levitating Island’s origin dao immortals in the blink of an eye.

Seeing that, the celestial emperors were finally stirred to action. If they remained on the sidelines any longer, it was highly likely that all of the immortals present would be killed.

“The demon god’s body is starting to recover... We must break it to pieces before it does!” The two disguised celestial emperors exchanged a glance, then raced toward the demon god’s damaged body.

Slap!

As soon as they shifted directions, a fur seal shrouded entirely in retribution exploded out of the waters and whipped them back with a violent lash of its tail. Although its strength was artificially enhanced by retribution, it was nevertheless an ancient origin dao immortal!

Caught by surprise, the two celestial emperors flew back like ragdolls.

At the same time, space trembled as three miniature suns shot at the demon god, dragging long trails of sparkling radiance in their wake. Pure terror oozed out of the demon god’s body.

Nineheavens Pure Yang Talismans!

Yet another three Nineheavens Pure Yang Talismans!

If they came in contact with the demon god, his stone body would be well and truly ruined. His true spirit was all that was left of him; he possessed no soul or nascent spirit! Leaving one’s naked true spirit exposed to the world was no different from suicide!

Swoosh!

Dusky-gray sword light flashed through the air as the edge of a sword sliced the three scorching suns apart. Hovering in a faraway corner of the sky, Sword Divine Dongfang Hao’s figure materialized into existence.

“The Sword of Chaos!” With great difficulty, the demon god craned a neck toward the divine sword in the man’s hands.

“Sword Divine, to think you’d associate yourself with a demon!” a celestial emperor shouted in anger.

Cold and eerie, Dongfang Hao’s gaze bypassed the celestial emperor and fixed itself upon an empty corner of the sky. From that direction, Lu Yun’s figure gradually came into view.

“I hadn’t expected you’d leave your people cowering in Dusk Province.” Though calm, a tinge of frustration clipped Sword Divine’s words. He’d planned to use the massive slaughter as an opportunity to trim Lu Yun’s wings. Alas, apart from a Yellow Springs emperor presumably allied to Lu Yun, no one from Dusk had come.

Oh, he’d spotted a fox early on, but it’d been surrounded by illusions so pervasive that not even he had been able to catch her.

“Lu Yun isn’t dead?!” Gasps of shock abounded at the discovery, but they had little attention to spare for this, given the more pressing matters at hand. A steady flow of fur seals surging out from below the sea commanded their entire focus.

Even so, to emerge unscathed after being squeezed to death by the demon god... what kind of monster was Lu Yun?!

“Who said my people aren’t here?” Lu Yun smirked at Sword Divine. “Ready your blades!” he shouted at the top of his lungs. “Exterminate fur seals!”

The words “exterminate fur seals” soon found an echo beyond the horizon. Enormous fortress ships sailed forth, flying behemoths from the skyline that shadowed the light of the sun. Spearheading the ships’ formation, a giant Black Tortoise hurtled toward the fur seals with a roar, immense waves of water swelling in its wake.

The Dusk Phalanx!

The soldiers that Lu Yun had dispatched to Witherdew Major had returned!

Roar!!

Clamoring in response, the fur seals in the North Sea immediately lost interest in the immortals and quickly banded together, their black demonic energy blending into something like an iron curtain.

“Kill!” Though surprised by the turn of events, Ge Yanxia and the giant fur sea didn’t panic. Quickly regrouping, they rammed the fortress ships head-on.

The ships’ firepower came entirely from the arsenal of crystal cannons onboard. In other words, their firepower would be disarmed if the ships were boarded. They had a new goal in mind: breach the defensive formations and board the ships! Take the ships for themselves!

“Ready your blades!!” a clear voice, delicate and melodious, called forth from the ships. “Exterminate fur seals!!”

A second Black Tortoise appeared in the air above: the Dusk Phalanx’s Heavenly Formation of the Black Tortoise!

Chapter 686: Come And Get It

The two Black Tortoises bellowed and raged furiously in the air, their figures unleashing fearsome sword energies that transformed the area five thousand kilometers around them into a sea of swords.

“How is this possible?!” Ge Yanxia’s bovine eyes grew round as saucers; even her giant father froze in disbelief. How could Black Tortoises unleash sword auras?

Sword Divine Dongfang Hao’s stick-straight eyebrows wrinkled in a frown. Naturally, he knew where the Black Tortoise and Black Tortoise Formation’s sword auras came from—the Sword Barrow.

The Black Tortoise had made Sword Lake outside the Sword Barrow its home; the Dusk Phalanx was also stationed there, meditating in the dense sword aura of the Sword Barrow day after day. And today, tortoise and formation had finally bared their fangs for the first time, displaying the full extent of their might for all to see!

The waters within five thousand kilometers became a sea of blood. Countless fur seals surged and were instantly diced into mincemeat. While the creatures' demonic aura was formidable, the collective sword aura manifested by millions of immortals was even stronger!

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

A clamor of battle cries rose again in the distant sky; the heavenly legions of several majors had also come to the rescue. Arranged in vast and majestic battle formations, they charged into the battlefield and massacred fur seals, thereby destroying the sacrificial momentum pervading the region.

“Forget about those soldiers. Kill Lu Yun and take the Demonic Sovereign Cauldron from him,” Sword Divine advised from afar.

Reminded of their true target, the giant fur seal, Ge Yanxia, and other dao immortal fur seals exploded into action. They struggled free of their current opponents and frantically threw themselves at Lu Yun.

Seeing these creatures fixated on killing Lu Yun, many people subconsciously paused and didn't try stopping them. They still remembered their primary reason in coming here: to kill Lu Yun and take the Dao Flower projection for themselves!

Therefore, it made no sense for them to prevent the fur seals from killing the Dusk governor.

Although the young man was nothing but trash whose phenomenon of ascension had been confined to four hundred kilometers, miracles followed him wherever he went. Content with the status quo, many immortals weren't keen to see the rise of one who created marvel after marvel.

More importantly, they didn't know what the Demonic Sovereign Cauldron was or what it represented for the demon god.

“You want to kill me?” Lu Yun sneered. With a backhanded throw, he pelted yet another three Nineheavens Pure Yang Talismans at the immobilized demon god.

He could enter hell at any time, craft new talismans, then return to the same point in time. He'd drawn these talismans just a split second ago. Now that his talisman creation skills were becoming more practiced, the process was increasingly less time consuming.

Like three comets, the three Nineheavens Pure Yang Talismans shot toward the demon god. However, they met Dongfang Hao first. A few slashes of the Sword of Chaos across the sky cut them to pieces right in front of their quarry.

Pff!

Dongfang Hao stiffened the next second and coughed up black and red blood reeking with an abominable fishy stench.

“Poison talismans! It was all a trap!” Blood drained from his face as black lines snaked over his skin and continuously nibbled away at his flesh and energy.

“You bastard!” Turning on his heel, he quickly made his exit. Even so, he’d already bought enough time for the big fur seal, Ge Yanxia, and the other dao immortal fur seals to reach the Dusk governor.

Rumble!

Out of nowhere, a giant fortress ship appeared at Lu Yun’s feet. More than ten times the bulk of a lord-grade ship, it pulsed with terrifying waves of power. With a rattle, the ship unleashed a cloud of black smoke and blasted a few fur seals away.

The Divine Glory!

Lu Yun’s first fortress ship and also the strongest one on duty, a vessel far greater than any mass-produced lord-grade ship.

Affixed at the bow, the Black Emperor gleamed brilliantly beneath the sun. It hadn’t fired a single shot yet, but the bloodthirsty aura emanating from it unnerved everyone present. It was Lu Yun’s trump card, one he saved for times of true need!

Poised on the ship’s prow, Lu Yun stared at the fur seals ahead with cold indifference.

“Die!!” He pointed somewhere with his finger... and a fur seal wreathed with the power of retribution suddenly turned into ash.

Death art, Judgment of Life and Death!

One point to pass sentencing on life and death!

“Denied!” Lu Yun spat out a single word afterward.

About to enter hell and become a ghostly servant, the fur seal’s soul fragment was erased from the world. Lu Yun subconsciously abhorred these uncivilized, amoral creatures... They weren’t fit to become his Infernum.

“My children!!” a mournful howl arose from the giant fur seal. With a jolt, he turned into a giant beast that spanned five hundred kilometers and threw himself at the Divine Glory.

The giant creature was a primordial origin dao immortal, not the arcane dao immortal of his last appearance. The one that’d appeared in the Exalted Major had been nothing more than his arcane dao replica!

Dense and overwhelming, origin dao energy surged from his figure and compressed into thick battle armor. Battered by the fearsome aura of an ancient origin dao immortal, the Divine Glory’s hull creaked as though it couldn’t bear the pressure.

Crack!

Lu Yun spread his fingers wide open and unleashed a black bolt of lightning from his palm.

Thunder Palmstrike!

The mutated lightning from Zhao Wushuang’s tribulation, and the judgment lightning he’d absorbed from his own via the lightning rod, made for a blended divine lightning of harrowing intensity.

Boom!

One blast from the black lightning sent the prodigious fur seal flying. Trails of black smoke billowed from its figure and the smell of well-done grilled meat, if somewhat rotten, wafted through the air.

“Father!!” Ge Yanxia groaned mournfully, her own body also scored by a barrage of lightning bolts. However, she was protected by the strange ripple-like treasure. Thanks to that, it barely managed to block the black lightning. Unfortunately, the other dao immortal fur seals weren’t nearly as lucky.

This was no ordinary lightning; it was judgment from the heavens themselves and infused with a special kind of tribulation!

Black as night, divine lightning spewed forth like a deluge. Amidst the roaring of thunder and hiss of lightning, hundreds of dao immortal fur seals howled in anguish, their bodies reduced to ashes.

Boom!

With another wave of his hand, Lu Yun transformed the lightning into a giant beast and sent it toward the recovering demon god in a headlong charge.

Craaaaack!

Black lightning smote the stone statue dead center. The cracks on the statue enlarged once more, and a black liquid oozed out of them like blood.

“Lu Yun!!” the demon god howled tragically. “You are the second on this seat’s list of targets after Yin Qingran! You will pay for your actions today!!”

Bang!

The demon god’s stone body shattered into gravel under the force of the lightning, even as a dot-sized true spirit flew out of it and disappeared from the land, its indignant fury echoing across the world.

Inside Dusk Province, observing the events in the North Sea through a formation, Yin Qingran stared blankly into space.

“Heavens above, who did I offend to deserve this?!” he too wailed in despair.

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“Retreat!!” Heavily wounded, the giant fur seal lightly rolled his tail around Ge Yanxia. Together, the two figures vanished from sight with a ripple.

“Exterminate them!”

Zzzzzz CRACK!

With unstoppable momentum, unerringly accurate black lightning struck every fur seal present. A second later, all of the fur seals were fried to the last!

Robe flapping in the wind, long hair fluttering behind him, and black lightning crackling around his figure, Lu Yun landed beside the Dao Flower projection.

“My life is here. The Dao Flower projection is also here. Those of you who want them, come and get them!”

Chapter 687: The Things A Man Does For Love

Lu Yun floated in the air, his figure illuminated by flares of black lightning. Those at the scene inhaled sharply, their eyes betraying unease. The Dao Flower projection was right next to him—their truest target—but no one dared approach him in the end.

“Lu Yun!” Sword Divine Dongfang Hao’s voice suddenly sounded again. “I wonder how much lightning you have left after killing all those fur seals. You may look strong right now, but you’re completely empty on the inside.”

The man was spot on.

Lu Yun had expended almost all of the lightning he’d absorbed, and what little was left could be seen crackling around his figure. While he could continue absorbing divine lightning from the highest reaches of the sky, tribulation lightning was on a different level altogether.

Many felt the lure of Sword Divine’s words. The sudden arrival of the demon god and his fur seals had inflicted heavy casualties. If they failed to obtain the Dao Flower projection after all that and had to watch Lu Yun establish his sacred land... all of those losses would be meaningless, and the bleeding wouldn’t stop there.

They were also quite willing to believe Dongfang Hao. He’d been the one to spread the news that Lu Yun’s tribulation would take place on this day! As for him taking the demon god’s side... Well, what did they care about that? Sword Divine wasn’t a good man to begin with.

“Are you people that eager to die?” A cold glint in his eyes, Lu Yun quirked a brow at the immortals advancing on him.

“The Dao Flower concerns us all. Your insignificant Dusk Province doesn’t deserve such a treasure!” An arcane dao immortal narrowed his eyes, his tone cold.

The Divine Glory was no longer anywhere in sight; it’d returned to the kingdom in hell. Meanwhile, millions of Dusk Phalanx soldiers sailed their lord-grade fortress ships behind Lu Yun and spread out in a straight battle line.

However, they were matched by celestial legions from different majors positioning themselves into battle formations and facing the Dusk Phalanx from afar. Bloodshed crept into the air, and war could erupt at any moment.

Bang!

Blinding lightning suddenly flashed beside Lu Yun as a giant beast surrounded by purple-golden bolts of lightning slowly walked out of the emptiness.

Kui!

The creature unleashed the full power of an ancient origin dao immortal for all to see. Dark, heavy clouds materialized in the sky, the deafening clap of thunder roaring amidst them.

Everyone looked on aghast, especially the two scarlet apes. Silverlight had slain Kui, but here it was, safe and sound! Moreover, standing at Lu Yun's side, it exuded an awe-inspiring presence and overwhelming power even greater than before. While Kui's strength hadn't yet reached peak origin dao realm, it wasn't far from it.

"So that's why!" The dao immortal that'd spoken earlier suddenly added, "This old man will bid one hundred ten trillion immortal crystals to buy your Dao Flower projection!"

Lu Yun: "..."

The gathered immortals: "..."

.....

"One hundred twenty trillion!" someone else soon followed suit.

Lu Yun: "..."

"One hundred thirty!" Bids rose and fell in quick succession.

Everyone desired the Dao Flower projection. As long as they could engrave their own dao runes on the projection, they would be connected to the immortal dao itself. Even if they weren't interested in establishing a sacred land, it'd still benefit them in a multitude of ways.

"At long last, you've exposed your full hand." Dongfang Hao's proud voice arose once again. "You've exposed your last trump card on this day, so I wonder what you'll be able to do for Qing Yu when she faces her tribulation three months from today!"

An invisible sword light flashed through the sky as a sudden stillness descended upon the crowd.

Qing Yu's tribulation!

Qing Yu was Qing Han, Dao Sovereign appointed by the immortal dao. If she were to ascend to immortality... what would happen then?

Even if Lu Yun didn't want the Dao Flower projection, with Qing Yu's backing, Dusk Province would become a sacred land all the same, one fully deserving of the title sacred land of immortal dao.

In the world of immortals, many had begun to speculate about the date of Qing Yu's tribulation, going so far as plotting to eliminate her in advance.

Inside the kingdom of the hell, the Karmic Tree rustled as it relayed its senses to Lu Yun through his nascent spirit, letting him sense the malevolence pervading the air. In fact, at this moment, he could see strands of ill will and other negative emotions even from those who'd protected him moments ago.

The entire world had turned against him.

"Forget it, it's no longer up for auction." He suddenly collected the projection into the netherworld with a flip of his hand, then conjured a small jade bottle.

"Starting now, I'm offering a bounty for the nascent spirits of any immortal and void-realm cultivator belonging to the Dongfang Clan. One nascent spirit can be exchanged for one drop of tribulation

essence, and if anyone can obtain the dao fruits and nascent spirits of all twenty-seven Dongfang dao immortals, this Dao Flower projection will be theirs.”

His proclamation complete, he turned back, strode into the distance, and vanished beyond the horizon.

Pure vindictiveness!

Dongfang Hao had always plotted against Qing Yu, and now he'd implicated Dusk Province as a whole in his insane quest to kill all those living there... There was no reason for Lu Yun to stay his hand any longer, so why not take out his anger on the man's entire clan?!

He wanted Dongfang Hao to regret his decision! To rue the day he chose to make an enemy out of Lu Yun!

Lu Yun wasn't one who strived to stay in everyone's good graces. Since Dongfang Hao was threatening his woman, he wouldn't stop until he wiped out the man's entire clan to the ninth generation!

The crowd stared in sheer confusion. At best, the Dongfangs were a clan more powerful than most, but it wasn't one of the truly major ones. According to speculation, there were indeed twenty-seven dao immortals in the clan. And now, the Dao Flower projection would be theirs for the taking as long as they could collect the nascent spirits and dao fruits from all twenty-seven...

It didn't sound all that difficult. The only thing they worried about was whether Dongfang Hao still had some cards left to play.

“Hmmp!” a dao immortal from Exalted Major snorted coldly. “This Lu Yun's crossed the line. Is he going to buy off the destruction of an entire clan any time he feels offended? First was House Donglin, and now the Dongfang Clan. Who knows when it'll be your turn or mine.”

With Exalted Major now in Dongfang Hao's grasp, it was no surprise that some immortals from Exalted Major had come as well.

True, the Exalted Immortal Sect had been almost entirely wiped out, and the Exalted Celestial Emperor gone alongside his Exalted Palace. Even so, the major's foundations lived on and few dared set their sights on it, at least for the time being.

Currently, Witherdew Major was everyone's main objective.

“House Donglin and the Dongfang Clan... it must be because both of them plotted against his dao partner,” a young lady from the Lin Clan suddenly interjected. “I wonder if my future dao partner will be so dauntless as to destroy two clans for my sake...”

The voices of most of the female immortals present soon rose to echo her sentiment. A gallant suitor ought to go to war to protect his sweetheart!

The immortal from Exalted Major closed his mouth, then opened it, and closed it again. What was he supposed to say to that?

“Very well, let us discuss this matter at another date. For now, we're leaving.” Waving his hand, a celestial emperor departed with his men.

Everyone blinked in surprise.

“The lightning rod! And the Closesky Formation!”

The crowd suddenly understood. The lightning rod was an outstanding instrument against tribulations, while the Closesky Formation could defuse attacks from weapons of war and crystal cannons. Indeed, now wasn't the time to discuss the bounty or Qing Yu's upcoming tribulation... Self-interest trumped everything else!

Chapter 688: Footprints By the Shores off the Blood Sea

Immortals over the North Sea receded like the tides. The heavenly armies of Dusk Province and other majors alike returned to their domains, and the sea returned to its former state of calm.

Shockingly, Levitating Island had survived the chaos. The giant isle had weathered both Lu Yun's tribulation and the battle of immortals shortly thereafter. Alas, the two Scarlet Apes realized with great disappointment that the floating peak at its center was gone.

“Don't bother looking for it.” Silverlight glanced in Dusk Province's general direction. “The island was that fox's treasure in the first place. She's just taken it back. It's already over, you two. Why are you still here?” She glared sharply into a corner of empty space.

“Hahaha, is that so? I guess my disciple and I shan't bother you any more,” a childlike voice sounded, followed by two ripples in space. The invisible duo had departed.

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“You're not going to refine the Dao Flower projection?” Qing Yu's eyes were as wide as dinner plates; she was bewildered by Lu Yun's decision.

“There's no need. Refining the projection is just ceremony.” Lu Yun shook his head.

“B-but... you shouldn't just give it away like that, either!” Qing Yu grew a little anxious. Lu Yun had used the flower's projection to place a bounty upon every dao immortal of the Dongfang Clan. Frankly, she found it crazily irrational.

Her partner ran his fingers through her silken locks. “If I didn't, there'd be more and more people after you...” Steel glinted in his eyes. “I'm going to teach the world a lesson. They're welcome to make a play for you, as long as they're ready to pay the price!”

The bounty was also a threat. Those who intended to follow in the Dongfang Clan's footsteps would first need to evaluate whether their faction or clan could bear the brunt of Lu Yun's ire.

A single death wasn't nearly warning enough.

Previously, Lu Yun had placed bounties with an absurd sum of crystals. This time, he was doing the same with tribulation essence and the Dao Flower projection.

His apparent psychosis greatly amplified the danger he posed. On the day of Qing Yu's tribulation, he was sure that there would be less than a handful of people waiting to attack her like today.

As long as he lived—as long as Dusk Province stood—the vast majority wouldn't risk such foolhardiness. The bounty seemed brash at first, but there was plenty of deeper meaning behind it.

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This time, the world of immortals finally caught sight of the newest addition to Lu Yun's trump cards.

Kui!

Many supposed that his lightning rod and the black thunder he'd used to crush the fur seals were related to the primordial Thunder God. In that bygone era, Kui had commanded the punishing thunder of innumerable worlds... it'd even been able to preside over common cultivators' tribulations. But now, it was Lu Yun's subordinate!

Thankfully, it'd evidently lost the power over tribulations. Otherwise, any void-ascended immortals feuding with Lu Yun would've died during their ascensions .

The fact that he hadn't immediately established a sacred land provided even more relief. During the first month of his immortality, Dusk Province remained relatively quiet and calm, while the rest of the world still churned in utter chaos.

Aside from the battlefield in Witherdew Major, the Donglin and Dongfang Clans' ancestral homes were completely leveled. The two great families saw their holdings overturned and their immortals scattered to the winds, a terrifying fate that deterred any of Qing Yu's would-be assailants.

Meanwhile, Dusk Province continued flourishing and the concept of 'supplemental paths as king' was gaining wider acceptance. The province's treasures, talismans, and methods began to circulate throughout the world. Even diagrams for formations of heaven and earth were being sold!

Though Dusk Province didn't proclaim itself as a sacred land, many people saw it as that and more. The lightning rod and Closesky Formation were especially popular bestsellers. Though exorbitantly priced, immortals nevertheless swarmed toward them like ducks to water.

Their only disappointment was that lightning rods were single-use products that were irreparably destroyed afterward. However, each and every user survived their tribulation!

Such fantastic results only served to heighten the fervor of the strongest factions.

The absolute best and brightest of the world didn't care for it, of course. Any genius who manifested phenomena of ascension across an entire major couldn't bear to lower themselves to requiring outside aid for their heavenly tribulations. Their pride compelled them to overcome their trials with only their own strength.

The Closesky Formation, on the other hand, was a more permanent fixture in day-to-day living. Its appearance had completely changed the law of the land, as the previously invincible crystal cannons and weapons of war were restricted by the mysterious power of this formation.

Setting up a Closesky Formation around one's own lair guaranteed safety from ballistic assault. However, its expensive price tag put it out of reach for many at the same time.

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One day, a hazy figure smashed into Dao City from the sky in a meteoric descent. Whoever it was had been beaten into an unidentifiable bloody pulp. Lu Yun immediately arrived on the scene to take the figure away.

It was the Divine Azure Dragon King!

He'd gone to the ancestral territory of the azure dragons to look for living kin; why was he so badly hurt? Most of the dragon veins he'd taken with him were gone; the only one left, kept tightly in his grasp, was the singular ancestral one.

"What happened to you?" Lu Yun's expression became rather ugly.

The current Azure Dragon King was at least a peak origin dao immortal. No, he was even stronger than that. Even so, he'd been brought to the brink of death by some unknown enemy.

Summoning the power of the three connate spirit roots inside herself, Qing Yu brought him back to a more stable condition.

Pah!

The Azure Dragon King spat out a mouthful of blood and shook his head violently before finally speaking. "Creatures from the Blood Sea have come ashore."

"You went to the Blood Sea... to look for your bottom half?" Lu Yun furrowed his brow. He'd witnessed the terror of the Blood Sea firsthand before. It was only because of the paper boats and lanterns that the girl lingering from ages past had given him that he'd safely traversed it.

Despite the Azure Dragon King's present strength, he wouldn't survive any time at all in the Blood Sea.

"No," the Dragon King shook his head, "my kinsmen are on the other side of the Blood Sea. Bloody footprints appeared by the shore... When I went to investigate, I was injured by the sea creatures."

"Bloody footprints?" Lu Yun pressed his lips together in concern. He knew that creatures in the Blood Sea could come ashore. Mo Yi had once captured one to sacrifice to the restriction inside Dusk Province's ancient tomb. Had more done so of their own volition?

"What kind of footprints were they?" he asked.

The Dragon King's eyes began to glow. A huge screen of water appeared in front of Lu Yun's eyes, depicting a Blood Sea that broke against a golden beach. Upon that beach, two small sets of crimson footprints stretched straight toward the mainland.

The footprints... were human.

Chapter 689: Sword Divine's Heavenly Tribulation

"Whatever that was... is that what you were hurt by?" Qing Yu withdrew her three connate spirit roots before asking.

"Not quite," the Azure Dragon King chuckled ruefully. "I was injured by a rotten kun from the underworld... don't worry, I've slain it already."

“A rotten kun?” Lu Yun blinked.

“When a kunpeng dies in the underworld in its fish form, it turns into a corpse. When decay sets in, that corpse transforms into a rotten kun—an extremely powerful zombie. If it was allowed to enter this world, its corpse poison would pollute everything it made contact with. Both the earth and sky for millions of kilometers around would be turned into zombie spawning grounds.

“That’s why I had to kill it,” sighed the Dragon King. “The underworld is on the brink of disaster too, it seems. A rotten kun emerging from there...”

“Send me back into the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals. I feel like my body is about to fall apart again.” The Azure Dragon King opened his palm, producing a tiny gold dragon in his hand. It was the ancestor vein he’d taken with him prior.

“Why did you mention the Blood Sea, then?” Lu Yun was dumbfounded by the quick changes in conversation. He’d thought a creature from the Blood Sea was responsible for the Azure Dragon King’s injuries, but if it was something from the underworld... that made much more sense.

Holy Lord Ashu was evidence enough of what kind of terrors lurked in those depths. The so-called rotten kun had likely swam out of Ashu’s domain.

Qing Yu complied with the ancient dragon’s request. Upon returning to the scroll, the Dragon King turned into a mountain that served as the painting’s dragon vein.

“Rooooaawr!” an immature growl suddenly sounded. A flash of golden light later, a tiny dragon no more than a meter long had... gulped the floating vein right down. With a satisfied burp and a swish of its tail, it tunneled into the void and disappeared.

Lu Yun traded bewildered looks with Qing Yu.

“Did... did it just eat Nephrite’s ancestral vein?” He asked, still not entirely sure what he’d seen was real.

“...yes,” came her stunned reply.

After a lengthy silence, Lu Yun screamed at the top of his lungs. “Liu—Qing—miao, get out here right now!”

On the other side of Dao City, the baby-sized Liu Qingmiao pulled back on the tiny dragon’s tail as hard as she could. “Did you get in trouble again, little guy?”

“Rooooaawr!” The dragon whelp growled as innocently as it could, then glowed and leaped onto Liu Qingmiao’s arm as a new tattoo.

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In the end, Lu Yun didn’t press his disciple about the kerfuffle with her pet, as he hadn’t intended to return the ancestral vein in the first place. He also hadn’t expected the tiny dragon to eat it in such an unexpected manner before the Azure Dragon King could make use of it... but that was no matter.

The tiny dragon he'd brought out from the North Sea skydragon tomb had accepted Liu Qingmiao as its master. Liu Qingmiao was his number one disciple, having completely divorced herself from the Panorama Pavilion and joined Dusk Province.

She displayed little respect for even the Pavilion lord, much less the rest of the merchants. However, there was nothing the Panorama Pavilion could do about it. Dusk Province had robbed it of the girl formerly slated to be its heiress.

Of course, the trading guild and province were diehard allies now. It was all thanks to Dusk Province that the thirteen mercantile organizations had been able to form their alliance.

The Panorama Pavilion was a business association with fairly loose ties, its members unified solely by the pursuit of profit. So, too, was the motivation behind the recently formed merchant alliance. If possible, they were more than willing to integrate into Dusk Province as one of its component parts.

That was also part of Lu Yun's plan.

The lord of Dusk was unconcerned with the rotten kun or the footprints upon the Blood Sea's other shore. There were other, more important people who could shoulder that burden, even if the skies caved in. Though his reputation had spread far and wide, he still considered himself weak.

Increasing numbers of cities opened up in Dusk Province. Each of Lu Yun's ten Yamas oversaw their own city; every cultivator and immortal was accepted, no matter where they originated from.

The thirteen members of the merchant alliance received individual cities to headquarter in as well. Though he hadn't wanted to do so originally, the quickness with which they backed him at the foot of Mount Exalted had changed his mind.

The natural qi inside the province multiplied at an astonishing rate, and its abundance soon rivaled that of Life Province, the heartland of Nephrite Major.

Immortal qi inside the three hundred and sixty-five cities was also comparable to any capital of the nine majors. Dao City had risen above that long ago, to incredible, unprecedented heights.

One day, Lu Yun's second disciple, Zou Longxiu, suddenly returned. He brought with him the Yellow Springs emperor's decree to formalize their alliance.

Having already fallen once for the little fox's tricks above the North Sea, the Yellow Springs emperor was forced to be a bit more forthright this time. Otherwise, he would've made an enemy of every side.

Lu Yun ignored the invitation in the decree that Zou Longxiu had brought with him. He would go to Yellow Springs Land sooner or later, but now was not the time.

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"Finally, it's time!" Lu Yun's eyes lit up. He bounced up from his seat, pacing back and forth in an effort to restrain his excitement.

"What have you thought of?" Qing Yu was thoroughly confused.

"Dongfang Hao... his tribulation is very soon." A sinister grin stretched over Lu Yun's face.

“His tribulation?” Qing Yu blinked. “You...”

“He wields the Sword of Chaos and grasps the ancient divine court’s heritage. His tribulation will be beyond the immortal dao and it’s a complete toss-up whether he survives it or not.” Lu Yun snickered. “I stopped him from combining his with Zhao Wushuang’s last time, so now it’s his turn! The lightning rods I made were all for him!”

Although the rods he sold were casual refinements of first-grade treasures, far inferior to the one he’d made for himself, they nevertheless contained his Thunder Palmstrike art. He could use the Tome of Life and Death to sense all of their positions.

Dongfang Hao had purchased a full three hundred and sixty-five lightning rods through various channels. And all of them were now gathered above the West Sea. That was where he intended to undergo his tribulation!

Through the Tome, Lu Yun could clearly sense Dongfang Hao sitting straight in the middle of all the lightning rods. He wasn’t making use of the rods out of cowardice or fear. Quite the opposite—his sword intent was sharp enough to pierce through the sky. His heart held far more steel than the majority of other geniuses.

No, it was precisely thanks to his excellence that Dongfang Hao remained keenly self-aware. Without outside help, his heavenly tribulation would surely result in his destruction!

“I’ll come with you!” Qing Yu knew what Lu Yun wanted to do and clutched his arm resolutely.

“No need, I’ve already sent my Xing Chen replica,” Lu Yun remarked offhandedly.

Chapter 690: Lightning Rods Gone Rogue

The vast expanse of the West Sea was located at the western edge of the world. Once the center of everyone’s attention, the monster spirit court that’d ruled the West Sea for eighty thousand years was one day silently overthrown almost overnight, the coup so swift that not a single rumor leaked abroad.

As for her then-emperor, a peak arcane dao immortal powerhouse, he’d been killed in a single blow and refined into a replica.

On a deserted island at the westernmost part of the waters, three hundred and sixty-five lightning rods were positioned in a mysterious formation, sparkling dazzlingly beneath the sun. In the middle of this array sat a man clad in blue. Beside him was stuck a sword into the ground at a jaunty angle: the Sword of Chaos.

Once powerful beyond measure, it now gave off an incomplete, imperfect feeling, as though it was missing a vital part—its heart.

The heart of the Sword Chaos was in Zhao Wushuang’s possession. But in the past, she’d been under the protection of Exalted Celestial Emperor Zhao Luo. And now, she’d taken shelter in the safety of Dusk Province, moving her out of Dongfang Hao’s reach.

Even so, his strength was bound to grow in spades after his ascension to immortality, and he vowed to find a way to take the sword heart back.

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“The kid probably knew a long time ago that you would come to his tribulation, so he’s deployed many killing formations in advance and is waiting for you to walk right into his trap.” Holy Lord Ashu stood beside Lu Yun, both of them transformed into infinitesimal particles standing on a speck of dust floating in the air.

Ashu continued with a frown, “The killing formations look to be the strongest ones of the ancient divine court. They might only be partial reconstructions, but you shouldn’t underestimate them. Even if I recovered my full essence, it’d still be difficult for me to withdraw unscathed.”

“Oh?” Xing Chen, Lu Yun’s replica, turned to look at Ashu.

“If you want to stop him from passing his tribulation, you’ll have to get creative. For example, why don’t you lure other powerhouses here like he did against you?” Ashu replied after a moment of silence.

“Lure other powerhouses here? What for?” Lu Yun shook his head. “If he wants to undergo his tribulation, I’ll leave him to it... It’s not like I’m trying to stop him.”

“Then... why are you here?” Ashu blinked in confusion. Was the lad just here to spectate? To personally witness Sword Divine’s ascension to immortality?

As a cultivator, Sword Divine’s strength had been above Lu Yun’s, and as an immortal... he’d still hold the upper hand, in all likelihood.

Letting such a dangerous foe develop unimpeded? That didn’t sound like Lu Yun’s style at all. But for his part, the young governor merely stood on the speck of dust and silently observed Dongfang Hao from afar.

“I came to see what tricks he has hidden up his sleeve.”

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Dongfang Hao had spent a long time preparing for this tribulation. In fact, he’d begun his preparations ever since his failure to ‘borrow’ another’s tribulation. To stop disruptions from ill-intentioned people, he’d deployed many traps in advance.

One thousand and eighty-eight killing formations were hidden nearby. Together, the combination formed the strongest killing formation known to the ancient divines. Even if the nine celestial emperors from the previous generation were to arrive, they’d find themselves powerless to interfere with his tribulation.

“I wonder if Lu Yun will come... I certainly hope he does.” Dongfang Hao took a deep breath. At first, he’d left Lu Yun alive for use as a whetstone, a rival with which to motivate himself. But now, he was slowly losing control of this tool.

More importantly, he wanted Qing Yu. He already had three sword gods in his service: Wu Tulong, Zichen, and Mo Qitian, all of them dao sovereigns as anointed by the Dao Flower.

If he could also bring Dao Sovereign Qing Yu into the fold and add her to that list, he could use these four masters, along with another existence, to rule over the immortal dao. Then, he'd slowly supplant it and become the master ruling over all of this world.

Lu Yun, that former whetstone of his, had become the last hurdle to his grand scheme.

Wu Tulong is also progressively getting out of control. It seems I need to find time to refine another soul seed and plant it inside him. Random thoughts flitted through his mind.

Unbeknownst to him, unease had begun taking hold inside his heart. He carefully studied the lightning rods inserted beside him. These were all one-time-use and would be destroyed once his tribulation was over.

He'd examined them individually and even used the Sword of Chaos to scan them, but found no formations or restrictions on the rods, nor any consciousness hidden inside. The judgment of the Sword of Chaos was infallible—no one was controlling these lightning rods from afar, nor had anyone left anything hidden inside. More importantly, Lu Yun wouldn't ruin his own business brand.

Why else would Dongfang Hao have spent such a large sum to buy three hundred and sixty-five lightning rods? Of course, as a prudent man, he'd brought them indirectly from Dusk Province through unrelated people, or second-hand from previous buyers.

Boom!

The sky trembled violently. Thick tribulation clouds quickly materialized in the sky, dyeing the entire dome a dark red. Soon, navy bolts of lightning snaked through the clouds.

"It's not the Diabolical Tribulation of World Refinement!" Dongfang Hao sprang to his feet and looked at the dark-blue lightning above, his voice soft as a whisper. "It's the Navy Thunder of World Extinction!"

This was a phenomenon comparable in magnitude to the Diabolical Tribulation of World Refinement, but also as different as night from day...

The Diabolical Tribulation of World Refinement was a prison in which countless demons were shackled. When the lightning struck, demons arrived in the world to tear apart the tribulation's target.

As for the Navy Thunder of World Extinction... it was simple destruction in its purest form. With the infinite power of lightning, it destroyed its target... and everyone else in the process!

"What a pity it's not a heavenly judgment. Is Lu Yun truly better than me?" Dongfang Hao tightly knit his brows together, taking exception to the notion.

While Lu Yun's phenomenon of ascension had seemed insignificant, that strange, gigantic snake had made the Sword of Chaos tremble.

During Lu Yun's phenomenon of ascension, when a purple aura four hundred kilometers across had come from the east, Dongfang Hao had clearly observed an ephemeral six-colored radiance flickering in and out of existence as well. That light must have been Lu Yun's true phenomenon of ascension, but it'd been promptly concealed by something.

After all, heavenly judgments were the strongest tribulations of them all. While the Navy Thunder of World Extinction was strong, it didn't deserve to be mentioned in the same breath.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Divine thunder welled up in the sky and roared into fearsome, gigantic beasts, and the claps of thunder gradually turned into bestial howls. A second later, lightning struck from above. A dark-blue lightning dragon slithered down from the heavens and cruelly struck at Dongfang Hao.

Bzzzt.

Three hundred and sixty-five lightning rods lit up at the same time, producing a dreamy radiance. They disintegrated the lightning dragon before it could touch him, reducing it to sparks that streamed toward the iron.

"It really works!" Dongfang Hao's eyes lit up, his fears finally allayed.

But suddenly, the unexpected happened!

The dreamy glow around the lightning bolts winked out, and the previously diffused lightning coalesced back into a dragon and pounced on him, baring its fangs and brandishing its claws.

Caught by surprise by the sudden attack, Dongfang Hao was blasted away like a broken kite!

"Lu Yun... you tricked me!!" he screamed in anger. He'd sensed Lu Yun's presence on the premises!