

Necropolis 701

Chapter 701: Only A Legend

Roar!!

The demonized Ancient Tree of Life bellowed and howled when it suddenly realized that the thing it treasured most was slowly making its way out of its body.

It was a large, broken shard of an entire world. After merging with the ancient tree, it'd given rise to an immense inner world inside the tree itself. This shard was the source of the tree's strength and the fundamental reason why it'd achieved self-awareness. So now that the shard was pulling away, the tree's mind was overwhelmed by boundless fear and dread.

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The fragment of hell broke free of the Ancient Tree of Life and slowly melded into the crystal garden. Yama Kings hovered in the ten directions in the sky above, and a vision of the Yama World materialized behind them. A colossal, majestic formation had suddenly appeared in the firmament.

"What is this..." The world itself shook and all things living wailed in shock. The Formation of the Ten Yama Kings had transformed Dusk Province into a world akin to hell itself!

Its power could be felt even more keenly inside the immortal crystal garden. Vicious cracks crawled over the Ancient Tree of Life, and even as it screeched with defiance, its giant frame inexorably bent down, crushed beneath the weight of the fragment of hell controlled by the formation.

The fragment should have been the tree's own strength, but it was now the instrument of its demise!

"Take Shenguang with you and leave, I'll go grab its crystal core!" With a kick, Chen Xiao punted Zhao Shenguang and Qing Buyi out, then streaked into a ray of light and slipped into the tree through the cracks. The imprisoned trio had regained their freedom at long last!

"Be quick about it, my formation can't last for very long," Lu Yun's voice sounded out.

"Hold it for twenty breaths!" Chen Xiao barked. Meanwhile, Lu Feng let out the breath he was holding and hastily escorted Qing Buyi and Zhao Shenguang back to safety.

Though suppressed, the Ancient Tree of Life hadn't lost all of its ability to move. As such, it still represented an enormous threat.

Transforming from a treant back to a giant tree, the ancient tree stabbed its roots viciously into the garden's soil and frantically absorbed immortal energy in a last-ditch effort to regain its strength and escape the grand formation above.

As for the fragment of hell previously inside the tree, it'd been fully absorbed by the Formation of the Ten Yama Kings, then decomposed and remolded into the embryo of the Yama World, thereby strengthening the formation as a result.

Alas, this increase in strength was but a transient one.

After all, the formation was born of the kingdom of hell, and its power stemmed from the netherworld. That it could emerge in the living world at all was due to the hell fragment in the tree.

But now that said fragment had been assimilated into the Yama World, the formation could only persist for ten more breaths at most! Moreover, the Gates of the Abyss were broken. While energy from hell could still trickle out of the gates, the amount was far from enough to sustain the formation.

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“Raaarrghh!” Standing opposite the desolate willow, the demon god began to panic. His giant face shot into the sky and threw itself at the crystal garden, hoping to break the formation and release the Ancient Tree of Life.

Boom!

But the moment he left the city, a shower of sword light fell from above like rain. The terrible, sharp sword energy sliced down like a tempest aimed squarely at him. With a snarl, the demon spat out a jet-black umbrella from his mouth. Acting as a shield over his head, the umbrella gave him a brief reprieve from the terrible sword onslaught.

The umbrella was a connate treasure. Not only that, it far surpassed ordinary connate treasures and had reached the level of a ‘supreme treasure’ at the very least.

“Stop him.” Lu Yun frowned faintly. If the demon god was allowed inside the crystal garden, the Ancient Tree of Life would indeed regain its freedom.

The Formation of the Ten Yama Kings was waning in power, but thankfully the desolate willow still had energy left to spare. Its giant frame blocked the demon god’s way and slashed at him with branches and leaves as sharp as immortal swords.

Somewhere nearby, another tall humanoid figure strode into being.

The human demon!

Augmenting himself with the power of the restriction, the human demon rained blows on the demon god’s umbrella like a man possessed.

The demon screeched in anger. As if he was suddenly drowning in a quagmire, his movements slowed to a crawl under the influence of an exceedingly powerful restriction. His own life in danger, he no longer had the luxury to think about the Ancient Tree of Life.

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Boom!

A dark-green ray of light erupted from the Ancient Tree of Life and soared toward the clouds. Fist-sized crystal core in his hand, Chen Xiao crawled out of the tree’s insides. One final furious howl came from the tree, its sculpture-like eyes glowering with a belligerence that swiftly faded away.

The giant face on the treetop vanished soon after, and the ancient tree settled down into a towering tree five thousand kilometers tall, quietly rooted in the center of the immortal crystal garden, its violent consciousness gone forever.

At Dusk Province's northern border, the demon god screamed in fury. Protected by the fiercely shaking umbrella above his head, he charged into the sky.

"Where do you think you're going?" Lu Yun's turn was finally here. Spotting a chance to deal a blow to the demon god, he immediately activated the sword formation. The formation's northern and eastern sword gates shot into the air, transforming into two giant swords and slashing down on their target.

Hum!

The connate umbrella protecting the demon god ballooned in response. Accompanied by resounding chants of scripture, halos of light as blue as the firmament formed a giant canopy of radiance that stood in the two giant swords' path.

Boom!!

Two sword-shaped sword gates slammed heavily into the canopy.

Craaaack.

What followed chilled everyone to the core. The connate-grade umbrella, a supreme treasure far above ordinary connate treasures, shattered upon impact!

It first disassembled, then exploded into a shower of dust sprinkling across the sky. The demon god stared in stupefaction. Then, with an ear-piercing shriek, he ignited his true spirit and fled Dusk Province with his tail between his legs.

Their work done for now, the four sword gates slowly faded from view and returned to the void.

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In the North Sea, two scarlet apes' fur stood on end at the scene.

"Is this demon god tired of living? Why would he ever dare face the ancestor's sword formation head-on with a connate treasure?" asked the bewildered Goldenlight. "From what I've heard about the period before Emperors Fall, that ancestor felt there were too many connate treasures in the world, so he took four swords with him and went treasure hunting. Every time he found one, he'd smash it to pieces with his swords."

"That's only a legend!" Silverlight corrected. "What really happened was that the ancestor forced his way straight into the treasuries of the various clans and races and destroyed all of the connate treasures stashed inside. Oh, he also razed the treasuries themselves while he was at it!"

Goldenlight gaped. How was that any better?

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As the Formation of the Ten Yama Kings dispersed, Lu Yun plopped down heavily and gasped for air. "It's finally done!" The hint of a smile appeared on his lips.

“Here, take this.” Chen Xiao also sat down beside him and casually tossed the fist-sized crystal core into the governor’s lap.

“Bring me ten jars of fine liquor in exchange!” he grumbled. “I’ve been trapped inside that damned tree for four and a half years. Now it’s time for this young master to drink his fill!”

Chapter 702: The Four Guardians

It’d been five years since Lu Yun first set foot in the world of immortals. He’d started as a youngster so weak that he couldn’t fight his way out of a wet paper bag. In desperation, he’d turned to tomb raiding just to stay alive. With that, five years had passed in the blink of an eye.

Now, not only had he become an immortal, but he was also a famous household name across the world. Perhaps he wasn’t the greatest of them all yet, but he could rival anyone in reputation.

Five years!

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When he casually tossed the demonic crystal core into hell, Ge Long gulped it down whole. Lu Yun didn’t mind either way.

The demonic energy emanating from the Ancient Tree of Life was entirely gone. Firmly taking root in the immortal crystal garden west of Dao City, the tree covered half the city with its shadow, like a sacred mountain.

To the surprise of many... Lu Yun then made the garden open to the public. Any immortal was free to go inside and cultivate or simply admire the giant tree!

His decision unnerved more than one; the garden and the tree were yet another sacred land of cultivation in Dusk Province. That Lu Yun would eventually find great success in establishing a sacred land of immortal dao seemed only a matter of time.

Inside the garden, the Dao Flower projection blossomed peacefully next to the ancient tree. Everyone knew he was delaying his second attempt at a sacred land because he was waiting for Qing Yu’s ascension to immortality.

Without question, she was the one he cared most about in this world. Before she became an immortal, worries and concerns would always niggle at his mind.

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Rather than ply Chen Xiao with jugs of liquor, Lu Yun ordered a grand feast for the entire province. Dao City, Dusk City, and the other cities open to the public all held magnificent celebrations.

Out of the cities in the province, five were occupied by the Lus, Qings, Chens, Xues, and Yins, the thirteen merchant alliance inhabited another ten, the ten Yama Kings ruled ten as well, and the capital of Dusk City made for twenty-nine cities accessible to the public. Dao City wasn’t part of the three hundred and sixty-five cities; technically, it was the three hundred and sixty-sixth.

Twenty-nine cities might not sound all that impressive at first blush, but the atmosphere and momentum reigning in Dusk Province surpassed that of many other great provinces.

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Inside Dao City.

Qing Buyi, Chen Xiao, and Zhao Shengguang gorged themselves on food, like hungry wolves that'd been starved for several lives.

"So that dick Zhao Changkong's dead... That's wonderful!" Zhao Shengguang chugged an entire jug of wine and waved his arms around happily. "That means I can go back and be celestial emperor of Nephrite Major!"

Chen Xiao sent him sprawling with a kick and snorted, "Be mindful of where you are!"

Zhao Shengguang scratched his head with embarrassment. That was right... they were attending a great banquet.

Everyone that was someone in the world of immortals was here. When they heard Zhao Shengguang, they couldn't help but pause. If he were indeed to ascend to the celestial throne, there was no doubt he'd be Dusk Province's ally. By then, Dusk would have the strength of all of Nephrite Major behind it.

Thanks to the presence of Art and Zither Saint, few dared entertain the idea of invading the major. Moreover, the two devils, Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi, had also returned and were standing behind Dusk Province and Lu Yun. The future was already a frightening thought to contemplate.

But while Dusk Province was indeed formidable, it was nothing but a tiny province at the end of the day. That no one dared invade it didn't mean no one was plotting to curb its growth and confine its influence to firmly within its borders.

As a matter of fact, various factions had begun to form a coalition against the Dusk Phalanx in Witherdew Major.

The advent of the Closesky Formation had rendered crystal cannons and sundry weapons of war almost obsolete. Although formation masters far and wide had yet to decipher that precise one, many similar formations were already seeing the light of day.

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The grand feast in Dusk Province was just that, a feast. There was no deeper meaning to it, other than an occasion to celebrate. When it ended, Lu Yun chased everyone away, leaving only Qing Yu behind.

"Shall we go to the netherworld?" He found himself somewhat flustered. His brain was buzzing, and he didn't know what to do with himself.

"I'd rather stay outside... If someone really is using me as a pawn in their nefarious plan, they'll certainly show themselves to stop us while you dispel my curse. I fear that kingdom of yours won't be able to withstand such a commotion then." Qing Yu refused his proposal.

Lu Yun looked down and began to think.

The pearls of the four divine spirits, the Fusang Purewood, and the Key of Life quietly floated around Qing Yu. The Key of Life was the heart of the Ancient Tree of Life. After fusing with the tree, it'd now become the tree's essence once more, equivalent to the tree itself.

Suddenly picking up something with his consciousness, Lu Yun waved his hand and opened a path through the surrounding formations, letting Zhao Wushuang in.

"What are you doing here for?" Lu Yun looked at her in bafflement.

"I came to save her." Zhao Wushuang bit her lip.

Lu Yun observed her with a silent frown. "What do you know?"

The exiled princess shook her head. "I possess the essence of the four sacred beasts. I can save her!"

"Sir... the four pearls, the Fusang Purewood, and the Key of Life aren't enough to dispel the shamanic divines' poison curse." Zhaoqing's voice echoed in Lu Yun's mind, but she didn't appear in person. "To dispel the curse, you also need the purest energy from the essence of the Four Guardians."

Lu Yun blinked. The Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Vermilion Bird, and Black Tortoise were collectively known as the Four Guardians! However, pureblood descendants of the four had long disappeared from the world.

The Black Tortoise in his service was the result of a combination between a black turtle and a blackwater snake. Together, they'd evolved into the semblance of a Black Tortoise, then obtained the blessing of the land to become a true sacred beast. It was as far from pureblooded as one could get.

The essence of the Four Guardians could only stem from the cardinal godkings or figures at the level of the Azure Dragon King. At the moment, the Azure Dragon King had transformed himself into a mountain and gone into the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals to recover.

Lu Yun slowly breathed out. Clearly, Zhaoqing had been the one who'd summoned Zhao Wushuang; the latter knew nothing of Qing Wu's poison curse.

The curse was an art unique to the shamanic divines... While shamanic divines bore the word shaman in their name, they were also divines, and an exceptionally cruel and evil breed of them at that.

As the daughter of a divine emperor, Zhaoqing naturally knew how to dispel a poison curse of the shamanic divines. She hadn't been aware of Qing Yu's circumstances before, but she'd understood after she'd seen Lu Yun take out the four pearls, the Fusang Purewood, and the Ancient Tree of Life. Therefore, she'd immediately summoned Zhao Wushuang.

Only, Zhao Wushuang wasn't aware of the relation between Zhaoqing and Lu Yun, so she was determined to play her cards close to her chest.

Zhao Wushuang... possessed the essence of the Four Guardians. The strange tribulation beast that'd appeared during her tribulation had clearly been an amalgam of the four cardinal godkings. Moreover, her phenomenon of ascension had also taken the shape of the four sacred beasts and contained their essence.

After piecing the sequence of events together, Lu Yun's back was drenched in cold sweat.

Chapter 703: So It Was You!

Empress Myrtlestar, Su Xiaoxiao, Xingzi, and even Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi all thought that the four pearls, Fusang Purewood, and the Ancient Tree of Life would be enough to defuse Qing Yu's poison curse.

However, Zhao Qing had realized with a single glance that the most crucial thing was still missing: the essence of the Four Guardians! It was the true key to dispelling the poison! The reason being, Qing Yu's poison curse was connected to the immortal dao. Any outbreak would taint dao itself.

Meanwhile, the Four Guardians were divine beasts born from nature and embodied the ultimate power of the four cardinal directions. In other words, their essence was the essence of nature in its most unadulterated form. Only such essence could dispel a poison so terrible that it threatened the entire world.

Zhao Wushuang gently opened her hand, collecting globes of azure, white, vermilion, and black light from her body and sent them slowly orbiting around Qing Yu. With that simple action, her face abruptly paled and her knees gave out from under her.

The essence of the Four Guardians was equivalent to her own core, so as expected, being separated from them greatly weakened her.

Lu Yun helped her up, then sent her out of the formation-constructed space. There would certainly be those who sought to stop him from dispelling Qing Yu's poison curse. This place would become extremely dangerous in short order, and he didn't want Zhao Wushuang to be caught in the crossfire.

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"Be careful, I can feel someone spying on us," Empress Myrtlestar suddenly warned. Scroll of Shepherding Immortals in hand, she stood in the middle of the great formation, the Imperial Star, Fire Starstone, and Big Dipper Starstone circling around her. Her strength had soared to an inconceivable degree as she stood guard over Qing Yu.

"Who is it?" Lu Yun scrunched his eyebrows.

"I don't know, I can't see what he looks like. He seems dead, yet also alive." The empress shook her head gently.

Her alert gaze swept through the surroundings. Mo Yi, Lu Feng, Qing Buyi, and Chen Xiao sat cross-legged at the formation's four eyes and likewise acted as Qing Yu's guardians. They all knew that the curse involved more than just Qing Yu herself—the lives of every creature under the immortal dao were at stake.

Lu Yun hadn't managed to locate Ghost Dragon and Ghost Phoenix in time, and Holy Lord Ashu no longer dared expose his presence without good reason lest he attract the attention of the underworld and be dragged back. Therefore, the only ones available to protect Qing Yu were those currently present.

Lu Yun had been tempted to look for Qi Hai, but was also concerned the man might do something insidious to sink his claws into Qing Yu and gain control over the immortal dao through her.

He brought out the three yet-to-be-incorporated fragments from the Gates of the Abyss and used the Tome of Life and Death to awaken the broken shards of hell within, while in the darkness, the Formation of the Ten Yama Kings lay primed and ready.

“I’ll have to trouble you then, senior.” Lu Yun nodded curtly. Undetectable enemies were the most fearsome ones... But since the empress could sense this particular enemy’s presence, he wasn’t particularly worried; someone that could be located could be dealt with.

Rumble!

Space shook violently as four giant coffins came into existence and merged with the sky. The Enneawym Coffinbearers, Nine-Phoenix Casket, Enneaqilin Coffinbiers, and Ninefooted Turtle Cist!

The four evil coffins had levitated into hell’s sky, then appeared inside the formation in a way Lu Yun couldn’t fully understand before fading into the atmosphere. He could vaguely sense that what lay buried inside the four coffins was no longer parts of the giant corpse, but four swords glowing with light as frosty as winter.

“Let us begin!” he took a deep breath.

Boom!

Space shook, and a giant forge of earth and sky came into view. The ultimate realm of equipment dao!

Like one would temper a weapon, Lu Yun began his pill refining... and by way of pill refining, he would cleanse the curse inside Qing Yu!

Qing Yu set foot into the forge of earth and sky, along with the treasures around her, whereupon raging blazes engulfed her figure.

A forge of earth and sky stoked no natural fire or hellfire. In a way, it was an external depiction of the strength of the land. With the sky as flame and the land as furnace, one could refine treasures through the world itself!

A trace of pain floated onto Qing Yu’s face as her figure was wreathed in a black fog. This fog, of course, was the terrible poison lying dormant inside of her. Any other pill furnace would long since have been corroded by the virulent poison.

Whoosh!

Lu Yun waved his hand and summoned the Poison Fiend to an empty spot next to him. The fiend opened its mouth wide and sucked in the poison inside the forge of earth and sky. Meanwhile, the various treasures inside the furnace melted into streams of light and flowed into Qing Yu.

Crackle!

An invisible fire lit up from her figure and began to expel the poison inside.

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A human figure strode out of the void with a measured pace. He considered Lu Yun and the forge of earth and sky in front of the young man with a cool, detached expression. For some mysterious reason,

no one out of Empress Myrtlestar, Chen Xiao, Mo Yi, Qing Buyi, Lu Feng, or the Yama Kings noticed his arrival. Thus unimpeded, the man arrived in front of Lu Yun as if on a leisure stroll.

“It’s... you,” Lu Yun suddenly noted.

“So it was you!” A second Lu Yun popped into existence as well and looked up at the tall figure, his eyes wide with shock.

“Lu Yun, you’re really a very lucky man. To think you’d find the proper way to eradicate the poison curse!” the newcomer sighed gently. “Therefore, I had no choice but to come to you.”

“Did Sword Divine... Dongfang Hao send you here?” Lu Yun’s brows knitted tightly together.

“Sword Divine? Dongfang Hao?” the man sneered. “That piece of shit?”

“Precisely!” Lu Yun’s forehead relaxed somewhat. His replica had reached peak golden immortal realm, and while he wasn’t as strong as one of those ancient monsters, he was strong enough to fear no one. At least... he didn’t fear arcane dao immortals.

As for the man facing him...

Lu Shenhou.

Lu Shenhou!

Lu Shenhou!!

How could it be Lu Shenhou!!

This was the same Lu Shenhou who’d originally discovered the void realm. Although dead, his lingering obsession had persisted and returned to bring the path of cultivation back to the world of immortals.

Lu Shenhou was also the first Sword Divine that Lu Yun had met, the one that’d made repeated appearances at the Sovereign Ranking Battles and the battle in Dusk Province. Now it appeared that all of it had just been an unimportant distraction.

Lu Yun had once thought Lu Shenhou to be Dongfang Hao’s subordinate—just like Wu Tulong, Mo Qitian, and Zi Chen, that he was someone that Dongfang Hao had brought back to life through a special method and turned into a sword god in his service.

However, in the battle for Dusk Province, Lu Shenhou had displayed the body of a shamanic divine and led everyone to believe there were shamanic divines at Sword Divine’s command.

But now... his arrival lifted the curtains on a very different truth. Lu Shenhou had been the one who’d planted the poison curse inside Qing Yu!

Although he hadn’t been in Xiankan when Qing Yu had been poisoned, it now seemed almost certain that everything was a plan he’d set in motion. Weave by weave, twist after twist, from Donglin Taihuang to the cosmic constitution, he’d spun his plot like a giant web that caught the entire world.

Chapter 704: The Non-Entity That Couldn’t Exist

Not even Lu Yun could see through what kind of existence Lu Shenhou was now. In all likelihood, the man had left Xiankan all those years ago not to avoid suspicion, but to set up all of his various other schemes.

Perhaps Donglin Taihuang searching out the Qing Clan and requesting production of a girl with a cosmic constitution was also related to him. Likewise, he'd been the one who'd brought Lu Yun, Qing Yu, and a few others to the ruins of the Firmament Prison, into the tomb where the Dao Flower lay.

It also was inside that tomb that Dongfang Hao had died, then mysteriously came back to life to obtain the Sword of Chaos. Plainly, none of it was a coincidence and all had been part of a carefully crafted plan.

But because of the appearance of the Dao Flower and the discovery of the void realm, neither Lu Yun nor anyone else had taken note of these oddities. In fact, even when Lu Shenhou had revealed the body of a shamanic divine, he still hadn't aroused Lu Yun's suspicions.

Thanks to his arrival now, everything finally clicked in place in Lu Yun's mind.

In his current state, Lu Shenhou was neither dead nor alive. He was a non-entity to anyone alive, while to departed spirits, he was just an indistinct shadow. Nearby, Empress Myrtlestar, Chen Xiao, Mo Yi, Chen Buyi, and Lu Feng all sensed something afoot, but nevertheless, none of them could see Lu Shenhou. For them, he simply didn't exist.

Inside the kingdom of hell, Lu Yun's nascent spirit formed a conduit that connected his primary body to Xing Chen, so the replica could also make use of his death arts. For that reason alone could he define Lu Shenhou's presence with the Spectral Eye.

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"Who in the world are you?" One after another, Sword Atlases unfurled around Lu Yun.

Now that his command over them had reached the realm of great perfection, each Sword Atlas could manifest ten thousand ninth-rank flying swords. A full one hundred and eight Sword Atlases soared into the sky, transforming the surroundings into an ocean of sword energy.

Meanwhile, Lu Yun's primary body remained unmoving and continued to recite incantations, silently refining Qing Yu with the forge of earth and sky.

"Me?" Lu Shenhou smiled mildly. "Didn't you recognize me already? I am Lu Shenhou."

He strode forward and eased his way past the barrier formed by the Sword Atlases, arriving in front of Lu Yun. For him, the Sword Atlases were simple mirages with no tangible existence. It was fundamentally impossible for them to stop him in any way.

But he halted the next moment, an unsettled expression on his face.

"Hellfire." Seeing the ball of black fire in front of him, he gently stepped back. "I see, the thing on you was hellfire. I suppose the primeval human dao's hell must also be in your possession, if so."

Turbulent hellfire erupted from Lu Yun and transformed the space into an ocean of fire as far as the eye could see. Ordinary means were ineffective against Lu Shenhou, but hellfire... hellfire was the bane of a being like him.

“No wonder, no wonder I subconsciously brought you there... Only one with the power of human hell could have awakened the Dao Flower and brought it back to life.” Lu Shenhou lowered his gaze, a cold, ruthless smile flashing past his lips.

Crackle!

His figure suddenly lit up with flames burning a hazy purple. As if afraid, hellfire immediately contracted into a ball and returned to Lu Yun’s hand.

Nether Fire.

Flames that had once destroyed human hell... Nether Fire that belonged to Violetgrave. She’d once said that hellfire was the greatest fire in the multiverse. According to her, Nether Fire was far, far inferior. But in Lu Yun’s hands, hellfire was limited by his cultivation and couldn’t unleash its full potential.

As an analogy, the tiger might be the king of the jungle, but a tiger cub was still no match for an adult wolf.

Moreover, Nether Fire had once been wielded by a supreme being so mighty that they’d destroyed hell. In the process, it’d absorbed a fraction of hellfire’s power, so it was little wonder its appearance could force hellfire back.

“It took me three entire eras to set this plan in motion. Although Qing Yu isn’t my only pawn, this pawn is on the eve of blossoming and bearing fruit. How can I possibly let you ruin it?” Cool and collected, Lu Shenhou looked even more like a Sword Divine than Dongfang Hao.

Each of his steps left a purple footprint in the air, and each time he stepped forward, hellfire receded a tiny bit in response. However, Lu Yun stood his ground.

“Since this plan took you three eras to lay out, I’ll use just one lifetime of mine to break it!” Xing Chen’s body glittered with a tricolor glow. The heart, lungs, and liver of heaven and earth pulsated audibly inside the body of the trivial golden immortal, resonating with the rhythm of the world. Spectral Eye wide open, two beams of black light as sharp as swords erupted from his irises and pierced more than thirty meters through the air.

The illusory silhouettes of the ten Yama Kings appeared behind Lu Yun. As they infused their strength into Lu Yun’s replica, Xing Cheng’s cultivation increased dramatically, rising from peak golden immortal realm to arcane dao immortal realm.

Meanwhile, this corner of the world shook furiously and produced a mysterious resonance with Lu Yun and his breathing.

“It’s no use. I’m not a living existence, so the cultivation and realms of the living mean nothing to me.” Step after step, Lu Shenhou made his way toward the forge of earth and sky. “I’ll be frank, this entire world is mere nothingness to me.”

Boom!

Lu Yun finally sprang into action. Encased in fire as black as night, his fist punched straight at Lu Shenhou's face. Black hellfire crackled to life as if suddenly endowed with prodigious courage, and it no longer backed down in the face of the Nether Fire.

Even so, Nether Fire jumped from Lu Shenhou and scattered hellfire, while Lu Yun's fist went straight through Lu Shenhou's figure, as if the man was a mere illusion devoid of substance.

"Wait, what?!" Lu Yun stared in disbelief. Why couldn't he even touch Lu Shenhou?

"For someone of flesh and blood like you, I am a non-entity, something that doesn't exist... While, for me, all of you likewise don't exist." Lu Shenhou shook his head gently, walked past Lu Yun, and came in front of the forge of earth and sky.

However, Lu Yun's primary body opened its eyes, and two blue halos of light lit up inside his irises.

Hum!

The Tome of Life and Death appeared above him and blasted Lu Shenhou away in a flare of dazzling radiance.

"What was that?!" Lu Shenhou flew more than thirty meters through the air before managing to steady himself and land on the ground. In utter disbelief, he gawked at the Tome of Life and Death.

Shrouded inside a hazy bronze light, the book's appearance remained hidden, but it'd demonstrated power great enough to repel Lu Shenhou. This power was gentle and devoid of killing intent, yet it was a barrier he couldn't surmount despite his best efforts.

"Just like me... something that shouldn't exist in this world?" Lu Shenhou sighed softly before smiling. "Then it's fortunate I didn't come alone."

Chapter 705: The Immortal Emperor

Lu Shenhou's murmur was as quiet as a whisper, but it made Lu Yun's heart tremble.

He wasn't alone? Who else had come?

Xing Chen opened the Spectral Eye and warily observed his surroundings. Dark and cold, an eerie wind blew past and elicited a subtle transformation inside the formation. Mo Yi, Chen Xiao, Qing Buyi, and Lu Feng stood up at the same time, vigilantly observing the growing darkness around them.

Empress Myrtlestar opted for her true appearance. Imperial Star hovering over her head, the other two starstones landed beside the forge of sky and earth and shielded it in boundless starlight.

The Formation of the Ten Yama Kings also came into view, the ten kings occupying positions in the ten directions and locking down the vicinity. The eerie wind gradually grew in intensity, filling the air with ghostly wails.

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"This isn't yin wind from hell." Lu Yun inhaled sharply when he felt the strange wind. "Be careful... akasha ghosts are here."

Akasha ghosts!

Lu Shenhou's reinforcements were akasha ghosts! In the air, white figures flickered in and out of existence, filling everyone with dread.

"The akasha ghosts have hell weapons with them," Lu Yun suddenly added. "Be careful not to let them take your souls."

He'd once very narrowly escaped that fate himself. Thankfully, Qing Yu had thrown caution to the wind and exposed her true appearance to deploy her starstone and the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, saving his life in the nick of time.

And now, their forms vague and indistinct, an unknown number of akasha ghosts had arrived. These specimens were different from the ones in the divine race's Last Repose. The ones that dwelled there merely came to destroy activated altars and were closer to incarnations or replicas. But the ones in front of them, hazy and shadowy, were the akasha ghost's primary bodies.

Bursts of yin wind blew by, so cold it made one's blood run cold.

Empress Myrtlestar beckoned gently with her fingers and conjured the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, unleashing pure white light from the treasure that drifted through the air like petals of a giant lotus flower.

The next moment, a stillness descended upon the scene. When time resumed its flow a beat later, the akasha ghosts scattered in a panicked flurry.

So it would seem that the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals really could suppress akasha ghosts. The first time they'd appeared, Qing Yu had also used the scroll to frighten them away.

However, these ones only instinctively reacted for a short moment before rushing at them a second time. They wielded various hell weapons, like chains and shackles or torture instruments once found in the eighteen layers of hell, and the very fabric of reality rippled intensely in the wake of their assault.

The ghosts shrieked like feral beasts as they swarmed forward. At that moment, the image of a similar charge in hell came to Lu Yun's mind.

Deja vu? The two scenes were eerily familiar, if not identical.

"Wait a moment!" He stiffened as he suddenly thought of something.

Hum!

With a gentle shake, the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals streaked into a trail of rainbow light and shot at the akasha ghosts.

"No, don't!" Lu Yun howled even as he lunged forward and threw himself in the scroll's way.

Bang! The scroll slammed heavily into him and sent him flying.

"What are you doing?!" Empress Myrtlestar chided softly. She hastily went to help him up, took out a healing pill, and shoved it into his mouth.

“No need.” Lu Yun gently waved her off, opened his mouth wide and sucked in a swift mouthful of air.

Pop pop pooooop!

Strange sounds snapped within Xing Chen, and soon after, his chest caved in by the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals inflated again. His body housed three organs of heaven and earth, and he wasn't a being of flesh and blood to begin with, so he could regenerate even if crushed to a pulp.

“Everything is fake.... This is a layout of absolute death,” Lu Yun slowly recomposed himself and spoke commandingly, “Cease your attacks, all of you. Everything you see is an illusion, a facade. Akasha ghosts have indeed come, but they're always accompanied by layouts of absolute death. As long as you don't trigger the layout, they won't be able to harm you.”

Lu Shenhou froze for a split second. He hadn't expected Lu Yun would see through the existence of the absolute death layout.

The last time, Lu Yun had made the mistake of bringing an akasha ghost into the kingdom of hell, thus triggering the layout of absolute death accompanying the ghost and summoning a throng of ghosts to descend on the netherworld.

At that time, he'd realized that the so-called layout of certain death wasn't a feng shui layout in the truest sense, but something that surrounded an akasha ghost like a personal domain. As long as one didn't touch the layouts, akasha ghosts couldn't truly arrive in person.

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Lu Yun's primary body no longer paid attention to Lu Shenhou. Glistening with dark, mysterious light, the Tome of Life and Death was focused on the forge of earth and sky while Lu Yun calmed his mind and focused all his attention on refining Qing Yu's poison.

“Heh... you countered my efforts so easily.” Though defiant, Lu Shenhou couldn't breach the defenses of the Tome of Life and Death, and the akasha ghosts were equally useless against Lu Yun. “Sure enough, you're quite the remarkable man, Lu Yun. Had you lived in the Primordial Era, you might very well have made that ancient emperor your follower.”

Empress Myrtlestar opened her mouth, about to reply, but Lu Yun dragged her over to his side.

“Don't bother responding to him, he's spouting pure bullshit.” It wasn't Lu Yun's first time confronting akasha ghosts. Additionally, the Spectral Eye could now see through all fabrications—even Qing Yu's former disguise would've been stripped down at first glance. Likewise, the Spectral Eye had also plumbed the depths of the resurrection layout.

“Don't talk, don't move. Even if the primordial immortal emperor were to come in person, treat him like empty air,” Xing Chen commanded in a cold voice.

The ten Yama Kings naturally followed his orders to the letter, while Mo Yi and the other three, in their capacity as protectors of the four formation eyes, likewise wouldn't act rashly. Empress Myrtlestar sighed faintly. To think a noble ancient empress like her would be lectured by a junior!

When my soul is fully healed, perhaps I, too, should start again from the beginning... With this one last thought, she gradually faded into nothingness.

“Did you say to treat the primordial immortal emperor like empty air even if he came in person?” Lu Shenhou suddenly posited.

Lu Yun threw him a sideways glance, but didn’t bother to reply.

“That... immortal emperor truly has come.” When Lu Shenhou’s voice fell, strains of immortal music filled the air and immortal radiance sprinkled down from the sky. An exceedingly handsome man walked down from the firmament with a measured pace. His face was striking and his features exquisite. Appearing as a young man, he was tall and slender, his tidy blue robe an appropriate finishing touch.

Inside the void, Empress Myrtlestar’s eyes widened when she saw the newcomer. She tightly covered her mouth, barely stopping herself from shouting in surprise.

The immortal emperor!

The immortal emperor of the Primordial Era!

The immortal emperor who’d unified a world where immortals and demons ran amok, the one who’d established a supreme immortal dynasty!

“Fake, it must be fake! How would the immortal emperor appear in this place?!” Empress Myrtlestar screamed inwardly.

“Who are you?” To her shock, she heard Lu Yun address the young man.

Chapter 706: Enemy

Lu Yun was talking to the immortal emperor! Was the man real?!

Empress Myrtlestar shot to her feet.

“Sit down, that wasn’t me.” Lu Yun’s timely warning rang in her mind. She opened her mouth, but decided against saying anything. “You should return to the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals, senior. Your soul is incomplete, which makes you highly exploitable. You can’t maintain your composure when facing the temptations from akasha ghosts.”

Shaking his head, he went up to her and took the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals from her limp hands. With another faint sigh, Empress Myrtlestar vanished into the scroll in a flash of light and the treasure settled down in Lu Yun’s hand.

In the beginning, both Lu Yun and Empress Myrtlestar had fallen for Lu Shenhou’s tricks and summoned an akasha ghost, which had disguised itself among the illusions. Thankfully, it’d been driven away by the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals before further harm could occur. Only then did Lu Yun realize what was happening.

The immortal emperor created by the layout of absolute death turned and looked silently at Lu Yun, who returned the gesture.

“We lost.” To Lu Yun’s great surprise, the image suddenly spoke. The Spectral Eye was revealing... something unexpected. “The entire world of immortals lost.

“Before my death, I saw a giant invisible hand piece together our torn body parts and bury us in different parts of the world. My body is buried at the center of the world, alongside something that will determine the fate of the world of immortals!” His tone abruptly turned grave. “Find it and take it! You must take it before those people find it first!”

A tremendous aura surged from the immortal emperor, exceeding origin dao immortal realm and even the ingress, primordial, and principal realms. His strength had entered an entirely new realm!

It was jade pure realm, the realm after supreme pure realm!

“Return from whence you came!!” snarled the immortal emperor when he looked up. Punching out with supreme might, he shattered the layout of absolute death around an akasha ghost. The would-be assailant popped like a bubble, its departure marked with a final whimper.

“All of you failed as well! As failures, you should swallow your defeat and return to the void rather than rampage like this in broad daylight!”

Kaboom!

One after another, the immortal emperor blasted the akasha ghosts into nonexistence. They were never alive to begin with, which meant they were unkillable. He could at most send them back to wherever they’d come from. The akasha ghosts that had been ‘killed’ by the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals weren’t actually dead, either.

Something the immortal emperor said caught Lu Yun’s attention. Akasha ghosts were also failures!

What does that mean? Had the akasha ghosts been like the primordial immortal emperor before their deaths?

Lu Yun’s thoughts were a tangled mess. However, he did notice that the immortal emperor, just like the others, was still failing to see the real Lu Shenhou. The Lu Shenhou in Empress Myrtlestar’s eyes was an illusion created by the akasha ghosts with the layout of absolute death.

Lu Yun didn’t know what the immortal emperor was. He wasn’t a ghost, nor was he the lingering obsession of the emperor... He was something incomprehensible, but not even he could see Lu Shenhou!

“That’s right,” Lu Shenhou said with a faint sigh. “We’re all failures. But!” Violent waves of power surged from him, prompting even the immortal emperor to turn around in horror. However, he still couldn’t see anything at the origin of the energy.

“We won’t rest easy!

“Why should we sacrifice ourselves and our dao for the sake of others?!

“We refuse to accept that fate!”

Bam!

Suddenly, Lu Shenhou struck the immortal emperor with a palm strike. The immortal emperor reflexively lifted his arms to block the attack, but the palm instantly punched straight through his body and rendered him into ashes!

“It’s you...” the immortal emperor’s voice whispered about in the air. “They are the enemies... You must be careful.”

Then, even his voice scattered without a trace on the wind. When Lu Yun turned to Lu Shenhou, the latter’s expression had calmed.

“You’re a pig I’ve been raising as well, Lu Yun,” Lu Shenhou said leisurely. “You’re not strong enough yet, not mature enough for me to slaughter.

“As for that thing,” he looked at the hazy Tome of Life and Death, “it must have a weakness, just like everything else that exists. We’ll find a way to counter it.

“Qing Yu is merely one of our lesser pawns, one cast in a fit of boredom.” A conspiratory smile tugged at his lips. “Another piece is coming to fruition soon. I hope you’ll be able to save her then.”

Lu Shenhou slowly faded out of existence, like he’d never been here. A formation suddenly exploded in the crystal garden, and the forge of earth and sky popped into view.

Qing Yu sat cross-legged within the forge, surrounded by poisonous black smoke. A grey pillar of light shot out of her body and pierced the firmament, seemingly connected to something above. As Lu Yun made a series of hand seals, the gray light gradually faded into pure white.

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“What’s going on? What are they doing?!” With the formation broken, some noticed what was going on in the garden. The formation had created a seed storage to conceal Lu Yun and Qing Yu; however, Lu Shenhou had shattered the subspace when he departed.

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“Off you go. Little Yu is injured, I’m merely treating her injury.” Xing Chen soared into the sky and unleashed a tremendous aura.

The spectating immortals started, reminded of the moment the Ancient Tree of Life had descended upon Dusk Province. Even the demon god had been defeated, which was enough to discourage them from attacking Lu Yun in his own territory. They wouldn’t be able to do anything but watch even if he did establish his dao here.

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Bam!

Bam!

Bam!

Great rumbling noises echoed from Qing Yu’s body. The Key of Life, Fusang Purewood, pearls of the four spirits, and essence of the Four Guardians emerged from her body. She’d turned the silver of starlight as

rays of cosmic radiance streamed down from the sky to wash over her, and she looked like a goddess stepping out from the light.

Hum.

Snow-white light flared from her body and shattered the gray light from earlier as the true Dao Flower slowly descended upon the scene.

Chapter 707: Palace of Heaven and Kingdom of Hell

The true Dao Flower had descended!

Lu Yun could tell that this Dao Flower wasn't the one bearing the path of cultivation, but the actual one that bore the immortal dao! The flower of the path of cultivation had transformed into a delicate crystalline petal and returned to the Dao Flower proper.

The actual Dao Flower!

The turn of events caught even Lu Yun off guard, but he immediately pivoted into appropriate measures without delay. All of Dusk Province shook as four giant doors of swords materialized to guard the province.

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"According to legend, the primordial divine court lured down the Dao Flower and erased its runes when supplanting the immortal dao," a voice rang from outside Dusk, then continued in a frantic shout, "Are you trying to do the same, Lu Yun?!"

"Do you even have a brain?" Lu Yun looked over his shoulder at the man. "My dao partner is the Dao Sovereign, a personage approved by the Dao Flower itself. Why would I go to such lengths to topple the immortal dao?"

Boom!

The Dao Flower trembled as its layers of petals unfurled to grace Dusk Province.

"Is he... establishing a sacred land again?" many clamored in shock and disbelief.

Lu Yun had only summoned the projection of the Dao Flower in his last failed attempt to establish his dao, but this time, the actual flower itself had descended and was blooming in Dusk Province! Waves of rich immortal energy washed over the land.

"Look at the stamen of the flower," someone shouted. "Is that... a palace?"

Spectators focused their gazes to take a closer look at the center of the flower, seeing a crystalline palace emerge from it. Its size and materials were impressively unknown, and the exquisite craftsmanship was beyond the abilities of this world. The palace seemed to have been born from nature rather than built by living beings.

"What is it? A treasure, a real palace, or... some sort of heritage?" From their vantage points in their heavenly palaces, the celestial emperors of the world watched everything playing out in Dusk Province, their gazes penetrating through layers of space.

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After a lifetime of torment, the poison curse in Qing Yu's body had finally been dispersed by the lineup of treasures and refinement. Luminous and incandescent, she looked up as layers of dao light washed over her and the radiant palace floated down to hover over her head.

Slowly, the Dao Flower faded away and the dazzling palace grew increasingly concrete. Compelled to open her arms, Qing Yu incorporated the palace into her body.

Momentary scuffles broke out on the ground and air as everyone wanted a piece of a treasure from the Dao Flower. Even the demon god flickered into existence, but all action was quickly quelled as the entire province entered lockdown. The four evil coffins re-emerged from the void and soared into the sky, arranging themselves into a square that slowly overlapped with the four sword doors isolating Dusk Province.

Clank!

The four swords came howling through the sky and shattered the four coffins. Tremendous killing power suffused the sky as giant swords of cyan, white, red, and black materialized in the air and became one with the sword doors, turning the sword formation into reality.

All living souls in Dusk prostrated themselves on the ground to worship the four swords!

At the border of Dusk, Sword Divine immediately took off from his hiding spot. He didn't dare linger any longer. He could tell that all four of the swords were much more powerful than the Sword of Chaos. Even if he found its heart and recovered the Sword of Heritage and Sword of Slaughter, the Sword of Chaos would still fall short by a great margin!

The four swords respected not the heavenly dao, nor life and death, and they obeyed not the cycle of reincarnation!

As soon as the four swords became one with the sword formation, silence descended upon the world and a great consciousness receded from its atmosphere, shifting its attention away from Dusk Province.

The two scarlet apes of the North Sea shuddered and whipped around, leaving without another thought.

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"If the four swords were buried inside the coffins, then what was the giant skeleton back in the Vastspace Mountain?" Lu Yun muttered at the sword formation looming over Dusk.

Both the corpses and the Blood Sea buried within the coffins had disappeared, replaced by the four giant swords. It wasn't time for him to follow that line of thinking, though; almost all of his attention was focused on Qing Yu.

Once the pristine palace had been incorporated into her body, Lu Yun could sense something unusually familiar about her. It was as if they were a match made in heaven, the fates themselves having decreed them to be together!

"Heavenly palace... and the kingdom of hell!"

Enlightenment suddenly struck him!

Traditionally speaking, a palace governed the heavens and a manor governed the earth. That manor had now become his kingdom in hell, and the two came together to form a complete cycle of reincarnation.

They hadn't been created by anyone, but were born out of the natural laws between heaven and earth... the Tome of Life and Death! Both the heavenly palace and the manor had been created by the mysterious book.

Lu Yun had declined to rule over life and death or determine the good and sins of all life solely at his own discretion. This was why the heavenly palace and manor had emerged, transforming into two worlds defined by certain laws.

The kingdom of hell had evolved from the damaged hell of human dao, while the heavenly palace was but a symbolic structure drafted by the Dao Flower. The real world of the heavenly palace had yet to come to fruition; that would have to wait until Qing Yu's ascension to immortality a month later!

Once the world of the heavenly palace was established, the heavenly courts of the nine majors, ten lands, four immortal seas, and four seas would become nothing but poor imitations of the real thing. Even the primordial immortal court would be considered illegitimate if they returned.

Realization of the gravity of these developments dawned on Lu Yun and Qing Yu, and the latter turned to flash a sweet smile.

She'd never been so carefree since the moment of her birth. Constant nightmares dogging her every thought, House Donglin and the poison within her had drowned her in endless anguish and despair, making even breathing a taxing ordeal.

Then she'd met Lu Yun, someone who'd breathed fresh air into her life and remained by her side through everything. Her nightmares had finally been dispelled today, and she felt lighter than she'd ever felt before.

Lu Yun landed in front of Qing Yu and pulled her into his arms.

The strange phenomena between heaven and earth slowly dissipated, and the Key of Life returned to the Ancient Tree of Life, while the Fusang Purewood returned to the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals. Zhao Wushuang collected the essence of the Four Guardians, leaving only the four pearls circling around Qing Yu and Lu Yun.

"Hey, hey, hey! What do you think you're doing, you brat?!" a strident voice interrupted the couple's moment of shared joy. Qing Buyi couldn't not say anything when he saw Lu Yun embracing his baby sister. The two of them weren't dao partners yet! Before Qing Buyi could step in and break them apart, Chen Xiao hauled him back.

"What now?!" Qing Buyi glared at him.

"Sever your cultivation now," Chen Xiao raised a brow, "and start anew!"

Chapter 708: The Immortal Emperor's Treasure

As soon as the two unholy daredevils—Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi—returned to the world of immortals, they severed their cultivation with the intent of attaining the void realm. Neither of the two unruly hooligans cared about what was happening to their clans.

Meanwhile, crown prince Zhao Shengguang happily left for Xiankan and requested to ascend to the throne. No one paid any heed as to whether or not he actually succeeded.

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Lu Yun gazed upon Qing Yu with an ardent gaze, causing her to duck her head in embarrassment.

“Let’s become dao partners!” She suddenly looked up directly at him.

“Yes!” Momentarily stupefied, Lu Yun swiftly nodded emphatically.

To become dao partners in the world of immortals was equivalent to getting married in the world of mortals. Lu Yun’s heart pounded, then with one swift kick, he punted himself—er... his replica off into the distance.

“If anyone’s going to become dao partners, it should be the original person!” Lu Yun glared at his replica and started to feel inexplicably jealous of himself.

Qing Yu rolled her eyes at both of them.

“Milord, you can’t become dao partners yet!” Ge Long came charging out of hell. With a wave of his hand, the four swords that’d merged with the gates returned to their resting places in the evil coffins and made their way back to the netherworld.

“Milord, the kingdom of hell has just evolved. If you form a dao bond now, the creation of the heavenly palace world will be halted!” The old servant furtively scanned the surroundings before continuing in a cautious tone, “If that happens, the heavenly palace world will be subjugated to the kingdom. You wouldn’t want milady’s accomplishments to be limited, would you, milord?”

Upon hearing that, Lu Yun turned and looked hesitantly at Qing Yu.

“Whatever you say,” she responded with a smile. Nothing else mattered to her now.

“Alright, then let’s wait until you ascend to immortality,” Lu Yun laughed heartily. “We shall join as dao partners once your heavenly palace matures into a world!”

There was still over a month’s time until Qing Yu’s ascension. That amount of time would pass by in the blink of an eye, and Lu Yun was in no hurry either. After her ascension to immortality, he would be able to go about his business uninhibited and truly unleash his great ambitions.

While his hell was evolved from that of human dao, the true world of the heavenly palace had been born from the Dao Flower. It was the very opposite of Lu Yun’s kingdom in hell.

“Milord, I believe it would be best if you paid a visit to the central world before the mistress ascends to immortality. You should take the central world and have it merge with the heavenly palace,” Ge Long suggested in a grave manner.

“The central world?” Lu Yun blinked. Naturally, he knew of its location. The Sovereign World established by the Sovereign Ranking Battles was also the central world, wherein lay buried countless ancient immortals and their teachings and legacies.

He’d always wanted to go there again, but the proper opportunity had never arisen. Furthermore, the gate to the central world was in Destiny City.

After the first Sovereign Ranking held in Destiny City two years ago, the organizers had hosted a second one. A great number of talented immortals had gathered once again in Destiny City, and geniuses sprang up one after another.

Unfortunately after that, the void that hosted the battles and contained the Sovereign World had never opened again.

Thankfully, this didn’t pose a problem for the cultivators and immortals of the world. Their mentalities had long been corrected and set on the right path. The Sovereign Ranking Battles existed for the sake of mutual exchange and progression, not for fighting over ancient legacies and inheritance.

“That’s right, let’s pay a visit to the central world!”

“The central world is the heart of the world of immortals,” Ge Long explained. “It once housed the primordial immortal court and was the final battleground of the ancient war a hundred thousand years ago. Therefore, it suffered the most severe destruction and has almost become a dead world where the immortal dao cannot be made manifest.”

When the Dao Flower was finally repaired and its projection reached the multiverse, Qing Yu had discovered a “void” world that the immortal dao couldn’t enter—the central world. That was also how Lu Yun had speculated that the Sovereign World was the central world.

“Although the central world is now fragmented and dead, it is nevertheless the heart of our world. Moreover, a tremendous immortal restriction is set there! Milord, if you succeed in merging the central world with the mistress’ heavenly palace, the benefits will be no less than waiting for the heavenly palace to evolve into one of its own.”

“How much do you know?” Lu Yun looked at Ge Long with a frown.

Glittering with aureate radiance, the Karmic Tree passed on feedback that Ge Long’s respect was very sincere and came from the bottom of his heart. Not even the Tome of Life and Death was able to prevent the old servant from entering and leaving hell as he would.

“This old servant knows everything... However, my knowledge cannot be shared. Even if I tell the truth, the world itself will interfere.”

To demonstrate, he opened his mouth and made motions like he was speaking... but nothing came out. Even stranger still was that his mouth seemed to be covered by an invisible force that prevented Lu Yun from reading his lips.

“What this old servant spoke of just now is the truth of the primordial war,” Ge Long explained helplessly.

Lu Yun nodded. The war that'd taken place a hundred thousand years ago was incredibly chaotic and cryptic. It'd shattered the world of immortals and hearkened a strange power that established the numerous tombs within the world!

Where all of these tombs had come from, and who'd established them for the immortals fallen in battle, were still unsolved mysteries. Perhaps Ge Long knew the answers to those questions, but he was unable to reveal them.

"In that case... Little Yu and I will set out for Destiny City in three days!" Lu Yun declared.

Qing Yu nodded vigorously, latching onto his arm and refusing to let go no matter what anyone said.

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"Lu Yun, you must not forget what the immortal emperor told you!" Empress Myrtlestar appeared again after Ge Long departed. She'd found it impossible to forget the venerated one's appearance. Moreover, she'd clearly heard what the immortal emperor had said to Lu Yun.

The item that could not be seen... was what the enemy had used to annihilate the primordial immortal court a hundred thousand years ago. The treasure of the immortal emperor, an item related to the survival of the world of immortals, would soon appear in the central world. She had a faint suspicion of what it might be.

"I know. It's time to pay a visit to the central world." Lu Yun nodded.

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"Hao'er, make preparations to enter the central world!" Dongfang Hao's master ordered with a sudden appearance. "The primordial treasures of the central world are about to reveal themselves. However, you must be careful. The changes in the underworld, as well as the movements of the creatures from the Blood Sea, are all due to that treasure!"

Dongfang Hao's master had gone to his disciple immediately after returning from the underworld.

"What is it?" Dongfang Hao asked with a slight frown. "Can it be the Immortal Subjugation Seal that was used by the immortal emperor to administer the world?"

"No, the Immortal Subjugation Seal simply cannot compare. The item's existence goes against the immortal dao and the world itself. Its name cannot be uttered. You'll understand when you see it."

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"It has appeared, at long last it will appear! ...Jiangchen, you shameless old bastard! You stole the body of a junior?! Aren't you afraid the old skeleton will come after you?" Yin Jiuying's expression changed drastically when he saw the greatly changed Jiangchen Xie.

"That old skeleton already chose this one and modified his body for eventual possession, anyway," sneered Jiangchen Xie. "Last time, I nearly died at the hands of a junior. This time, I will turn that junior into a zombie!"

“Forget about Dusk Province for now!” Yin Jiuying dismissed gravely. “The treasure of the immortal emperor is about to appear. Go to the central world and obtain it!”

Chapter 709: The Immortal Emperor’s Heir?

In the world of immortals, life proceeded as usual.

Most regular immortals, including some crippled origin dao experts, were unaware of what’d just transpired. But some special existences, including all of the celestial emperors, keenly felt something afoot, as if the very air was imbued with a peculiar energy.

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“Ah, it’s the venerated immortal emperor’s treasure.” Inside a small mountain gorge, a youth stood up and stretched leisurely. “Since the heavens permitted me to survive and be reborn, I shall strive in this life to reforge our glories from a hundred thousand years ago!”

Impressively, this young man was a primordial powerhouse reborn. Blurring into motion, he headed toward Destiny City.

Quite a few others like him could be spotted in various places around the world. The primordial immortals had possessed a keen sense of danger, and many of them had scouted out a hiding place on the eve of the catastrophe. Though they’d died in the end regardless, their souls and true spirits had survived and quietly awaited rebirth.

There were also those who walked out from ancient tombs. Awakened by intrepid tomb explorers of the current age, these ancient powerhouses possessed the bodies of their hapless victims and hid themselves afterward. After the rediscovery of the void realm, they too had re-emerged one by one.

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Destiny City was exceptionally lively these days.

Apart from the imposing city itself, a profusion of citadels had been erected in its vicinity. Through two Sovereign Rankings, Destiny City had further consolidated its status and was poised to become the number one “sacred city” in the world.

At first, its city lord hadn’t planned on holding more than one Sovereign Ranking, but Qi Hai’s arrival had changed everything. Lu Yun hadn’t participated in the second gathering, but a host of geniuses from all over the world had responded to the call and gathered in Destiny City.

Under Qi Hai’s supervision, this gathering became an occasion to spar and exchange knowledge with each other, so that all the void-realm powerhouses of the world could work together to improve themselves.

It was precisely to this Sovereign Ranking’s credit that the numbers of void-ascended immortals in the world continued to increase.

After Dao City’s rise to prominence, countless void realm methods began circulating, alongside various void-ascending methods, combat arts, mystic arts, and even formations of heaven and earth.

In such an environment, Destiny City grew ever more prosperous. Meanwhile, Qi Hai pulled the strings behind the scenes and continued to incorporate various geniuses of outstanding talent into the faction.

Of course, as a human, his goal was to revitalize mankind. He wanted humanity to once more stand at the top of the world, to control the immortal dao, and to rule over all the other races. Therefore, he naturally wouldn't rear geniuses for potential enemies and only chose humans that'd been blessed with immense potential.

"Only the perfect timing is left before we can establish the sacred land of human dao and rekindle mankind's glory." Hovering above Destiny City, Qi Hai looked up at the sky. He, too, had noticed the immortal emperor's treasure, but it brought him no joy. The treasure was too powerful, too eye-catching. It wasn't something that Destiny City in its current state could involve itself with.

He very much coveted the treasure, of course, but he wasn't blinded by greed. If the treasure were to truly fall into Destiny City's hands, it might do more harm than good and snuff out the newly-kindled spark of hope.

Compared to the treasure, what he cared most about was humanity's future.

Many major figures throughout the land had dispatched geniuses under their wings to Destiny City, while others had come in person. The path leading to the central world lay inside the Sovereign Stele. However, it came with a formidable restriction. Namely, dao immortals were barred from setting foot on it; the greatest realm allowed was the peerless immortal realm.

Actual fighting prowess counted for little, as only one's cultivation realm mattered for the restriction. Void-ascended immortals were still a relatively new phenomenon. Apart from rare cases, like Mo Yi or Lu Feng, the strongest ones were merely empyrean immortals.

Due to Lu Yun's efforts in spreading formations of heaven and earth far and wide, quite a few old-system peerless immortals were now endowed with one. In battle strength, they could be compared to the primordial immortals. They would be the main protagonists in the fight to come over the treasure.

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"City Lord, fellow daoists hailing from the world over have gathered in Destiny City. Please open the path." All of the celestial emperors had come to Destiny City in person. Ancient writings were the only places where one could find mention of the immortal emperor's treasure, but their heavenly mandates could vividly sense the item's presence.

The treasure's power was formidable, surpassing the Immortal Subjugation Seal that represented the world's legitimacy. It was classified as forbidden by both the world and the immortal dao. For many, even if they couldn't get their hands on it, they had to at least obtain the "Immortal Subjugation Seal".

The Enlightened celestial emperor appeared to be a young man. While he'd reached origin dao realm, he hadn't fully grasped the heart of a true celestial emperor. When he spoke, light could be seen dancing in his eyes.

Nephrite Major's throne currently sat empty, and the major's guardians, Art and Zither Saints, cared only about defending it from foreign invasions. Therefore, there was nothing preventing these celestial emperors from arriving in Nephrite Major in person.

“There’s still someone missing... The road will only open when he arrives.” The lord of Destiny City gently shook his head.

“Oh?” Many blinked in surprise.

“Who?” The Enlightened celestial emperor frowned faintly.

“Lu Yun of Dusk Province,” answered Destiny’s city lord.

“Lu Yun? How does this matter relate to him?” The crowd froze for a fraction of a second when they heard the name. Although the young governor wasn’t particularly strong, Dusk Province had grown to such a degree that many now considered it a real threat.

At first, they’d thought that even if it were to become a sacred land of immortal dao, they could simply choose to ignore its existence. But alas, Dusk Province had bared its fangs. In Witherdew Major, the Dusk Phalanx had trampled everything standing in its way and conquered many provinces and assorted territories, all the while inflicting disastrous losses on numerous factions.

Many were those who were afraid that once powerful enough, Dusk Province would set its sights on conquering the world of immortals.

“He is the very reason why the treasure has come into being in the first place,” Qi Hai’s voice sounded from the sky. “The primordial immortal emperor has chosen the boy as his successor.”

Qi Hai was all too happy to make some trouble for the young man.

“What?!” The celestial emperors who’d made the journey sprang to their feet, ominous sentiments flickering rapidly through their faces.

“In this world, there are no immortal emperors, only celestial emperors,” the Enlightened celestial emperor retorted. “The immortal emperor is a thing of the past and can no longer influence this new era.”

“This Qi Hai is really gifted when it comes to making things difficult for me.” Inside Destiny City, a disguised Lu Yun and Qing Yu sat in a teahouse and observed the exchange between these mighty characters from afar. “They’ll probably find another way to open the stone stele even in my absence.”

There was a path inside the Sovereign Stele to begin with. Last time, the will of the immortal dao had taken control of the Sovereign Ranking and brought out Nephrite Major’s key treasure, the Path of Ingress, to establish it as the road leading to the central world.

“According to my calculations, the road can be opened by gathering the heavenly mandates of all nine majors, ten lands, and four immortal seas.” Qing Yu nodded. Sure enough, someone else soon brought up this method: force the stele open with the heavenly mandates of the world!

The world of immortals was a vast realm with abundant riches and countless capable persons. A method that Qing Yu could so easily calculate would naturally occur to others as well.

Chapter 710: Masters of the Four Seas

To activate the Sovereign Stele and enter the central world, heavenly mandates from all twenty-three facets were required. However, the Nephrite, Witherdew, Exalted, and Truespirit celestial emperors had all died in short succession, their heavenly mandates returning to their respective majors.

Faced with this issue, the crowd found themselves at a loss as to how to proceed.

“There is another way!” Qi Hai’s voice rang out again. “It’s not impossible to replace the four missing heavenly mandates. We simply need the masters of the East, West, South, and North Seas to bring forth the essence of the four seas.”

“The masters of the four seas?” Blinks of astonishment were shared amongst the crowd.

“The North Sea court is no longer and the West Sea also seems to be in turmoil...” The one who’d spoken was the Primus celestial emperor. Among the five remaining celestial emperors, he was the strongest, the two origin dao fruits he’d plucked thanks to his mandate setting him apart from the rest.

“Kekeke!” a shrill voice came from the sky, quickly followed by a fetid stench as an obese humanoid creature walked out of the emptiness.

“There will be no problem with the West Sea monster court. The celestial emperor of the West Sea is now Us!” Ge Yanxia proudly announced, baring her massive belly at the crowd. When she used the imperial “Us”, the conceit in her expression grew even more pronounced than usual.

With a light wave of her hand, a golden ball of light appeared above her palm and flared with a sharp metallic aura: essence of the West Sea.

This essence wasn’t strictly comparable to a heavenly mandate from one of the world’s facets. Technically speaking, the four seas weren’t parts of the world itself, just strings wrapped around the world of immortals that prevented it from disassembling. But when it came to strength, they were strong enough to match any heavenly mandate.

The difference was that while heavenly mandates could be refined to wield the power of its facet and augment a celestial emperor’s strength, the essences of the four seas could only be the equivalent of a powerful connate treasure.

That Ge Yanxia had become the master of the West Sea came as a surprise to everyone. Celestial emperors had never addressed the monster emperors of the four seas as “celestial emperors”, and the title of monster emperor suited her even less, since fur seals had been excluded from the monster spirit race since time immemorial.

The crowd looked at one another, unsure of how to address her.

“Why don’t we just call her the West Sea Dog Emperor?” someone offered.

“Who was that?!” When Ge Yanxia heard the words “West Sea Dog Emperor”, her smugness instantly transmuted into outrage. Without further ado, she roused the power of the West Sea’s essence and lashed out with sharp metallic energies in the direction the voice had come from.

Boom!

Space trembled as a giant silver halo of light exploded out of nothingness and shattered the golden beams. A tall, limber figure came out into view. Most present instantly forgot to breathe upon seeing the apparition.

It was a woman of extraordinary beauty, unmarred by the slightest defect. Every centimeter of her skin seemed to have been lovingly crafted by the hands of the heavens. Long silver hair cascaded down her back like a river of stars that trailed all the way down to her heels, while a silver silk dress clung tightly to her figure and accentuated her perfect curves.

Most men at the scene, including the celestial emperors, swallowed hard.

“Who are you?!” Rippling like waves of flesh, the excess fat on Ge Yanxia’s face and body trembled in stark contrast to the newcomer.

“Silverlight.” Rather than the soft, delicate voice one might expect, the woman sounded unusually spirited and valiant.

“Silverlight... The scarlet ape?!” The crowd inhaled sharply.

A second scarlet ape even more fearsome and powerful than the golden one was in residence on Levitating Island of the North Sea. No one had ever imagined that... in her human shape, she would possess such stunning beauty!

But the crowd stiffened when, with a gentle sweep of her right arm, she conjured a black ball of light in her palm. Inside the ball, one could see endlessly surging violent waves and billows.

The North Sea’s essence.

The North Sea’s essence was in Silverlight’s possession, which implied she’d become the sovereign of the North Sea. While she didn’t call herself a monster spirit emperor, she was one in all but name.

Soon after, the monster emperors of the East and South Seas also arrived.

The East Sea emperor was a transformed xiangliu, an ancient immortal beast. Rather than a divine beast, he was a monster spirit through and through. The South Sea emperor was a bai ze. Bai zes were ancient divine beasts, but even in the current age, they were still among the noblest of divine beasts.

However, neither emperor was a pureblood immortal beast or divine beast, unlike Third Prince of the East Sea, Xiangliu Hongzhen, a pureblood xiangliu, or Third Prince of the South Sea, Bai Qi, a pureblood bai ze.

With these new arrivals, the masters of all four seas were assembled.

However, the East and South Sea emperors hadn’t come in person. The South Sea emperor was in seclusion, and the East Sea emperor considered himself the direct descendant of the primordial immortal court and was constantly trying to conquer the world. As a result, there was incredible enmity between him and the immortals of the nine majors, ten lands, and four immortal seas.

If he were to visit Destiny City in person at a time like this, he would be promptly swarmed by a host of powerhouses from the world over. Even if he were to grow three heads and six arms, he wouldn’t survive the ordeal.

“Since four celestial emperors from the nine majors are dead, let us masters of the four seas replace them.”

With an indifferent expression, the East Sea monster emperor swept a glance at Ge Yanxia, disapproval flashing through his eyes as he did so. The masters of the four seas titled themselves as either monster spirit emperors or masters of the sea, never celestial emperors.

An unsettled expression playing over her face, Ge Yanxia glowered at Silverlight with extraordinary spite, but didn't dare act on it. The scarlet ape was unbelievably strong. If she ever decided to attack... even the big fur seal, Ge Yanxia's father, would have no recourse but to rein in his anger. Her father was a primordial origin dao immortal, while Silverlight's cultivation far surpassed dao immortal.

Immortal dao was severed in the current era, so contemporary immortals only knew of realms above dao immortal because of legends. But for figures like Silverlight, those levels couldn't be more commonplace and mundane.

“Let us begin then... We will jointly open the gates to the central world. What happens after will be up to individual ability,” the South Sea emperor declared.

“Not so fast! We must prevent Lu Yun from entering the central world!” Ge Yanxia shrieked with a righteous face.

“Lu Yun's transformation art is unparalleled in the world. If he wants to go in, will you be able to stop him?” Qi Hai hadn't joined their gathering, but quite a few people nodded inwardly at his words nevertheless. The last time, Lu Yun had come to Destiny City disguised as “Qing Yu's Sidekick”, and everyone had been none the wiser.

“It's simple, we only let our own clansmen into the central world. Everyone else is forbidden from going inside!” Ge Yanxia proposed with a grating cackle.

Quite a few people fell silent.

All of the major powerhouses at the scene were aware of Qi Hai's identity as the foremost pillmaster of the Primordial Era. No one doubted his words. Since he'd named Lu Yun as the heir chosen by the ancient immortal emperor, there would be no mistake.

Dusk Province was now a name that carried weight. If her governor obtained the supreme treasure of the immortal emperor on top of it, she would rule supreme over all other factions, so there seemed to be a consensus forming about keeping Lu Yun out of the central world.

“Heh...” the East Sea emperor suddenly chuckled. “Are we to deprive everyone else of this opportunity for the sake of a single Lu Yun? Such an opportunity doesn't belong to us alone... Had the roles been reversed, Lu Yun certainly wouldn't have stopped everyone else from entering the central world.

“To sin against the entire world for the sake of a single person... If so, allow me to bid you farewell.” Without further ado, the emperor turned around and made his exit.

“We take our leave as well!” The South Sea emperor and the dragon emperor of the Untroubled Sea quickly followed suit.