

Necropolis 711

Chapter 711: Celestial Emperor of Nephrite Major, Zhao Shenguang

The East and South Sea emperors, as well as the dragon emperor of the Untroubled Sea promptly left without a second thought.

“Stop them, quick!” Ge Yanxia shrieked. “They’re Lu Yun’s allies, all of them! I’m sure they’re going to join him now.”

The combination of two monster emperors and a dragon emperor was a fearsome one. With them by his side, Lu Yun would have no issue activating the Sovereign Stele and setting foot in the central world. Sadly, the three had long disappeared into the distance.

“It’s too late, you people can’t stop them from leaving.” Strongest of the group, the Primus celestial emperor shook his head. “Let us go to the Sovereign Stele now. Since this sealed stele can’t be ours... we must prevent Lu Yun from attaining the ancient immortal emperor’s treasure at all costs!”

His eyes glinted menacingly. The lord of Destiny City had no strong opinion one way or the other, so he looked up at the figure of Qi Hai hovering in the sky, who gently shook his head.

“Indeed, we can’t let Lu Yun get his hands on the treasure... With the protection of the sword formation, Dusk Province is already as impregnable as Mount Tai. If he gains such a treasure on top of it, the world of immortals will be his sooner or later,” Qi Hai asserted meaningfully.

“If Dusk’s powerhouses ever happen to launch an offensive, I fear the few of us wouldn’t be able to stop them by ourselves,” Ge Yanxia responded uneasily.

Dusk Province could count on a holy lord from the underworld, the first void-ascended immortal Mo Yi, and the enigmatic Lu Feng. Furthermore, Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi, two unholy devils that’d once terrorized the entire world, had returned. Most likely, their battle strength was at origin dao immortal realm, if not greater.

A combined assault from all of those mighty figures would be impossible to fend off, even with the gathering currently assembled in Destiny City. Everyone’s gaze landed on Silverlight; among them, she was undoubtedly the strongest.

“Not to worry. This is Destiny City, not a place that just anyone can run wild in,” Qi Hai reassured.

“Incidentally, there’s more heavyweights in the world at large than one can imagine. If they ever dare go too far, someone or another will be along to deal with them.”

Awkward shrugs rose and fell in the crowd. Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi were fiends who’d never let anything stop them. “Too far” didn’t exist in their vocabulary.

“Indeed, if one could truly do as they pleased in this world, Goldenlight and I would’ve long conquered the ten lands and occupied the nine majors.”

Quite a few shuddered at Silverlight’s words. There were eighteen complete origin dao immortals at Levitating Island’s command. Lacking heavenly mandates and imperial treasures, no current celestial emperor would be their opponents.

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In fact, the East and South Sea emperors, as well as the dragon emperor of the Untroubled Sea, didn't go to Lu Yun. They'd discussed the matter with him in Dusk Province beforehand and decided on a plan of action, hence why they weren't particularly worried.

Meanwhile, layers upon layers of seals were added to the Sovereign Stele. The Primus celestial emperor personally added numerous restrictions to protect the giant stele. Not even a fly would be able to slip through the defenses.

There had to be more than two methods to activate the stele. Before a third way could be found, no one was to be allowed within three thousand meters of it.

At the break of dawn the next day, a great rumbling came from the air as a blindingly white avenue fell from the sky and crashed into the Primus celestial emperor's restrictions. Under the impact, the great formation that contained the power of the celestial emperor's origin dao fruits instantly shattered.

The Path of Ingress!

"Who is it?!" The Primus celestial emperor broke out of his meditation and sprang to his feet, two aureate rays erupting from his eyes as he took stock of the situation. Since there was a Path of Ingress in Lu Yun's possession, his first thought was that the little bastard had come a-knocking.

"This emperor cometh!" a voice traveled in from the distance with unbridled arrogance. "Female immortals of Destiny City will quickly submit to this emperor. Do not force this emperor's hand, or no mercy will be forthcoming despite you being members of the fairer sex!"

Open-mouthed, everyone stared dumbly at him.

"Zhao Shengguang, what in the heavens are you doing?!" Some people quickly recognized him.

Clad in imperial vestments, Zhao Shengguang stood on the Path of Ingress. Glittering bright above him was a heavenly mandate—Nephrite Major's heavenly mandate! After returning to court, he'd... actually really become the celestial emperor!

Lu Yun and Qing Yu exchanged a glance. When the boy had escaped from the Ancient Tree of Life, Zhao Shengguang had skipped his way back to Xiankan, muttering something about recovering an imperial treasure. It hadn't been yet five days since. How had he managed to refine the heavenly mandate and become the celestial emperor in the meantime?

The first time he'd ascended the throne, he hadn't refined the mandate at all. He'd merely managed to put in a quick appearance before being dragged off by Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi to the Endless Desert, leaving a casual substitute in the Nephrite Palace.

As a result, a creature from the Blood Sea had come ashore and swallowed the substitute, refined the heavenly mandate, and become the celestial emperor, thus turning Nephrite Major upside down. It'd happened right when Lu Yun and the rest had obtained the Dao Flower and were drifting in the Blood Sea.

Ultimately, Mo Yi had had to make a trip to the Nephrite palace, capture the creature, then sacrifice it to Dusk Province's restriction along with the mandate. It now appeared to Lu Yun that the creature had

chosen Nephrite Major for a specific reason... namely, the Path of Ingress, a path that led to the central world!

Back during the first Sovereign Rankings, when the Path of Ingress had been connected to the central world, countless creatures from the Blood Sea had also crawled onto it. At first, Lu Yun had thought them part of the ranking's trials.

However, according to the Azure Dragon King, creatures from the Blood Sea had come ashore again. As it happened, something unusual had recently taken place in the central world, leading to the appearance of the immortal emperor's treasure.

It'd be too incredible a coincidence if the two matters weren't related. Most likely, the denizens of the Blood Sea were after that very treasure. As for what Qi Hai had said, that was nothing but utter bullshit. The appearance of the treasure had to be intimately linked to the immortal emperor's sudden appearance.

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"You?" The Primus celestial emperor stared blankly at Zhao Shengguang for a long moment before recomposing himself. "You're the new celestial emperor of Nephrite Major?"

"New? Wrong! This emperor was always the Nephrite celestial emperor!" Zhao Shengguang tilted his chin regally. "That you lot have trespassed on Nephrite Major territory without this emperor's permission... Are you challenging Our authority?"

Qi Hai kneaded his forehead wordlessly. Zhao Shengguang's sudden arrival was truly unexpected, to say nothing of using the Path of Ingress to smash through all the formations and restrictions laid down by the Primus celestial emperor and the other powerhouses.

"The emergence of the supreme treasure in the central world is a matter of great import for all living beings of this world. It is an opportunity that one and all are entitled to! How dare thee rebuff the will of the people out of petty selfishness?" Zhao Shengguang roared. "Today, this emperor comes to redress this wrong for the good of all. Open!"

Rumble!

With a violent shake, the Nephrite mandate above him transformed into white radiance that encompassed all of Destiny City. Following which, the Path of Ingress shot into the sky and smashed the Sovereign Stele into pieces, then connected their spatial plane into the unexplored horizon where the central world lay.

"Go forth, mine people! Other than the immortal emperor's treasure, thou may also find the teachings and legacies of countless ancient immortals inside. Go on, it's time for thee to find thy destiny!" Zhao Shengguang hovered in the air, doing his best to look mysterious and unfathomable.

Chapter 712: The Mighty Zhao Shengguang

With a vacant stare, Qi Hai looked at the broken Sovereign Stele, then at the Path of Ingress leading straight into the central world. He raised his hand and almost slapped it down, but ultimately decided against the action.

Nephrite Major somehow already had a new celestial emperor on her throne, one who should've been in seclusion to refine the heavenly mandate. To fully refine a mandate required at least a thousand years!

In other words, apart from the dead Exalted and Truespirit celestial emperors, who'd earned the acknowledgment of their heavenly mandates, none of the others had mastered theirs in the truest sense. At most, they could borrow some strength from it.

However, the new generation of celestial emperors, including the now-deceased Zhao Changkong, had been groomed by their predecessors as their chosen heirs. From the moment they'd been born, they'd basked in their respective mandate's nourishing warmth. Therefore, even if they'd been mere aether dao immortals before succeeding the throne, they would've quickly attained the origin dao realm once in full mastery of their mandates.

But unlike Zhao Changkong, neither Zhao Shengguang nor the other celestial emperors had benefited from similar advantages. Therefore, they would have to toil for a full millennium to refine their mandate and bring out its full strength.

Indeed, why else would the old imperial uncle have left the major's ancestral vein in Lu Yun's care?

But now... that oddity Zhao Shengguang had raised a fuss, demanding female immortals to wait upon him as soon as he'd arrived in Destiny City. Even more outrageously... he'd used Nephrite Major's great treasure, the Path of Ingress, to break the Sovereign Stele and open the way to the central world!

In addition, the heavenly mandate's light could be seen revolving around his figure, clear proof that he'd somehow refined it!

In terms of cultivation, he was a measly peerless immortal, an ordinary one bereft of formations of heaven and earth, someone who should've become obsolete in this brand-new era.

But for some strange, unimaginable reason, this kid was now the celestial emperor of Nephrite Major, and he'd even gotten his hands on the heavenly mandate and the court's cherished treasure.

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"Hahaha!" Zhao Shengguang laughed boisterously. "Ladies of Destiny City, are you swooning at this emperor's graceful bearing yet...? Mommy, damn, what is that?!"

In his proudest, smuggest moment, his eyes happened to land on Ge Yanxia. He first froze for the duration of a breath, then shrieked with alarm, then... violently threw up on the spot.

"What is that thing? That, that lump, that pile, that thing's not human and not a ghost. Men, take it away!" Suddenly remembering his lofty status, Zhao Shengguang wiped off his mouth, pointed at Ge Yanxia, and hollered loudly.

"Nephrite Celestial Emperor!" The lord of Destiny City walked out, somewhat displeased. "She is the master of the West Sea. Her status is as noble as yours."

The city lord was barely holding in his irritation. For him, Zhao Fengyang was both a teacher and a friend. He'd met all of the emperor's children, but the one he was least fond of happened to be Zhao Shengguang.

Sex was this fellow's lifelong pursuit. He had a hundred dao partners in his harem, and stranger still... he was in the business of operating brothels. Be it the world of mortals or immortals, pleasure houses he'd personally established could be found everywhere.

Last time he'd come to Destiny City, he'd planned to open a brothel there, only to be kicked out by the city lord for his efforts. So now that this blackguard was here again, the city lord naturally didn't bother to hide his annoyance.

On the other hand, he wasn't particularly angry about the Path of Ingress smashing the Sovereign Stele. Rather, he very much approved of it.

"Master of the West Sea?" Zhao Shengguang blinked. "Dog of a West Sea Emperor?"

Snorts and stifled chuckles rose and fell in the crowd. Silverlight had just called the fur seal West Sea Dog Emperor, and now this curiosity of a Nephrite celestial emperor was adding fuel to the flames!

"You must be tired of living!" Furious, Ge Yanxia was about to strike when she suddenly realized she was being suppressed by the power of the land. Reeling from the pressure, she couldn't help but shudder. Such was the power of a celestial mandate!

"Hmph!" Zhao Shengguang turned frosty. "West Sea Dog Emperor, West Sea Shaggy Seal! You freed the demon in Exalted Major and caused untold mayhem through the world, almost turning all of it into demonic soil! Not to mention, you also caused the deaths of the Truespirit and Exalted celestial emperors. How dare a lowly beast like you still set foot in my Nephrite Major? You court death!

"Men, take this sea bitch away!" His eyes gleamed with a tyrannical light, raging wrath palpable to the countless immortals nearby. Little did they know, the anger didn't have much to do with the freed demon god or the two dead celestial emperors.

Rather... in that battle, many of his properties—his pleasure houses in Exalted Major—had been destroyed! His heart bled at the thought.

"At your command!"

Boom!

Four ear-splitting explosions rumbled through the sky. Visions of the Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Vermilion Bird, and Black Tortoise slowly took to the air. Together, they sealed off Ge Yanxia's movements. At the same time, crystal cannons flashed into existence, their mouths glittering threateningly.

The Azure Dragon Phalanx, Vermilion Bird Phalanx, White Tiger Phalanx, and Black Tortoise Phalanx! These four great armies were the core of Nephrite Major's strength! The soldiers stationed at the North Sea fortress at Dusk Province's borders had been a mere subdivision of the Black Tortoise Phalanx!

The true Black Tortoise Phalanx was uniformly composed of august immortals. Together, they could manifest the Black Tortoise's true self. Compared to Dusk Province's Dusk Phalanx, it was so much more formidable, so much more daunting.

Add to that the other three armies... Azure Dragon, Vermilion Bird, White Tiger, Black Tortoise— the formation shaped by all four sacred beasts made the very air tremble!

Deploying the power of the entire major, the heavenly mandate hovering over Zhao Shengguang bore down on Ge Yanxia. The four phalanxes launched their offensives at the same time.

Boundless in its grandeur, the divine power of the four sacred beasts crushed the fur seal like heavy mountains.

“Aaahhh!” Ge Yanxia screamed miserably, her body flattening into something that resembled black flatbread mashed into the ground. “Nephrite Celestial Emperor, I will have your head!!”

With a bloodcurdling scream, she opened her mouth and spat out a golden globe of light: the West Sea’s essence.

It immediately reshaped itself into a giant sword that ripped the sky open. As it did so, Ge Yanxia sacrificed part of her own flesh in a blood ritual and finally managed to flee Nephrite Major, leaving a mist of putrid blood in her wake.

“Ew, that’s so gross. That disgusting thing actually swallowed the West Sea’s essence. It’s going to be quite the trauma for whoever refines the essence next.” Zhao Shengguang chuckled.

The lord of Destiny City looked blankly at him, uncertain as to what he was supposed to say. As for Qi Hai, he hadn’t shown himself from start to finish, as if he’d fallen deeply asleep.

“Don’t worry, I didn’t forget the rest of you bastards!” Zhao Shengguang vented his spleen on the rest of the crowd. “You obviously know that repulsive fur seal is the demon god’s bitch, but here you are, happily rubbing shoulders with her. You were going to listen to that creature and block the way to the central world! You were going to destroy the future of your juniors! Or perhaps you, too, have sold yourselves to the demon god and want to sabotage the world of immortals?!”

Hum!

His heavenly mandate shook, amplifying his voice so that it resonated like the sound of the grand dao itself, so loud it could rouse the dead.

Chapter 713: Dog Emperor

Bolstered by the Nephrite mandate’s heavenly energies, Zhao Shengguang resonated with the entire major. The other celestial emperors collectively paled, and the monster emperors were sent tumbling to the ground by the shock.

After disappearing for so long, no one had expected the prince to return with so much newfound strength, alongside the harbingers of trouble, Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi. Right now, he was displaying power far greater than Zhao Changkong had ever shown!

During the incident in Azure Province, Zhao Changkong had called upon the Path of Ingress rather than Nephrite Major’s heavenly mandate. By that point, he’d reached peak arcane dao realm. Though he’d poured everything he had into the treasure, he still had a decent shot at surviving in some form of life—he’d only perished thanks to the misfortune of landing in the celestial master tomb.

On the other hand, if he’d used the heavenly mandate against Goldenlight and Kui, he would’ve been crushed by its backlash—soul, true spirit, and all.

That was a far steeper price than using the Path of Ingress. Though Zhao Changkong had willingly chosen death, he had done so with fear in his heart. Without the heavenly mandate's recognition, he couldn't comprehend the heart of the world.

In comparison, Zhao Shengguang had done all of that and more. After summoning the Path of Ingress to connect Nephrite Major and the central world, he'd also resonated with Nephrite's heavenly mandate as a mere peerless immortal.

Such a feat would've been unimaginable for his brother.

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"That Zhao Shengguang came out of the Ancient Tree of Life with Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi, didn't he? Maybe those devils had a miraculous encounter of some sort inside?" The celestial emperors of Primus, Enlightened, Truespirit, Thundergale, and Lazuli Majors were uniformly concerned.

That Zhao Shengguang could resonate with his territory placed him far ahead of them, making them feel just as self-conscious as the monster and dragon emperors of the ten lands and three immortal seas.

Zhao Shengguang was Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi's sidekick, and had indubitably been influenced by those two daredevils. If he crushed them with the power of Nephrite Major in a fit of impulse, they would have all died for nothing.

The new celestial emperor looked more murderous by the minute.

"You're mistaken, Your Majesty." The long-absent Qi Hai finally reappeared. "Destiny City is a sacred city for all cultivators and an uncountable number of them have congregated here. Even if we want to kill that fur seal, we must do so somewhere else.

"The fur seal is an underling of the demon lord. If a fight breaks out, the whole of Life Province will be caught up in it, much less than a singular Destiny City. It is our responsibility to make sure he doesn't try anything drastic, we can figure out where to go from there."

Qi Hai had a pale, handsome face and a lean figure. As soon as he appeared, Destiny City pulsed with a miraculous force that pushed back against Nephrite's heavenly mandate. The looming pressure of the Four Legions was rebuffed as well.

Destiny City had been one of the three hundred and sixty-five main cities during the era of human dao. As one of the wellsprings of humanity's power, it naturally possessed certain extraordinary qualities that couldn't be denied. Moreover, Qi Hai was the foremost city lord among all three hundred and sixty-five cities, with sufficient authority to command the rest. It was trivial for him to make use of the power within Destiny City.

"You..." Zhao Shengguang's face colored slightly. "If that's the case, this emperor shall not pursue the matter further."

Qi Hai's mouth twitched at the pompous self-reference. Before Emperors Fall, it had been used by celestial emperors of all races. Nowadays, rulers preferred the royal 'We', much like monarchs back on Earth. The difference, and the reappearance of 'emperors' and 'kings', had been brought about after the severing of the path of cultivation. It seemed to have something to do with humanity's ancestral planet.

As such, Zhao Shenguang's continued usage of the term made Qi Hai's teeth hurt. Not that he could do much about it, alas. If Destiny City were at its peak, he would have thrashed the young man and halted his antics a long time ago.

"However, the fur seals are subordinate to the demon god. They plot to overturn the world of immortals with every breath. Therefore, this emperor believes there is a great need for us to come together to defeat them."

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Inside the teahouse, Lu Yun and Qing Yu stared flabbergasted at the Nephrite once-prince.

"Is he really Zhao Shenguang?" Qing Yu blinked. She knew the youth—or thought she did, anyway. The prince was a dandy who'd gotten both of his legs broken by Chen Xiao when fighting over a woman, then ended up hung up over the Nephrite palace doors...

How had he become so assertive?

Moreover, his ability to use the Path of Ingress and Nephrite's mandate simultaneously was also a mystery.

"Ge Long once said that the Key of Life wasn't a part of the original Ancient Tree of Life. Born of the Wood Altar, it eventually became a part of the tree's source." Lu Yun furrowed his brow. "Before Emperors Fall, the ancient tree was the personal treasure of a certain emperor. If Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi specifically brought Zhao Shenguang along to pluck the tree's fruit..."

"Are you saying..." Qing Yu's eyes widened in shock. "Zhao Shenguang received that emperor's heritage from the tree?"

"It's just a sudden theory of mine." Lu Yun shook his head. "After the battle of Emperors Fall, every trace of the great emperors was wiped away from history... I've never heard of anyone obtaining their heritage after that. In fact, the very title of 'emperor' became an ill omen."

He turned back toward Dusk Province. He couldn't quite put his finger on it, but the demon spirit that'd corrupted the Ancient Tree of Life still seemed odd to him. However, Ge Long had already eaten the crystal core that once contained it, so there was nothing that could be further explored there.

Nevertheless, Zhao Shenguang's transformation was clearly due to some kind of inherited strength from the Ancient Tree of Life. If Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi hadn't placed any restrictions on him—indeed, they apparently condoned his ascension to Nephrite's imperial throne—they evidently thought he was qualified to rule.

"Oh, didn't Holy Lord Ashu say that the Ancient Tree of Life was some sort of great emperor's... covenant?" Qing Yu wasn't too sure about this.

During her baptism by the energies of the ancient tree, she had felt the full extent of its tremendous vigor. There was enough life contained there to construct an entire world. Lu Yun shook his head again; he had no way to know whether the holy lord had spoken true.

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“Wow, what a beauty!!” A loud shriek echoed beside Lu Yun and Qing Yu’s ears. The triumphant Zhao Shengguang had landed at some point when they weren’t looking. His eyes were practically glued to Qing Yu’s face. “Hello, miss. This emperor is Zhao Shengguang, the celestial emperor of Nephrite Major. Do you have a dao partner? If We may, We would like to suggest...”

“Are you not worried about Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi breaking your third leg?” Qing Yu snickered, then hurriedly flung out a restraining arm in front of Lu Yun.

“Huh?” Zhao Shengguang shivered violently at the mention of the Twin Devils.

Boom—

Boom—

Heaven and earth trembled alongside him. Two instances of ascension phenomena appeared consecutively, rippling through the whole world! In the next instant, they vanished as quickly as they’d appeared.

“Those Twin Devils became void-ascended immortals so fast...” The gathered celestial emperors gulped apprehensively in wariness and envy. They absolutely didn’t have the courage to discard their cultivation and ascend anew through the void realm.

Chapter 714: Tomb of the Immortal Emperor

The fact that Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi had become void-ascended immortals in only a few days made everyone incredibly uncomfortable.

“Heh... heh heh... it was just a joke, just a joke!” Zhao Shengguang twisted in mild discomfort at the sight, then snuck a look at Qing Yu before hurriedly turning away. Murder was written all over Lu Yun’s face, causing the new Nephrite celestial emperor to shrink in even further on himself.

While stuck in the Ancient Tree of Life, Zhao Shengguang had experienced firsthand how ferocious Lu Yun could be, but the Nephrite heavenly mandate connected to him told him more than that: there was something monstrously terrifying inside the other youth. If it were to be unleashed, even a noble celestial emperor would be annihilated in a mere instant.

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All kinds of immortals streamed into the now-open central world. They’d originally been in the dark, but the various emperors and moguls that’d gathered in Destiny City over the past couple of days hadn’t exactly kept the topic of their discussions a secret.

Well, it was more accurate to say that there was no way of keeping it a secret in the first place. The primordial immortal emperor’s treasure had appeared! It could very well be the key to the primordial immortal court—and indeed, power over the entire world!

This particular piece of news caused great excitement far and wide, and immortals and cultivators flocked to Destiny City once more. That last bit was no more than hearsay, of course; unsourced gossip that eventually became completely hyperbolic.

Nevertheless, its probable lack of truthfulness didn't curb the enthusiasm of the thrill-seekers in the slightest. When the sovereign world had opened during the Sovereign Ranking last time, countless cultivators had obtained ancient heritages within. A mere few years later, many of them had become void-ascended immortals.

Even if the primordial immortal emperor's treasure was a lie, there were still plenty of immortals interested in exploring the central world. The restriction there meant that dao immortals couldn't enter, making the situation relatively safer for them.

In just a few days, over a million immortals entered the central world in order to explore it. Those fortunate enough to obtain the heritages of primordial immortals were rapidly strengthened by their discoveries.

Quite a few Dusk citizens were among their number.

The Lin brothers were champing at the bit for a second plunge. They'd been conned into joining Lu Yun's banner in the central world last time, abandoning a sovereign-grade combat art—the 'Sword Atlas'—in the process. Hence, they burned with the desire for more loot.

There was less than a month before Qing Yu's tribulation, but neither she nor her dao partner was concerned. The two of them had already planned for her to undergo her tribulation within the central world!

Since the immortal restriction over the central world prevented dao immortals from entering, it was the safest place to undergo any tribulation. Furthermore, Qing Yu could make use of the tribulation to refine the central world into the world of the heavenly palace.

On the seventh day after the central world opened, Lu Yun and Qing Yu finally disguised themselves and entered that grand realm.

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The central world was gigantic, far greater in size than any of the other facets. The Sovereign World revealed last time had only been a tiny corner of the central whole. The sky was covered in a gray haze, and the earth underfoot cracked and barren. Burial mounds of all sizes littered the horizon.

"My cultivation's been restricted to the true immortal realm." Lu Yun frowned slightly.

He was here in his own body. After the nascent spirit of his replica had fused with his own, the Tome of Life and Death had bolstered his cultivation to that of Xing Chen's level, making him an arcane immortal. After arriving in the central world, however, that boost was nowhere to be found.

That wasn't due to any outside interference; the limitation was imposed by the immortal dao itself. After the first Sovereign Ranking and the opening of the central world, the immortal dao had begun encroaching upon these lands.

On their last journey here, they had come with bodies forged from life glyphs. Returning here with their real bodies gave them new insights.

"I feel it!" Qing Yu visibly brightened. "The origin of this world... its heavenly mandate, is calling to me. If I refine the heavenly mandate using the heavenly palace, I'll be able to turn the central world into the world of the heavenly palace."

The heavenly palace was born out of the Tome of Life and Death, so its perception was unerring.

"Alright, let's go find the central world's heavenly mandate. I'll watch over you as you work on it!" Lu Yun grinned.

"No!" Qing Yu disagreed. "You need to go find the primordial immortal emperor's treasure. The denizens of the underworld and the Blood Sea are both after it. If it falls into their hands, the consequences will be absolutely devastating!"

"But..." Lu Yun remained hesitant.

"The kingdom of hell protects you. You can go there if you get into too much trouble, right? In the same way, the heavenly palace is my world. If there's danger outside, I can simply escape there!" Qing Yu chuckled.

The heavenly palace existed in an unknown dimension, but wasn't a realm unto itself yet. When Qing Yu entered the palace, time in the outside world flowed as normal.

"I already know where the central world's mandate is. The moment I finish refining it, my heavenly tribulation will come..." A hint of melancholy suddenly entered her eyes. "Eighteen days from now, maybe? Eighteen days..."

"Don't worry, I'll be at your side by then for sure." Lu Yun took a deep breath.

"Okay." A smile returned to Qing Yu's face.

The two of them split up. Qing Yu was a force to be reckoned with in her own right. She possessed the combat arts of the founder of immortal dao and Empress Myrtlestar's guidance.

Lu Yun had used the Hell Flower and Dao Flower projection to reform the empress' soul and refine her body. Right now, she was undergoing both processes inside the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals. However, her thoughts remained available to wield the power of her starstones.

Because they were here in the flesh this time, none of the couple's treasures were sealed away.

Nevertheless, Lu Yun remained worried about Qing Yu's safety if she went off by herself. As he sat down at the lakeside of the thunder pond, his replica that'd been watching over Liu Qingmiao and Zou Longxiu left hell and trailed behind her. Having come to the central world, the replica was also limited to a true immortal's strength.

Noticing Xing Chen behind her, Qing Yu wordlessly held her head, then joyfully took the replica's arm.

Lu Yun instinctively opened his mouth at the gesture before sighing in resignation. "It's just me and myself... what am I getting jealous for?"

He produced his feng shui compass with a turn of his palm. It was at this moment that he finally understood the true meaning of the luopan. It contained yin and yang in one form, much like the Formation Orb, or perhaps the heavenly palace and the manor of hell.

“To seek a dragon of gold coiled,
Those deathly cliffs with mysteries roiled.”

Hum!

Aureate sparkles flared up from the luopan, but its singular needle pointed to several different directions before slowly beginning to spin without end. Lu Yun put the compass away.

“There’s too many treasures in the central world and the so-called ‘immortal emperor treasure’ has hidden itself. The luopan can’t find its whereabouts.” He took out the Treasurefall Coin, but it was similarly ineffective.

“Wait a second... the most likely place for that treasure to be... is the immortal emperor’s tomb. Of course!” The sudden epiphany made his next course of action clear: he needed only to find the immortal emperor’s tomb.

Chapter 715: Jiang Chen

The tomb of the immortal emperor!

Lu Yun didn’t need the luopan to locate it—he knew it was at the heart of the central world!

On the fringes of the central world were burial mounds of all sizes. Some were as small as a pile of dirt, while others were as large as a mountain range. Within every burial mound lay a primordial immortal.

There were more tombs and burial mounds here than in the nine majors and ten lands combined. These were the true resting places for immortals.

Lu Yun didn’t fight anyone for the opportunities he encountered on his way to the immortal emperor’s tomb. Those primordial legacies were beneath him. The methods he and Qing Yu had theorized together exceeded those of the primordial immortals. Once he established a sacred land and popularized the methods, the world of immortals would reach heights greater than the glories of the Primordial Era.

The primordial immortals had failed.

Lu Yun hadn’t.

With the Wandering Step, he made his way through the central world at a tremendous clip, travelling five thousand kilometers with every step. The central world was vast, much more so than any of the majors in the world of immortals. Even with his stunning death art, it’d still take him a few days and nights to reach its heart.

“Here you are, sir!” Lin Xuan’s voice came through Lu Yun’s transmission talisman after it rang. “The tomb of the primordial immortal emperor is at the heart of the central world, protected by a great formation. Anyone who wishes to enter will have to go in through an altar!”

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan had entered the central world seven days ago as Lu Yun's vanguard. Once they sensed Lu Yun's arrival, they hailed him without delay.

"There are twenty-eight altars that are portals to the heart of the central world, but all of them have been occupied over the past seven days. The two of us aren't their match... So..." Lin Xuan's voice gained a tinge of shame.

"Where's Lin Yu?" Lu Yun interjected.

"My older brother's recovering from a serious injury... Dammit! Someone's here!" Lin Xuan's startled shout was the last thing Lu Yun heard. Then there was silence.

With a slight frown, Lu Yun took out his luopan and input the message Lin Xuan had sent him into it. The indicator on the compass spun and stopped toward the northwest. With no hesitation, Lu Yun followed the luopan's guidance and moved with the Wandering Step.

This was one of the marvelous uses of a luopan. Not only could it determine feng shui and locate ancient tombs, but it could also trace energy or a voice to their source.

.....

Bam!

Bam!

Bam!

Great explosions rang out as the defensive formation Lin Xuan had hurriedly set up trembled furiously, cracks snaking through it.

Within its protection, Lin Yu was covered in blood, teetering on the edge of death. If not for the healing medicine Su Xiaoxiao and Yuying had packed for them, Lin Yu would've already died.

Lin Xuan quickly put down the transmission talisman and coalesced formation after formation with a flurry of hand gestures.

"Our teacher is very right. Formations without foundation may be the ultimate height of formation dao, but they have a great weakness—they lack reliability." Face pale, Lin Xuan threw up a mouthful of blood as soon as he opened his mouth.

He wasn't as badly injured as his brother, but his injuries were still serious. Both brothers were great formation masters. Under Lu Yun's guidance, they were on their paths to becoming the top-tier formation grandmasters in the world of immortals.

However, they were too weak in all other aspects. Their cultivation and combat arts, especially, were mediocre. Once someone was able to get close to them, the brothers basically lost all of their ability to fight back.

They had been ambushed earlier. If the tomb-raiding archives that Lu Yun had gifted Lin Xuan hadn't been a powerful dao immortal treasure, they would've died a long time ago.

“It’s just a little turtle shell, you two aren’t going to last long!” a malicious voice came from outside the formation, tinged with mockery and derision.

Lin Xuan threw up more blood with a reddened face upon hearing the voice, and the defensive formations he’d struggled to create shattered instantly.

A gray-haired man dressed in a long black robe appeared before the Lin brothers. He was tall and thin, his facial features devilish and eerie. An evil smile constantly played at his lips, but his eyes were unusually cold and devoid of life.

“Jiangchen Xie!” Lin Xuan snapped out.

The man was the top genius of the Jiangchen Clan from Truespirit Major, and he’d sensed the existence of the void realm twenty thousand years ago. However, his presence felt completely different now. The Hadal Bonfire hidden in him had disappeared completely.

Jiangchen Xie walked toward Lin Xuan and loomed over him, his voice cold as he said, “You’re a valued follower of Lu Yun’s, aren’t you? A rare formation grandmaster who can create formations without foundation. Do you think Lu Yun will lament your loss if I kill the two of you?”

Vicious light burst out from Jiangchen Xie’s eyes when he mentioned Lu Yun. He was, in fact, Jiang Chen, forefather of the Jiangchen Clan!

As the successor of the Venerated Sacrosanct Demon Sovereign, Jiangchen Xie had reached great heights with his Hadal Bone Method, becoming a treasured protege of the demon sovereign.

Yin Jiuying had once prevented Jiang Chen from taking over Jiangchen Xie’s body, but the zombie had taken advantage of a slip in attention when Yin Jiuying fought Holy Lord Ashu outside the realm.

There wasn’t anything Yin Jiuying could do after his return.

Although Jiang Chen’s cultivation was also suppressed to the august immortal realm, he was so powerful that just unleashing his aura was enough to critically injure Lin Xuan.

“Who do you think you’re going to kill?” demanded a steely voice. Lu Yun stepped between the two of them to protect Lin Xuan. “Well, well, I was wondering who it could be. It’s the old zombie, and you’ve possessed your own junior!”

Lu Yun’s Spectral Eye revealed Jiangchen Xie’s true condition. His true spirit and soul had been devoured by Jiang Chen; the old man had fully taken over the body.

“Lu Yun!!” Jiang Chen’s eyes blazed with fury as they settled on the newcomer.

He’d been defeated by Lu Yun’s then golden immortal replica outside Dusk Province, leaving him struggling for life with only a head. Jiang Chen took great offense at that and thus lost his temper as soon as Lu Yun appeared.

Bam!

Yellowish-gray corpse energy flared as he made a move; his hands had turned into beastly claws. Alarmed, Lu Yun grabbed the Lin brothers and quickly retreated; the old zombie was too powerful for him to face head-on.

When they'd fought outside Dusk Province, the old zombie had been powerful, but he could at most rival an old school dao immortal after his resurrection. Now, however, he'd possessed Jiangchen Xie, a void-ascended immortal!

Lu Yun quickly sent two healing talismans into the Lin brothers' bodies to stabilize their condition. Then he summoned the Sugato Sword with another wave of his hand, sending curtains of light cascading down to deter Jiang Chen.

"You should've been grateful that I spared your life, Jiang Chen, but look at you trying for revenge. I will fully end you this time!"

Bam!

Brilliant radiance burst out of the Sugato Sword and took shape as dark cyan swords, slashing at Jiang Chen from overhead.

Sword dao!

It was no longer Violetgrave's sword dao, but a sword dao belonging wholly to Lu Yun himself!

Chapter 716: Certified King of Scapegoats

The dark cyan sword encompassed thousands of sword dao combat arts, such as Vast Dragon Seaturner, Peng of Kun, Starstream Stroke, and Endless Cosmic Ocean, all of which served as the main structure of Lu Yun's sword dao.

Sword dao was a standalone path just like equipment, pill, formation, and talisman dao. Unlike the four supplemental paths, however, sword dao was the way of slaughter.

The area flooded with a vicious killing intent as soon as Lu Yun employed his sword dao. Having reunited with its jewel, the Sugato Sword was now complete and had even fostered a weapon spirit, allowing Lu Yun to tap into its true power by burning immortal crystals.

Jiang Chen went white as a sheet. His consciousness ground to a halt in the face of such enormous pressure, like an ant waiting to be trampled underfoot. All of the Corpse Refiners accompanying him had been annihilated into ashes.

Combat arts imbued with the power of the Sugato Sword were terrifying, enough to scare dao immortals witless, even if they weren't in the central world.

Bam!

A crackling sound traveled through the air as an enormous seal descended from the firmament and smashed into the dark cyan sword image, knocking it slightly askew. Jiang Chen seized the opening to make a panicked escape, vanishing without a trace.

Lu Yun jerked his head up at the faint figure hovering in the air. Sheathing the Sugato Sword, he asked in an indifferent voice, “Fangyang Xing, do you represent the Fangyang Clan or the Green Firmament on this trip?”

“Is there a difference?” Fangyang Xing shook his head and disappeared with a turn.

Lu Yun narrowed his eyes before checking on the Lin brothers. “Are you alright?”

“We are.” Lin Yu panted and got to his feet. “Unfortunately, the old zombie seized the altar we occupied!”

Dusk Province had come into her own and boasted quite the host of immortals now. The Lu, Qing, Chen, Xue, and even Yin Clans had officially joined Dusk as subordinate factions after Lu Yun acquired the projection of the Dao Flower. Immortals from all five clans had followed the Lin brothers to the central world this time.

Other than the void-ascended immortals, all Dusk immortals under the dao immortal realm had gained great strength after incorporating a formation of heaven and earth. The Dusk contingent had occupied an altar not long after their arrival, but before they could find a sacrifice to activate it, they were defeated by Jiang Chen and his entourage of Corpse Refiners.

Given the liberal scattering of tombs and burial mounds in the central world, it was the perfect battleground for Corpse Refiners. There were endless zombies buried here that they could enthrall. Zombies transformed from primordial immortals were tremendously powerful. Despite having incorporated a formation of heaven and earth, the Dusk immortals weren’t their match. Playing a key role in their defeat was Jiang Chen, who swept the floor as soon as he made a move.

“I understand.” Lu Yun nodded after Lin Yu’s briefing.

“Shall we go back and reclaim the altar?” Lin Xuan asked urgently. He couldn’t let the defeat stand. If Jiang Chen hadn’t shattered the formations set up by him and his brother, they wouldn’t have lost to the Corpse Refiners and their zombies.

Lin Xuan’s understanding of feng shui allowed him to counter zombies, which, however, all became useless once Jiang Chen stepped in. There seemed to be a tremendous forcefield around the old zombie that sent any zombies within its zone into a strange frenzy. Not even Lin Xuan’s feng shui layouts could deal with them in that state.

Now that Lu Yun had come and easily defeated Jiang Chen, Lin Xuan and Lin Yu wanted nothing but to retaliate.

Instead of giving the brothers free rein, Lu Yun mused pensively on the situation. He wasn’t afraid of Jiang Chen, but Fangyang Xing had shown up, and with a treasure that could rival the Sugato Sword—the Skyturning Seal.

With a single blow, the seal had challenged his sword dao deployed by the Sugato Sword. That was cause for caution, and he had to be on his guard.

The Sugato Sword was far from unrivaled in the central world. If the Skyturning Seal could put it in check, then there would be far more great treasures that could also do the same. It would be impossible for Lu Yun to defeat all immortals in the world with a single sword.

Noting the prolonged silence, Lin Xuan hurriedly spoke up, "All twenty-eight altars have been occupied, sir, we..."

"Forget the altars, gather all Dusk immortals in the realm." After a thoughtful pause, he continued, "Qi Hai set me up and called me the successor of the primordial immortal emperor. Everyone in the central world will thus be after our contingent. They're all in great danger if they set off on their own."

Five great clans had thrown themselves under Lu Yun's banner, who had sensed their sincerity through the Karmic Tree and accepted them into the fold. Since they were now his, he naturally wasn't going to abandon them.

"Understood!" Lin Yu began setting up formations. On this outing, the two brothers spearheaded the group of Dusk immortals. Thus, the other immortals had formation disks created by the brothers in their possessions. With a successful set up, Lin Yu could guide immortals from the top five clans to this location through their disks.

"Lin Yu, Lin Xuan, have you two escaped from the old zombie... Ah!" The first to arrive was a man dressed in cyan. He greeted the Lin brothers before coming to a surprised pause upon seeing Lu Yun. "You??"

It was Yin Qingran of the Yin Clan.

Yin Qingran snuck uneasy glances at Lu Yun off to the side; he couldn't not recognize their young governor. After all, he'd tripped up the man back in the Last Repose of Mount Exalted and hadn't expected to meet him again so soon. He knew the man was the master of Dusk Province, Lu Yun.

Yin Qingran had been against his clan joining Dusk Province, but his senior council had reached an agreement with Zhao Zhicheng. Yin Qingran had no choice but to follow his clan here.

As for Lu Yun... well, in his eyes, Yin Qingran was essentially the king of scapegoats who'd taken endless blame for him. If he hadn't joined Dusk Province, Lu Yun would've transformed into him again and started trouble in the central world.

"This... this... this subordinate greets Lord Lu Yun." Yin Qingran squirmed and bowed to Lu Yun.

"So it's you." Lu Yun gave him a half-smile. "I should commend you for a job well done in the Last Repose in Mount Exalted."

"Ahem!" Yin Qingran looked up with a smile that was more a crying grimace. "I've taken the fall for you many times, milord, to the point where I've become more trouble than I'm worth to my clan. I was forced to leave my home, leave Exalted Major..."

He'd realized what had actually happened in the divine tombs as soon as he arrived in Dusk Province, but it was too late then. The Ling Clan saw him as an enemy, and the demon god, fur seals, and all of Exalted Major considered the Yin Clan a great threat.

As a result, his clan would be slaughtered to the last if they hadn't sought asylum in Dusk Province.

Chapter 717: Eradication Formation

Soon enough, the immortals of Dusk Province answered the formation's signal. When everyone was accounted for, Lin Yu wore a dark expression, Lin Xuan's eyes belched fire, and Lu Yun's expression was inscrutable.

"There's only three hundred of you left?!" Lin Yu clenched his fists and ground his teeth. Though he'd asked the question aloud, it was more rhetorical than anything.

A thousand or so immortals had set out from Dusk Province. Among them, some possessed formations of heaven and earth, while others were void-ascended immortals.

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan had led a small group to occupy an altar after setting foot in the central world, but the rest had gone their separate ways to explore tombs and burial mounds, hunting for treasures and inheritances. However... only roughly three hundred had arrived in Lin Yu's formation. That meant everyone else was dead!

Lin Yu's nascent spirit was connected to his formation disk. Those who'd left their imprint on their own disks could sense his "mother formation", and Lin Yu could likewise determine their positions and whether they were dead or alive.

Based on the feedback from the formation disks, apart from the three hundred who'd made it here, everyone else was dead.

"Yes." Yin Qingran nodded. "I think they have a special method to determine where we come from. Anyone from Dusk Province... They've issued an order to kill us on sight."

"They?" Lu Yun frowned.

"A loose alliance formed by a dozen major clans around the world. Their only goal is to deal with Dusk and counter the alliance you've created, milord." Yin Qingran heaved a heavy sigh. Had he not been an outstanding genius of the Yin Clan with the ability to hide inside the void... he would've died several times over to said alliance.

"Lin Xuan, we're going back!" Clenching his jaw, Lin Yu turned to face his brother. Everyone's eyes snapped to him.

"Aren't you afraid?" Yin Qingran frowned slightly. After joining Dusk Province, the five great clans had developed an inexplicable sense of belonging to their new home. While the feeling wasn't that deeply-rooted yet, he was displeased, even disappointed, by Lin Yu's sudden desire to withdraw.

"Very well!" Lin Xuan nodded. "Undo the seal, we're going to trigger our tribulations!"

Lin Yu and Lin Xuan hadn't ascended to immortality yet!

In terms of cultivation, they'd become void-realm immortals a long time ago. In fact, they could already sense their tribulations. They'd used formations to break the connection between themselves and the world in order to postpone the date.

They'd wanted to strengthen themselves as much as possible beforehand in order to build the staunchest of foundations. However, taking it slow and steady was no longer possible. They'd joined Dusk Province earlier than folks like Yin Qingran, so their sense of belonging was even greater.

"Yes, it's high time for you two." With a flip of his hand, Lu Yun sent two golden lights into Lin Yu and Lin Xuan. The two brothers' cheeks flushed bright red and their entire beings felt like they'd been set afire.

Karmic fruits.

At this juncture, Lu Yun had injected them with two karmic fruits.

"Now go and face your tribulations... Return to Dusk Province and have Lu Feng stand guard over you." Lu Yun nodded.

"Let's go!" Lin Yu hastily pulled his younger brother along, his seal threatening to break loose at any second. There was an immortal restriction in the central world, so they couldn't undergo their tribulations there.

"Once we become immortals, we'll come back and teach them a lesson!" Lin Xuan's voice came from afar; they'd already vanished from sight.

.....

"Now then, I'm going to teach you all a battle formation called the 'Eradication Formation,'" Lu Yun announced to the remaining three hundred immortals once the two brothers left.

Like everyone else, Yin Qingran's pulse quickened. Although they'd joined Dusk Province, they hadn't obtained any unique benefits other than a formation of heaven and earth. There were all kinds of methods, combat arts, and formations of heaven and earth flowing out of Dao City. While they could obtain those, the same goods were accessible to other immortals as well, easily purchasable as long as one met the retail price.

However, the formation Lu Yun now spoke of was something they'd never heard of. Without a doubt, it was on an entirely different level compared to the goods for sale in Dao City. At the very least, it ought to be higher grade than formations of heaven of earth, crystal cannons, or lord-grade fortress ships.

Lu Yun immediately passed along the theory for the formation.

"Alright, I don't have time to guide you step-by-step through things. How far you can take this will depend on you. I hope that in the seventeen days to come, you can use this formation to slay every member of their so-called alliance," Lu Yun explained, his voice low and grave.

"With this formation, it'll be child's play to kill those mere true immortals!" Yin Qingran proclaimed loudly, his confidence at an all-time high.

Although they weren't yet familiar with their new knowledge, they could keenly sense how powerful it was. Compared to the battle formations they'd come across before, this was on an entirely different level.

This formation was a brand new one that Qing Yu had derived from Lu Yun's Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons. Through her calculations, she'd made many alterations, and she'd also

integrated the strong points of the Kunpeng Battle Formation, Scaled-Dragon Battle Formation, Formation of the Black Tortoise, and a dozen other war formations of varying strength.

Alas, it was only half complete in its current state, due to a lack of time. In its complete form, the Battle Formation of Yin and Yang would be able to project its own world and use its energy to kill enemies. However, it required every participant to be at least an aether dao immortal.

Lu Yun took his leave after imparting the battle formation. He hadn't planned on competing for the various finds and treasures in the realm, but he was absolutely furious that they'd allied for the sole purpose of uniting against him.

He'd learned the identity of the alliance's members from Yin Qingran and the other three hundred immortals. It would be one thing if he'd somehow offended them in the past, but as far as he knew, there were so many clans involved that he'd never even come across, to say nothing of possible enmity.

By teaming up against him, they simply wanted to weaken Dusk Province's influence and prevent it from ever truly becoming a sacred land!

In the past, it would've been understandable for people to see him as a helpless lamb to the slaughter, given that a weakling like him dared rule over a potential future sacred land. But he'd filled out his wings now and had demonstrated multiple times in broad daylight a strength that could shake the world.

Yet some still thought him a pushover...

He'd always played a passive defense, content to keep his head down and not offend anyone unless they provoked him first. But that was to be no longer! Today marked the moment he officially bared his fangs, showing the world what he was made of and striking out on the offensive!

"Thundergale Major, Zi Clan!" he muttered while traveling with the Wandering Step. "After I warned you out of the kindness of my heart that Dongfang Hao had seized control of Zi Chen, and your guardian spirit had turned traitor? This is how you repay me, by stabbing me in the back?"

"Sorry, Brother Zi Chen. I'm afraid I'll have to reap your clansmen." With a casual backhand, he landed a heavy blow on a burial mound below and instantly killed the eight immortals foraging within it.

These immortals hailed from the Zi Clan, one of the first clans to participate in the alliance in its infancy. Once dead, those immortals immediately entered hell and became Lu Yun's ghostly soldiers.

His first move complete, he continued on his way, hunting for his next target. Even so, the route he chose was one that still led straight to the heart of the central world. Despite these distractions, he hadn't forgotten his most important goal.

Chapter 718: World Boundary

Apart from the Infernum and ghostly servants who'd gone to Witherdew Major with Yuchi Tianhuang, Xuanyu and company, the rest had all been reborn from their Hell Flowers and become denizens of hell.

Hence, it was past time that Lu Yun recruited another batch of ghostly soldiers. Along his way to the immortal emperor's tomb, he went on a furious killing spree and didn't spare a single immortal that belonged to this so-called alliance. He could quickly determine everyone's identity with the Spectral Eye, so his target selection was as accurate as could be.

Meanwhile, the Eradication Formation directed by Yin Qingran also lumbered into motion. However, since the Dusk immortals weren't too familiar with operating it yet, they acted with more reserve.

Even so, they quickly attracted the attention of a special power. Members of the alliance gradually surrounded them and attempted to wipe out the Dusk survivors all at the same time.

Back in the world of immortals, Dusk Province didn't stand idly by. Only a little more than a thousand immortals had set out from Dusk, a trivial number compared to the contingents sent by other factions and clans. But once Lin Yu and Lin Xuan returned and related the events afoot in the central world, Wanfeng and Zhao Zhicheng saw red.

A flurry of action erupted as the province mobilized in full force. One after the other, lord-grade fortress ships cast off their moorings and set sail for Destiny City in Life Province.

The clans forming the enemy alliance also received word that the gig was up, and in response, they turned out en masse and sent their members swarming into the central world, intent on turning it into another battlefield.

The riches that could be found inside the central world defied imagination. There were endless heritages to be found, or ancient combat arts fully intact just waiting to be picked up. These kinds of arts were a perfect fit for void-ascended immortals of the current age and enabled them to unleash greater power as befitting their level.

Therefore, even the conflict in Witherdew Major abated. Large numbers of troops retreated from Witherdew in droves and headed toward Nephrite Major instead, where Zhao Shengguang presided over Destiny City, his presence overshadowing the authority of Qi Hai and the city lord. Everything proceeded in an orderly fashion, with no signs of disruption to be found anywhere.

In the beginning, a major clan's crippled origin dao immortal and his warriors had tried to stir up mayhem in a scene reminiscent of the first Sovereign Ranking. However, Zhao Shengguang had acted decisively in response. With the combined power of his heavenly mandate and the Path of Ingress, he wiped out the crippled dao immortal and executed every warrior of his clan that'd made the journey to Destiny City.

Shortly thereafter, he declared war on the same clan and arrested all of their immortals in Nephrite Major, then had them burned at the stake.

His actions stunned the world.

No one had expected this new, incredibly ludicrous emperor would be so decisively brutal. To think he'd wage war on a major clan protected by a crippled origin dao immortal! When the shock wore off, that very ruthlessness gave pause to those who were becoming progressively more restless and ultimately kept them in line.

The Art and Zither Saints also showed themselves, and they weren't alone. Bearing a name that struck fear in the hearts of many otherkind and monster spirits, the Gorb Demon had also been spotted in Destiny City.

By himself, a simple Nephrite celestial emperor might not be able to subdue all immortals far and wide, but the presence of Art Saint, Zither Saint, and the Gorb Demon was enough to dissuade anyone from making a scene.

Besides, Zhao Shengguang's actions clearly hinted at which way the wind was blowing. Nephrite Major planned to bring Destiny City back under her jurisdiction!

Destiny City was located inside Life Province, yet was an independent faction free from Nephrite's rule. The two factions had frequently locked horns in the past, a situation that'd only eased somewhat after the crowning of Zhao Fengyang, the father of the current Nephrite celestial emperor.

At the moment, Nephrite Major's four Guardian Phalanxes surrounded Destiny City in all four directions, while Zhao Shengguang personally oversaw the scene with his heavenly mandate and Path of Ingress, making no secret of his intention to bring the city to heel.

The lord of Destiny City remained expressionless, while Qi Hai's expression was so brooding it could almost rain.

"Does Nephrite Major wish to undergo another change of rulers?" Qi Hai's lips curled in a malevolent smile.

Something was obviously afoot inside the central world. Initially connected to the outside world through the Path of Ingress, the world was slowly revealing its true form as a giant lid in the sky over Destiny City. Even so, it hadn't fully come into being yet. As of this moment, it still lay inside an unknown space.

.....

Lu Yun arrived in front of a great wall of light, a manifestation of the guardian formation of the immortal emperor's tomb. Along the way, he'd added more than ten thousand ghostly soldiers to his kingdom.

Such a terrible number couldn't help but make many immortals sit up and take notice. But, while they felt the pressure, they also couldn't pinpoint Lu Yun's location.

"This wall of light isn't a formation, but a boundary between worlds!" Lu Yun immediately understood when he reached out and gently poked the light.

A World Boundary!

At the edge of the East Sea, the boundary that'd isolated the underworld from immortal tribulations was also a World Boundary. Such a boundary was born from the world itself, rather than being an artificially-built structure. Using the purest energy of the land, it formed a barrier that demarcated two different worlds.

"It's true we're inside the central world, but the immortal emperor's tomb is isolated behind a World Boundary.... Perhaps the tomb isn't inside the central world, per se, but in yet another world? A world within a world?" Lu Yun summoned the Path of Ingress and tried to force his way past the boundary into the tomb.

Alas, unlike the badly battered boundary at the end of the East Sea, this barrier was in perfect condition. It was flawless with nary a weakness in sight. The Path of Ingress was powerless against such a barrier born from the purest energy of the land.

Had Qing Yu been with him, she might have been able to calculate a weak spot in the boundary and find a way to unravel this formation of heaven and earth. Lu Yun himself possessed a certain degree of proficiency in formula dao, but what he had couldn't compare to his dao partner's mastery.

On her side, Qing Yu had located the central world's mandate and was in the process of refining it. Her actions likewise drew the attention of many, but Xing Chen was there with her, fully committed to protecting her and stopping anyone trying to interfere.

"I have to find a way, Fangyang Xing and Jiang Chen have already gone inside." The boundary could stop Lu Yun from entering, but it couldn't obstruct his Spectral Eye, so he could see who'd gone beyond the barrier.

What truly surprised him was the size of the area delimited by the World Boundary. It was a mere thousand kilometers across, and while there was indeed a great tomb inside... the immortal emperor wasn't the tomb's chief occupant.

"Is the one buried inside the immortal emperor's tomb not the emperor himself?" Lu Yun furrowed his brows. "That said, there's this undefined area outside the tomb that the Spectral Eye can't penetrate..."

With a deep breath, he turned around and left. Since he couldn't force his way past the barrier, he had to slip inside via an altar instead.

Traveling with the Wandering Step, he quickly found such an altar. The edifice was protected by layers of formations and thousands of immortals were densely crowded around it, subtly positioned in a formidable battle formation.

Altars were critical structures to entering or exiting the immortal emperor's tomb. If lost or destroyed, those who'd entered might well become trapped. Therefore, it was impossible for a single clan to occupy an altar by themselves.

For example, ten clans were jointly in charge of the altar currently below Lu Yun.

Chapter 719: Spirit Fragmentation

In total, five thousand immortals from ten clans were arranged in a majestic formation around the altar.

Lu Yun took some time to consider his options. It would be one thing if the five thousand were loosely stationed around the structure. He could've used the Sugato Sword to wipe them out in a single attack.

However, they were arrayed in a battle formation that amplified their strength many times over. As things stood, they could erase him from existence with a single strike. Anyone in a position to enter the central world was at least a void-ascended immortal, or an immortal who'd integrated a formation of heaven and earth into themselves.

"Strange, this battle formation is ever-changing and in continuous motion, as if it's gone through a great deal of trial and error and withstood the test of time. But it's been at most seven or eight days since they came in here. Plus, these people..."

Opening the Spectral Eye, he immediately grasped their identities. These ten clans all hailed from different places and weren't even affiliated with the same celestial court. Stranger still, it'd taken them less than ten days to fully grasp the formation.

It didn't make sense at all, no matter how he thought about it.

"Hmm?" He froze when all five thousand immortals below suddenly looked up, their eyes landing simultaneously on him.

How was that possible? He'd use Size Manipulation to shrink himself to an infinitesimal particle standing on top of a speck of dust suspended in the air. Without forewarning and a meticulous search, not even dao immortals would detect his presence.

Yet here he was, the eyes and consciousnesses of the true immortals below firmly locked on to him.

"Raaaaaargh!!" the five thousand immortals roared in unison like wild beasts. Light beams the color of blood shot into the sky and formed a giant scarlet skeleton that charged at Lu Yun.

"Wait a minute! This isn't a battle formation! They've all been possessed by something!" Color draining from his face in fright, Lu Yun immediately jumped away from the speck of dust and resumed his normal size. The Sugato Sword appeared above him, its sword curtains trailing down and forming a shield in front of him.

Boom!

The scarlet skeleton rammed viciously into the sword curtain and jolted the Sugato Sword. It felt like a massive mountain had crashed into him as a great ball of fire burned in Lu Yun's chest. Shaken, he coughed up blood by the mouthful.

"Spirit Fragmentation!! This is the Spirit Fragmentation art of the shamanic divines!" Hurling backward from the impact, Lu Yun's thoughts nevertheless continued circulating at full speed and he recognized the nature of this scarlet skeleton.

Spirit Fragmentation was a combat art unique to the shamanic divines. By separating one's mind into many parts, a powerhouse could take up residence in the minds of other organisms like a parasite.

For example, these five thousand immortals were clearly inhabited by the mind of one such powerhouse, yet they'd retained their self-awareness and were still alive, so not even the Spectral Eye had spotted anything abnormal.

But once the art was activated, the five thousand immortals could be manipulated to act like a single entity.

"This is the consciousness of a dao immortal... He's possessed five thousand people, and with the help of their nascent spirits and a special method, he's restored his strength to its peak!"

Heart pounding, Lu Yun forced himself to regain his balance and suppressed his injuries. The unknown shamanic divine had split his strength into five thousand parts, then perfectly concealed himself inside five thousand true immortals to circumvent the restriction in the central world.

When he noticed Lu Yun, he'd used the strength of these five thousand immortals to power his unique art and restore his original strength. This powerhouse wasn't an immortal from the current age, but a primordial dao immortal even stronger than Ge Yanxia!

A single attack of his had heavily injured Lu Yun.

Roar!!

Allowing the governor no respite, the scarlet skeleton went again on the offensive. Mouth wide open, it launched itself at Lu Yun, traveling through the air at lightning speed and ready to sink its teeth into the young man's flesh.

"Piss off!!" With a furious shout, Lu Yun spread his fingers apart.

Crackle!

A bolt of dark blue lightning arced from his palm and transformed into a dark blue dragon.

The Navy Thunder of World Extinction! The very lightning that Dongfang Hao had attracted during his tribulation!

Lu Yun hadn't had a chance to use it yet after absorbing it, but against the shamanic divine, he deployed Palm Thunderstrike and summoned the lightning dragon without a second thought.

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

One by one, dark blue lightning beasts exploded from Lu Yun's figure and snarled savagely at the scarlet skeleton. The skeleton wailed in fear and struggled to twist around and run away, but how could it be faster than lightning?!

It wasn't called the Navy Thunder of World Extinction for nothing!

That being said, the lightning was nothing more than a void realm cultivator's tribulation to immortality, something the scarlet skeleton's physical self could have swept it away with a casual flick.

A shamanic divine was on an entirely different level, compared to Ge Yanxia. Ge Yanxia was a beast-like fur seal that wielded weak combat arts and knew nothing of the dao, while shamanic divines were one of the strongest races in the world, masters of splendid skills and prodigious arts.

For them, a cultivator's tribulation lightning, even a type spoken of only in legends, could be dispelled.

Sadly, this skeleton was merely a nascent spirit that'd possessed five thousand people through Spirit Fragmentation. Nascent spirits couldn't contend against lightning, especially one imbued with a will of destruction like the Navy Thunder of World Extinction.

Boom!

Heavily struck, the nascent spirit draped over the scarlet spirit disintegrated.

Pff!

The five thousand immortals below coughed up blood at the same time. They, too, reeled from the skeleton's destruction, their own nascent spirits and bodies blasted by a destructive force.

Floating in the air, Lu Yun slowly retracted the Thunder Palmstrike. Instead of stepping onto the altar, he fell into deep thought.

“For immortals and cultivators, the nascent spirit is their root, the foundation of all. But while there are indeed spirit arts in the immortal dao that make direct use of the nascent spirit, they’re nothing but paper tigers.” He wasn’t particularly excited that his Thunder Palmstrike had destroyed the skeleton. Instead, a deep sense of urgency arose.

“Too weak, too weak! The skeleton was strong and its nascent spirit art powerful, but it still fell to a single bolt of lightning. The nascent spirit of a primordial immortal, gone just like that! Too weak, far too weak!

“Contemporary spirit arts are much weaker than they look. The second they run into something that can restrain the nascent spirit, the victim won’t have the slightest chance of getting away!

“In this world, immortals fight with cultivation methods, treasures, and combat arts. Very few of them duke it out with their nascent spirits! Once their corporeal body is destroyed, that’s it for them!

“The immortal restriction in the central world keeps dao immortals out, but this shamanic divine skirted around the issue with Spirit Fragmentation. By all rights, he should’ve been invincible here, but one lightning bolt of mine erased him for good.

“The nascent spirit is an immortal’s weakness, and the spirit arts currently available are too weak. I have to create a powerful spirit art!” His eyes glinted with newfound fervor. “After I establish the sacred land of immortal dao, I’ll try formulating a spirit art with Qing Yu and see if we can’t find a way to strengthen nascent spirits on a fundamental level!”

He still recalled Holy Lord Ashu’s words, how the world of immortals was the only sanctuary left in the entire multiverse.

Chapter 720: Four Blood Spirits Formation

The one sanctuary in the multiverse was not, alas, all that safe. Small chinks had appeared in Nephrite Major’s Dusk, Azure, Crimson, and Argent Provinces. An even bigger fissure could be found elsewhere, one that required nine celestial emperors to seal with their lives—the World Gates.

Lu Yun had seen the tide of yin spirits in Azure Province for himself. He’d been a powerless bystander as yin spirits tore apart the bodies of immortals and swallowed their defenseless nascent spirits.

And now, he’d personally destroyed the nascent spirit of a primordial dao immortal with the tribulation lightning from a cultivator’s ascension... It gave him a profound sense of crisis.

No matter how strong a cultivator’s tribulation was, it was still a phenomenon activated by a simple cultivator. Once stripped of the protection from the laws of nature, many immortals could scatter tribulation clouds by force. But no matter how strong the nascent spirit was, it was utterly vulnerable to lightning when lacking protection of the flesh.

“I have to create a spirit art so that an immortal’s nascent spirit can possess real fighting ability!” The look in his eyes turned resolute.

Creating a brand new cultivation method would be sheer folly for most. The immortal dao was the product of eons of evolution. While cultivation methods were always evolving, they never strayed far from those pioneered by the three founders of immortal dao.

But times were changing. Dao sovereign beneath the immortal dao, Qing Yu had comprehended “formula dao”. With it, she could theorize everything under the sun. Lu Yun himself had used formula dao to postulate his body-refining method based on the organs of heaven and earth.

All of that was a basis, a starting point with which to build from. In the near future, it wouldn’t be impossible for Lu Yun and Qing Yu to create a new nascent spirit method. More importantly, he had a faint premonition that the creation of such a method would depend on Qing Yu’s Scroll of Shepherding Immortals.

The scroll had been painted by the primordial Human Celestial Master Zhang with the essence of God, then sealed by the immortal fires of the three founders... In the process, the founders had left their imprints on the scroll!

.....

“Aoxue, Huangqing, Cangyin, Luli, the four of you protect this altar with the Four Blood Spirits Formation. Kill anyone who tries to take it from us!” Lu Yun summoned the four Yama Kings from hell.

“At your service!” The four of them genuflected, their figures turning into four blood demons. A blood dragon, blood phoenix, blood qilin, and blood tortoise flashed into existence. Together, they combined into a terrible crimson formation and slowly melted into the void.

“Strange. Is it just me, or is the energy I sense from them not the pure power of feng shui, but... something else?” Lu Yun stiffened.

The four blood demons were legends from a bygone era, ominous existences only spoken of in hushed whispers. Stories abounded of how the advent of any blood demon brought untold calamities in its wake, enough to throw the entire world into turmoil.

These creatures were in fact a fusion between living beings and feng shui layouts. Together, they combined to produce an ominous feng shui energy. When Lu Yun had gathered the four, he’d used the Tome of Life and Death to suppress the ominous feng shui that’d created them.

But when they formed the blood formation, he’d unmistakably felt the ominous feng shui vanish without a trace. Or rather, it’d transformed from one state into another—a purer and more formidable energy.

“Ge Long’s the one who came up with this formation... And there’s also some kind of connection between him and the four evil coffins... Maybe the body parts buried inside the coffins actually belong to him?”

The idea flashed through his mind, but he chose not to delve any deeper. Ge Long’s past might be extraordinary, but now... he was subordinate to the Tome of Life and Death.

In a blur, Lu Yun flashed onto the altar. Once he sacrificed a primordial legacy to it, space warped in front of him and permitted him inside the central world's core region, a land eight thousand kilometers in width.

Indeed, eight thousand kilometers only. To be more precise, it was a large tomb eight thousand kilometers wide.

"The tomb of the immortal emperor!" A tombstone that pierced through the clouds like a mountain was the first thing that greeted the eye. But strangely enough, he could see it in its entirety even without the Spectral Eye.

In fact, no matter where he was, no matter from which angle he looked at it, he could still see it in its entirety.

Here lies the immortal emperor.

The words were written in big, glistening characters that oozed with blood, as if the immortal emperor had written his epitaph with his own blood. Drop by drop, the dark red liquid trailed down from the characters and pooled into a river of blood that flowed somewhere into the distance.

"When I used the Spectral Eye on the other side of the World Boundary, I didn't see this bloody tombstone." Lu Yun took a deep breath. Something even the Spectral Eye couldn't see... This tombstone was no doubt a peerless treasure.

"During the Primordial Era, the immortal emperor used the Immortal Subjugation Seal to subdue all immortals in the world and rule over the entire multiverse. Logically speaking, the Immortal Subjugation Seal should be the number one treasure above all other connate treasures..."

"But if so, what's the other treasure that's even stronger...?" Lu Yun couldn't help but ruminate over the paradox. "Last time the will of the immortal dao came into existence, the Sovereign Ranking was established and the dao weapon turned into the Sovereign Arena. Still, it wasn't as mammoth in scale as this. All the old monsters hiding in their holes somewhere have been alarmed this time around.

"Whatever the case may be, the Immortal Subjugation Seal is also a treasure that carries the teachings and legacies of the immortal emperor. If someone gets their hands on it, they'll most likely be able to establish something comparable to the primordial immortal court..."

Lu Yun took a deep breath. According to his speculations, the Immortal Subjugation Seal should be a kind of dao weapon that ruled over the immortal dao and could make immortals far and wide submit to it.

Boom!

A deafening explosion came from the sky as a giant mountain fell straight on top of Lu Yun.

"Even the most humble technique can shine?" He looked up and struck out with a punch.

Boom!

With irresistible momentum, his fist shattered the towering mountain.

“Come on out!!” Lu Yun shouted with annoyance, his voice rolling outward like a surging wave.

Pff!

A human silhouette came into view and coughed up blood.

“What a powerful reaction. You’re indeed worthy of your fame, Lord of Dusk Province! But inside the immortal emperor’s tomb, you’re all on your own... Even if you have three heads and six arms, you’ll be buried here today!” the man spoke in a quick, urgent voice. “Attack!”

A ghastly white fire erupted in the air and surrounded Lu Yun as soon as his voice fell.

“Hadal Bonfire! You’re the old skeleton’s man! Hmph, his heir, Jiangcheng Xie, has been possessed, and the skeleton can’t protect himself either. How dare you provoke me!” With a hearty laugh, Lu Yun took a step forward and flashed in front of his opponent, his fist aimed at the man’s face. Although his opponent was a true immortal like him, they couldn’t compare when it came to real strength.

“Hahaha!” The figure suddenly turned incorporeal. By the time Lu Yun’s fist landed on his face, he’d become a stick of white bone.

Crack!

More white bones came flocking in from every direction and stacked into a giant skeleton.

Boom!!

Lu Yun’s fist landed on the white bone, but the skeleton didn’t even budge.

“Lu Yun, who did you say couldn’t protect himself just now?!” the Venerated Sacrosanct Demon Sovereign scoffed in a leisurely tone.