

Necropolis 881

Chapter 881: The Same Two Options

Lu Yun and the little fox had been in the netherdark for eight years. During those years, however, the human race hadn't followed its earlier trajectory to unite under the banner of the Yan Tribe.

Rather, a great war had broken out, sweeping almost the entire race into chaos.

Lie Shan's rise in power and defeat of a number of connate demon gods had instilled a dread of humans in the other races of the great wilderness. Moreover, humanity had greatly improved their constitution through mastery of medicine and agriculture, as well as made qualitative progress in terms of strength through their practice of the qi refinement method.

In the past, true divinity had been the highest bar possible for the human race. Over the past eight years, however, humans had seen more than one of their own ascend to the celestial divine realm!

Lie Shan's appearance greatly concerned the chaos realm demon gods. Deathly afraid of another Lie Shan, they fanned the flames of civil discord among humanity so they would be more concerned with killing each other than cultivating and growing stronger.

War shaped many great geniuses through trial by fire, but most of the newly risen geniuses fell to assassination. Even Wahuang, ever vigilant in the human sacred land, couldn't do anything about that. There was no direct evidence connecting their deaths to the connate demon gods.

With Leize and Huaxu injured, and Fuxi yet to return from the chaos, she didn't dare start anything, lest the other connate demon gods gang up against her.

Fortunately, Leize had appeared in the netherdark eight years ago to threaten Darkriver, indirectly staying the hands of the other connate demon gods out of both fear and dread.

This was why they now worked from the shadows—stoking a civil war and going after geniuses with the potential to be great—not personally, of course, but through their disciples.

At the same time, the chaos realm demon gods had examined Lie Shan's qi cultivation method and concluded that only humanoid beings could cultivate it. If the other races wanted to acquire qi refinement, they would have to first transform into human form, with the corresponding meridians and constitution, before they could do so.

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"Those connate demon gods have given me quite a surprise." Lu Yun sneered at the battles ripping through the basin of the Yellow River. "I was dashing my brains out over how to start a war to unite the human race... They handed me the solution wrapped in a bow on a silver platter."

"But war broke out too suddenly, so our race has suffered a great toll. Many major tribes have been exterminated!" Shennong fretted over recent happenings. "The connate demon gods have instigated a war to erase humanity. Conflict continues until the other party is completely erased. That's not how things are supposed to be done at all!"

“This is why humanity must exert our dominance.” Lu Yun was suddenly reminded of what Qi Hai would say in the future.

Humanity would rise to become the ruler of the multiverse, suppressing all other races and permitting them no room for defiance. In order to gain a foothold in the great wilderness, where tens of thousands of races and countless powerful beings reigned, humanity had to exert their supremacy!

All demons and gods who stood in their way were to die!

The Yan Tribe had been pulled into the civil war as well, but it was now the most powerful tribe and Shennong had ascended to the celestial divine realm. In addition, Lie Shan’s name alone was enough to intimidate any would-be challengers. The connate demon gods could only attempt to exhaust Yan reserves through the other human tribes, instead of launching a direct attack.

“Help! Help! Help!” A panicked Ah Niu rushed in from the outside.

As the Yan Tribe rose in power, so had their tribute spirit likewise grown in strength. Ah Niu was now in the celestial divine realm, making him the most powerful tribute spirit of the human race.

“What’s wrong?” Lu Yun frowned as an unpleasant premonition formed in his mind.

“Gremlins attacked the Kunshan Tribe ten thousand kilometers away and inflicted heavy casualties. Ah Bao went off to help them, but someone kidnapped her!” Ah Niu was highly frantic.

The Kunshan Tribe was a medium-sized tribe in the Wei River basin. They’d joined the Yan Tribe eight years ago and now worshipped Ah Niu as their tribute spirit. One of Ah Niu’s replicas was the tribe’s guardian.

However, the replica was now dead, and before he was killed, he’d seen Ah Bao taken away.

Lu Yun shot to his feet, his expression forebodingly ominous. “Who did it?”

“It seemed to be a giant deer... I didn’t recognize him!” Ah Niu blurted out frantically. “Ah Bao didn’t even manage to struggle. You have to save her, Lie Shan!”

He waved a hand to manifest the image of a giant gray deer.

“It’s Pijiu!” Tianqi recognized the form immediately and eagerly volunteered himself. “He’s Fuzhu’s child and a great empyrean master of the combat arts! Let me handle this, master, I know where to find him!”

Mount Tai lay at the intersection of yin and yang, connecting the netherdark and the great wilderness. Tianqi had been sentient for a very long time and could observe the two realms through his mountain, thus becoming privy to a lot of information about the great wilderness.

“Where is he?” Lu Yun composed himself with a deep breath.

“The Lun Mountain!”

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The Lun Mountain sat to the northwest of the great wilderness with the great Lun River at its foot.

As Fuzhu's son and a great empyrean master in his own right, Pijiu was going to enact revenge on the mewling human for killing his father and roasting the corpse for the Yan Tribe.

"That tribute god must've already shown Lie Shan my image. It won't take him long to figure out where I am. He comes to his death!" Pijiu appeared to be a giant gray deer, similar in form to Fuzhu, while Ah Bao lay unconscious by the banks of the Lun River.

"So it turns out the Wei river god is also the Qingqiu mountain ghost! If I kill her, the foxes there won't let things slide... Forget it, I'm here to kill Lie Shan. Better not get those foxes involved!" Pijiu lay low on the ground, waiting for the human to appear. "No son shall suffer his father's killer to walk the land. I will slay Lie Shan even at the cost of my life!!"

He forced down the fury in his heart.

"There he is!" He stood tall and looked up at the figure in the sky, roaring with fury, "Lie Shan of the human race!!"

"My master hasn't come," came the answer. "I'm his third disciple, Tianqi."

Tianqi had grown up to be a fair-faced young man. Eight years under Wahuang's guidance hadn't improved his cultivation much, but he'd learned many powerful connate combat arts. Moreover, Lu Yun had taught him the Method of Life and Death, placing him at the top of empyrean experts.

"You're not Lie Shan, but his disciple?!" Pijiu scoffed. "Fine, you'll die first to appease my fury!"

"Grrrrraaw!" The deer bounded into the sky, antlers flaring with cutting sword energy lashing out at Tianqi.

"You're trying to trick my master into a trap by weaponizing the influence of Lun Mountain and its river, aren't you? Unfortunately for you, you couldn't fool even me, let alone my master." Tianqi threw his head back with laughter. Pijiu's sword energy was no threat to him; it was only meant to activate the great influence of the landscape here.

During his earlier stay in Mount Buzhou, Wahuang had taught him Fuxi's feng shui and formations. As the god of Mount Tai, he had an inherent affinity for them.

After Fuxi had entered the chaos, no one knew if he'd ever return safely. His skills and knowledge had to be preserved and passed down, and Tianqi was undoubtedly a perfect candidate.

"How, how do you know that?!" Pijiu stared at him in shock.

Bam!

Tianqi didn't dignify that with a response. He shattered Pijiu's sword energy by pressing downwards, then stepped into the great influence created by the mountain and river.

"You really are too arrogant. The Lun Mountain and Lun River are nothing but a little hill and a creek in the great wilderness. Do you really think an influence of their making will be enough to kill my master? Break!!"

The great influence of the mountain and river broke on command, shattering beneath the sheer strength flaring out of his palm. There was no intricate display of technique or heaven-defying combat arts, just pure, simple, strength.

Tianqi was the god of Mount Tai. With the mountain situated between the yin and yang realms, it would come into the great wilderness as a divine mountain second only to Mount Buzhou.

Therefore, the Lun Mountain and Lun River really were nothing but a hill and a pond in his eyes. His might of Mount Tai dispersed their influence in the blink of an eye. There was no need to employ feng shui or formations, just raw power. His strength alone was great enough to destroy the great influence.

He remembered well what Master Wahuang had told him: He must not reveal the existence of formations and feng shui to the world until he became one of the most powerful in the great wilderness.

Pfft!

Dark crimson blood sprayed out of Pijiu's mouth and he crashed to the ground like a sac of meat.

Tianqi approached him, walking on air. "You should be grateful that Aunt Ah Bao isn't injured. If she'd so much as lost even a hair, you'd be begging for the sweet release of death."

Black flames burned in his eyes.

Pijiu stared back at him, face ashen. He hadn't expected to be so soundly thrashed by Lie Shan's disciple—he hadn't managed to get a single strike in! The great influence that'd once felled a connate demon god had been shattered by a single strike from Lie Shan's disciple!

A deep sense of resignation threatened to overtake him.

"My master gave your father two options. I'll do the same for you." Tianqi's lips curled into an eerily mischievous smile. He'd been born at the intersection of the yin and yang realms, surrounded by thick vicious energy. He might be an obedient disciple to Lu Yun and Wahuang, but he was a nightmare to other living souls.

"You can either be my mount, or I'll make a feast out of you for the Yan Tribe... I hear that your father tasted quite good!" He smacked his lips when he thought of what people had said about that meal.

1. Another mythological creature in the Classic of Mountains and Seas.

Chapter 882: Suppression Seal

There was no room for anything other than stark terror in Pijiu's mind. Like master, like disciple. Tianqi was crueller and even more evil than his master!

Pijiu had been counting on the great influence formed between the Lun Mountain and Lun River to take out his enemy. After all, it could trap and kill connate demon gods! But Tianqi was the god of Mount Tai and a student of feng shui. This kind of layout might as well not exist in his eyes; he could dismantle it with a single huff.

Now that he'd destroyed it in such a simple and brutal manner, Pijiu couldn't even go down with his enemy if he wanted to. When Tianqi mentioned his father once more, a humbling fear reduced the gray deer to a petrified heap on the ground, hopeless despair written across his face.

Tianqi sneered and stored Pijiu in a seed storage with a wave of his hand. He walked over to Ah Bao and gently lifted her up in his arms, checking her for injuries. She was fast asleep and hadn't seemed to have suffered anything. If that hadn't been the case, Tianqi would've smashed Pijiu to pieces without further ado, instead of wasting all that time bantering back and forth.

Boooooom.

The skies abruptly darkened as an enormous claw descended from the heavens, intending to crush Tianqi flat.

Startled, Tianqi whirled around and hovered protectively over Ah Bao. At the same time, a huge dark figure wreathed in hellfire blasted out from his back. It wielded a pitch-black sickle that flashed viciously before slicing at the claw.

Humm.

Black sword light arced through the void, almost separating sky from earth in a single, mighty slash. Like doom, the terrifying light broke the giant claw to smithereens, and blackish-red blood poured down like rain.

"That's Ji Du's greatest treasure, why's it in your hands?!" A dismayed and furious shriek echoed through the air while the attacker revealed themselves in the void.

It was an immense monkey that was three thousand meters tall. Tawny fur covered his body, but his eyes and mouth were red like they were on fire.

"Yonghe, how dare trash like you make trouble for my master?!" Tianqi immediately recognized the demon god.

Yonghe counted only as middle of the pack; his status was far lower than that of Bashe and Dusk Snake. But as a connate demon god, he was still a lofty being and a chaos realm master. He looked coldly at Tianqi with flames burning in his eyes.

"Why is Ji Du's blade in your hands?" he asked again.

"My master gave it to me, of course." Tianqi's true form was still below, protecting Ah Bao. Up in the air, he used a wisp of hellfire to wield the black sickle and face off against Yonghe.

However, he was secretly very nervous. He wasn't his master in the sense of being able to use empyrean realm cultivation to defeat a chaos realm demon god. If Yonghe came down hard on him, he wouldn't be able to withstand the demon god even though he had hellfire at his disposal.

"Lie Shan of the human race?" Yonghe leered. "Though I'm not his match, my opponent today is you! If I eat you, I'll become the mountain god of Mount Tai and control its power!"

He shrank swiftly as he spoke and turned into a big monkey three meters tall to charge Tianqi.

“You!!” Tianqi’s expression tightened, and the sickle in his hand furiously churned forward. Black rays of sword energy crashed down on Yonghe like they were firing out of an ocean of qi.

An emerald colored club appeared in Yonghe’s hands, twirling and whipping through the air before it smashed Tianqi’s attack to pieces.

“Die!!” Yonghe thwacked his club down and smashed through Tianqi’s hellfire projection, then hurtled downward as a meteor of emerald light, arriving above the boy’s true body in the blink of an eye and bringing his club down a second time.

He wanted to eat the mountain god divine decree inside Tianqi, and not the mountain god himself.

Hummm.

A pillar of black light erupted from Tianqi’s body and blasted into the skies while a black square object floated out of his form. Yonghe’s second attack connected solidly with it, reducing his hands to a messy pulp from the recoil.

“What is that?!” Yonghe screamed from his high vantage point.

Tianqi slowly stood up with Ah Bao in his arms. Hellfire burned in both his eyes and around the big black seal over his head. Two twisted characters slowly emerged on the square seal: Suppression Seal.

This was the seal that Wahuang had gifted to Tianqi upon taking him as a disciple.

“I hadn’t been able to refine this seal all this time—it turns out I needed to activate it with hellfire... senior master...” Tianqi thought of both Wahuang and Lu Yun.

Lu Yun should know how to bring the seal to life, but hadn’t conveyed how to use the connate treasure to his disciple. They’d given their presents to Tianqi, but the rest was up to him. Thanks to a string of happy coincidences, he’d brought the seal to life with hellfire!

The emerald club in Yonghe’s hand was a connate treasure, but it was leagues apart when compared to peerless-grade connate treasures. He should be counting his blessings that only his hands had been injured from smashing his weapon into that treasure.

“This is something that can take your life!” Tianqi laughed heartily. He summoned the seal to action, sending hellfire dancing through the skies to wrap around it and release its incomparable might.

“I’m out!” Yonghe promptly dismissed all ambitions at the sight and flipped backwards, vanishing without a trace.

Tianqi waved a hand and collected the emerald club.

“Mm, this is a connate treasure at the end of the day. Auntie Bao doesn’t have a proper treasure to call her own yet.” A smile crossed his face, he used the Suppression Seal to overpower the club and turned it into a club one meter tall, then shoved it into Ah Bao’s hands.

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“Pfft!” Yonghe’s swiftly escaping figure jerked to a halt roughly fifty thousand kilometers away and he spat out a mouthful of blood. “My sprout! God of Mount Tai, I will not suffer to live beneath the same skies as you!”

“Yonghe, who do you hate?” A voice suffused with evil sounded by his ear.

“Luo Houluo?” Yonghe jumped and looked at the man in front of him with shock. “No, you’re not Luo Houluo, you’re Darkriver!”

“Kekeke—” The man in front of him who looked like Luo Houluo, but somehow also like Darkriver, stretched out a bloody claw and closed it around Yonghe’s neck. Staring at the newcomer in plain terror, Yonghe couldn’t twitch even a muscle.

How... what... who.....

He slowly lost all movement and ceased shifting entirely. Yonghe’s figure gradually deflated into a dried monkey skin and drifted to the ground.

“Who am I?” Confusion flashed through the eyes of the man who seemed both like Darkriver and Luo Houluo. “Who I am? But... hehe. Lie Shan... Ji Du! Heh heh, no matter who I am, I’ll be coming for both of you!”

1. Yonghe is an ape with yellow fur, red eyes, and red mouth from the Classic of Mountains and Seas. Its appearance often meant impending famine from crop failure.

Chapter 883.1: Lie Shan’s Dignity

Lu Yun wasn’t worried that his disciple had gone to sort the situation out. As long as Tianqi discovered how to activate the Suppression Seal and deploy the connate treasure of the netherdark, his battle strength would grow by leaps and bounds. Though he still may not be the match of some of these connate demon gods, he would have no trouble defending himself.

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After Ah Bao’s rescue, Lu Yun immediately set up numerous defensive restrictions in her body. They were all rooted in hellfire and thus, incredibly terrifying. With those in place, she would be able to protect herself, even from the likes of ordinary connate demon gods.

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“Master!” Tianqi stood respectfully by Lu Yun’s side. Pijiu was tied up like a trussed chicken and placed in the central sparring grounds of the Yan Tribe.

The tribe assessed him like a prime cut of meat. They’d feasted like kings on the corpse of Fuzhu when he was delivered by the god of the Yellow River, and their overall strength had indeed improved thanks to the demon god’s core essence. Many Yan youths had ascended to true divinity after that meal. Therefore, the tribespeople swallowed hard upon seeing how closely Pijiu resembled Fuzhu.

Meanwhile, Pijiu’s complexion was ashen, like a dead man walking. He finally understood how terrifying humans could be—they were weak ants who could gnaw away a divine dragon of the nine heavens!

“You’ve done very well!” Lu Yun nodded and looked at Pijiu, continuing coldly, “Do you want to become my disciple’s steed, or do you want to become food for humans?”

Whether it was Fuzhu or Pijiu, neither of them were kind souls. Countless humans had died in their mouths and though it was right and proper for Pijiu to avenge his father, an enemy was still an enemy. Lu Yun wouldn’t show them any kindness.

“I’m... willing, willing... to be a steed!” Pijiu responded haltingly, “I... don’t want to be eaten...”

Lu Yun smiled at Tianqi. “The disciple outshines the master alright, you’re already greater than me. His father wasn’t willing to be my mount no matter what!”

“And wasn’t that because you moved too quickly?” The little fox rolled her eyes. “Fuzhu had already surrendered to you, but you still chopped his head off because you felt like it.”

Lu Yun rubbed his nose as he had no response to that.

Shennong and Jiang Ti turned away while Ah Bao looked highly regretful. She really wanted to see how different Pijiu tasted from Fuzhu.

Delighted, Tianqi danced up to Pijiu and slammed a restriction into his soul, making the demon god his.

“There’s a connate demon god by the name of Qi Sparrow who lives in the Beihao Mountain, which is in the northern reaches of the great wilderness. Go kill him and bring his body back,” Lu Yun suddenly said to Tianqi.

“What?!” The order took everyone aback. He wanted his disciple to kill a connate demon god??

Setting aside whether or not Tianqi could accomplish the task, why did demon gods sound like chickens when Lie Shan talked about them? When did they turn into fruit ripe for the picking at the snap of a finger?

Wasn’t he afraid of angering the other demon gods?

“I hear and obey!” An eager light shone in Tianqi’s eyes when he heard his master’s command.

“You’ll be able to hold your ground at best with the Suppression Seal. But if you can grasp the way to utilize that sickle, you’ll easily kill Qi Sparrow,” Lu Yun said to his disciple. “Go on then, it’s up to you this time.”

Tianqi shook at the reminder and instantly understood. It hadn’t been a coincidence last time that he’d been able to activate the seal with hellfire—his master had surreptitiously helped him from the sidelines.

“This disciple will complete his mission!” Tianqi bowed to Lu Yun and climbed onto Pijiu’s back, vanishing beyond the horizon.

“This... isn’t very good, is it, Lie Shan?” Shennong asked hesitantly after Tianqi left.

“What’s not good about it?” Lu Yun shook his head slightly. “I’m going to pay a visit to the Mu nation located above the East Sea. If we don’t establish our authority now, those demon gods will have further designs on the tribe.”

“Besides, that Qi Sparrow slaughtered three thousand human tribes and ate countless members of our race. Now that Holy Emperor Fuxi is gone and Holy Emperor Wahuang protects the human sacred land, I naturally have to take up the mantle of enacting this revenge,” Lu Yun spoke calmly with his hands behind his back.

“Tianqi is following strong in my footsteps and possesses unlimited potential. However, he hasn’t fully unleashed it yet. Though Qi Sparrow is a connate demon god, he doesn’t have any connate treasures and he took form late. He’s only chaos realm, so he’s a perfect target for Tianqi to practice on.”

“...only.” Shennong, Jiang Ti, and the senior priest of the tribe all sighed helplessly.

They hadn’t realized yet that with Lie Shan in their midst, humanity was now on par with the peak tribes of the great wilderness. No one dared provoke any race with a chaos realm great master, but the demon gods repeatedly encroached on humans. They were testing Lu Yun, and if he didn’t respond, they’d become even bolder and get out of hand.

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A month passed in the blink of an eye. Another big disturbance exploded through the great wilderness when the corpse of an enormous bird passed through the skies, on its way to the Yan Tribe by the banks of the Wei River.

It belonged to the connate demon god Qi Sparrow, and the one flying through the air with it wasn’t Lie Shan, but a young man astride a deer—his disciple Tianqi!

Another demon god had fallen!

It wasn’t Lie Shan responsible for it this time, but the humans still claimed credit!

Though Tianqi wasn’t human, he was no different from being one of them in the eyes of the great masters.

“Qi Sparrow slaughtered three thousand of my race’s tribes and a million of my people.” Tianqi suddenly stopped, walked down from Pijiu’s back, and shouted into the air. “Today, I carry out orders from my master Lie Shan to execute this cretin. May this be a warning to those who would imitate its actions!”

The soundwaves of his voice boomed through the land, making the murmuring demon gods fall silent.

At the foot of Mount Buzhou, Wahuang processed the rolling announcement with incredulity. She hadn’t thought that Lu Yun would be so domineering that he’d use a demon god as the basis for establishing his authority. Most importantly, it hadn’t been him or Bingyi, the god of the Yellow River, who’d done the deed, but his disciple Tianqi!

How mind-boggling was it that even his disciples could kill connate demon gods?!

“Isn’t he afraid of inspiring the demon gods to band together and attack him?” She smiled wryly.

Leize had once suffered such a fate and fought a battle that’d lasted three thousand years. Countless demon gods had fallen, and Leize himself had suffered innumerable injuries. He’d also become much more reserved after that incident.

And now, Wahuang seemed to foresee Lie Shan going down the same path.

Chapter 883.2: Lie Shan's Dignity

"Lie Shan, don't you think you're a bit out of control?!" An enormous roar echoed between heaven and earth while a colossal face peered out of the void, looking coldly down at the Yellow River basin.

The human tribes in the area trembled with fear and huddled on the ground. Color also drained out of Bingyi's face; though he'd refined Fuzhu's life sphere, he was still a paltry ant on the ground compared to the being in the sky.

"Out of control? For what reason do you make such a claim?" Lu Yun responded in a self-assured manner and tilted his head up at the face in the sky. His tremendous power surged over all of the Yellow River, wordlessly confronting the new enemy in the skies.

"Killing a chaos realm demon god on a simple whim, do you think you're Leize?" the existence demanded frostily.

"Dijiang, don't even think about swaggering around and throwing your weight around here!" Another immense presence suddenly rose into the air as a young woman—so stunning that she would conquer cities by her beauty alone—appeared next to Lu Yun and stood by his side. A faint golden haze shone around the Bell of Chaos.

"Tushan!" Dijiang, one of the most preeminent demon gods of the world, reacted dramatically when he saw the young woman. "So the Bell of Chaos is indeed in your hands!"

"The Bell of Chaos is right here, come and get it if you can!" Icily glaring back, Troublemaker Tushan retorted in a tone that left no doubt she wasn't feeling charitable.

"Tushan, isn't it crossing the line that Lie Shan allows his disciple to kill demon gods?!" A knot of thunderclouds suddenly collected above the northern skies and golden-purple lightning howled among them, coalescing into a titanic body.

"Then I ask you, Nuanzi, what would you do if a hundred million of your tribe was killed?" Tushan asked coldly as she looked to the north.

"How preposterous, this seat is a most lofty being beneath the heavens. Who would dare touch my tribe?" sneered Nuanzi.

"So they don't dare touch your people, but they dare come eat mine?" Lu Yun interjected. "I, Lie Shan, slayed Dusk Snake, Fuzhu, Huashe, beat the shit out of Luo Houluo and Darkriver in the netherdark, and even killed one of Ji Du's bodies. Do all of you still take me to be fruit ripe for the picking?"

"Or can only the two of you bask in your dignity, and I am allowed none of that?!" His voice reverberated through the great wilderness like the tolling of an exceptional bell.

It stung the demon gods on the scene awake. Though Lie Shan was a pathetic human, his battle strength absolutely put him at the peak. Even Darkriver and Luo Houluo hadn't been able to put up a fight against him, and in fact, their current whereabouts were still unknown.

Ready to benefit from an opportunity dropped into his lap, Ji Du had suffered the loss of one of his bodies instead, rather than become lord of the netherdark.

“Lie Shan, you could triumph over Darkriver and the others in the netherdark only because you could rely on hellfire there. We are in the great wilderness now, not the netherdark. There is no hellfire to bolster you here!” Dijiang revealed his true form as an enormous scarlet bird sparkling with silver light. He possessed six feet, two pairs of wings, and glared coldly at Lu Yun through a pair of dark red eyes.

“Indeed, whether or not you’re worthy of dignity needs to be determined through battle. Or do you really think you’re Leize?” Nuanzi snorted.

“What, do the two of you want to bully him through superior numbers?” Troublemaker Tushan took a step forward and speared them with an icy look.

“Yaaawn, why are there more and more people who seek death these days? What’s the point in all this fighting and killing? It’s much more comfortable to sleep at home.” A voice that seemed to be more sleep talking sounded around them. A young woman wearing a purple silk dress, her face almost split by the force of her yawns, suddenly appeared out of the blue.

Ah Zhi.

Observer of stars and weaver of fates in the human sacred land, the Ah Zhi who could enter the future from her dreams.

“A Fated Spider!” Nuanzi and Dijiang looked at each other when the latest newcomer joined them.

“It’s three against two now,” Troublemaker Tushan chuckled merrily.

“Even so, that’s all there is to Lie Shan. You are still nothing without hellfire.” Dijiang remained undaunted.

“Yaaawn. Don’t you get it yet, Dijiang?” Ah Zhi asked with resignation. “All of you dare to bully Lie Shan because you think his foundations are shallow and weak, and that he doesn’t have any friends. But here I am, and I represent his family of five demon gods. I’m not opposed to any of you challenging him one-on-one.

“Well, I can’t be bothered either if you want to bully him with superior numbers. But I’m sure Leize and Huaxu would be quite interested in that.” Ah Zhi fully opened her sleepy eyes and looked seriously at Dijiang.

There were more than Nuanzi and Dijiang in the surroundings. The others were hidden in the void and refusing to show their faces. Regardless, the two that were out in the open were among the strongest of the demon gods, on par with Luo Houluo and Darkriver.

In other words, existences that’d once been able to suppress Lie Shan with a single thought.

“Dare you face me, Lie Shan?!” Nuanzi’s body was that of a dragon, but he had the head of a tiger. Eight pairs of wings flapped on his back and continuously released bolts of lightning into the surroundings.

“Why wouldn’t I?” Lu Yun met him stare for stare.

“Good. We will acknowledge your status if you defeat me today, and no longer interfere in your quest against other demon gods who have slaughtered your race. I won’t kill you even if I defeat you either, just imprison you in a chaos tribulation at the center of the Arctic Sea. Do you accept this?!”

“Alright!” Lu Yun nodded slightly when he heard this. It would seem that Nuanzi wasn’t here because the demon god had certain designs toward him or humans, but was here on behalf of the demon gods.

As for Dijiang...

That demon god was still fixated on the Bell of Chaos over Tushan’s head, and Tushan herself.

Hailed as the foremost beauty of the great wilderness, this wasn’t a title that Tushan had given herself. It’d been attributed to her from hordes of adoring demon gods, and there were many who would love to get their hands on her.

“We fight above the nine heavens, below the cosmos!” Nuanzi’s ponderous body took to the air and instantly arrived beneath the seal keeping out the yin spirits and realm monsters.

Lu Yun was close behind him.

The great wilderness boiled over with activity; almost every demon god cast their eye there. They wanted to see just what kind of trump card Lie Shan of the human race possessed, that he dared fight Nuanzi!

Though Nuanzi wasn’t Leize or Taiyi’s match, he was on par with Darkriver and Luo Houluo. So what gave this pathetic human such confidence to contend against this august being?

“Master, take these weapons!” Tianqi quickly sent his seal and sickle into the stars.

“No need.” Lu Yun gently pushed them back into Tianqi’s hands.

Many swallowed hard at the sight of those two treasures, but no one dared make a move before the battle concluded.

Nuanzi’s titanic self circled in space. When he saw Lu Yun arrive, he pounced on the human and flared outward with a rain of lightning. This lightning was more than a thousand times stronger than Fuzhu’s amateurish attempt. Just a single one of these bolts could obliterate him!

Boom.

A black tree shadow appeared behind Lu Yun as hellfire blazed to life in the cosmos, turning space into a sea of fire.

1. Dijiang is an ancient mountain god in Chinese mythology and credited with being the originator of tribal song and dance.

Chapter 884: I Can Save Her

The image of the Sal Tree of Life and Death emerged in the cosmos with a blaze of hellfire, pooling into a sea of black flames.

Nuanzi's calm mask fractured and he blasted tremendous lightning into the Sea of Hellfire, stirring up violent black waves, but his lightning was instantly churned to nothingness by the roiling waves.

Expression darkening, he hovered quietly in the air, deep in thought. In the end, he sighed with defeat. "How did you do it, bringing the Sea of Hellfire to the cosmos?"

"This is but a small part of the Sea of Hellfire. It may not be enough for me to defeat you, we still have a fight on our hands." Lu Yun didn't give Nuanzi a direct response. He could tell that the demon god no longer wanted to fight him.

"Whether you can defeat me or not, you've already proven yourself," Nuanzi said coolly with the cosmos as his backdrop. "From now on, the human race will be one of the peak races of the great wilderness. If any connate demon god dares intervene with its affairs, they alone will be responsible for defending against Lie Shan's vengeance."

Silence reigned over the great wilderness and countless connate demon gods sucked in a collective breath.

Nuanzi's words were empty as they offered no substantial help to Lu Yun and the human race. However, Lu Yun and humanity had also officially earned the approval of the great powers in the great wilderness.

If anyone made a move against the humans now, Lu Yun would be allowed to retaliate with impunity. He no longer had to worry about earning the ire of the connate demon gods, and they wouldn't mob him like they had with Leize.

Lu Yun raised a cupped fist salute at Nuanzi and dismissed the blazing hellfire. The image of the Sal Tree of Life and Death vanished as well. Everything had been resolved without undue bloodshed.

"Hahaha, Lie Shan!" snarled Dijiang. "Nuanzi may have given you his approval, but you'll have to get past me still!"

He suddenly appeared before Lu Yun and clawed savagely at the human.

"Dijiang, stop!!" Nuanzi's eyes shot so wide open that the corners of his eyes almost tore. He hadn't expected Dijiang to make an attempt on Lu Yun's life as soon as he'd given his approval on behalf of the connate demon gods!

Caught off guard, Lu Yun quickly called upon his body of the world and summoned the image of the Sal Tree of Life and Death again.

"Hmmp!" Bell of Chaos in hand, Tushan interjected herself between Lu Yun and danger.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The bell tolled loudly to keep Lu Yun protected, but Dijiang shrieked in laughter, "The Bell of Chaos is mine!!!"

He swiftly changed targets, foregoing Lu Yun for Tushan and tore apart the replica. The tremendous might damaged even the Bell of Chaos, shattering it into pieces. As sudden as his attack, Dijiang transformed into a great crimson bird and disappeared into the great wilderness.

Among the Yan Tribe, the little fox's true form shuddered and collapsed to the ground, barely breathing.

"No!!" Eyes crazed, Lu Yun hurried back to the great wilderness, putting Dijiang out of his mind. He grabbed the little fox and poured energy into her body with reckless abandon. She'd just recovered to the celestial divine realm, and Dijiang's attack had been so terrible that it tore into her true form through her replica.

If her replica hadn't been as powerful as it'd been and the Bell of Chaos hadn't protected her, the attack would've already disintegrated her. Even so, she'd still suffered a critical injury. Her soul was crushed, and her true spirit damaged.

"Monster Celestial Master..." a voice murmured in Lu Yun's mind.

At first highly alarmed, Lu Yun let out a sigh of relief when he recognized it as Meng Wang. "I thought you were dead!"

Meng Wang was the treasure spirit of his feng shui luopan. There'd been no trace of him since Lu Yun's arrival in the great wilderness, and he'd eventually assumed the treasure spirit had dispersed through the stress of traveling through time. Fortunately, the spirit was still around.

He wasn't with Lu Yun, though, but with the Dao Flower in the chaos.

"I did almost die," Meng Wang said with melancholy in his voice. "But the Dao Flower helped me absorb a wisp of chaos energy, which brought me back."

Lu Yun fell silent; he hugged the little fox to him and made his way to Mount Buzhou.

"The truth may hurt, but her true spirit has begun to scatter. I'm afraid..." Meng Wang trailed off, saddened. He recognized the little fox as one of the celestial masters who'd supported him to becoming the celestial emperor he'd once been.

"I can save her." Lu Yun travelled thousands of kilometers with each step, his destination never changing.

"Ah!" Wahuang's face contorted with sorrow when she laid eyes on the little fox in Lu Yun's arms.

"Tushan's true spirit has scattered. Not even Pangu could bring her back were he still with us."

"I can save her," Lu Yun said again as he went deep into the mountain, setting foot on the path to the netherdark.

"Let her rest, fellow daoist," Daoist Yuyu appeared before Lu Yun and said in a somber voice, his eyes fixed on the young man and the fox. "Tushan's true spirit is gone. Not even the creators can help her now."

Lu Yun's response was the same.

"I. Can. Save. Her." One step after another, he carried the little fox to the Sea of Hellfire in the netherdark.

By now, the little fox had stopped breathing. Her eyes were gently closed, a satisfied smile adorning her little furry face. To her, she'd died a worthy death.

Lu Yun smoothed his hand over her little head, then lowered her into the Sea of Hellfire. Meng Wang looked down silently from the Dao Flower, while Wahuang and Yuyu made their way to the shores, watching the scene play out.

“Is he going to bury her in the Sea of Hellfire?” Wahuang asked, wanting to look away. Neither she nor Yuyu believed Lu Yun could bring the little fox back.

In the eyes of the powerhouses of the great wilderness, only utter destruction of the complete soul meant death. As long as one’s true spirit remained, they stood a chance of being reborn into the world as a later-day life form and starting anew.

However, if even their true spirit was scattered... there was no recourse then. Their very existence would be erased from the world.

That was what had happened to the little fox. Her true spirit had been damaged in the future, sending her back to the bottom of the totem pool as a regular living soul.

Dijiang’s attack had connected with her replica, which was controlled by her true spirit. That was why her true spirit had suffered a devastating injury as well. Not even the combined efforts of the three creators—Pangu, Hongjun, and God—could save her now.

Lu Yun and the little fox reached the heart of the Sea of Hellfire, right above the Sal Tree of Life and Death.

“Thankfully I can use my death arts here... Don’t worry, I won’t let you die.” Allowing himself a relieved sigh, Lu Yun stretched out a finger and tapped between her brows.

Resurrection.

Chapter 885: Rearbow

Inert in Lu Yun’s arms, the little fox’s ears suddenly twitched gently before she blearily lifted her head and looked at Lu Yun with baby-blue eyes.

“Hongjun left a restriction in your true spirit, so you wouldn’t have really died.” Lu Yun caressed her head and winked at her.

Blinking, the little fox took a second to collect her bearings and then... scrambled out of Lu Yun’s arms and shot onto his head.

“Oh no, oh no, ohnonono. Dijiang has the Bell of Chaos!” She panicked, running ‘round and ‘round on Lu Yun’s head.

Lu Yun:

Daoist Yuyu:

Wahuang:

.....

No one knew how or why the little fox had come back to life, but neither was anyone determined to get to the bottom of it. Maybe things were like what Lie Shan had said, that a great master by the name of Hongjun had left a restriction in her true spirit and spared her from succumbing to her injuries.

Those who were unfamiliar with the name looked around blankly, while those who had heard of it remained silent. No one was willing to pursue this mysterious existence that'd listed himself as a taboo.

The little fox was just as lively as before her resurrection, but she was a frantic mess. Too many secrets were sealed within the Bell of Chaos, including the Deaf Prince and the six others. If a divine weapon of time that didn't belong to this day and age suddenly appeared in this eon, then it could very likely give rise to a series of horrifying events.

However, no one knew where Dijiang was. Even Leize wasn't able to locate the demon god.

"Now that Dijiang has the bell, we probably won't be able to get it back even if we find him. In that case, let's just see how things play out." After musing over various possibilities, Lu Yun finally sighed and set it aside for now.

"Tianqi, I have matters to attend to and must leave the tribes for a while. You have a mission to carry out in my absence—ferret out any demon god who's creating trouble for humans and kill them all. If you can't, partner with Bingyi. If that still proves insufficient, go to Mount Buzhou and ask Her Majesty to take the field!" Lu Yun summoned his disciple.

Nuanzi had acknowledged his status and confirmed humanity as a peak race in the great wilderness. If there was any great master who still courted death even now and sowed discord among the tribes, then Lu Yun would do as Nuanzi had said and bring down the full might of his wrath upon them.

However, he wasn't strong enough to easily sweep all of his enemies just yet. He could temporarily summon hellfire and bolster himself with it, but like he'd said in the earlier battle, Lu Yun was less than Nuanzi for now. He was less than even Dijiang, unless they happened to be in the netherdark and he was reinforced by the true Sea of Hellfire.

He had the faintest hunch that Fuxi's return from the chaos would be the prelude to a heaven-shattering war. Perhaps demon god rule over the great wilderness would end in that war, and human dao might be... officially established.

Therefore, he really needed to get stronger.

However, he couldn't cultivate in his Xing Chen replica. This body of the world had only come to be because Qing Yu had theorized the proper method to do so—refine the five divine treasures and nine connate spirit roots into him so that he could break through into the chaos realm.

The Dusk River, living soil, Traceless, corpsefire, and demonic tree were all in hand. In fact, they'd all melded into Xing Chen's body thanks to their journey through spacetime. If Lu Yun could find the nine connate spirit roots in this era and continued to incorporate them, then Xing Chen's strength would increase as a result.

The first one he thought of was the Constellation Willow. Luo Houluo was gravely injured thanks to his disciple, so now was the perfect time. However, Lu Yun needed to find Ling Weiyang first before doing anything. Ling Weiyang's natural talents would help him locate the spirit root.

Meanwhile, the little fox sprawled on top of Lu Yun's head and wouldn't let go of his hair roots no matter what he said.

"I'm going with you!" She shook her head violently from side to side. Two crafty glints shone out of her eyes; there was patently something in the Mu nation that'd caught her attention.

"Big brother Lieshan, I want to go too!" Ah Bao tugged piteously on the hem of Lu Yun's shirt.

"Alright, alright, let's all go together." Lu Yun rubbed his forehead. Now that his status had been confirmed, he could do just about whatever he wanted in the great wilderness. Not many would provoke him under the current circumstances.

"Tianqi, remember what I said. You must be unyielding and dominating so that they fear you!" Lu Yun imparted a final solemn reminder.

"Understood!" Tianqi nodded gravely.

.....

The Mu nation was located to the east of the great wilderness in the depths of the East Sea.

Lu Yun didn't know what connection it had to the East Sea in the future world of immortals, but he did know that the latter was currently called the world of celestials. It was held up by Mount Buzhou and hung in the outer realm of the great wilderness, in another dimension.

A trace of confusion flashed through Lu Yun's eyes when he exited Suncrows Plain and looked out at the vast East Sea. It was... rather similar to the one that would be in the world of immortals.

"Greetings to Lie Shan." A warm current suffused their surroundings as a young girl wrapped in flames floated down from the void. She swept a graceful curtsy at Lu Yun when she reached the ground. "My deepest gratitude for your aid last time. You saved my younger sister from being overrun in the tide of yin spirits."

The visitor was one of Xihe's replicas, the goddess who lived in the sun and Changxi's elder sister.

"It was a simple act of convenience not worth mentioning. Besides, Changxi helped me hold off Dusk Snake last time as well." Lu Yun waved a hand.

"Nothing can repay the debt of saving a life. I have observed your battles a few times and notice that you utilize hellfire. While hellfire is ferocious, all things in the world have their counter. Please accept Yi's greatest treasure, his Rearbow." Xihe's form slowly transformed into a jade-green bow before it disappeared into the air.

"What the, she gave you Yi's bow just like that?" The little fox popped out and assessed the weapon with surprise. "I remember Xihe being a big miser... she's way less generous than her younger sister, Changxi!"

"Well, the bow is indeed the Great Yi's. Though he's dead to the point where his body doesn't even exist, his true spirit hasn't scattered," Lu Yun analyzed thoughtfully. "Xihe may attract karmic repercussions if she continues keeping the bow, so that's why she gifted it to me. Honestly, it's killing

three birds with one stone—thanking me for saving her sister, avoiding any karma that may be coming, and transferring any consequences to me...”

Thankfully, he didn't care about any potential backlash. He did indeed lack a handy treasure at the moment after gifting the hundred-and-eight-ranked white lotus to Eternal. The bow had showed up right on time.

When he grasped the bow, a pillar of jade-green brilliance shot into the clouds. The power of the world's liver within his body instantly connected with the bow; he didn't even have to refine it before it became his.

“Absolutely perfect! I'm at least thirty percent stronger with this bow in hand!”

Chapter 886: A Body of the Great Dao

Though he knew that Xihe was just getting rid of future trouble in gifting Rearbow to him, Lu Yun still happily accepted the present.

“There's still a guy we haven't gotten rid of in Yi's tomb.” He looked downward.

There was a fellow in the Great Yi's tomb, trapped by Kuafu's soul fragment and corpse, that Lu Yun wasn't sure was Darkriver or Luo Houluo. He didn't dare brashly spring into action as that might doom Kuafu if things went south. In spite of everything, Lu Yun still nursed a small fantasy that he might be able to pull Kuafu out of death.

There was no system of reincarnation in the great wilderness at the moment, so no matter how he reversed life and death, he wouldn't run afoul of any taboos. Actually, his secret desire was to revive all of the great masters in the cosmos if he had the chance to!

.....

The East Sea was enormous, so many times bigger than the great wilderness, and the Mu nation was located in its deepest reaches.

Lu Yun held Ah Bao's hand while the little fox curled up in her accustomed place inside his robes. The three of them walked over the waves and headed for their destination.

Lie Shan's trip to the east and intent to visit the Mu nation naturally drew a lot of attention. Their ruler, Goumang, waited twenty-five hundred kilometers outside of his nation as soon as he received word.

With Lie Shan's current status in the great wilderness on par with Nuanzi's, Goumang had to show his respect as he was a preeminent demon god just a little bit outranked by Nuanzi and Dijiang.

“Hahahaha, it is such a great honor that Lie Shan has come to my nation. What an honor, truly an honor! Come come come, you are my guests!” Goumang laughed heartily upon seeing the human.

Lu Yun stopped dead in his tracks and stared at the demon god. The little fox gaped as well, not knowing what to make of the situation.

“This is my first time seeing Goumang...” she muttered softly.

“Hahahahaha!!” Lu Yun threw his head back with laughter. “Peasant Lie Shan of the woodlands greets the ruler of the Mu nation. After you!”

Taken aback, Goumang blinked, then warmly took Lu Yun’s hands and brought him into the Mu nation.

The country was vast and situated on an enormous island with a towering tree at its center. Nearly the same scale as Mount Buzhou, the gigantic tree reached up to the cosmos and stretched down to the netherdark.

Her sovereign was another entity that took the form of whoever was looking at him. The young man’s movements brimmed with a solemn dignity, but an extraordinarily gentle expression filled his face. The most shocking of all was that he looked just like the Deaf Prince!

Does he reincarnate into the Deaf Prince later on? Lu Yun’s mind gossiped furiously at the implications.

Deaf Prince Xiangliu Hongzhen was a pureblooded xiangliu, and Xiangliu was a connate demon god in this day and age. Lu Yun had already met him in space, and nursed the theory afterward that the Deaf Prince had something to do with Xiangliu. However, he immediately dismissed the idea now that he’d met Goumang.

When Goumang had said, “What an honor, truly an honor!”, Lu Yun had almost taken him to be the Deaf Prince on the spot.

“This big tree is the Builder Tree, isn’t it?” Lu Yun tsk’ed with amazement when he looked at the soaring tree at the center of the nation.

He couldn’t make out its final height or overall girth, and most surprising of all was that in the future, legends would place the Builder Tree in the middle of the great wilderness. It was a bridge between heaven and earth, a connection between heaven and man. But this divine tree was actually rooted in the Mu nation?

“Correct, the Builder Tree!” Goumang nodded gently and welcomed Lu Yun into his palace.

His palace was very simple—one formed naturally from numerous saplings. Vibrant vitality filled the structure and Lu Yun immediately felt at ease when he set foot inside.

“Big brother Lieshan, I like this place!” Ah Bao spread her arms out and luxuriated in the comfortable feeling. Meanwhile, the little fox’s eyes darted around rapidly, seemingly looking for something.

Lu Yun found the situation a bit awkward and Goumang waved a hand, dismissing all of his attendants.

“Fellow daoist didn’t make a trip to the Mu nation just to see me, did you?” Goumang looked at the human with a smile.

“Truth be told, I do have a favor to ask,” Lu Yun responded gravely.

“Please go ahead, fellow daoist!” Goumang nodded.

“I’d like to see Ling Weiyang.”

“See Ling Weiyang?!” Joviality slid off Goumang’s face and the look in his eyes grew a bit remote.

“Hmm?” Lu Yun blinked, a bit confused, but didn’t voice his confusion out loud.

“What might Lie Shan have to do with Ling Weiyang?” Even Goumang’s honorific for the human changed.

“I’d like Ling Weiyang to help me locate the Constellation Willow and bring it to me.” Lu Yun held nothing back. He could forgo all of the other spirit roots, but he had to obtain the willow.

“I see...” the demon god heaved a slight sigh of relief, then continued after a pause, “Who told you that Ling Weiyang can help you obtain the Constellation Willow? And where did you hear this name?”

“Is there... something special about Ling Weiyang?” Lu Yun asked subconsciously when he heard the questions. He suddenly recalled the little fox saying that she’d never heard of the name in this era.

“Correct, there is something very special about Ling Weiyang. Helping you locate a connate spirit root is indeed one of his abilities.” Goumang peered deep into Lu Yun’s eyes and enunciated carefully, “In addition, he possesses a connate dao constitution. His body was forged from the great dao itself. ...do you know what that means?”

“A body of the great dao?!” Lu Yun yelped. “A special constitution that can communicate with all living beings and become one with dao?!”

“Correct!” Goumang nodded. “Ling Weiyang will be invincible if he reaches the chaos realm, and even Leize won’t be his opponent then. At the same time, his soul is quite fragile right now, and he has a less than perfect control over his body. Anyone can possess him!”

He kept his eyes tightly fixed on the human as he spoke.

“...does fellow daoist know the mountain god of Mount Tai?” Lu Yun smiled gently. “And the torch dragon being nurtured in the Sea of Hellfire? That one’s an existence that can control yin yang and reverse them.”

Goumang blinked, then roared with laughter. “Hahahahaha!! So it’s this one who’s been rather rude!”

Whether it was Tianqi or the torch dragon, neither of them was any less than Ling Weiyang’s body of the great dao. One of them had become Lu Yun’s disciple and received his careful tutelage, while the other had received his guardianship. The human had weathered a chaos tribulation for eight years and left without a word, making no designs on the recipient.

“Servants, have Ling Weiyang come here!” Goumang bellowed and waved a hand.

“Understood!” came the response outside the palace.

It wasn’t long before Ling Weiyang arrived with a young man dressed in white robes—Bai Zhaoju, who Lu Yun had met before.

Bai Zhaoju had now broken through divine king and reached empyrean realm. He was a great master of the combat arts, and this cultivation speed was downright frightening.

“Lie Shan, it really is you!” Bai Zhaoju exclaimed when he saw Lu Yun. He couldn’t connect this mighty existence on par with Nuanzi and Dijiang to the thin, weedy human youth he’d once seen.

“Long time no see, White Emperor!” Lu Yun nodded when he saw Bai Zhaoju.

“Ling Weiyang greets the Mu emperor and Lie Shan!” Looking exactly like Ashu, just much younger, Ling Weiyang was only at the divine king realm. That didn’t make him very strong, but an uncommonly comfortable presence emanated from his body. It felt like the great dao sharpened into focus if one was next to him.

“Ah Bao, little fox, go run around and play,” Lu Yun fished out the little fox from his robes and shoved her into Ah Bao’s arms.

Chapter 887: Asura

“Do you know me?” Ling Weiyang considered Lu Yun with a serious expression. “I can sense that you know me, and that you know me well, but I’ve never seen you before.”

He frowned, deep in thought.

“I do know you. We’re actually pretty close at that,” Lu Yun admitted easily. “You’ll understand in the future.”

Ling Weiyang gave Lu Yun an inquisitive look before turning to Goumang.

“I have other matters to attend to, I’ll leave you be.” With a smile, Goumang took his leave.

His earlier words to Lu Yun were a test. He’d wanted to see if Fuxi and Leize had misplaced their trust in the boy. He was a connate demon god loyal to Leize, so naturally he would be on Fuxi’s side.

Nevertheless, the human youth had passed and earned his trust.

“What are you doing here, White Emperor?” Lu Yun turned to Bai Zhaoju in surprise. The man had said that he would return to the Jin nation after acquiring Taiyi’s true feather, but the feather was still with Bai Zhaoju and he was in... the Mu nation.

When they parted ways in the cosmos, Lu Yun had told Bai Zhaoju to wait for him in the Mu Clan, but that had been eight years ago. Since Bai Zhaoju still had an unfinished task at hand, Lu Yun had expected he would’ve returned to the Jin Clan regardless. Therefore, it was quite a surprise to see him here.

“So you’re the White Emperor...” Ling Weiyang gave Bai Zhaoju a disdainful look.

“Of course I am!” Bai Zhaoju crowed. “I’m the White Emperor, and you’re the Azure Emperor!”

“Azure?” Ling Weiyang grumbled. “Why not the Ling Emperor?”

“You idiot, the Mu nation rules over azure wood, the eastern wood element. That makes you the Azure Emperor! Why do you think I’m not calling myself the Bai Emperor?” Bai Zhaoju spoke as if it was self-evident.

Lu Yun slapped his forehead at the exchange.

“Right!” Bai Zhaoju remembered Lu Yun’s question only now. “Bai Ze of the celestial court told me to stay in the Mu nation and wait for you until you came! I couldn’t deny the request of a connate god, so here I am.”

He put it that way, but it wasn't like he'd had a choice. He'd wanted to return to the Jin nation earlier, but Bai Ze's will had continued to exert pressure on him from the cosmos, commanding him to stay. The celestial king's will vanished, however, as soon as Lie Shan arrived.

"Celestial King Bai Ze told you to stay?" Lu Yun asked, surprised.

"Yup." Being naturally irreverent, Bai Zhaoju wasn't one to treat Lu Yun differently after he became one of the greatest powers in the world.

Lu Yun scanned Bai Zhaoju closely and made some calculations through the formula dao. "Bai Ze told you to stay in the Mu nation in order to save you."

Bai Zhaoju started. "What?"

"The Jin ruler sent you to retrieve Taiyi's feather so you would ultimately become a sacrifice. You were to become its vessel." Ling Weiyang sighed and continued in a cool tone, "Haven't you said that the feather has gradually become part of your body over the past eight years? That's because of your unique constitution. It allows you to absorb the feather's power and slowly become someone like Taiyi.

"If you'd returned to the Jin nation eight years ago, Rushou would've possessed you or refined you into a replica." Ling Weiyang gave him a pitying look. "If you hadn't acquired your sword dao in the cosmos and improved your cultivation so substantially, that wouldn't have resulted in Celestial King Bai Ze intervening because he wanted to save a great talent. By all rights, you should already be dead."

Bai Zhaoju blanched at the incredulous revelation, cold sweat beading his forehead. He rasped out disbelievingly, "Lord Rushou wants me dead?!"

"I wouldn't say that... but he did adopt you for Taiyi's true feather." Ling Weiyang patted him on the shoulder. "I tried to warn you before, but you trusted him too much to suspect him and listened to nothing I said.

"Since you're in the Mu nation now, just focus on cultivating. You've incorporated Taiyi's feather into yourself and acquired your sword dao... You'll ascend to the chaos realm in no time and have no reason to fear Rushou then."

"It's not fear." Bai Zhaoju protested absentmindedly as his eyes turned mournful. "It's just... I..." He couldn't voice the struggle within his thoughts. Naively, he still wanted to believe there was some misunderstanding in all this, that his friends were mistaken.

"Lie Shan, will you go to the Jin nation with me after everything here? I want to ask master in person... if he really intends to turn me into a replica!" A pleading tone bled into his voice. "It's all speculation at the moment. No one knows the truth yet."

Lu Yun nodded. "I'll go with you."

"Thank you!" Bai Zhaoju relaxed minutely.

His master Rushou had raised him since youth, passing combat arts and cultivation methods onto him. It was all because of his master that Bai Zhaoju was able to reach such heights before turning a hundred years old. Every fiber of his being rejected the notion that his master meant him harm.

However, he also didn't want to die, either. He still had so much more to see and do in life! If Ling Weiyang's speculations were right, he'd be a lamb walking into a tiger's mouth if he returned to the Jin nation. That was why he needed Lu Yun to go with him.

"By the way, what do you need me for?" Ling Weiyang felt a natural affinity to the powerful human who'd attracted so much attention as of late. Hence, his casual attitude toward the man.

"I seek the Constellation Willow!" Lu Yun responded solemnly, his gaze fixed on Ling Weiyang.

"The Constellation Willow? It's in Luo Houluo's possession!" Ling Weiyang blurted out what he knew. "He may not be able to refine the willow, but it's under his protection. I won't be able to summon it here."

"Luo Houluo is gravely injured at the moment," said Lu Yun. "He's unlikely to have any effort to spare for the willow."

"Ah, in that case... follow me." Ling Weiyang rose to his feet and walked out of Goumang's palace. His heart leapt with an unfamiliar excitement. He'd never tried taking away the spirit root of a top connate demon god before!

However, robbing Luo Houluo of his Constellation Willow would surely result in a death feud with the demon god. He would definitely retaliate once he recovered from his injuries. That was why Ling Weiyang must exercise caution to conceal himself and the presence of the Mu Clan in his upcoming attempt.

Naturally, Lu Yun would also step forward to capture Luo Houluo's attention, announcing that he, Lie Shan, possessed the willow.

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On a deserted island a hundred and fifty thousand kilometers away from the Mu nation, Ling Weiyang extracted several drops of heartblood from his chest and used them to draw bizarre glyphs on the ground.

"Um, I say, don't you think you agreed to help me a little too easily? Not that I'm complaining..." Lu Yun asked in surprise, watching Ling Weiyang work.

"I was born with a dao constitution, which means I should follow my heart," Ling Weiyang chuckled. "My lack of unwillingness is proof enough that I'm doing the right thing."

"Follow my heart?" Lu Yun murmured. "That's right. I might've made some calculations through formula dao, but I've been following my heart as well... I want the Constellation Willow, so I sought you out. I... My constitution is of the world as well."

With a simple grabbing motion, Ling Weiyang completed a dark green formation.

"Are you sure you want the Constellation Willow and not the other connate spirit roots, Lie Shan? How about the top-ranked Chaos Lotus?" He turned to Lu Yun. "I can only summon a connate spirit root once every century!"

"I'm certain, I want the Constellation Willow!" With just a few points in the air, Lu Yun created an enormous formation that protected Ling Weiyang and Bai Zhaoju and left him alone outside.

"Alright!" Ling Weiyang nodded and bit into the tip of his tongue, splattering blood over the glyphs on the ground. The dark green glyphs lit up brilliantly and nine differently-shaped spirit roots emerged before him.

They were the nine connate spirit roots coveted by all living souls of the great wilderness: the Chaos Lotus, Immortal Myriadtree, Fusang Purewood, Heavenly Grass, Earthly Duskroot, Moon Osmanthus, Embittered Bamboo, Constellation Willow, and Demon Vine!

Ling Weiyang pointed at the projection of the willow.

Boom!

A tremor passed through the sky above the island as a giant willow slowly emerged out of the air. It was inky black throughout with twinkling leaves scattering starry light among the branches. Behold, the Constellation Willow, ranked eighth among the nine connate spirit roots.

"Who is it?!" snarled a furious voice from the other end of the passageway. "Who dares steal my treasure from me?!"

"Luo Houluo? Or Darkriver?" Lu Yun's expression darkened when he heard the voice. It was neither Luo Houluo nor Darkriver on the other side, but at the same time, it was both Luo Houluo and Darkriver!

"Lie Shan!!" The being flew into a crazed rage when he heard Lu Yun's voice. A giant scarlet hand fell from the sky, forming a scarlet hand seal to swat at Lu Yun.

Swoosh!

Emerald light blossomed from Lu Yun's figure as he manifested a longbow of the same color. He pulled it taut and shot out a black burning arrow.

Boom!

An arrow of hellfire clashed with the scarlet hand seal, shattering the very air and evaporating a hundred million tons of seawater. Powerful formation ripples flurried outwards, keeping Ling Weiyang and Bai Zhaoju protected and out of sight.

"Yi's bow!!" The mysterious being woke from his raging frenzy and stared at the longbow with wariness.

"Just what are you?" Lu Yun asked with a frown.

The figure was humanoid, but a pair of bat wings unfurled from his back. Blood-like fire burned around him, and the existences of Darkriver and Luo Houluo were fading away. A different being was emerging from their amalgamation... a new kind of connate demon god!

"I... am a demon! A demon of Asura! Mine. Name. is ASURA!!" The being's guttural roar reached the nine heavens, shockwaves felt by even the connate great dao.

Boom!

Crimson flames of light spread at tremendous speed, dying everything red within a fifty thousand kilometers radius. Even the body of water beneath Asura's feet turned into a sea of blood!

Chapter 888: Rearbow's Second Form

"Asura!" Lu Yun's expression tightened when he heard the name. Asura's reputation was too infamous—he would become the ultimate nightmare in one of the ages to come, the demon of dreams. Who would've thought he'd suddenly appear here!

"Legend has it that Asura was born of the Blood Sea, and that the greatest of his lineage can turn wherever he stands into a Blood Sea!"

Based on his knowledge from Zhaoqing, Lu Yun knew Asura as one of the most frightening beings before Emperors Fall. He was most likely the entity that Ge Long had quartered and buried inside the four evil coffins.

"Luo Houluo is the greatest demon of the great wilderness and Darkriver is the master of the Blood Sea... No wonder, no wonder!" Lu Yun murmured to himself as he watched the newly born Asura exult in his might.

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"Asura has emerged in the world!" At the foot of Mount Buzhou, Wahuang stood up and looked to the East Sea. "His birth means the doomsday of connate demon gods. Everything is in readiness, now we lack only Fuxi."

.....

Asura raged over the East Sea, lit with flames the color of blood that morphed into bloody shadows to dive at Lu Yun. His killing intent was pure and domineering—there was no other thought in his mind other than to kill, kill, kill!

His conviction was a faith that Lie Shan would die at his hands.

With Asura as the center, the great ocean beneath his feet turned into a Blood Sea that contained his great dao. Bloody rain also drifted from the skies, collecting and shifting direction toward Lu Yun as sheets of keen razor-blades.

In response, the shadowy image of the Sal Tree of Life and Death appeared in the void, marking an explosion of hellfire that clashed with the bloody ocean. As the two terrifying seas rammed each other on the ground and in the air, so did Lu Yun and Asura throw themselves at each other.

Lu Yun hadn't really summoned the Sea of Hellfire. Though hellfire blazed furiously around him, it was just external leakage from the real Sea of Hellfire that the Sal Tree had summoned to the East Sea.

At the same time, Asura hadn't really created a Blood Sea either. His great dao had just taken the form of the Blood Sea and carried its will within.

Trembling from the ferocious impact between the two combatants, the East Sea agitated and frothed into tempestuous waves. Everything that lived in its waters fled in all directions, not daring to come within five hundred thousand kilometers of the epicenter of doom.

In the Mu nation, Goumang's expression darkened ominously and he approached the Builder Tree, calling upon it to protect his kingdom and everything within fifty thousand kilometers of it.

"I couldn't let loose last time because Nuanzi didn't dare fight to the death and Dijiang ambushed me instead. But since you're here today, let me see just how my battle strength measures up to the true peak experts of the great wilderness!" Lu Yun roared.

Whooooosh.

A long streak of black flame burst from his body and surged into the bow in his hands. What had been a jade-green longbow suddenly blackened from the ignition of hellfire on it. And then... it transformed in a streak of light into a set of black armor on Lu Yun's body!

"Rearbow is one of the great peerless-grade connate treasures in the world, one that can kill suncrow spirits corrupted by realm monsters. What it has displayed thus far can't be all that it can do, but I never thought it possessed a second form!" When the armor settled down on him, Lu Yun felt a terrifying strength surge into his body. Combined with the support of hellfire, he suddenly felt that he could punch straight through the heavens.

"Hahaha—c'mon Asura, let's fight!" Lu Yun roared, charging toward his opponent in a long tail of flame.

Asura's replicas now dotted in the sky as a hundred million bloody shadows. No one could discern where his true self was. However, that didn't concern Lu Yun at all; he covered all of the shadows with the span of a single blow.

Boooooom.

One punch blasted all shadowy forms apart and reduced them to a bloody mist in the sky. His second punch drew hellfire into his body and projected it as a huge fist, blasting savagely into the Blood Sea. That punch possessed the strength to destroy the world!

Lu Yun punched straight through the Blood Sea from that one move. The skies darkened and the sun dimmed; the center of the world seemed to be wherever he stood.

"Hahahaha—Asura, stop playing dead. Come out and fight!" Black flames replacing his eyes, the black armor on Lu Yun's body sharpened into focus and became one with his skin.

In this moment, he finally understood what an ultimate peerless-grade connate treasure meant to a chaos realm expert. Such power, such dominance! No wonder Dijiang had set aside all concerns for face and gone after the Bell of Chaos!

Rumble.

The Blood Sea gushed back to life as a pillar of ghastly-white flame erupted out of it and made for the horizon. A giant skeletal beast with three pairs of wings on its back, two horns on its head, and wielding a black bident stormed out of the stark-white fire.

A body of Hadal Bones, the trump card of the Venerated Sacrosanct Demon Sovereign!

However, this version was plainly a hundred million times stronger than the demon sovereign. Hadal Bonefire blazed on it in a crazed inferno; even the Blood Sea and hellfire in the air showed signs of freezing over.

“Lie Shan!” Asura roared, flinging his bident through the air to nail down Lu Yun. At the same time, his ponderous body lifted off in a spray of fiery sparks and shot at Lu Yun from another direction.

Despite the murderous glints of the two points bearing down on him, Lu Yun stared calmly back at the weapon and answered back with a fiery punch.

The bident that would spell inevitable doom for any other demon god shuddered from the force of a human’s punch and... fell into the ocean as a hunk of scrap metal. At almost the same time, Lu Yun twisted around at an impossible angle and kicked out with his foot, connecting solidly with the bony body’s waist.

Craaaaack crack crack.

The indestructibly sturdy skeleton broke apart in two and flew off in opposite directions!

.....

“This strength is incredible!” Up in the void, Nuanzi scanned Lu Yun with significant shock. Last time he faced off against the human, the youth had also summoned the Sea of Hellfire, but his battle strength hadn’t been anywhere near as exceptional as what he was displaying now!

“It’s Rearbow!” Dijiang manifested a replica beside Nuanzi. “I hadn’t known that Rearbow was this astounding, it’s second only to the Bell of Chaos! ...in that case, I should’ve paid a visit to the sun star and taken the bow from Xihe when I could.”

“Hmph!” Nuanzi snorted when he saw the other demon god and ignored him.

He’d just acknowledged Lie Shan and the human race in front of all the experts in the great wilderness when Dijiang ambushed Lie Shan and Tushan in broad daylight. That had been a slap straight to his face!

But now that Dijiang possessed the Bell of Chaos, his strength was almost on par with Taiyi and Leize’s. Nuanzi didn’t dare overtly express his displeasure, but wouldn’t cower before Dijiang just because of that. He was one of the oldest experts of the great wilderness!

“It’s not just Rearbow.” A being sparkling with golden luminescence materialized out of the void—a connate demon god who looked rather weird. He looked a bit like the humans did, but long white fur covered his body. He had four limbs like a tiger’s and stood on the backs of two dragons.

Rushou!

The ruler of the Jin nation to the west!

“Lie Shan’s battle techniques aren’t something that we can measure up to!” Rushou’s pale-golden eyes sent out sparkling beams that were three meters long as he sized up the human. “He’s less than Asura in terms of absolute strength, but could snap Asura’s body in two with one kick due to the frightful might of his battle techniques. Even we would be the losing side if we faced off against him.”

Connate demon gods venerated strength; the great daos and various combat arts they possessed centered around strength as well. It was thus a very uncomfortable feeling to see Lie Shan defeat one of their own through ingenuity instead of strength.

It wasn't that they disliked this display of skill, but that they felt an innate rejection of something new. Nuanzi felt the same way, despite having given his approval of the youth.

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Asura's skeletal body swiftly regathered above the East Sea and his hideous wounds quickly healed. However, his presence was a touch weaker than before.

"Again!" Lu Yun roared, his body flashing to Asura in a blaze of black flame. This time, he punched out at the demon god's head.

"AhhhhHHHHH!!" Asura shrieked, beckoning his hand to summon two murderous swords from an unknown location. They instantly landed in his palms—the two connate swords that'd once belonged to Darkriver. They had been the basis on which he'd conquered the netherdark and called himself the patriarch of it all.

With those two weapons in hand, Asura's strength skyrocketed thirty percent greater. The Blood Sea hovering over the East Sea shifted into light form, shooting toward Lu Yun as streaks of deadly radiance.

Behind Lu Yun, the Sal Tree of Life and Death slowly became more substantial, like it'd truly arrived on the scene. Refusing to give a single inch, he grasped at thin air and materialized the bow that'd turned into his battle armor. It appeared as a black bow made of light and landed in Lu Yun's hand.

A black arrow of flaming hellfire was already notched on its strings, and it twanged three times in quick succession, arcing three arrows through the sky with one in front.

Asura's skeletal figure waved the two swords in midair, slashing out with streaks of bloody light and smashing the arrows to pierces. But before he could pivot into another move, another three flaming black arrows broke through the air and made for his body.

"So fast!" Asura gasped; the new attack had arrived when he was still finishing his earlier swings.

Donk!

Donk!

Donk!

Craaaack!

The three arrows pierced him through in the next breath.

Chapter 889: Slaying Asura

Three muffled impacts marked Asura's skeletal body being pierced clean through. Lu Yun arrived in front of him at almost the same time, bow drawn taut yet once more and this time, releasing a storm of several hundred arrows.

Asura shrieked and flailed, wanting to escape the hail of pain. However, Rearbow proved much stronger than the two swords in his hands; his body was reduced to bone dust in the blink of an eye.

“Lie Shan, I swear upon my essence as a demon that I will seek vengeance for this!”

Whoosh!

The bone fragments drifting around the air suddenly ignited and collected as one enormous ball of Hadal Bonefire, which then scattered explosively in the four directions.

Rearbow was too domineering. When Yi wielded it, he could almost defy Taiyi equipped with the Bell of Chaos. Though Asura was stronger than Lu Yun, his Blood Sea was less than the Sea of Hellfire, and his two swords were also less than the Rearbow. If the fight continued, the human would beat him to death!

Most importantly, Asura was still struggling with his injuries. Ji Du had delivered a devastating blow to his prior self, so he had to continue devouring the core essence of other connate demon gods to increase his strength. He had to keep eating, and eating, and eating until he was the only demon in the end and annihilated all life!

Annihilation!

This was the only desire in Asura’s mind from the moment of his creation.

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“Trying to run?” Lu Yun sneered when he saw the demon god take the form of Hadal Bonefire.

Whoosh!

Burning merrily in midair, the Sea of Hellfire suddenly exploded and churned toward the scorching Hadal Bonefire.

“AHHHH!!” Asura shrieked with fear. More than eighty percent of his boundless fire was destroyed before it had time to flee! Without a doubt, this was yet another ruinous blow that greatly damaged his core.

Extraordinarily aggressive himself, however, he consumed the Blood Sea with his remaining bonefire and escaped in a shroud of bloody light, vanishing beyond the horizon of the East Sea.

“What a pity, just a little bit more!” Lu Yun sighed. It seemed that some things were decreed by fate. Asura would be defeated and quartered by Ge Long, currently Daoist Yuyu, sometime in the future and buried in the four coffins. Later on, four blood demons would be born into the world...

He wouldn’t be able to kill Asura even if he pulled out all stops now—the demon god had too many lifesaving measures. Still, he’d put in a good day’s work right here. The Constellation Willow was his and he’d gravely injured Asura. That one wouldn’t be showing his face in the world for a very long time.

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“When... when can I become someone like Lie Shan?!” Veneration crossed Bai Zhaoju’s face as he stood in the formation that Lu Yun had set up.

“You’ll become a peerless master like him sooner or later if you follow the path you’re on.” Ling Weiyang’s tones also rang of emotion. “This Constellation Willow isn’t complete.” He shook his head with resignation when Lu Yun landed next to them again. “Asura’s taken two-thirds of its core essence for some undoubtedly nefarious purpose. The rest is just barely supporting the spirit root so that it doesn’t immediately wither up and die.”

“I see...” Lu Yun blinked, then nodded. “Well, having one-third is enough for me.”

What he wanted was the connate energy within the Constellation Willow. It didn’t matter if all of its core essence was gone, it was enough to just have its true form.

Lu Yun stretched out his hand and stored the willow inside his body, allowing it to take root in his body of the world.

Hummm.

A deep buzz that reached the soul emanated from his figure, and he felt that he’d taken another step closer to all living beings in the world.

“The primitive great dao has undergone some changes again...” In the chaos, Lu Yun’s cross-legged form suddenly opened his eyes to scan the great dao running through it.

In that battle with Asura, he’d unleashed his power to the best of his capabilities and further influenced the great dao because of it. From this moment onward, any life form that took another form would assume Lu Yun’s shape, unless their own bloodline power was uncommonly strong and overbearing, or one bestowed by the heavens themselves.

In other words, all life forms would naturally take human form.

Lu Yun’s cultivation method was slowly being assimilated into the primitive great dao. It’d gained the approval of the heavens and would form the basis for the future path of cultivation.

In the current great wilderness, divine spirits were the pioneers of all cultivation methods for latter-day beings. However, there wasn’t a complete system for cultivation yet, and there wasn’t anything close to being accepted by the great dao.

Though human dao had yet to be established, the primitive great dao was already setting foot in its vicinity.

“Battle... as long as I continue to battle, then the dao for humans will be continuously perfected. ...so I’m the one who creates human dao?!” Full realization struck Lu Yun at this point. He was a life form under the immortal dao and thus lacked a direct connection to human dao. In the same vein, that meant there was no need to agonize over whether the chicken or egg came first if he was the creator.

“To fully unleash myself... I just need to keep picking fights.” A smile curved Lu Yun’s lips.

Many naturally noticed the changes in the great dao, but none of the connate demon gods cared about that. So what if one had to take the form of a human in order to cultivate? What did that have to do with any of them—naturally born great masters of combat arts? They didn’t need to cultivate.

No matter what the great dao turned into, it wouldn’t affect them at all.

As for latter-day descendants... they were unable to sense the changes in the great dao. So in the end, no one paid attention to what had changed in their world.

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After absorbing the Constellation Willow into his body, Lu Yun took another small step closer to the true chaos realm. He traveled back to the Mu nation with Ling Weiyang and Bai Zhaoju.

“Someone’s coming.” His expression suddenly changed. He sensed the addition of two more powerful demon gods in the Mu nation. One of them was Dijiang, and the other shimmered with razor-sharp glints of yang metal. It was the ruler of the Jin nation in the west, Rushou!

Color drained out of his face when Bai Zhaoju also discovered his master’s presence. He’d planned to have Lu Yun accompany him back home so he could ask Rushou face-to-face if he really wanted to refine his disciple as a replica. To think that his master had come here in person instead!

Not only had he come, he’d come with Dijiang so they could threaten Goumang together!

It was plain to see that Bai Zhaoju had been able to reside safely at the Mu nation for eight years only because Goumang had been protecting him.

“Don’t worry, there’s still me.” Lu Yun flashed a slight smile when he noted the pallor of Bai Zhaoju’s face. “And don’t forget, you’re the future White Emperor.”

“I...” Bai Zhaoju’s voice was slightly hoarse. “Does he really want to refine me into a replica?”

Lu Yun sighed inwardly. Bai Zhaoju viewed Rushou as his father, and the demon god had indeed been the one to raise him and pass the great dao onto him. It was only to be expected that he couldn’t accept this harsh truth.

“Go on, you can ask him yourself in front of everyone.” Lu Yun patted his shoulder.

“...’kay...” Bai Zhaoju nodded gently.

“Ashu... eh, Daoist Ling. This has nothing to do with you, so you shouldn’t be involved.” Lu Yun turned to Ling Weiyang.

“Ashu?” Ling Weiyang blinked, then nodded. “I do indeed lack the right to intervene in the affairs of demon gods.”

He smiled ruefully. He was only a true divinity at the moment, and thus less than even an ant in the eyes of the lofty chaos realm demon gods. He raised cupped fists at Lu Yun and Bai Zhaoju and then walked elsewhere.

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In Goumang’s palace, he looked at his visitors with an unpleasant expression. Rushou’s replica had come several times over the past eight years to request Goumang send Bai Zhaoju back to the Jin nation. The request had been met with refusal each time.

However, Lie Shan’s great battle with Asura over the East Sea had attracted the arrival of Rushou in the flesh. Rushou was now here with Dijiang to demand the return of Bai Zhaoju!

“Fellow daoist, Bai Zhaoju is my disciple and has visited your Mu nation for the past eight years, it’s time he returned to the Jin nation.” Taking the form of whoever looked at him, Rushou sat cross-legged on a seating cushion and looked around with a remote glint in his eyes.

Dijiang beamed merrily, looking like a benevolent mediator, but the corners of his eyes flickered to the Builder Tree now and then. He patently also desired the foremost divine tree beneath the heavens.

“Since fellow daoist has come in person, then I will decline you no longer,” Goumang responded coldly. “But you must think carefully, fellow daoist, Bai Zhaoju’s future is unparalleled...”

“I know that, you need say nothing more, fellow daoist.” Rushou nodded. “My disciple, why do you not come out to greet your master?” He turned and looked in the opposite direction.

Bai Zhaoju walked through a door by himself. He paused in front of Rushou before saying, “This disciple is willing to return with master.”

“Mm?” Rushou started, then smiled. “What, did old man Goumang not tell you that your death is certain if you go back to the Jin nation?”

“This disciple knows!” Bai Zhaoju bit his lip. “This disciple is perfectly willing to!”

Both Goumang and Lu Yun outside the palace didn’t say anything. They’d known from the beginning that Bai Zhaoju would say and do this, which was why Goumang had never told Bai Zhaoju that his master had come.

“Hahahaha!!” Rushou laughed heartily upon hearing this and arched a smug brow at Goumang. “Good, very good! I didn’t teach you for nothing then.”

Goumang remained expressionless.

“In that case, I will impose on fellow daoist no longer. I shall take my leave now.” Rushou waved a hand and collected Bai Zhaoju in his seed storage. He raised a cupped fist salute at Goumang and departed.

Dijiang also smiled at the ruler of the Mu nation. “Fellow daoist, please tell Lie Shan that if he wants the Bell of Chaos, he can come find me at the Tang Valley.”

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“I couldn’t save him in the end.” Despondency filled Goumang’s face. “Ling Weiyang, you might as well go into seclusion in the Builder Tree,” he transmitted. “Don’t come out until you’re in the chaos realm. There are too many pairs of eyes on you in the great wilderness now.”

Ling Weiyang nodded, then walked into the tree.

“This was his choice... but I think Bai Zhaoju won’t die.” Lu Yun walked into the palace. “He is a good disciple. As for his master...” He hesitated, then continued, “Dijiang is obviously up to no good. I’m going to take a look.”

He stepped forward and followed in their wake, hiding his figure with hellfire.

Chapter 890: Demise

The great wilderness was vast and boundless, cached with countless secrets that not even the mighty creators had fully identified.

The Mu nation was to the east of the great wilderness, and the Jin nation to its far west. There were five hundred million kilometers between the two. Tang Valley was at the foot of Sky Mountain, both of which were in the west.

Rushou and Dijiang were traveling side by side as the two were on friendly terms, which was why Rushou had asked Dijiang to come with him to pressure Goumang together.

“Who would’ve thought old man Goumang would give in so easily? I’d thought he would ask that Lie Shan to fight the two of us together.” Rushou was in an exceedingly good mood and looked merrily at his friend.

“With the Bell of Chaos in hand, even Leize has to give way before me if he’d come.” Dijiang smirked proudly. “What a pity that I need the bell to be able to fight him though, even at my current strength.”

“True... he’s part of the first batch of connate demon gods that formed in the great wilderness. They’re too strong!”

Deep reservations flashed through both Dijiang and Rushou’s eyes when they thought of Leize. The demon god was very strong and extraordinarily tyrannical in his dealings. He killed at the drop of a hat whenever he was displeased, and was in fact, more out of control than man of the hour Lie Shan.

“However—” Dijiang’s grin widened. “If I could obtain Taiyi’s true feather and refine it into myself, I’ll be able to undo the final restriction in the Bell of Chaos and fully make it mine. I’ll be able to kill Leize with a single blow then!”

“Eh?!” Expression freezing, Rushou played it off. “Surely you jest, fellow daoist.”

“I’m not joking!” The grin on Dijiang’s face took a sinister bent. “There’s a final restriction in the Bell of Chaos that prevents me from fully refining it. But if I obtain Taiyi’s true feather and change my constitution to be the same as his, I think I’ll be able to truly make the bell mine.

“Rushou, you and I will still be fellow daoists if you give me the feather. If not... you’ll be a dead daoist.”

Joviality sliding off his face, Dijiang looked coldly at Rushou.

Humm.

The golden Bell of Chaos suddenly appeared over Dijiang’s head and sealed off an area three thousand kilometers across. Rushou registered the developments with an ugly expression; he hadn’t expected Dijiang to scheme after the Taiyi true feather!

The two demon gods had been evenly matched before, but now that Dijiang possessed the bell, he was overwhelmingly stronger than Rushou.

“It seems that you’re not willing to hand it over... in that case, my fellow daoist will have to be a dead daoist! I’ll send you on your way!” Not giving Rushou a chance to respond, Dijiang abruptly shifted into his true form of a four-winged, six-footed crimson bird and concentrated the power of the bell onto his body.

“Die!!” Dijiang’s claw came down on Rushou’s head with inevitable might. Bolstered by the power of the Bell of Chaos, he ripped through the very fabric of the great wilderness. There was nothing that could be done to withstand or avoid it.

“Go!” Rushou pointed forward and shot out a thin beam of golden radiance. It pierced through the curtain of light created by the bell and contained Bai Zhaoju within it.

“My disciple, you will enter Goldflare Mountain upon your return and cultivate until you’ve reached the chaos realm! You will be the ruler of the Jin nation afterward!” Rushou’s voice echoed in Bai Zhaoju’s mind.

“Master!!” screamed Bai Zhaoju in panic. He could clearly see that Rushou was standing in front of Dijiang with arms outstretched, using his physical body to bear the brunt of the bell’s power so it wouldn’t hit his disciple!

The streak of light that was Rushou’s greatest treasure carried Bai Zhaoju out of danger and shot furiously in the direction of the Jin nation.

“Lie Shan! Save my master!” Something suddenly occurred to Bai Zhaoju and he yelled with renewed hope.

“Lie Shan?” Following through with his devastating blow to Rushou, Dijiang’s expression shifted. “So you’re here alright.”

Whoosh.

An enormous illusory Sal Tree of Life and Death appeared in the sky, enveloping the premises as hellfire blazed to life. Rearbow in hand, Lu Yun appeared and speared Dijiang with a cold glare.

A huge hole had opened in Rushou’s chest from the sudden attack and his great dao had been shattered. His life was hanging by a thread.

“Don’t worry, you won’t die. I can save you.” Lu Yun nodded gently at Rushou.

“Don’t.” The demon god shook his head. “The doomsday of demon gods is upon us, and only with my death will the Jin nation be spared from it. I thought I would die in the hands of the realm monsters, but to think it’d be because of Dijiang instead!”

“What about Bai Zhaoju?” Lu Yun wanted to clear up the lingering doubts in the air.

“Bai Zhaoju is my disciple, so of course I had to protect him. I allowed word to circulate that I would be using him as a cauldron for a replica, so that the other demon gods wouldn’t dare do anything to him,” Rushou sighed.

How inhumanely cruel must one be to refine their own disciple, to use him as a cauldron and strip everything from him? It was precisely this ruthlessness and cold-blooded regard of Bai Zhaoju as a tool that had saved the budding White Emperor. Otherwise, he never would’ve returned safely from the stars after he obtained the Taiyi true feather.

Anyone who thought of making a move on him had to consider the very real possibility of retaliation for coveting one of Rushou's possessions. Dijiang had had designs on Bai Zhaoju as well, but hadn't dared to do anything out of reservation of Rushou's wrath.

It wasn't until he obtained the Bell of Chaos that he dared show his true face to Rushou, but he, too, had been surprised that Rushou had covered Bai Zhaoju's escape at the cost of his own life!

"What a thing to ask of you. Go in peace, I will take good care of the Jin nation and Bai Zhaoju." Lu Yun nodded.

Rushou's lips quirked upwards and his eyes slowly drifted shut, his soul scattering on the wind.

"Bai Zhaoju is my friend. I naturally have to take revenge for you killing his master." Lu Yun stowed Rushou's corpse safely away. "The little fox is one of my closest confidantes. You killed her once and took her treasure. I must also take revenge for that. So this time, there will be no quarter for you."

"Hahahaha!!" Dijiang roared with laughter from the human's declarations. "Lie Shan, you really are too full of yourself. Do you think you'll be able to defeat me just because you defeated a crippled Asura?"

"Some things are only known when tested!" Lu Yun lifted Rearbow to a ready position, turning it into a streak of black light that settled on his body. Hellfire jumped with increasing ferocity in the air, poised to set the very air aflame.

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"I... I see... so I thought wrongly of him." In the Mu nation, sorrow flashed through Goumang's face when he saw Rushou die. "Bai Zhaoju believed him, but as his long-time fellow daoist, I... I chose not to..."

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The Mu nation of wood to the east, Jin nation of metal to the west, Huo nation of fire to the south, and Shui nation of water to the north—these nations stood in the cardinal directions of the great wilderness and were its four pillars.

Mu ruler Goumang, Jin ruler Rushou, Huo ruler Zhurong, and Shui ruler Gonggong were among the greatest masters in the land. Rushou's death shook the great wilderness, and the Jin nation started trembling at the precise moment of its ruler's demise.

Abject sorrow wrapped around the country and rays of blinding brilliance shone out from the mysterious Goldflare Mountain at the heart of the nation, enveloping the kingdom.

No one had thought that Rushou would die at the hands of Dijiang. They were both residents of the west and had supported each other against other demon gods when they'd first taken form.