

Necropolis 961

Chapter 961: Vagabonds

Lu Yun frowned when he noted the darkfuries' behavior. He blasted away with a burst of tyrannical strength and sent them reeling backwards. However, they desperately flung themselves forward again when they recovered their balance. They had eyes for nothing but the food in front of them.

Sorrow deepened in Lu Yun's eyes, and even the little fox's fury slowly abated. He shook them off the wild boar again and again, but they always launched themselves back at the animal after getting to their feet.

Finally, Lu Yun rushed over and split himself into a myriad of copies, punching every single darkfury on the premises regardless of age or gender. A din of wails and howls rose from the terrified group and they finally changed their focus to the human youth. They craved food, but they were more afraid of death.

"You!" He stomped a random darkfury and coldly ordered, "Roast this wild boar like you were just talking about! I'll kill you if you dare eat any meat with a hint of blood in it."

Wild savagery's turning point into civilization was the usage of fire. Only when living beings walked out of the age of drinking blood and tearing into raw meat did they slowly develop culture.

Though Lu Yun had never encountered the darkfuries before, he knew that these were once a guardian race of the humans and great experts of hell. Though they were now a shadow of their former selves, he would never permit their descendants to drink fresh blood like wild beasts, no matter how hungry they were.

Under close scrutiny from Lu Yun's consciousness, the trembling darkfury approached the wild boar and summoned fresh springwater to skin and clean it. The others cautiously walked up and helped him as well.

Darkfuries were cultivators skilled in combat arts. They strongly repressed their hunger and desire to start a flame and roast the wild boar. Once the meat was thoroughly cooked, they could no longer resist their cravings and dug in with ravenous gusto.

Lu Yun watched them silently. Reason returned to the group when they'd had their fill and their eyes no longer glowed green.

"Milord!" The old darkfury from before stood up and bowed respectfully to Lu Yun. In this moment, he seemed to regain something that'd been lost long ago—his dignity.

"What is your name?" Lu Yun asked.

"In response to milord, I have no name. None of my tribe have names," murmured the elder. "We've become orphans of the universe ever since the destruction of the human dao. The master of the realm does not permit our entrance to that flourishing world, so we can only roam this newly born one."

Lu Yun nodded slightly. In the waning days of human dao, many races under its banner had turned traitor to give humanity a fatal blow. But the darkfuries and a few rare others in hell had steadfastly

stood on humanity's side until hell itself had been shattered. They'd been exiled by the new rulers and left to wander around the newly born worlds.

After the establishment of the immortal dao, everything about that war had been concealed and so all of these races were completely forgotten. They were the lost races of the world, doomed to be eternal vagabonds around the boundaries of the realms.

But it was also because of this that they didn't forget their past.

"You can go back now," Lu Yun said softly to the elder. "The human race should pay their debt to you."

"We can't, none of us can go back." The elder shook his head. "Milord, a new great dao runs through the heavens. They call it the immortal dao.

"We are the abandoned races and can't assimilate into it. We can't practice immortal dao either."

The elder stretched out his hand and showed a laughing and crying ghostly face materializing on his wrist—an akasha ghost.

This face was also a curse, a curse that forever cut off the darkfuries from the immortal dao. It wasn't a curse on the dao itself, but on a race and a bloodline. The origin of the curse was the ancestor of the race—the Darkfury Emperor.

His kinsmen also showed the mark on their wrists, imparting a sinister atmosphere to their surroundings. They could coexist peacefully with the dead spirits because of this curse. It tormented all generations of darkfuries with the inability to become part of the immortal dao and return to a living world. They would have to drift around on the edges of the realms for all eternity.

Whether it was the darkfuries or any other races in hell, they were exiled to the Quiet Realm forever.

Lu Yun had once thought they'd been completely exterminated. To think they lived on without dignity and hope here! The little fox's fury completely vanished; she looked at them with only pity.

"Since you can't go back, then... stay here." Lu Yun sighed and took out a few cultivation methods with a wave of his hand.

These were human dao methods that he'd invented in the great wilderness, the most primitive methods of their kind. Though they were categorized under the human dao, they were born beneath the primitive great dao. One could practice them even in the absence of human, immortal, and great dao.

Lu Yun could tell that these darkfuries cultivated the fragmented methods of the human dao era. They were much more refined after hundreds of millions of years of improvement, but were also much less than his original ones in a place like this.

"Take these." He imprinted the methods on their minds.

Their bodies shook and they looked at Lu Yun in a new light. A chord resounded from deep within their souls. This ordinarily looking young man should have something to do with that mighty figure of yesteryear!

“I can tell you how to break the curse,” Lu Yun continued. “Kill and eat humans. That will dispel the curse in your bloodlines.”

Their eyes grew even bigger.

“You can tell the other forgotten races how to break the curse and also share the cultivation methods I just gave you.” Lu Yun turned and left with the little fox.

Though this newly born star was a barren place, it wasn’t without food. These darkfuries didn’t have the ability to take it, but would regain strength with his cultivation methods and survive in this world.

There were also humans present on this world as well.

“Patriarch!” The darkfuries clustered around the elder.

“Though we have no direct relationship with the humans now, we would rather bear the curse than kill and eat them!” the elder declared firmly. “Humanity is our great benefactor and we will not harm them even if we are eradicated ten times over, to say nothing of a curse!”

Chapter 962: Palace of the Main World

The darkfuries were used to life here. If Lu Yun forcefully sent them to the world of immortals, they might fail miserably at adjusting to their new surroundings. He also didn’t dare break their curse either. If he did so, they wouldn’t be far from true extinction.

They hadn’t borne him any killing intent from start to finish as their only goal was to fill their stomachs. It was plain to see that they didn’t harm humans not only because “they” forbade it, but because the darkfuries themselves didn’t want to.

Lu Yun believed that once these abandoned races attained supreme power, they would achieve a series of earth-shattering feats. The cultivation methods he’d created weren’t simple, primitive ones. They encompassed a myriad of changes and fostered infinite possibilities.

Armed with these cultivation methods and combat arts, the darkfuries would be able to usher in a new era for themselves.

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Lu Yun and the little fox left this new star and strolled through the cosmos, heading in the direction that the little fox had pointed out.

“This is the main world of the Quiet Realm.” Lu Yun suddenly stopped in space.

In all of the realms of the multiverse, each of them possessed a main world. The boundless night sky stretched on beyond the main world, similar to the setup of the world of immortals. Though the Quiet Realm was a newly formed realm, it held the complete structure of one.

Its main world was similar to all of the lower worlds—under attack from dead spirits. Despite being the main world of this new realm, it was also almost completely overrun. Ruins and wreckage strewed the land; countless living beings struggled in the mouths of dead spirits.

An enormous palace hovered outside the main world, extending a giant boundary onto one of the continents below and protecting the denizens there. At the same time, it, too, was under attack.

The main world of the Quiet Realm wasn't a star, but a world embedded in the void. The natural walls resulting from the laws of a world separated the world from the cosmos.

When Lu Yun landed on the ground, he immediately sensed the dense concentration of the world's qi and the strength of the immortal dao.

"People from the world of immortals have descended here and are fighting off the dead spirits." He noted representatives from the world of immortals in action on the main world, but for some reason, these immortals didn't act in concert with the palace overhead. In fact, they built their own system of operations on the protected continent and fought the dead spirits in their own way.

All was still and quiet within the palace with no signs of life inside it.

"That's it!" the little fox shrieked. "The direction I calculated is there. Your dao fruit should be within that palace!" She popped out of his embrace with great excitement.

Lu Yun opened the Spectral Eye on the palace, but saw nothing apart from information of the dead from it. Large numbers of creatures had died there, from the Primeval Era of human dao to contemporary times.

He shook his head when he read even a few connate great gods among the dead. Entering the palace right now would be a very unwise move. If even great gods had died inside, there was certainly an uncommonly terrible danger within. It would run him right over, leaving him no idea of how he'd died.

"Let's get an understanding of how things are like in the main world." He didn't observe any activity from the Dao Academy here, so it didn't look like any academy disciples had descended to the Quiet Realm.

The realm's main world was incredibly vast, on par with a major of the world of immortals. However, dead spirits filled every nook and cranny of the world.

Most of its places had been razed to the ground, including the largest continent of the world. The only place that'd been spared was the continent protected by the palace. However, it was only roughly six hundred thousand kilometers across—about the same size as a province in the world of immortals.

A horde of dead spirits mobbed Lu Yun and the little fox the second they landed. Since Lu Yun possessed the Tome of Life and Death and hellfire, he wasn't the least bit daunted. Displaying his peak peerless immortal cultivation to its highest, he cleared the dead spirits around them and retreated to the safe continent at the same time.

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"Eh? Someone's come from the stars?" Surprise flashed through the eyes of immortals on the continent to see Lu Yun retreating their way. "I hadn't thought that anyone else would dare descend here apart from those of us from Truespirit Major and the Dao Academy. Tsk... tsk tsk tsk. They really have a death wish, huh?"

This group of immortals was disciples of Truespirit Major—where the Corpse Refiners reigned dominant. Almost every citizen of that major cultivated the ancient path of refining corpses. Since it'd become part of the immortal dao, it was now a properly legitimate great dao in its own right.

Yin Jiuying, lord of Truespirit Major, had expressed his wishes to Lu Yun to integrate the dao of corpse refining into the Dao Academy. His request was granted, but apart from Truespirit immortals, no one else was particularly interested in learning it. Naturally, Lu Yun added it to the academy because this dao was highly useful for tomb raiding. Even the most fearsome zombie could be refined into a battle zombie for immortals.

There was no inherent good or evil in dao. That existed in people instead.

The Dao Academy was an enormous melting pot and melded together the numerous great daos beneath it. It also continuously forged new paths out of what it already contained. Corpse refining had originated as a secret art, but grew into a great dao after joining the academy.

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“Some junior brothers from the Dao Academy have entered that palace to explore it and their status is unknown... And now we have a newcomer from the stars. Do we help them, or not?” A Corpse Refiner asked doubtfully on seeing Lu Yun fight his way to their position.

“We help him!” sneered another. “We can't just watch him die in front of us, can we? A mere peerless immortal can only be... Bah! His Lordship has forbidden us to refine the corpses of immortals!”

Dissatisfaction crept into his tones when something occurred to him.

Corpse Refiners, whether in the Primordial Era or modern times, once knew no taboos or prohibitions. They would even refine people alive! But ever since the dao of corpse refining became a great dao beneath the immortal dao, the Truespirit lord forbade Corpse Refiner disciples to take the living, or even recently dead immortals as their battle zombies.

Any violators would be shown no mercy.

This decree raised stunning conflict in the major as there was naturally a great deal of protest. In the ensuing protests, Yin Jiuying scattered the souls of several dao immortals to ensure that his orders would stick.

“Alright, we'll save him! I'll send my battle zombie to bring him to us.” A female disciple summoned the corpse of a primordial immortal and sent it flying through the air. It departed from the boundary's protection and flew toward Lu Yun.

Since battle zombies weren't alive, they didn't give off the presence of life and thus wouldn't be attacked by the dead spirits. It could be said that Corpse Refiner disciples were most at ease in the battlefield against dead spirits.

Chapter 963: Scarlet Bale Spirits

“Eh? Corpse Refiners?” Lu Yun started when he saw a few battle zombies furiously throw themselves at the dead spirits and carve out a path in the sky. Apart from the boundless dead spirits, he was the only one in the area. Plainly, the Corpse Refiners had come to save him. What a surprising turn of events.

He didn't have a good impression of this sect. Jiangchen Wushang, Jiangchen Xie, Jin Heyi and other members had all refined living people into zombies. Their transgressions were so severe that they'd once elicited massive punitive expeditions from the rest of the world of immortals.

That matter had been resolved only when the celestial emperor of Truespirit Major passed his throne onto the sect master of the Corpse Refiners.

However, what happened after changed his mind about them. The sect master of the Corpse Refiners and celestial emperor of Truespirit Major had... sacrificed himself to protect Exalted Major.

That was why Lu Yun had agreed to let Yin Jiuying incorporate corpse refining as one of the great daos beneath the immortal dao. The Corpse Refiners was a full illustration of how good and evil existed in people, and not dao.

Now that their disciples rushed to save him, he mentally revised his feelings about the sect once more.

"How dare you travel to the Quiet Realm by yourself?? You court death!" A battle zombie with a stiff expression on its face spoke human language in a girl's voice. She snapped at Lu Yun, "Follow me!"

The hovering battle zombie spat out dense corpse energy and forced back the dead spirits around them. It then shot toward the continent protected by the boundary while Lu Yun leisurely followed behind.

"Gyak gyak gyaaaak!" A strange cry came from the air before a scarlet yin spirit suddenly materialized and bit down on the battle zombies.

"It's scarlet bale spirits!" Though the battle zombies in midair didn't have any expressions on their face, their masters were greatly dismayed.

Scarlet bale spirits were far more terrifying than the black dead spirits or gray yin spirits. They understood the existence of a battle zombie and thus always delivered resounding defeats to the Corpse Refiners. Otherwise, this sect swept through the opposition with ease in the Quiet Realm. They hadn't thought that they'd run into the dreadful scarlets on a simple rescue mission!

In the ten years since the Ascension Pool was rebuilt, immortals who'd been completely ignorant of dead spirits had slowly built up general knowledge about them after a decade of campaigns.

The weakest among the enemy were the gray yin spirits. The prolonged tides of yin spirits in Nephrite's Dusk, Azure, Crimson, and Argent Provinces were mostly comprised of these spirits.

One step above them were the dead spirits that were most often mentioned. Black in color and stronger than their gray brethren, they were faster and wielded an infinite supply of death energy. Even immortals with an internal world frequently lost to these dead spirits.

If one couldn't shake off these dead spirits, it was only a matter of time before the immortal was picked clean.

A further step up were the scarlet bale spirits. These ones seemed to possess some sentience and intelligence as battle zombies ignored by the yin and dead spirits would register to these bale spirits. Not only were the scarlet ones stronger than the previous two, they possessed the ability to control their inferiors.

Aimlessly drifting tides of yin and dead spirits swiftly formed terrifying armies when directed by the scarlets. When directed by an intelligent mind, the spirits swiftly redoubled in awful might. As for even more horrifying existences... no immortal had ever lived to tell the tale, so no one knew much about them.

During the yin spirit tide in Azure Province, Lu Yun had seen gray, black, scarlet, and even a few purple bale spirits. However, he'd been preoccupied with setting up the bronze palace with Wayfarer so they could seal those things outside the world of immortals. Otherwise, he might've taken a closer look at them at that time.

Those of the world of immortals felt very lucky that the descent protocol had appeared for them to visit the lower worlds and get to know their enemies. Otherwise, if their first close encounter with dead spirits was during that final encounter in seventy years, half of the world's immortals would probably die in the first engagement.

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Surrounded by an enormous entourage of dead spirits, the scarlet bale spirit bit down on one of the battle zombies and ripped its arm off. The dead spirits around it flooded over and devoured the zombie clean.

Within the boundary, the disciple that the zombie had belonged to paled with anguish. Though he was a peerless immortal, his cultivation was concentrated on his battle zombie. With its destruction, more than eighty percent of his battle strength was also gone.

He was just an ordinary disciple and didn't possess a great formation of corpse refinement or a treasure like the Bag of Corpse Refinement. Who knew when he'd be able to refine another battle zombie?

"Go!" The girl from earlier spoke again. Her battle zombie grabbed Lu Yun's clothes and threw him at the boundary. With a loud howl, the zombie then charged at the newly materialized scarlet bale spirit.

"All of you, get out of there!" she shouted. "I'll go kill that scarlet!"

Her gaze was determined and though she wasn't a city-toppling beauty, a unique bearing marked her movements. She floated in the air and fully concentrated on directing her battle zombie against the enemy.

"Senior sister Luan!" her peers cried out. They didn't want to give up their personal battle zombies, but they didn't want to leave one of their own behind either.

"Charge!!" a young man suddenly roared. "We Corpse Refiners retreat and advance as one! We won't leave senior sister Luan behind!"

Their battle zombies snarled and howled, charging furiously into the unending tide of yin and dead spirits.

"You bastard, what are you still doing there?? Get over here!!" Senior sister Luan yelled angrily when she turned around to see Lu Yun still standing in the air, dumbfounded like he was scared witless.

Weren't they sacrificing their battle zombies for this person who had nothing to do with them? But this guy was standing there like a block of wood, wasting their efforts!

“You guys... really have a one track mind.” Lu Yun cocked his head in thought. “The formation of heaven and earth is mainstream knowledge in the world of immortals, is it not? So why don’t you etch it into your zombies?”

“Huh?” The Corpse Refiners looked blankly at him.

Etch the formation of heaven and earth into their battle zombies? Then they would have an internal world inside of them and become... as strong as void-ascended immortals!

What the Corpse Refiners used for battle zombies now were the corpses of primordial immortals excavated from ancient tombs, or converted the zombies already present within the tombs. The primordial immortals also possessed formations of heaven and earth. Though that still made them less than contemporary void-ascended immortals, they were close enough.

However, their internal worlds dispersed upon their death.

Recreate the formation of heaven and earth in our battle zombies?

A window onto something new seemed to open in some of the disciples’ minds.

Lu Yun then made his move—a watery ripple flowed out of his hand and slaughtered all of the spirits on the scene.

Chapter 964: It’s All Fake

Scarlet bale spirits had once appeared in the yin spirit tide of Azure Province, the one that’d blotted out the heavens and covered the earth. Dao immortals of those times hadn’t been able to put up any resistance before they were gnawed down to nothingness.

The yin tides of the world of immortals were far more frightening than those of the lower worlds, and there were many more high level spirits in the ones that attacked the world of immortals. There were also far fewer yin spirits in the Quiet Realm than compared to the usual lower worlds.

A scarlet bale spirit that was incredibly terrifying in the eyes of other immortals was completely harmless to Lu Yun. One slash from Quietus created a void of yin spirits wherever it passed through, connecting with the scarlet spirit at the end and cutting it straight through.

That immediately sent the yin and dead spirits into chaotic disarray. Milling around, some pounced on Lu Yun in a disorganized fashion. He dispatched them all with a few casual strokes.

Within the boundary, senior sister Luan and the others gaped at the human youth in mid air.

“I’m afraid... we overthought the situation just now. That expert doesn’t need our rescue at all, he’s probably a supreme genius from the world of immortals who’s practicing his combat arts on the spirits here,” senior sister Luan chuckled ruefully.

They’d seen geniuses of this caliber before. Things were relatively calm in the world of immortals these days as a bloodbath would arrive in less than seventy years. All of the world’s factions were keeping themselves in check to save their strength for those times. No retaliation had been forthcoming even when Dao Academy disciple Silverblaze killed the prince of Qingfu Nation.

In comparison to the usual squabbles, the yin spirits of the world of immortals turned into everyone's training targets. A myriad of geniuses emerged from seclusion, each bolder and more adept than the last. They charged into the endless tides of dead spirits to hone their craft—in the eyes of the Corpse Refiners, the somewhat ordinary young man in the air was one of them.

Only that standard of genius would think of etching formations of heaven and earth into battle zombies.

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"Luan Qi of the Corpse Refiners greets this senior brother. Please forgive me if I affronted you earlier." Senior sister Luan Qi quickly walked up to greet the newcomer when he entered the boundary.

Though the Corpse Refiners had lost a battle zombie, it was much more serious that they'd interrupted a genius in training. If he sought to vent his spleen on them, they wouldn't be able to withstand his fully justified anger.

"No matter." Lu Yun knew what identity they'd assigned to him and went along with the situation.

"What is the status of this Quiet Realm?"

"In response to senior brother, this realm is much the same as any of the other lower worlds. However, there are fewer yin spirits here compared to elsewhere." Luan Qi quickly added, "It does seem that the immortals of this world don't welcome us though."

"Don't welcome us?" Lu Yun blinked. She meant visitors from the world of immortals.

"That's right, they don't like having us here. There is one thing more bizarre about this realm than the others... At least several tens of thousands of immortals have visited this realm over the past ten years, but they've all died. Apart from a hundred Corpse Refiners and a few Dao Academy senior brothers that have entered the palace floating above us, there is no one else who visits this world anymore."

"What?" Lu Yun's eyes widened. "You say that academy disciples have entered that palace?"

"That's right!" Luan Qi and her peers looked at each other. This genius senior brother was likely from the Dao Academy.

The Dao Academy prospered entirely too well these days and counted hundreds of millions of disciples within its campus and the three hundred sixty-five cities of Dusk Province. It was the undisputed titan of the world of immortals. Though it didn't vie for the title, it was the greatest heavyweight of them all regardless.

"I see." Lu Yun nodded slightly and thought of those abandoned races. "You should go notify your other senior brothers to return to the world of immortals. The Quiet Realm is a newly born realm compared to the others, which makes it more dangerous than the other lower worlds. You'd be dying for nothing if you stay here."

"Understood." Luan Qi and the others started before leaving in search of the others.

"There's something wrong with all of the immortals and cultivators here." Lu Yun frowned slightly as he watched them head out.

The little fox burrowed out of Lu Yun's robes and swept a look around the surroundings. "None of the surroundings here are real, it's a massive Great Formation of Myriad Returns that's refined illusion into reality!"

"What?" Lu Yun's jaw dropped. "It's all fake?"

"This world is dead. The boundary and everything inside it is all illusion," murmured the little fox as she lifted her head. "The source of the formation lies within the palace in space.

"Also, there's no such thing as indigenous cultivators or immortals here. Apart from the seven Corpse Refiner disciples we just spoke to, there's nothing else alive here!"

Dismay gripped Lu Yun. He didn't doubt Miao's words—her mastery of illusory formations was much higher than his. She was also an empyrean realm master, enabling her to see through many things that he couldn't.

Lu Yun possessed the Spectral Eye and the observational skills of a formation grandmaster, but his cultivation level was still weak. Thus, many things beneath the heavens could still pull the wool over his eyes.

"I need to save them!" He darted forward and caught up to Luan Qi and the others.

"Senior brother?" The group stopped out of curiosity when they saw the genius flash in front of them.

"Do you have any other instructions, senior brother?"

"Go back to the world of immortals right this moment. Go back right now! All of your peers are dead. Tell the four guides by the Ascension Pool that a fox told them to list the Quiet Realm as a forbidden area. No immortals are to descend here, and no immortals from this realm are allowed to ascend to our world!" Lu Yun's tone was uncommonly severe.

"Impossible!" bursted out one of the male disciples when he heard those words. "My master is a mighty High Immortal of the Great Firmament! How would he die to a scarlet bale spirit?"

Lu Yun's frown deepened. He wanted the seven to notify Mo Yi and the others because he wanted to allow them to enter the Dao Academy. Otherwise, he could easily notify the guides through his nascent spirit.

He didn't want to do things that way, however. It was an entirely different matter when these Corpse Refiner disciples brought the message compared to if he did it himself. He wanted to foster autonomy within Ascension city, just like how the Dao Academy could now operate without him.

"Hahaha—my good disciples. You've finally come back, and with a young friend! Come come, introduce him to your master." A youthful looking man arrived on swordback at this time with a few other disciples.

Now frowning ferociously, Lu Yun interposed himself in front of Luan Qi and the others.

"Are you something formed out of illusion, or one of those scarlet bale spirits in the skin of immortals?" A black light flashed through his eyes.

Chapter 965: Nether Fire Reappears

“Why do you say that, little daoist?” Stunned, the youthful man in black froze.

“I don’t want to repeat what I just said. Go back to the world of immortals right this moment!” Lu Yun fixed his stare on the man in black. “It looks like I was wrong, you’re not a scarlet bale spirit. The scarlets don’t have your level of intelligence. You’re a purple one, aren’t you? You want to use the Corpse Refiners to enter the world of immortals.”

“This joke isn’t funny at all.” The man paled and looked at Luan Qi with a question, “Luan Qi, who is this?”

“Master...” Luan Qi didn’t know what to think or do.

Lu Yun rushed forward before she had a chance to finish her thought and let loose with the energy of a world, bringing a wave down upon the black-robed man.

Shocked, the man took a step backward to evade the attack, but an even stronger surge of energy rose from behind and crashed over him.

“Ahhhh!!” He shrieked with anguish as purple smoke sizzled from his body. The layer of human skin around him swiftly melted away to reveal a purple bale spirit in front of them.

“Master!!” The disciples turned white as a sheet when this horrifying scene happened in front of them. Their master and almost a hundred peers really were dead!

“Waaaaugh!!” Screeching furiously, the purple bale spirit streaked into a cloud of smoke and swooped down on Luan Qi.

Close at hand, Luan Qi was a very powerful peerless immortal. Unfortunately, she was as weak as a chicken in front of the purple bale spirit. An overwhelming mix of tyrannical emotions surged from the spirit to suppress her thoughts, forcing her to remain unmoving where she was.

This was one of the strongest abilities the purples could bring to bear—tyrannical strength of mind. It was enough to overcome dao immortals, to say nothing of mere peerless immortals.

Whoosh!

Sword light sliced across the void in a watery ripple and slashed apart the purple bale spirit’s power, returning Luan Qi’s freedom.

“Go back to the world of immortals and tell the four guides what I told you earlier,” Lu Yun commanded coolly.

“You guys go back!” Upon realizing the gravity of the situation, Luan Qi whirled around and shooed her six peers away.

Since those from the world of immortals could utilize the descent protocol to visit the lower worlds, they could also activate the ascent protocol to return home. Using the protocols this way was almost a cheat, but Lu Yun and Qing Yu had wanted to ensure that immortals wouldn’t be trapped in danger in the lower worlds.

The lower worlds were a place of trial and tempering where one had to fight off death and eke out survival. But it wasn't a place where people should die completely needless deaths, hence the couple wanted to avoid that.

"But, senior sister!" The six naturally didn't want to leave Luan Qi here alone.

"I'm staying here to get revenge for our master. Hurry up and go back. There's bigger things at stake here!" Luan Qi roared.

"Alright!" The six decisively made up their minds and refrained from insisting they all leave together. After all, with that genius senior brother here, their senior sister wouldn't run into any trouble. She'd come back as soon as they slaughtered the purple bale spirit.

Lu Yun raised an eyebrow at the Corpse Refiner disciple, mentally upward revising his opinion of her.

The ascent protocol activated in the six disciples as milky-white radiance that seeped out of their bodies. This was the light that signaled ascension, a unique force created by the protocol. The waters of the Ascension Pool were the tangible form of this ascension light.

The light required a hundred breaths to envelop the user; immortals couldn't move or utilize their internal force during this time. This was to prevent over-reliance on the ascent protocol, that people wouldn't run for the world of immortals at the first sign of trouble.

Immortals were uncommonly weak during this process and couldn't react to sudden developments. Thus, they wouldn't use the protocol unless they were in a spot of absolute safety, or had no other option available to them in a zone of fatal danger.

But with Lu Yun guarding the premises, the six Corpse Refiner disciples had nothing to fear. As the disciples returned to the world of immortals, the purple bale spirit and a few scarlets by its side looked uneasily at Lu Yun's sword, not daring to make another move. Since that sword could sever even thoughts, it had to be at least a connate treasure.

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"Keep yourself safe," Lu Yun said to Luan Qi after her peers vanished. Pointing Quietus forward, he once more charged at the purple bale spirit.

Quietus didn't have a handle or crossguard, just the keen edge of a blade that resembled a watery ripple. Instead of grasping the sword with his hand, Lu Yun directed it with where it connected to his index and middle finger.

A slight shift of his body slingshotted the ripples of sword light swirling around him into the purple bale spirit.

"Waugh!!" Seeing that Lu Yun refused to identify himself, the purple spirit shrieked and... yin spirits poured in through the boundary that didn't actually exist at all.

This main world had fallen long ago and spirits had devoured all of its inhabitants. Everything here was fake. Now that the only two living beings on this world were immortals who knew the truth, the dead spirits no longer kept up the facade.

What looked like the only safe harbor in this world was infiltrated with boundless dead spirits. Commanded by the purple bale spirit, they stormed Lu Yun and Luan Qi.

Three battle zombies appeared by Luan Qi's side. One of them was her personal battle zombie, while the other two were undead servants that she'd refined. The three kept her firmly protected between them and maintained a stalwart defense against the enemies.

Since the purple spirit wanted to use Luan Qi to travel to the world of immortals, it didn't order its spirits to give no quarter. Otherwise, Luan Qi would've become their food after the first rush.

Lu Yun wasn't affected by any of this. Wrapped within Quietus' sword light, he advanced upon the purple spirit, unimpeded.

Though black dead spirits and gray yin spirits madly flung themselves at him, the keen edge of sword light around him reaped their lives like it was harvest time on a farm. Every single spirit in his way was ripped apart into pieces.

He stood in front of the purple bale spirit a dozen breaths later.

"I would be able to crush you with a single move if not for this strange connate treasure!" The purple bale spirit took the form of a gust of smoke, two balls of purple flame burning within the smoke like two eyeballs.

Lu Yun saw them very clearly—the two purple flames were netherfire. Violetgrave's netherfire.

Chapter 966: Pure Soul Force

"Oh, that's perfect then," Lu Yun grinned. "Isn't it nice I have this sword to beat the crap outta you with?"

He raised a hand and sent another slash at the purple bale spirit. An enormous water ripple of sword light pierced through the heavens and slashed everything within five kilometers in half.

The purple spirit shrieked with alarm and shot fifty kilometers away, slowly coalescing into tangible form. It emitted energy suffused with death and swirled it into a terrifying tornado that churned toward Lu Yun.

This was pure strength.

Lu Yun leapt into the air like an enormous dragon arcing out of a deep sea. Vast Dragon Seaturner!

This was the first sword technique he'd ever invented and the first step of initiation into his own sword dao. The technique had reached great perfection and the ocean of sword qi was now a real ocean with no hint of the energy that formed its building blocks. The sword dragon that frolicked in its depths was also a true dragon with scales, claws, and the look of a flesh and blood body.

It'd achieved Return to Origin—the hallmark of the final realm of great perfection.

"Awooo!" A long dragon croon swept the land, rolling outward in all directions as soundwaves of sword qi brimming with the richest energy of a realm. It disintegrated any yin and dead spirits it grazed, turning them into dust.

The energy of a realm was anathema to all yin and dead spirits. Since the scarlet bale spirits were intelligent, they furiously burrowed beneath the ground the moment the sound rang out. Retreating underground far enough would bring them out of range of the devastating energy.

These spirits were formless and intangible, like a cloud of smoke. Dirt was no obstacle in their eyes and they easily darted below ground.

Luan Qi heaved a slight sigh of relief to see huge swathes of dead and yin spirits flying apart on the field. She quickly swallowed a few pills to replenish her internal energy and looked nervously in the direction of Lu Yun and the purple bale spirit.

Purple bale spirits were infamous throughout the multiverse—death and extinction followed wherever they appeared. Even Golden Immortals of Grand Unity had fallen to them before.

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Boom!

The sword dragon that Lu Yun had transformed into also barreled down into the ground when the scarlet bale spirits tunneled beneath the surface. The earth swiftly turned into an ocean of his sword qi, shaking the fleeing scarlets back out and turning them into dust in midair.

The snarling dragon then shot back out of the ground and made for the purple bale spirit.

“Waughhh!!” Roaring wrathfully, the purple spirit transformed into an unknown beast that comprised of a dragon’s head, tiger’s body, and two pairs of wings on its back. It crashed brutally into the sword dragon that was Lu Yun.

Lu Yun’s sword qi dominated, but the netherfire within the purple bale spirit also exploded with enormous strength to repel his attack.

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“Hmm? What’s this?” Hiding and observing from the far distance, Luan Qi noticed small scarlet beads on the ground that were the size of rice kernels. She bent down curiously and picked up one of them “These come from the dead scarlets!”

Eyes widening with realization, she released her consciousness for a close examination. Great shock shook her mind when her consciousness touched the bead—her own consciousness and nascent spirit had grown a bit stronger!

Though they hadn’t increased by much, they were still stronger than before. However, the red bead she’d picked up was also gone.

“No! These things are dropped by those bale spirits, so it’ll probably affect my mentality if I brashly refine them.” She strongly rejected a new idea the moment it arose in her mind.

As an extremely rational person, she wasn’t overcome with greed upon finding that these beads could enhance her nascent spirit. Instead, she carefully collected the beads on the ground.

“What are you doing?” A crisp and pleasing female voice sounded from behind her. Jumping in fright, she whirled around and looked warily behind her.

A dusty fox had appeared at some point in time and was looking at her curiously.

“A fox?” Luan Qi gasped. There were no other living creatures on this world as the yin spirits had eaten all of the indigenous residents and Corpse Refiner disciples. Now that an extremely intelligent fox had appeared out of nowhere, she subconsciously felt that it was a second purple bale spirit.

Though the scarlets also possessed intelligence, they couldn’t talk and didn’t have the same level of awareness.

However, she suddenly recalled what the senior brother from the Dao Academy had wanted them to say to the four guides—that a fox had told them to do so.

A fox?! Is it this little gray one in front of me?

“Are you that senior brother’s spirit creature?” Luan Qi asked carefully.

“Spirit creature?” The little fox tilted her head in thought and shook her head slightly. “I’m not a spirit creature. I’m his martial nephew at most.”

Since Hongjun had enlightened the little fox, they were master and disciple in truth, if not in name. As Lu Yun and Hongjun called each other fellow daoist and his disciples called Lu Yun martial uncle, then the little fox was also Lu Yun’s martial nephew.

“I see,” Luan Qi sighed with relief. “I discovered that the scarlet bale spirits leave these beads behind after they die. My nascent spirit grew a bit stronger when my consciousness touched one of them.”

She offered a handful to the little fox. “But since the scarlets drop these things, I don’t dare refine them. What if they affect my mind?”

“These things?” The little fox took a close look at the kernels and nodded slightly. “Your thinking is correct—remnants of the scarlets linger on these. It’s no big deal if you refine one or two of them, but too many will turn you into a human-shaped bale spirit.”

Luan Qi shuddered and impulsively wanted to throw the beads away.

“Don’t throw them away yet, give them to that guy when he finishes up with the purple bale spirit. He’ll have a way of cleansing the beads.” The little fox waved a paw. “The gray and black spirits also drop similar things, but they’re too small for your eyes to pick up.”

Her eyes brightened with a sharp glow and focused on the fine layer of dust covering the earth. It was formed from the droppings of deceased dead and yin spirits.

“These things are the core essence of dead spirits, pure soul force. Given the kind of person he is, he’ll invent a treasure to collect and cleanse these kernels,” murmured the little fox as she watched Lu Yun battle in the air.

Chapter 967: Splitting Apart the Dao Palace

Up in the sky, a dragon of sword qi that'd transformed into a real dragon clashed repeatedly with a purple creature that bore a dragon head, tiger body, and two pairs of wings on its back. Water ripples continuously shimmered over the sword dragon and took form as tangible arcs of sword energy that ricocheted at the purple beast.

Snarling and tearing at the air, the purple beast flared with intense netherfire and ignored the arcs of sword energy slamming into it. Instead, it latched onto the sword dragon with sharp claws and shredded the sword energy that formed its body.

The stunning battle shook heaven and earth. Both beasts set aside their combat arts to meet each other in the most primitive method of body combat.

As the fight went on, the purple beast started going out of its mind. The tiny human before it was just a peerless immortal—it could crush that ant in a split second with its power of the mind! However, the mewling human's unknown connate treasure was too strong. A ripple of sword energy lopped off the bale spirit's power as soon as it extended it, rendering its usual tactics useless.

Their combat shook the land and pierced straight through the moderately sized continent beneath their feet, enabling the surging seas to slowly seep in and sink it. Miao and Luan Qi had taken to the air and were closely observing the great battle from a distance.

The fight not only destroyed several large continents in the main world of the Quiet Realm, but it also obliterated the boundless tide of dead spirits in this world. As the brawl dragged on, the purple bale spirit reached the end of its stamina and its netherfire began to dim.

"This isn't possible! You're just a minor peerless immortal, why can you deploy the strength of a connate treasure?!" As the purple bale spirit didn't recognize Quietus, it didn't know what level the treasure was.

It'd first suspected that this ordinarily looking youth was the legendary headmaster of the Dao Academy in the world of immortals. After all, rumors put Headmaster Lu Yun's primary body at peerless immortal realm.

However, apart from his customary Vast Dragon Seaturner, Lu Yun was using none of his usual combat techniques. He actually fought with an entirely different style.

In the eyes of the general public, his ultimate moves stemmed from Worldcarver, Heavenfall, and the great combat art of spacetime reincarnation. Apart from those, his sword dao and terrifying Sword Atlas combat art were also his signature moves. When he deployed Sword Atlas, he filled the air with eighteen thousand flying swords arranged in a dominating formation that annihilated his enemies!

Lastly, the magical nascent spirit observation method that could project anything was his final trademark weapon.

All he displayed now, however, was the strength of a pure sword immortal. His Vast Dragon Seaturner had long become a mainstream technique in the world of immortals and the opening move of many sword immortals on their own path of sword dao.

Able to shift through a kaleidoscope of changes, a multitude of sword dao combat arts and other permutations were derived from the Vast Dragon Seaturner.

Lu Yun was highly skilled in formula dao and specialized in deriving new combat arts. After returning from the great wilderness and melding into the immortal dao at peak empyrean realm, he brainstormed countless new arts and techniques from his new knowledge and experience.

Many of them were too complicated and profound to be made available to the greater world, so it was impossible to identify who he was on pure basis of what combat arts he deployed in battle.

Returning to human form, Lu Yun twisted in the air and summoned all of the sword light zigzagging through the air. They combined into an enormous sword and swung ponderously at the bale spirit.

Horrified by the heaven-defying stroke, the dreadful purple bale spirit's courage completely deserted it and it abruptly withdrew the leaping netherfire, fading into a cloud of purple smoke that dispersed in all directions.

"Trying to get away?" Lu Yun smirked, revealing his position and splitting Quietus into ten thousand strands. They scattered around the void, sealing off everything within five thousand kilometers.

Strands of sword energy swept through the air in a maddened drizzle of rain drops, slicing through every wisp of the purple bale spirit's smoke.

Hummm.

The enormous palace outside the main world suddenly came to life, firing a pillar of radiant golden light down to the planet and protecting the purple bale spirit from Quietus' devastating final slash.

With only a tiny wisp of smoke left to it, the purple spirit fled the main world and vanished into the palace.

Lu Yun summoned Quietus back with the wave of a hand. He stood in the void, sneering at the palace overhead. "You come provoking me when I haven't gone looking for you. Do you really think I'm afraid of you?"

The purple bale spirit had ruined everything in the Quiet Realm. Apart from the exiled races on the newly formed star, there was no other life to be found in the entire realm. Lu Yun wouldn't rest today before he executed that bastard spirit!

"Don't go!" The little fox and Luan Qi came flying over. "Ignore that palace and purple bale spirit for now, the little girl's made a new discovery."

"Wait for me here, I'll be right back." Lu Yun flew out of the main world with his sword and arrived in front of the palace in the stars.

When he'd observed the palace before, all he saw were mirages and illusions. In the falsehoods he'd seen, the palace was opposing the dead spirits in space. Now that the little fox had awoken him to the truth of the matter, the illusions that the palace put out could no longer beguile him.

The palace was magnificent, splendid, and spectacular. It hovered around the main world like the moon did around Earth, but it was many times bigger than the moon.

Dense clusters of dead spirits traveled in and out of the palace, a far cry from the resolute defense against the enemy that Lu Yun had caught sight of earlier. The golden palace stood in stark contrast to

the teeming mass of black spirits. No one would believe that such a glorious structure would be the nest of the dead spirits!

“The Dao Palace?” Lu Yun’s expression darkened when he read the signboard over the palace doors.

The Dao Palace!

He hadn’t named the main Dao Academy that even though it stood at the foot of Mount Xuanhuang! How dare this festering den of dead spirits call itself a dao palace!

“Since you dare call yourself that, watch me split you apart!”

Hum!

Quietus suddenly swelled hundreds of millions of times bigger, expanding itself into a giant sword as large as the main world beneath them. Its impossibly keen sword light undulated in all directions, pulverizing the space around them and crushing the pieces into void storms that swirled around the blade.

Sensing the sword’s strength, the Dao Palace began to tremble and emitted layers of concentrated golden light, forming numerous defensive boundaries. It seemed to possess its own thoughts and consciousness, like it was alive.

“Don’t!” screamed the little fox when she saw the scene. “Don’t forget that your fortuitous opportunity, your dao fruit should be in there!”

“I’ll pass on an opportunity like this, thank you very much!” Two goutts of black flame roared in Lu Yun’s eyes. He could see every detail of life and death through the Spectral Eye, and he located the death notices of the academy disciples that’d entered the palace earlier.

They’d all died inside, but their information didn’t indicate how they’d died.

Whoosh!

Lu Yun flung his hands downward and sent the mammoth sword falling down, drilling into the center of the Dao Palace.

Chapter 968: Might of the Monster Spirit Ancestor

Boom—

Aftershocks rippled out from a tremendous collision that rocked the local region of space. Any location the ripples passed through was thoroughly cleansed of dead spirits. Teeming masses that filled the cosmos disintegrated into dust and vanished entirely.

On the main world of the Quiet Realm, the faint shadow of a bell flashed across the little fox’s body and casually dispersed the ripples drifting their way.

The cataclysmic collision scared Luan Qi out of her wits and all thought fled her mind. She was just a peerless immortal; the Corpse Refiner had no idea how to react to the devastating ripples flooding in all directions of the void.

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Crackle...

Hideous cracks appeared on the Dao Palace after Lu Yun's colossal stroke. Quietus was a chaos treasure and thus superior to all regular connate treasures. Even though Lu Yun was only bringing a hundred millionth of its power to bear, the edge of a chaos treasure wasn't something that a mere palace could withstand—no matter what kind of backing it came with.

Rich aureate brilliance oozed out from the cracks. Scintillating and spectacular, the light brimmed with the dense power of a star. It was thus apparent that the palace held a giant star inside of it, one more glorious and majestic than any star in the world of immortals. Apart from the dense cosmic energy around it, it seemed to nurture stranger power and rules of... the chaos.

"Ahhhhhhh!!" Ghastly shrieks sounded from the palace when it was split open. If Lu Yun had ever witnessed dismemberment, he would map that anguish to the wails he heard now. They were the agonizing screams of flesh being scraped off the bones of those still living.

Two twinkles of black light flashed through Lu Yun's eyes to illuminate three strange looking creatures writhing in torment next to the star. He could also see boundless energy from the Quiet Realm furiously flooding into the cracks in the palace to corrode their bodies.

However, the energy of this realm wasn't strong enough to instantaneously obliterate the three creatures, which further added to their torture.

"ROAR!!!" A furious bellow traveled out of the palace that wasn't completely shattered. A vicious beast hissing with fire sprang out of the palace, clawing down on Lu Yun's head.

A connate demon god, or rather, a chaos beast!

Chaos beasts were born of the chaos, which made them existences similar to connate demon gods. But while demon gods were born at the chaos realm, chaos beasts were born at the human king realm. Back in the day, several human kings had hunted down nine chaos beasts in the cosmos to craft a palace for the dragons. That palace had now been repurposed in the new state of affairs in the world of immortals.

That a chaos beast would charge out of the Dao Palace was the last possibility on Lu Yun's mind. These creatures had gone extinct at the end of the human dao era!

"So it's creatures of the chaos." Lu Yun quickly realized what was going on here.

Creatures of the chaos!

They drew upon the star in the palace for their core essence and had built a palace around it so that the laws of the chaos would descend upon the Quiet Realm. Meanwhile, they hid inside the palace and set up their plots for this realm.

The rulers that the darkfuries spoke of were these chaos creatures in the Dao Palace, and the hunting of humans was forbidden not out of consideration for the curse on these abandoned races. When Lu Yun split the palace apart, he'd spied a multitude of human flesh mashed together in a titanic embryo!

He didn't know what purpose that monstrous embryo served, but he could clearly read the boundless resentment swirling within it. There was no fear intermixed within, just pure and immense resentment. This was only possible if the humans had lived in paradise after their birth and were summarily tortured to death!

This was the real reason why the chaos creatures forbade harming the humans, and why the yin spirits here were likewise under control to not attack the humans. The Quiet Realm was a breeding range of the human race.

The appearance of the ascent and descent protocols had thrown their plans into disarray, forcing them to change their methods and create an enormous mirage in the main world. If it hadn't been for the little fox accompanying him on this trip, Lu Yun wouldn't have been able to see through the illusions either. This exerted immense pressure on him. The combat arts, techniques, and supplemental paths wielded by the chaos creatures were far superior to the world of immortals!

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The chaos beast at the level of the human king realm opened a large mouth that yawned like a black hole. Dominating suction force enveloped Lu Yun, fiercely shaking Quietus as it battled the new enemy. Unfortunately, Lu Yun was as fragile as an eggshell in front of a human king. Even wielding a chaos treasure wasn't enough for him to defy human king strength.

Ring.

Ring.

Ring.

Waves of enormous bell tolls rang through the cosmos as the infinite space, stars, and starlight gathered together to form an upside down bell. A stunning girl whose beauty could topple cities set foot into the void, approaching them from the light of the descent protocol.

Tushan!

The energy of a world spread through local space and even shook the neighboring realms. Immortals who happened to be within range jerked in shock when they sensed the incredible strength. Stunned and alarmed, they all looked in the direction of the Quiet Realm.

But the strength of an empyrean master was too strong for even a Supreme Immortal of Original Order to see what was going on.

"Vile cretin! How dare you harm the living and destroy a world?! Today, as the dean of the monster spirit dao in the Dao Academy, this seat will put an end to your evildoing!" The upside down bell of starlight brightened when Tushan waved a hand, sucking in the giant chaos beast and trapping it inside. She then set her sights on the cracked palace. "How dare you call yourself the Dao Palace?! This is sheer blasphemy against my Dao Academy!"

A harsh light flashed through her eyes as she regarded the damaged structure. The Bell of Chaos trembled in the next moment and bore down on the Dao Palace.

“Hmph!” A cold sneer echoed through the cosmos before a mammoth black hole suddenly appeared in the foreground of the stars. A huge hand made of purple fire slowly stretched out of it and reached for Tushan.

It was so impossibly gargantuan that even the main world looked like a fly next to it. Tushan wasn’t even the size of a speck of dust to it. The hand flared with empyrean strength, but the great emperors of the world of immortals now were also in the empyrean realm—the one that hadn’t been cursed before the human dao!

Experts across the multiverse suddenly looked in their direction. They didn’t know what was happening, but they did know that two great emperors were clashing in the lower realms. One of them was the dean of monster spirit dao in the Dao Academy!

The two scarlet apes on Levitating Island were as white as a sheet, and the ruler of Qingfu Nation was so pale that he was almost translucent. They’d thought nothing of this dean of monster spirit dao before, taking themselves to be the strongest monster spirits in the world. Who would’ve thought that this dean would be a great emperor?!

“It’s that fox, the one who appeared at the end of the human dao era and called herself the monster spirit ancestor!” Amazement appeared on Goldenlight’s face. “Isn’t, isn’t she empyrean realm though? When did she become a great emperor?”

“A fox that called herself the monster spirit ancestor?” Silverlight’s eyes widened. “Did you just say there was a fox who called herself the monster spirit ancestor?? ...can it be her?”

“Who?”

“The monster spirit ancestor!”

“.....”

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The hand was in the shape of a human’s hand. Both Lu Yun and Tushan could clearly see that the lines of the palm and whorls of the fingerprints were the same as a human’s.

“Hmph! You stretch out a hand when this seat is here in person, do you really take this seat for an easy mark?!” Tushan flew into a tirade and released rays of starlight from her body that connected with the Bell of Chaos of the stars. The local space became her battlefield; she was the first cosmic constitution beneath the heavens!

Ring.

Ring.

Ring.

Shaking furiously, the Bell of Chaos tolled with ringing peals and smashed the soundwaves into the large hand, ripping it to pieces. Purple flame and purple blood sprayed through the stars, but Tushan wasn’t going to stop at just that.

With a beckon of her hand, the bell fell from space and took solid form. Golden ripples oscillated through the void and blasted into the black hole, raising howls of fury and pain that shook all of the Quiet Realm.

“I have a connate treasure and you don’t, how dare you throw your weight around in front of me?!” Tushan flew through the void with bell in hand, white robes fluttering around her and charged at the black hole.

“Bitch! Do you think you can do whatever you want just because you have a peerless connate treasure?!” bellowed an incensed voice from the black hole.

“That’s right! I can do whatever I want precisely because I have a peerless connate treasure!” Curling her lip, Tushan stood next to the black hole and forced it to remain open with the bell’s power.

A wooden striker appeared in her hand and she pounded the Bell of Chaos with a frenzied tempo. Accompanied by a cascade of golden ripples, glorious and stately bell tolls pulsed through the void and barreled into the black hole.

On the other side, the empyrean master screamed with excruciation as his body began to crumble and break apart from the barrage. The Bell of Chaos was no ordinary connate treasure, it was the greatest connate treasure of the great wilderness, second to only Worldcarver, Heavenfall, and Quietus!

“Stop, stop! Don’t you want to know where I come from?” The empyrean master finally admitted defeat, but he grimly clung on and refused to surrender.

“There’s no need,” Tushan’s tones were frostily cold. “No matter your background, you’re our enemy. The only good enemy is a dead enemy.”

Chapter 969: Boiling Frog Syndrome

Tushan refrained from further conversation and deployed the Bell of Chaos to its greatest strength, obliterating that unknown empyrean realm master into oblivion.

The bell recognized Tushan as its master and she was the only one who could refine its final restriction. Just like how Quietus behaved in Lu Yun’s hand, she could release the fullest extent of its capabilities even at her current strength.

In addition, empyrean realm was sufficient to deploy the true might of a connate treasure.

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After demolishing an empyrean master, the Bell of Chaos returned to an upside down bell of light over Tushan’s head. She stood in the void and coolly regarded her surroundings.

The world of immortals trembled. They’d finally truly understood the Dao Academy’s foundations and strength when a great emperor was wiped out of existence without even a chance to fight back.

“It really is her...” Color drained from Silverlight’s face when she sensed the aura emanating from Tushan. She murmured, “Our ancestor, the monster spirit ancestor really has come back...”

“She’s the legendary monster spirit ancestor?” Goldenlight’s jaw dropped. Legends of the almighty ancestor had long abounded among the monster spirits, but most of the race believed that she’d died in the tremendous cataclysm that ended human dao.

Their history was marked by manifold appearances of monster spirits who called themselves the monster spirit ancestor. They’d all tried to unify the monster spirit race, but none of them were met with any hint of a good ending.

The title of the monster spirit ancestor wasn’t something that the ancestor had given herself, but was a title that the entire race revered her with.

When the little fox traveled through time, she’d attempted to use the title to unite the monster spirits so they could battle their enemies, but she’d also failed as well. Her true form sustained injuries during her attempt and she’d lost most of her cultivation by the time she reached the era of immortal dao.

In the end, she’d had no choice but to enter the cycle of reincarnation and become a living being under the immortal dao.

She couldn’t reveal Lu Yun’s existence, but the Corpse Refiner disciples that’d left had brought word of the Quiet Realm to the ascension guides. Many factions in the world of immortals summarily learned of the truth here, so it wasn’t out of the ordinary that the Dao Academy had sent a representative to deal with the threat.

.....

“What have you discovered?” Back on the main world of the Quiet Realm, Lu Yun looked curiously at Luan Qi.

“This!” The girl recovered from her stunned state and quickly handed over the pure soul force she’d collected.

The little fox sprawled on Lu Yun’s shoulder. She’d appeared in her true form as Tushan earlier, but she was also a bonafide empyrean master. It was the easiest thing for her to hoodwink those with lower cultivation levels.

Lu Yun took out a scarlet bead and examined it closely. “Are you willing to join the Dao Academy?”

“Join the Dao Academy?!” Luan Qi looked blankly before sheer delight filled her face. She rapidly bobbed her head up and down. “I am, I’m willing to join!”

The school of corpse refining within the Dao Academy was the sole work of Corpse Refiner disciples. However, only a select few from the sect possessed qualifications to enter the academy. Those lucky enough to be enrolled were the last hopes of the Corpse Refiners in the cataclysm to come. If Truespirit Major was unfortunate enough to fall in seventy years, then at least a bit of it would live on in the Dao Academy.

Luan Qi didn’t have the choice of entering the academy, she was just an ordinary disciple. With her master dead and lacking further backing in the sect, her future was now one of everything being stripped from her. Someone would claim her battle zombies and she herself would quietly die in a corner, to be surreptitiously refined into a battle zombie by another.

The Corpse Refiner Sect was no faction of kindness and benevolence. How else would it be so infamous throughout the world of immortals otherwise?

“Alright, you should head back to the world of immortals now and tell the four guides about the soul force. After that, tell them that a fox told you to join the academy and be an inner disciple,” Lu Yun said solemnly.

“An inner disciple?!” Elation flashed across Luan Qi’s face.

“It is a deed of great merit to the world that you’ve discovered this soul force. You absolutely have the right to become an inner disciple.” Lu Yun gave the matter some thought and continued, “But don’t go to the school of corpse refining, that’s basically a miniature Corpse Refiner Sect. They’ll ostracize you if you try to join them. Go to... puppetry. That so-called dao of corpse refining is actually a permutation of the art of puppets.”

He’d never been interested in corpse refining since he saw it for what it was, a type of puppet manipulation. It was just an exercise of refining corpses into puppets.

Lu Yun finally breathed out in relief when Luan Qi returned to the world of immortals.

“You should know that these yin and dead spirits are just a scheme. They’re all bait.” The little fox jumped down from Lu Yun’s shoulder and regarded him solemnly. “Those in the world of immortals are addicted to the lower worlds and battles with the dead spirits. They’ve discovered that their nascent spirits grow stronger from the fights and their cultivations also improve. It’s all because of this thing.

“If this continues for long, we won’t need those dead spirits to break through the World Gates. Our own immortals will turn into them first.”

“Mmhmm.” Lu Yun nodded gently. “Apart from wanting to locate my dao fruit, I descended to the lower realms this time also because I wanted a better understanding of the yin spirits. Who would’ve thought that a little girl would locate one of the secrets first?”

“Little girl?” The little fox flicked a sideways glance at him. “She’s at least a hundred years older than you.”

Lu Yun looked around sheepishly. Of course he’d been able to tell that Luan Qi was at least two hundred years old... but a peerless immortal two hundred years of age was already an absolute genius in the world of immortals.

Most importantly, she’d severed her own cultivation after the void realm reappeared. Instead of availing herself of a formation of heaven and earth, she walked the path of cultivation again to reach immortality from the void realm.

“You’ll be able to create a treasure to cleanse those beads, won’t you?” asked the little fox. “This soul force is very strange. It vanishes without a trace when an immortal’s consciousness touches it. If it hadn’t been for you killing those dead spirits with the energy of a world, the girl probably wouldn’t have discovered it either.”

Although immortals also used the energy of a world to crush dead spirits on the battlefield, the grays and blacks only left behind faint dust when they died. In a hotbed of action and danger, no one would pay attention to a little bit of dust.

Immortals could kill the scarlets only in close quarter combat, so the scarlet beads were instantly refined by the consciousness when the bale spirit died. There wasn't enough reaction time for the immortal to do anything different.

When immortals fought, their consciousness constantly revolved around their bodies to observe their surroundings, deploy combat arts, or manipulate treasures. There were very few who unleashed enough energy of a realm to flood a world. Even if some dao immortals or ingress immortals had such ability, they wouldn't want to waste energy like this.

"There's a way." However, Lu Yun frowned when he observed the scarlet bead in his hand. "But the costs are too great. Refining a treasure like that will be the equivalent of creating a crystal cannon. We won't be able to make it available at all."

The little fox's eyes widened. The equivalent of creating a crystal cannon?

Crystal cannons were still uncommonly valuable even in the current world of immortals. A blast from an ordinary cannon was on par with a full-powered blow from a High Immortal of the Great Firmament. Such a cannon was worth a hundred million premium crystals.

It wasn't that Lu Yun wanted to strike it rich through refining such items, but that their creation method was overly complicated. The materials they required were also unduly precious, so there were very few people who could make crystal cannons apart from a handful of premier treasure refiners in the world.

Mass production and making it mainstream was a farfetched tale.

"Thankfully though, there's not that much resentment and malice contained within the dead and yin spirits. They probably want to imperceptibly transfer this negativity to immortals, like boiling a frog through slowly heating the water." Lu Yun mused a bit more on the matter.

If immortals were instantly assimilated into dead spirits during their battle, that would alarm their peers and the remaining immortals would immediately retreat. After battling zombies and immortal ghosts in the ancient tombs for eighty thousand years, modern day immortals were sharply alert against anything out of the ordinary.

"What about the star of the chaos and the embryo inside the palace?" Lu Yun asked the little fox.

"The star is still here, but the other things inside the palace have vanished, including the three creatures of the chaos and the huge embryo," the little fox responded dejectedly.

She'd let the three creatures escape in a moment of inattention! There was plainly a back door in the palace, enabling the three creatures to escape with the embryo the second there was danger. The chaos beast and empyrean realm that'd appeared one after another had all been distractions to create opportunities and make time for escape.

“Here, take this star.” The little fox handed over the chaos star that she’d collected. This was just as it seemed, a star formed in the chaos according to the laws of the cosmos. It was wholly different from the star of a realm, just like chaos treasures were different from connate treasures.

Lu Yun didn’t immediately refine it when he accepted it. He sent it to hell first and scanned every inch of the resplendent star with the six paths of his nascent spirit, wary of any traps that might be hidden in the golden star.

His mind was preoccupied with thoughts of the embryo created from human flesh and blood. That thing would become a thorn in their side sooner or later.

“I have a hunch that there are numerous dao palaces like this one in the lower worlds,” Lu Yun murmured as he peered into the depths of space.

“What do you want to do?” The little fox’s eyes opened wide and she shuddered when she looked at Lu Yun’s face.

“Find them one by one, of course. Let’s see if we can catch ourselves a chaos creature and study what makes them tick.” A cold sneer played at Lu Yun’s lips. “They know us like the back of their hands, but we still don’t know anything about them.”

Chapter 970: Descent Platform

The three chaos creatures in the Quiet Realm’s dao palace had escaped. If there were more of their kind in the lower realms, they would be on the alert after this and ready for action, having laid foolproof plans for defense.

They wouldn’t easily admit defeat after losing one of their strongholds. In their eyes, the creatures of the realms were ignorant, bumbling fools to be toyed with at their leisure. They would never bow their heads to pathetic natives!

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Dustfall Realm was a large realm within the lower worlds that neighbored the Quiet Realm. It was a brand new realm, but with a more complete system since it’d been born earlier than the Quiet Realm. The energy of the realm and its worlds was far stronger and denser than that in the Quiet Realm.

Naturally, that also meant the dead and yin spirits here were more ferocious and found in greater numbers. They were present on almost every star and planet, with most of the celestial bodies gnawed to ravaged husks by the dead spirits. In comparison to its neighbor, Dustfall Realm was more dangerous and there were more scarlet and purple bale spirits to be found here.

Apart from the main world, there were no other places suitable for life in the rest of the realm’s stars and planets. Most beings were struggling for survival in various planetary ruins that dotted the cosmos.

This was a scene of true devastation, a microcosm of the multiverse at large.

After some deduction, Lu Yun discovered that the second dao palace was in this realm and pinpointed it to the wreckage of a broken world. Again it floated over a world that looked to be valiantly defending against the dead spirits thanks to a Great Formation of Myriad Returns.

But since Dustfall Realm's main world was still intact and in good shape, it'd become the main camp for visitors from the world of immortals. They hadn't yet explored the realm in depth, which was why the palace remained undiscovered up until now. Or perhaps there were those who'd already found it, but summarily died for their efforts.

Lu Yun was in a new disguise this time, appearing to be a sword immortal in white, flowing robes with a sword strapped to his back. The little fox reverted to her snow-white fur and sat placidly on his shoulder.

The dao palace wasn't too far from the main world, but Lu Yun didn't head there directly. Since he'd obtained his dao fruit, he wanted to remain in the lower worlds both to root out the dao palaces and to further train himself.

What he needed most now was trial and tempering. There remained great room for improvement in his combat arts, cultivation methods, cultivation realm, and personal strength.

He chose to land on Dustfall's main world through the descent protocol as it teetered on the edge of defeat. Likewise, the dao palace had lost numerous experts in various offensives.

The first batch of immortals to visit the lower realms were immortals from the Dao Academy and Nephrite Major. Upon their arrival, they immediately set up descent platforms to stabilize the descent protocol. Future immortals would then appear on this platform when they traveled to this realm.

If something happened to the world or it fell to the dead spirits, the world of immortals could also sense what had happened through the platform. As for the Quiet Realm... the first batch of academy disciples to arrive were immediately deceived and beguiled. They'd died in the dao palace before they had a chance to build a descent platform.

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"Who goes there?" demanded an immortal when Lu Yun and the little fox walked down from the sparkling platform.

"Dao Academy, Lu Chen of sword dao." Lu Yun made up a random name on the spot and displayed his Dao Academy medallion.

When the Ascension Pool was first rebuilt, only the deans of the academy could bestow descent medallions onto immortals who wanted to visit the lower realms. A decade later, however, the Ascension Pool was opening up to more parties. The masters of the eight majors, rulers of the ten lands, dragon patriarchs of the four immortal seas, and monster spirit lords of the East and South Seas all had the right to approve descent medallions.

This was also a nod to the current layout of power within the world of immortals.

The two scarlet apes of the North Sea had once requested this authority as well, but the dean of monster dao had refused them outright.

Meanwhile, Qingfu Nation's clash with the academy disciples was the personal grudge between the younger generation. Qingfu Nation had also paid the price of one of its princes, so the little fox couldn't be bothered with it. But the two scarlet apes of Levitating Island were plainly scheming against the Dao Academy, so she wouldn't be as generous with them.

Apart from that, the Dao Academy firmly controlled the Ascension Pool. The four guides were also unshakeable existences in both strength and status. Many factions offered up their own experts to become guides when they realized how important the position was, but the academy rejected them all.

While the Ascension Pool was monopolized solely by the Dao Academy, the other factions of the world alternated control over the descent platforms. The platforms were essentially a transportation formation. Not only could one visit the lower realms through it, but it was faster to ascend back to the world of immortals from the platform than through the ascent protocol.

“So it’s a senior brother from the Dao Academy!” The two immortals on duty immediately snapped to respectful attention. Immortals from the Dao Academy enjoyed very high prestige in the lower realms, not to mention that they’d built a sprawling academy network in the lower worlds that only dispersed knowledge and didn’t enroll disciples.

Incidentally, their newest visitor was surnamed Lu... the Lu Clan was Headmaster Lu Yun’s clan. Though they didn’t enjoy any special privileges, they were the equivalent of royalty in the eyes of immortals outside the academy.

“Dustfall Realm’s situation isn’t looking good, so please be careful, senior brother,” one of the immortals ventured cautiously.

“Understood.” Lu Yun tossed a storage bag to them that was filled with hundreds of premium immortal crystals. This had become an unwritten custom of the system.

“Thank you, senior brother!” The two were delighted by the contents of the bag.

“You’re going to just let them accept bribes like this?” the little fox transmitted disapprovingly. This was blatant corruption, and Lu Yun—leader of the immortal dao and head of the Dao Academy—was permitting such behavior!

“The descent platforms are very important and watching over them is a critical duty. It absolutely requires a genius to stand guard. This is also a thankless task, to constantly be on the alert against ambushes from the scarlets and being unable to cultivate or train.

“Honestly speaking, it’s just a waste of time for these geniuses. No one would be willing to do the task if there weren’t some benefits involved.” Lu Yun shook his head.

Several hundred immortal crystals weren’t a small sum, but it wasn’t a hefty price for the traveling immortals. If every passenger tipped several hundred crystals, it would amount to a small fortune after some accumulation.

Apart from this, the Dao Academy also dispersed an annual stipend to compensate the disciples guarding the descent platforms.