

Necropolis 1851

Chapter 1851: Thirty-Three Layers of the Firmament Prison

Yun Yi retracted his gaze back into the ruins of the Firmament Prison, but the image of the brawny enigma stone thief was imprinted on his heart.

“Is that Lu Yun? I sensed his presence just now, but that man isn’t him.” Yun Yi frowned tightly. He couldn’t see through Lu Yun’s Shapeshifting combat art, but at the same time, he didn’t think there was anything the young man could do that would hoodwink him.

Yun Yi didn’t even consider the possibility that the muscular man might be a disguise. He was a powerhouse far above supreme—the shapeshifting arts of the supremes were child’s play in his eyes. Lu Yun was just a baby at twenty-four levels of sequence, how could he pull anything over Yun Yi?

But Yun Yi’s senses couldn’t be mistaken—Lu Yun was indeed on the scene. There wouldn’t be a corresponding disturbance in his heart otherwise. It had pierced through the Firmament Prison and created a tiny opening in the ruins.

Only someone like Yun Yi could create a flaw in the whole and intact prison. And only someone like Lu Yun could seize the opening.

Though Yun Yi looked back to himself, Lu Yun followed his gaze in. Someone at Yun Yi’s level was so fearsome that a simple glance inflicted devastating damage on the Firmament Prison. With the spacetime tide already over, the prison’s power was much weaker than before. It wasn’t nearly as indestructible.

After all, it was a patch of ruins—albeit dangerous ruins. When Lu Yun looked over it, he saw the overlapping peaks of dim-colored mountains.

“No, not mountains, they’re the wreckage of buildings. How many people died here??” Lu Yun saw death information everywhere when he opened the Spectral Eye.

He sifted through the data and determined that some came from heavyweights of the current chief worlds, while others originated from the primeval era. He silently committed certain names to memory—they would come in handy sometime in the future.

“It’s strange, why do I feel like this place is very familiar? Not the familiarity of having visited before, but that I should know this place like the back of my hand.” Lu Yun paused and cocked his head to the side in thought, then shook his head.

He’d truly entered the Firmament Prison; it was a place filled with decay and decline. Not one of the environment, but one of civilization and time.

Civilization and eras that couldn’t advance with history were summarily toppled by it. Such was Lu Yun’s first impression of the place.

“Were they eliminated because they were thick-headed to reason and clung to their old ways?” Lu Yun rubbed his head. He knew now that the Firmament Prison wasn’t simply the prison of its time; it was also where the heavenly court had met its end.

As it was the most well preserved out of the ancient sites, it was hailed the ruins of the Firmament Prison.

The primeval heavenly court was the subject of myths and legends, very few in the chief worlds knew that this was the site of the fabled heavenly court. Chu Xingran must've discovered something that led him to not wanting the Imperial Seal or the heritage kept here. He wouldn't have gone to the Land of Reincarnation otherwise, seeking to use the land's power to shake off the treasure.

"Strange... the death information here has been fully preserved. It hasn't been eroded by the passage of time." Lu Yun looked around him, finding a thick layer of bone dust on the ground. It'd come from the skeletons of those who'd died on the premises.

The time modifier of the primeval heavenly court name was in itself a myth and legend. "Primeval" was an era that could no longer be measured by time. Its artifacts could not be preserved to present day; it was a miracle that the ruins of the Firmament Prison yet existed, and that all of the death information it contained was perfectly conserved.

Everyone, everything that had died here—even an ant—was laid out in front of Lu Yun. He could see everything about their experiences in life and anything having to do with them.

"Firmament Prison... Firmament Prison!" Something occurred to him. "Isn't it hell? All sorts of information about life and death is preserved in hell, but that's only to be expected.

"Additionally..." Lu Yun flicked out a sparkling soybean. A small ripple later saw a golden armored warrior stand in front of him.

"Master!" The same ball of energy as ever, the warrior smiled innocently at Lu Yun. "You've finally come!"

Lu Yun trembled and he stammered, "A-aren't, aren't you guys heavenly soldiers from the g-great wilderness? So what, what do you..."

The golden armored warrior's meaning was very clear—Lu Yun was finally here. They'd been waiting here for him all this time.

"The previous soldiers were indeed those unsophisticated yin gods, but once master's cultivation ascended to the chaos, you summon us!" The warrior beamed proudly.

"You mean that the Tome of Life and Death has also refined this place before?" Lu Yun paused, but still voiced the treasure's name out loud.

"This is the Dejected Land, the Deserted Land. Everything here, its civilization and era, has been abandoned by history. How would an existence like master look upon this place with any favor?

"What master has refined is us—the lingering yin spirits that survived," the warrior responded candidly. Who he meant by master was not Lu Yun, but the Tome of Life and Death. Since the treasure was Lu Yun's nascent spirit and inseparable from the young man, the two were one and the same to the golden armored warrior.

Only Lu Yun knew that he'd fully subdued the Tome of Life and Death, making it part of himself. He might be able to fully unlock the book's secrets when he incorporated the Firmament Prison and Ruina into hell.

"Do you know the truth about this place?" Lu Yun took a deep breath. Although he could read the death information and piece it all together, he wasn't able to get a clear picture of what had happened in that era.

Chu Xingran was here to help him gain the core essence of the Firmament Prison, not to help Lu Yun obtain the primeval heavenly court's heritage.

"I know some, but not all," the warrior thought for a bit. "I know why master is here. Please follow me!"

He and Lu Yun were of the same mind since Lu Yun had summoned him with a death art. Thus, he knew what the young man wanted.

"Master's two friends have reached the thirty-third layer of the Firmament Prison and are in its deepest parts," the warrior said.

"Thirty-third layer??" Lu Yun's heart clenched when he heard this.

Chapter 1852: Tower

Thirty-three layers of the Firmament Prison didn't mean much. The world of immortals possessed thirty-three layers as well. Perhaps it was a coincidence.

All the same, Lu Yun's heart clenched from the potential implications. He felt that he should know this place, that he should be very familiar with it. But he didn't know there were thirty-three layers in the Firmament Prison.

It was a very uncomfortable contradiction.

However, he didn't interrupt the golden armored warrior's walking tour. The warrior kept up a constant stream of explanation as they walked, heading toward the inner depths of the Firmament Prison.

The thirty-three layers were one entity set in a major world; they were the thirty-three minor worlds of their major world. All of their layouts were similar to the thirty-three layers of the world of immortals.

As things stood now, the Firmament Prison had collapsed, the major world was destroyed, the minor worlds were demolished, and everything lay in ruins. The wreckage of the legendary primeval court lay beneath the thirty-three layers.

It'd perished before the Firmament Prison fell, becoming the base for the remnants of the Firmament Prison to land on. The prison buried everything that'd been the heavenly court. According to the golden armored warrior, they were the last batch of Infernum protecting the Firmament Prison in their past lives. The core essence of the warriors was Infernum!

In Taiyi's court of the great wilderness, the soldiers that'd become yin gods were connected to the Firmament Prison in certain ways. They wouldn't have become Lu Yun's golden armored warriors otherwise.

"Are there Infernum in the Firmament Prison too?" Lu Yun asked.

"In response to master, it is the Firmament Prison when it is in the sky and hell when it is on the ground. The hell dao from the god of Mount Tai and the hells he crafted drew inspiration from the Firmament Prison.

"It further becomes Ruina when it enters the sea," the warrior concluded.

"Do you know who created Ruina?" Lu Yun lit up when he heard Ruina mentioned.

"Yes!" The golden armored warrior nodded. "But that one's existence is taboo. If I say her name, that might direct danger to her! She is by master's side and those who wish to kill her search for her by your side."

Lu Yun's side... To the warrior's former identity, residing in the Land of Reincarnation was the same as being by Lu Yun's side. Compared to the chief worlds, the land was an insignificant speck of dust.

Lu Yun immediately understood and nodded, dropping the subject. His thoughts had been on the wrong track all along. When he learned that the demon of immortal dao was subordinate to the god of Mount Tai, he thought it was the mountain god who wanted to eliminate Mo Yi.

But now that he knew that the demon was a dog of war, that the latter might've been in the Imperial Seal all along, Lu Yun understood that the mountain god wasn't behind things. It was the dog itself and the seal that wanted to kill Mo Yi!

In the thirty-three loops that he'd journeyed through, he'd seen Mo Yi die thirty-three times for him. The treasure that he made use of then was the Imperial Seal. Thank goodness he'd happened to toss the seal into the Tome of Life and Death this time and never brought it back out!

"Do the curses that turn me into a beacon of misfortune come from the withered wood, or from the Imperial Seal?" He couldn't be certain anymore. Six hellfires had combined into the one and only, using the withered wood as its kindling. While there was stunning resentment on the wood, that hadn't been the tree god's original intention.

"The Imperial Seal!" He set his jaw. The original emperor had once owned the seal as well!

"Master!" The golden armored warrior suddenly broke their silence. "Master will have to continue alone after this post. I cannot help you!

"Be careful to not use the death arts in the heart of the Firmament Prison. Extreme danger will come for you if you do! Master must also be careful to not listen to anything we say. We are your servants only when the death arts call us. When we are not commanded by the Tome of Life and Death, we will seek your life.

"The Firmament Prison is the greatest of the three hells. After master refines it and consolidates the power of the three hells, you will manifest the true reincarnation cycle." The warrior dissipated with dramatic flair.

Lu Yun nodded gently. While the Firmament Prison was the greatest of the three hells in the past, his hell was the strongest of them now. The six hells had become one and formed the origin hell. Most

importantly was that hell was now the medium through which the Tome of Life and Death released the strength of reincarnation.

Hell was complete, but the Firmament Prison and Ruina remained shattered.

Thanks to the warrior's guidance, Lu Yun met no obstacles along the way. He was already standing in front of the thirty-third layer. There seemed to be a strange power here—one that had destroyed the golden armored warrior. In contrast to the other thirty-two layers, there was an intact building preserved within the thirty-third layer.

A pagoda.

A black pagoda with an unknown height and width. It seemed as large as a world. Chu Xingran and Xie Tianxun were here, as were Yun Yi and the bizarre young man in white.

"A world in the shape of a pagoda?" Lu Yun spread out his hands and summoned God's Army Pagoda. He looked at the black pagoda, then back at the Army Pagoda. They were astoundingly alike!

"You are correct." The Soldier King walked out of the Army Pagoda and sighed when he saw the black pagoda.

"I what now?" Lu Yun blinked.

"This pagoda..." the king sighed again.

"Is the Army Pagoda based off of this pagoda?" Lu Yun interrupted.

"Never mind, you did indeed guess wrong." The Soldier King pursed his lips. "The Army Pagoda draws inspiration from a certain tower, but not this one.

"This is also a Profound Pagoda, but whereas the Army Pagoda is a treasure and soul weapon, this pagoda is a true piece of architecture. It contains the thirty-third layer. Both pagodas are based off that tower."

"What tower?"

"The one in your dao partner's hands."

"The... Hongmeng Tower?!" Lu Yun's eyes widened.

"Correct," the king nodded and quickly interjected, "Do not say her name here. It will attract trouble to her."

Lu Yun swallowed his words. "What kind of existence is she that even the Firmament Prison of the primeval court is based off of her treasure?!"

Chapter 1853: Yin Soldiers

"I don't know either," the Soldier King shook his head.

"I thought she was the princess or empress of the primeval court. But now it looks like... that's not the case," Lu Yun shook his head with a wry grin.

“The primeval heavenly court? They’re a bunch of stubborn idiots who insisted on taking the road to ruin. Who is the mistress? She is one who created Ruina with a wave of her hand!

“The primeval court held every possible advantage when it came to fortune and public will, but still needed her guidance to complete the Firmament Prison. Without these ruins, how would that so-called heavenly court have ruled the chief worlds?

“In the end... heh. She nurtured a bunch of ungrateful riff raff and snakes.” The Soldier King plainly knew the history of those times and was very contemptuous of this ancient court.

Lu Yun forced down his curiosity and refrained from asking further.

“You cannot keep the Army Pagoda on you—the Firmament Army Pagoda will eat it,” the king suddenly switched topics with a solemn air. This was why he’d emerged from the treasure.

“Wait, what did you say?” Lu Yun’s eyes widened. “The Firmament Army Pagoda?”

“Correct, the Firmament Army Pagoda,” the king nodded. “It is like the Army Pagoda in your hands, but the Firmament Army Pagoda has evolved into the medium for the Firmament Prison. Therefore, it’s stronger than your pagoda. With the destruction of the Firmament Prison, its Army Pagoda has suffered devastating damage. It will dismantle your pagoda to make itself whole again.”

Lu Yun shook his head fiercely. “The Firmament... Army Pagoda!”

“What you summoned earlier is what the other soldiers and I were in the past. We are heroic spirits of battlefields past. Collected by the Army Pagoda, we turned into its soldiers.”

However, the Soldier King and his one hundred and eight men were now real living beings instead of puppets. When they revived in the sea of Hell Flowers, everything sealed in the pagoda regarding their past selves returned to them as well.

This was what God had prepared for them.

Lu Yun’s thoughts couldn’t help but run wild when he saw that the tower in front of him was also an Army Pagoda.

“So... my golden armored warriors are all soldiers from the Army Pagoda in their final form?” he asked.

“Yes,” the king nodded. “If you wish to subdue this pagoda and obtain the core essence of the Firmament Prison, you will need to overcome the king soldier of this prison and win his allegiance.”

The soldiers and king of the Firmament Army Pagoda were different from the Soldier King and his men. The Soldier King and others were puppets under the rules of the Army Pagoda, whereas the ones in the Firmament Army Pagoda were more akin to Infernum.

“I understand.” Lu Yun nodded and handed his Army Pagoda to the Soldier King, then set foot into the black structure in front of him.

.....

“This is the real Firmament Prison... the thirty-two layers before were the world projected by the pagoda,” Lu Yun realized after he entered the thirty-third layer.

The preceding thirty-two layers of ruins that he'd walked through, including the Firmament Prison in the outside world, were built from the core of this pagoda. All of the prison's rules originated from this building.

Its inner world was also a scene of obliteration. Decrepit and broken-down buildings rose and fell in piles so great that they formed mountains. Debris filled the world, all of it a testament to how glorious this place had once been—and how rotten.

Everything was pitch black except for a tiny pinprick of light that allowed Lu Yun to see his surroundings. Yet, he was so out of sorts it was like he was blind.

The death arts were ineffective here.

Normally speaking, he instinctively called upon the Spectral Eye to observe the world. This had become second nature, but since the death arts didn't work here, there was no Spectral Eye for him to use.

Shapeshifting was also negated and he returned to his true form.

I have to be even more careful.

"The thirty-third layer of the Firmament Prison is bigger than the entire prison! It's like trying to find a needle in a haystack if I want to find someone in here!" Lu Yun crouched on the ground and stuck a Stillness Talisman on himself, trying to conceal the ripples of immortal force from him.

This precaution was probably more self comfort than not—the young man in white from earlier had easily located him.

"Strange, why does the layout here seem like a tomb...

"A dragon sleeps in mountains coiled, those deathly cliffs with mysteries roiled.

"If thousand peaks with locks deter, a noble soul be thus interred!" He silently operated the Dragonquake Scripture and tried to use the Dragonshift Method to probe the area. As he thought, there was a tomb in this world.

"The coiled mountains form locks... the tomb of a noble soul!" He sucked in a sharp breath. Nobility that could be buried in the core of the Firmament Prison was likely someone from the primeval heavenly court.

"Are they all in that tomb?" he wondered.

"Master!" A sinister voice sounded in his ear. Lu Yun jumped with fright and hastily shuffled to the side. A ghastly pale man in rusty armor had appeared next to him at some point in time. There was no presence of the living on him—yin winds gusted around him like he was a yin ghost. But somehow, he had the body of a living person.

He wasn't a living dead, but a dead man. Or an Infernum.

"Are you the soldier that I summoned earlier?" Lu Yun raised a brow.

"It is I!" An uncanny smile appeared on the soldier's face and he walked toward the young man. "Allow me to show master the way!"

"You just told me not to trust any of you." Lu Yun took three steps back as fiery black sparks sizzled over his body.

"Surely you jest, master. I am your servant, how can you not believe me? I was joking earlier. Now, let me lead you to your friends." The soldier drifted up to Lu Yun like he was weightless.

Whoosh!

Instead of wasting his breath with more talk, jade light flashed through Lu Yun's hands as he stuck a nine-colored talisman on the soldier's forehead.

The talisman blazed with light and froze the soldier on the spot. It was a Principal Nineheavens Talisman, one specifically to incapacitate immortal ghosts. The Infernum were a type of ghost, so they were susceptible to the talisman.

Indeed, the soldier ground to a halt and couldn't move.

"What are you doing, master?" Another voice came from behind him. And then...

"What are you doing, master?"

"What are you doing, master?"

"What are you doing, master?"

The same words echoed from all directions as more Infernum walked out of the darkness. They looked different from each other, but their expression, words, movement, and gestures were all the same.

Chapter 1854: Tomb of Nobility

Lu Yun swiftly backed up and dismissed the tongues of hellfire that'd started leaping over his body. This was the Firmament Prison, hellfire was restricted here. Even his death arts were null and void.

An endless horde of Infernum shambled out of the darkness. They looked physically different, but their expressions and mannerisms indicated they were the same person. In response, Principal Nineheavens Talismans floated around Lu Yun. They could control both immortal and yin ghosts.

The yin soldiers halted as soon as they encountered the talismans. However, the other Infernum were unswayed by their suppressed brethren. They continued to advance on Lu Yun.

"Stand down!" the young man shouted.

"Master, your subordinate is here to help you," they responded in uncanny unison. There were so many of them that they trampled the frozen soldiers in front, yin ghost and talisman together.

"Since you won't stand down, you can die." Detachment crossed Lu Yun's face and he splayed his hand—an image of a massive cannon emerged from the palm of his hand.

An immortal weapon of war!

The weapon wasn't actually in the ruins or stored on him, but since Lu Yun was versed in the combat art of Spacetime Reincarnation, he could combine two spaces and bring the weapon to him.

These days, the weapon was renowned through the chief worlds for being able to deliver the blow of a supreme. Even bonafide supremes in the chief worlds were wary of it.

“Why go to all this trouble?” The unending horde of Infernum dispersed, replaced by a man with commonplace features in black armor. He wielded a heavy longsword and seemed to have been there all along, observing Lu Yun. It wasn’t until the ghostly soldiers scattered that the young man was able to see him.

“The king soldier of the Firmament Prison?” Lu Yun arched a brow and aimed his cannon at the man.

The king soldier looked very ordinary. Neither strikingly beautiful nor horrifically ugly, he would be instantly lost among the masses if tossed in a crowd. Yet, it was this nondescript look that was most representative of life.

“The Firmament Prison will be yours if you can subdue me. Care to give it a try?” He remained unmoving as he looked at the weapon of war in Lu Yun’s hand.

“I do want the Firmament Prison, but I don’t want the prison of the primeval heavenly court.” Lu Yun shook his head.

Boooooooooom.

A pillar of light spewed from his hand and smashed into the king soldier, instantly vaporizing the target.

Although there was no trace left of the king soldier, Lu Yun knew very well that more was needed to kill a powerhouse of that caliber. The king soldier of the Firmament Prison was an existence that exceeded supreme. To the lower levels of the chief worlds, the supremes were lofty, inviolable beings. Yet when one joined the ranks of these august personages, they realized that being a supreme was just to reach ordinary adulthood.

“Is he gone?” Lu Yun breathed out with relief and put the weapon away, continuing on the path beneath his feet to the depths of this world.

At some point in time, he arrived at the tomb he noted earlier. The tomb was the true core of the prison. Silence reigned around him—it’d grown darker the further in he ventured. His eyes were useless by this stage since there was no available light to see with.

With the Spectral Eye nullified by the rules of the Firmament Prison, it was the first time that Lu Yun set unseeing eyes on pure darkness.

But he remained calm. His nascent spirit was still connected to hell and he could make a swift exit if danger found him. That was why he had come here so fearlessly. Even though the spacetime tide had receded, the ruins were still an extremely hazardous place for supremes, not to mention sequence experts.

All was quiet in the darkness. Nothing could be heard, nothing could be seen. However, Lu Yun smelled a certain pungent stench. He couldn’t place it—it wasn’t of decay or rot, but something else.

The tiniest exhale whispered through the air, sending Lu Yun’s hairs standing on end. He reflexively shot back as far as he could.

Crunch!

It was like a giant mouth had suddenly snapped shut. When upper and lower teeth crunched together, a pungent smell again burrowed its way into Lu Yun's nostrils.

A massive beast!

Lu Yun realized what he was facing. He must've walked in front of an unknown beast; the stench was its breath!

Barely repressing the urge to vomit, he scuttled backward. Though he couldn't see the beast, he could sense that it was coming for him with jaws wide open.

Rustle!

A dull clanging of chains echoed in the darkness, followed by an agonized yelp. The wave of ill wind speedily shifted away. Lu Yun's back was drenched with sweat. If he'd been any slower, he would've been consumed so thoroughly that not even bone fragments would remain.

"What was that? A dog of war?" He heaved for breath. Thanks to the beast chasing him, he was now completely lost in the darkness. It was impossible to find his way back to the path.

"Where are Chu Xingran and Xie Tianxun?" Lu Yun frowned in thought. "Right, this is a tomb of nobility, so ordinary methods can't pierce the surroundings. I'll have to try with the Dragonquake Scripture."

He called upon nearby earthen veins with the scripture. As jet-black light flared in his eyes, the world around him came into focus.

The Dragonquake Scripture!

Its combat arts perfectly replaced the death arts that he couldn't call upon at the moment. There was a massive black dog crouched on the ground roughly five hundred meters ahead of him. Just as Lu Yun thought, it was a dog of war.

"Do you recognize it?" Lu Yun used his eyes to create an opening in the world of the Tome of Life and Death.

"It's not one of my kind—something's possessing it." The demon of immortal dao shook his head. "That's not a dog of war!"

The earlier barking had almost caused the demon to lose his mind when it traveled into the book. It also had the additional effect of awakening some of his memories.

"It's not your body?" Lu Yun pressed.

"No!" the demon answered. "My body was lost a long time ago. The phenomenon earlier was me, but the one in front of us is not me."

"How do I bring it down?" Lu Yun would have to make it past the dog if he wanted to enter the main burial chamber. However, he was no match for it.

Chapter 1855: It's Cold Here

"You can't..." the demon of immortal dao answered blankly. "I would be able to control it if it was still a dog of war, but it bears no resemblance to one aside from its appearance. I can't even say that it's really alive."

"It's not alive?" Lu Yun blinked. With his Spectral Eye deactivated, he was unable to see through life and death. Personal strength alone was insufficient to determine whether the dog was dead or alive.

He'd imagined thousands of times before what it'd be like to have the Tome of Life and Death leave him and lose the death arts. To think that he'd encounter the situation today! The treasure was still with him, but he'd lost the death arts all the same.

The Spectral Eye had become an innate part of who he was; he even used it to observe the living. The life and death of ordinary people was available to him with a single glance. But now, though his eyes saw everything in front of him, he still felt like he was blind.

"I can't really say if it's dead or alive," the demon mumbled. "I can't tell what it is—a puppet?"

Lu Yun closed the connection to the Tome of Life and Death and cut their conversation short. The demon had lost himself in the first dog's barking, he didn't want more madness to ensue from further shock.

"Good thing I've already set foot onto my own path and crafted the origin hell," Lu Yun sighed with relief. While the Tome of Life and Death was off limits, there were still plenty of combat arts and secret methods that he could make use of from his own dao.

He didn't know if it was the book that was ineffective in the Firmament Prison, or if it was the prison restricting the treasure's capabilities. Or had the Tome of Life and Death purposefully withdrawn the death arts for a moment to test him?

The book was an inanimate object—it was Lu Yun's nascent spirit. However, there was also a specific order within it that defined a certain existence. It posed tests to challenge Lu Yun at regular intervals.

When he revived Fuxi, he defied the treasure's will and replaced it, becoming the true master of the Tome of Life and Death. That had been one of the tests. Now in the ruins of the Firmament Prison, the death arts suddenly vanished. It might be the work of the order within the book as well...

Lu Yun formed his suspicions when the dog of war penetrated the walls of the Tome of Life and Death, but didn't anticipate that it would end up with the death arts completely losing their effectiveness. The warrior he'd summoned earlier had discovered signs of it; Lu Yun was mentally prepared thanks to his reminder. If he'd been caught off guard, it would've caused a long period of confusion.

"In that case, I'll just use my own strength!" Lu Yun set his jaw and took a resolute step forward.

Rumble!

Purple dragons burrowed out of the ground and curled up around him. He set his foot on them and charged the black dog.

"Don't kill it!" Chu Xingran's voice suddenly rang urgently in his ear. Lu Yun jerked to a stop and quickly directed the dragons away. The massive dog was so terrified that it shivered on the ground, crying with its tail between its legs.

Aha. I see. While the dog looked frightening, it wasn't that strong. Lu Yun had been floundering in the darkness earlier, panicking about his blindness without the death arts. That was why he'd been petrified by the sudden appearance of an enemy.

If it wasn't for Chu Xingran's abrupt communication, he would've already run the dog over with all of the dragons.

"Where are you, Chu Xingran?" Lu Yun called out.

"So you did come, you brat!" Chu Xingran snorted. "Why didn't you tell me first??"

It was... the big black dog speaking. It spoke human speech and with Chu Xingran's voice.

"Er, did you put this thing here?" Lu Yun blinked.

"Not me, Xie Tianxun did. He thought you would come, so he resurrected a dog of war and used a puppetry art on it. I say, can you not tell that this is a puppet?" Astonishment bled through Chu Xingran's voice.

Lu Yun refused to answer. He was so weak when he couldn't use the death arts! No, this wouldn't do! Just the Tome of Life and Death doing this on purpose was enough to send him into a tailspin—and the treasure doing so meant that there really were things in existence that could prevent the usage of its arts.

"Alright, follow me!" The black dog stood up and indicated for Lu Yun to jump on its back.

Xie Tianxun had employed a special puppetry art on the corpse of a dog of war, then chained it to this spot. He wanted to make sure it wouldn't wander off into another area when they weren't around to control it.

The dog wasn't meant to guard this passageway; it was here to wait for Lu Yun.

The Firmament Prison normally saw no visitors. Even if there were any, they would be supremes or above. They wouldn't enter the heart of the prison through this route—only Lu Yun would enter through the tomb of nobility.

Lu Yun didn't suspect foul play and jumped onto the dog's back. He'd deduced the situation through formula dao. Only now did he truly calm down and sort through his scattered thoughts and emotions.

The death arts were unusable, but he still had the Dragonquake Scripture, formula dao, hell, and the combat arts of his own invention. When he lost the death arts earlier, he was so flustered that he'd completely forgotten about formula dao.

"I'm showing my lack of experience and relative youth. I've also had an easy time of things lately," he concluded for himself.

A patch of bright light entered his view after an indeterminate period of time. It was a tiny bonfire with two people craning their necks around it. One of them quickly walked up in welcome when they saw Lu Yun.

"Why didn't you tell me that you were coming?" Chu Xingran complained as soon as they convened.

"I couldn't say anything. If I did, word of my movements would get out." Lu Yun shook his head and jumped off the dog.

"What, you mean you don't trust us?" Xie Tianxun raised his eyes to look blandly at the young man.

"Some things always get out if they're spoken of," Chu Xingran explained before Lu Yun had a chance to. "If Lu Yun told me his plans, someone would've learned of them. My cultivation isn't strong enough to keep this kind of secret."

Lu Yun nodded. That was how word had gotten out about Earth being a seed of nothing despite the prudence he'd exercised. He'd been cautious of repeating the same mistake since.

"It's cold here, come warm up by the fire." Chu Xingran led him to the bonfire.

"Cold?" Lu Yun blinked with incomprehension.

Chapter 1856: A Realm Monster About to Take Form

"Correct, it's very cold here." Though Xie Tianxun didn't have a good impression of Lu Yun, he still explained, "This is a very cold place. You may not feel it now, but you'll figure it out soon enough."

Lu Yun nodded. He picked a spot next to the bonfire and sat down without another word.

"You guys are certainly living it up," he couldn't help grumbling when he took a good look at the fire. They were burning a very precious wood infused with the energy of the five connate elements.

"We have no choice, nothing else can withstand the cold apart from that," Chu Xingran responded with resignation. "The worlds within the ruined Firmament Prison haven't turned into realm monsters after it fell, but they're pretty much the same."

"Turn into realm monsters?" Lu Yun's eyes widened with incredulity. "The Firmament Prison might turn into a realm monster?"

"Yes, and we're seeing signs of it already." It was Xie Tianxun who responded. He was much more knowledgeable in this aspect compared to Chu Xingran.

Lu Yun frowned. "If the Firmament Prison turns into a realm monster, all of the worlds in the vicinity will be affected. We need to stop it!"

"Wait, have you two been staying here because of that?"

"Mhmm," Chu Xingran nodded.

"You two are twenty-eighth level sequence cultivators and you're bold enough to stop a realm monster forming by yourself?" Lu Yun asked again.

Twenty-eight levels of sequence. He could clearly see that Chu Xingran's main body had accessed... immortal dao sequence. Chu Xingran had set foot into immortal dao at some point in time!

He hid it so extremely well that no one noticed, apart from Lu Yun. Twenty-eight levels went beyond Lu Yun's imagination—he hadn't thought that Chu Xingran's primary body would be so strong at twenty-eight!

Xie Tianxun wasn't as strong as his companion, he broke through to twenty-eight levels when he dwelled in the fourth realm. That level made them the strongest out of the younger generation. Twenty-nine levels made one a senior cultivator, not a youngster.

"I knew you would come, duh," Chu Xingran guffawed and clapped Lu Yun's shoulder. "The two of us can't do it, but you can!"

"So you've been waiting here for me?" Lu Yun rolled his eyes.

"We would've left a long time ago, if not for Yun Yi," Chu Xingran continued in an odd vein. "He's here for us, but he doesn't show himself as long as we don't attempt to leave. If we do, he immediately manifests and beats us back in here."

"Yep," Xie Tianxun nodded as well.

"My replica wanted to tell you this, but he used some magical method to prevent my replica from saying anything. I know everything that's taking place here, but I can't speak of it. It's a very strange feeling," Chu Xingran chuckled ruefully.

He knew that Lu Yun would come and wanted to tell the young man everything, but his replica hadn't been able to convey a word of it. He wasn't under a restriction of any kind, but that his replica simply didn't remember what occurred inside the Firmament Prison.

It only recalled that Chu Xingran was in the prison and being hunted down by Yun Yi, but as for how and what they'd encountered?

Nothing.

"That has nothing to do with Yun Yi. It's the embryonic realm monster's self defense mechanism." Lu Yun understood the situation at hand when Chu Xingran spoke of it.

No wonder the yin soldiers and king soldier he'd encountered earlier had been so weird. They all wore the same expression, as if they were the same person. He thought the king controlled all of his soldiers. It wasn't until now that he grasped that even the king soldier had been under the nascent realm monster's control.

The death arts would set them free, but the Tome of Life and Death was ineffective here. It was both a trial that the treasure posed to Lu Yun and an innate self defense reflex from a realm monster before it took shape. All death arts were rendered null and void.

Once it formed, all of the yin soldiers and their king would be assimilated. The Tome of Life and Death would never summon them again and the soybean soldier death art would have to call upon other yin gods.

"Can you stop the realm monster from taking form?" Xie Tianxun asked hurriedly.

"Yes," Lu Yun nodded. "It's simple."

"How simple?" he pressed.

“One of the methods in the Dragonquake Scripture—the Dragonspike Litany!” Lu Yun answered. “Realm monsters are a life form of condensed resentment that result after a world ends. The core essence of a world is a layout, so a realm monster is also a type of layout. If we want to destroy a realm monster, all we need to do is to destroy the layout.

“There are three great methods in the Dragonquake Scripture—Dragonsearch, Dragonshift, and Dragonspike. The Dragonspike Litany destroys fortune and snaps the foundation. The realm monster will have no chance of survival once it is used!”

The litany would be ineffective if the realm monster had already taken shape and formed its core essence. But since it was still coming into existence, it’d yet to coalesce the tiny bit of its core. Thus, Lu Yun could break it apart with the Dragonspike Litany.

“The Dragonquake Scripture!” Xie Tianxun couldn’t help but shudder when he heard the name. He was also a feng shui master skilled in excavating tombs. He knew all sorts of killing formations, and his achievements in feng shui crowned him as first among the younger generation in the chief worlds.

Even he didn’t dare attempt the Dragonquake Scripture; he hadn’t dared learn it when Lu Yun wanted to teach it to him.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Gusts of yin wind blew around them. The temperature dropped precipitously and their surroundings turned into a land of ice and snow. Lu Yun couldn’t help shivering with cold; he found a small hint of warmth when he drew near the bonfire.

He saw a dark figure through the dim firelight, one that slowly approached them.

“He’s here!” Chu Xingran and Xie Tianxun snapped to attention, both of their faces grave.

“The king soldier of the Firmament Prison!” Lu Yun also grew nervous when he saw the figure. It wasn’t the king soldier at the moment, but the realm monster!

The realm monster had awakened its mind, putting the king soldier and his men under its control. Indeed, there were hordes of yin soldiers behind the man.

“Where’s Yun Yi?” Lu Yun suddenly asked.

“Don’t know,” Chu Xingran shook his head. “He doesn’t show up if we don’t leave this place.”

“Then let’s go, right now!” Lu Yun shouted.

“What for? Do we want to die?” Xie Tianxun jumped with shock and carefully sealed his consciousness away, not wanting Yun Yi to know that he was mentioning the supreme’s name.

The king soldier was drawing closer with his men and the air grew even colder. The bonfire that Chu Xingran and Xie Tianxun had built began to flicker, looking like it would extinguish at any time.

They’d met the group of soldiers a long time ago, but it was their first time meeting the king soldier. If they couldn’t even handle the soldiers, they would have no choice but to escape through the

Resurrection Talisman if Yun Yi was also thrown into the mix. While Lu Yun's death arts were useless here, his talisman creations were still valid.

"How will we take care of these soldiers if that bastard Yun Yi doesn't come?" Lu Yun took a deep breath. "Let's go!"

He jumped onto the big black dog, leaving the other two no choice but to follow.

The king soldier and his men wouldn't let them go so easily. Raising gusts of arctic air, they rushed the dog. Everywhere they passed froze into blocks of ice.

The dog sprawled on the ground, its tail between its legs and whining up a storm. It refused to move.

"Isn't this thing supposed to be a puppet?!" Lu Yun kicked it in anger. Why was the dog scared shitless at this time?!

"Um..." Chu Xingran said awkwardly. "The puppet is a bit of a coward, but it's still quite useful when there's no danger."

He and Xie Tianxun weren't afraid since they'd preset their resurrection points. They'd just reappear there if they died.

Chapter 1857: The Realm Monster's Sacrificial Goods

The same didn't hold true for Lu Yun. It would be the end of his road if he died—he only had one life. In addition, all of the Resurrection Talismans would be rendered ineffective the second he died. Therefore, they were useless to him.

Not even Lu Feng knew about this, despite his devout efforts in marketing the talisman.

"The two of you should die... no, go first." Lu Yun gnashed his teeth at the sight of the advancing soldiers.

"Is there a problem?" Chu Xingran sensed something was amiss when he read Lu Yun's expression.

"No." Lu Yun shook his head. There was a layer of icicles hanging off of him by now. When he stretched out his right arm, the long-stored Argent Snow appeared in his hand. "You two can die first, I'll fight my way out."

As comical as his words sounded, there was no better option available to them.

"Then let's fight our way out together. We can still revive if we die." A longsword black as night manifested in Xie Tianxun's hand. Sword light flashed through the air as he charged forward, targeting the weakest link in the horde of yin soldiers crowding them.

"Take this!" Lu Yun hauled Chu Xingran back before the man also charged forward. The young man operated Spacetime Reincarnation and fetched an immortal weapon of war, shoving it into Chu Xingran's hands.

"Aim at the king soldier. Blast it to pieces if it makes a move!" Lu Yun shouted.

Just one weapon of war was insufficient to kill the king soldier of the Firmament Prison, but currently, the king soldier didn't seem capable of enduring a blow. He would be blown apart if attacked and the rules of the Firmament Prison would create a new king soldier.

But that would take time.

Lu Yun released the Argent Snow Domain from the weapon in his hand and deployed the Dragonshift Method at the same time. Purple dragons rushed out of the ground to become one with the domain.

Roaring, he pulled Chu Xingran over and reconvened with Xie Tianxun. They furiously slaughtered the yin soldiers in front of them.

The king soldier stood silently off to the spot, not making a move.

"Weird, the yin soldiers seem limited somehow. They're completely different from the ones we fought before!" Chu Xingran mumbled as he took aim again and again.

"They're definitely a lot weaker." Xie Tianxun also found it odd. "If this was like normal times, the three of us would already be dead."

He subconsciously looked at the king soldier. They hadn't encountered this being in all this time and didn't even know it existed. Though the king remained motionless, he still exerted a lot of pressure just by being present.

The soldiers were normally so strong that Chu Xingran and Xie Tianxun had died countless times to them. The greatest danger in the Firmament Prison wasn't Yun Yi, but the yin soldiers. Yun Yi just wanted to prevent them from leaving; the soldiers killed.

Whenever they were surrounded by the yin soldiers, there was nothing they could do but stand there and die.

"I know what's going on!" Lu Yun shouted. "We won't make it out like this. Go for the king soldier!"

He waved a rain of Principal Nineheavens Talismans into existence and temporarily froze all of the soldiers around them. He also stopped operating the Dragonshift Method—it didn't seem very effective against them.

Although the yin soldiers were yin ghosts, they were controlled by the realm monster's will. The dragons in this land were now part of the realm monster, so they wouldn't have much of an effect against the soldiers.

"Are you crazy?!" Xie Tianxun shrieked. Just one group of yin soldiers was enough to leave them no way out, and now they wanted to go for the king?? That was just courting death!

"Do as he says," Chu Xingran responded firmly and followed close behind Lu Yun. He kept the cannon in his hand pointed at the king soldier.

"You... finally... under, understand." The king soldier stretched his lips in a stiff smile to see Lu Yun approach him.

"You meant what you said earlier, you do want me to subdue you!" Lu Yun said.

“...yes.” The king nodded with effort. “I, I can... remain m-myself if, I, follow you. If—if not, the... realm m-m-monster swallows, me!”

It was exceedingly hard for him to form a complete sentence as his will was focused on defying the realm monster’s will. Although the realm monster had only formed a bit of sentence at this point, it was still too much for the king soldier to withstand.

When the Major Cycle Worlds of the Land of Reincarnation perished, they gave birth to a realm monster that took Lin Mo sacrificing her life to bring down. The world of the Firmament Prison was infinitely times stronger than the Major Cycle Worlds. If it became a realm monster, it would far outstrip what the Land of Reincarnation had spawned.

Thankfully, it’d yet to fully take shape.

Chu Xingran and Xie Tianxun looked at each other with shock when they heard these words. The realm monster was most likely on the cusp of maturing if it’d forced the king soldier of the yin ghosts to cooperate with Lu Yun. No wonder it’d appeared at this point in time.

“Take me, take... to the land, of light!” The king soldier’s face was ghastly pale and the look in his eyes alternated between lost bafflement and determined resolution. It was his control of the yin soldiers that caused their strength to decline by such a marked amount.

The land of light was where Lu Yun had first met him—the patch of dusky radiance outside the tomb.

“Go!” The king soldier walked incredibly slowly and paced to the exit. The soldiers followed him with blank expressions. They were powerless to resist the realm monster’s will and had been assimilated long ago. However, the habit to obey their king was engraved into their bones. They moved slowly and shuffled behind the king soldier, showing no signs of going on the offensive.

Unbidden, Lu Yun was reminded of a movie he’d seen on Earth—Crazy Alien. An alien visited Earth and possessed a monkey’s body, leading to its trainer treating it as well, a monkey. That was probably similar to the scene that he saw in front of him right now.

The realm monster’s will controlled the yin soldiers, but couldn’t control their king. If the king soldier fully resisted, he was able to regain control of his men.

After an unknown period of time, the endless darkness faded away and was replaced by a dusky world.

“Strange, why isn’t Yun Yi chasing after us?” Xie Tianxun paused. When trapped in the tomb, Yun Yi’s primary body appeared whenever they tried to leave. He either forced them back or outright killed them, forbidding them to leave.

“Someone’s keeping him preoccupied right now, he doesn’t have the attention to spare,” Lu Yun grunted.

“You’re the one who said you wanted to bring him to us!” Xie Tianxun glared.

“I was just confirming something. It’s great if he can come, no big deal if he can’t.” Lu Yun’s expression twisted when he turned around to look at the enormous darkness behind them. “If he came, that would prove he’s not in league with the realm monster. Since he hasn’t, that means he has some sort of dealing with it. Perhaps this world becoming a realm monster is thanks to him too.

"The young man in white must've discovered something, which is why he's gone for Yun Yi and is keeping him preoccupied," he murmured.

Xie Tianxun trembled. "So you knew early on??" He looked at Chu Xingran, who nodded in affirmation.

"He probably thinks of us as sacrificial goods for the realm monster so it can take shape." Chu Xingran chuckled, then continued with resignation, "You possess The Kinship of Heaven and Earth and that legendary person's heritage. I also have a stunning secret on me. We are the realm's monster's fortuitous opportunity, so Yun Yi followed us in and refuses to let us leave."

"That is indeed the case." The king soldier had returned to normal. The realm monster's will circulated only in the land of darkness of the tomb. Once removed from it, it couldn't control the king soldier or his men.

However, it could still affect them. The yin soldiers still shared the same expression and they moved like one person.

"If you swear allegiance to me, that'll be part of the realm monster or Yun Yi's plot. It didn't fully refine you because you're here as bait for me!" Lu Yun suddenly identified.

Chapter 1858: Cause and Effect

"Yun Yi took over these ruins a long time ago, he knows them like the back of his hand. The first one to explore this place and receive the primeval court's heritage wasn't me, but Yun Yi," Chu Xingran murmured.

Xie Tianxun jerked with shock. The inheritance of the primeval heavenly court that shook the chief worlds was with Chu Xingran? And it sounded like Yun Yi had gifted it to him?

"The second was also not me, it was the Huangpang Supreme," Chu Xingran continued. "Yun Yi gave the heritage to the supreme and tried to sacrifice her to the realm monster."

"But the supreme quickly grasped the situation and severed her karmic ties with the dragons, turning her back on them. She was the eldest princess of the yellow dragons and changed her name to Huang Pang. Prior to that, she and Moran Qingfei—a stunning genius of the Moran Clan—loved each other. However, their factions opposed the match and their relationship had been forced to come to an end."

"But when Huang Pang left the yellow dragons, Moran Qingfei also severed his connections to his clan and took the name of Mo Fei, continuing his bond with Huang Pang."

"Well, he is certainly a loyal man," Xie Tianxun took a sharp breath. He'd visited the Firmament Prison before during another spatial tide and had heard of the strange legends surrounding Huangpang major world. He knew of the might of its ghostly capital city.

It wasn't until now that he understood why.

"You know everything after that. Huang Pang became a supreme and is a dragon, so she can no longer be a sacrifice. Therefore, Yun Yi stirred up trouble and made her nature widely known, borrowing the hand of countless supremes to kill her."

Yun Yi didn't take action himself because he didn't want to form karmic ties with the dragons and the Moran Clan. He only made a move at the very end to retrieve the heritage of the primeval heavenly court. Supremes couldn't be the realm monster's sacrificial good, so he had to find someone else to play the part.

He found Chu Xingran.

Chu Xingran was no fool. Although he didn't know why the Huangpang Supreme had died, he knew that his unexpected gains would result in fatal attention and affect all of Darklake.

Determined to see things through, he ran off to the Land of Reincarnation using the Dafeng betrothal as an excuse. Chu Xingran's reaction was wholly unexpected; when Yun Yi came to, his would-be sacrifice was already the Curse King in the Land of Reincarnation.

Before he did so, Chu Xingran visited the ruins and obtained a fragment of the Firmament Prison. Since he'd yet to fully digest the primeval legacy then, he couldn't serve as the sacrifice. Yun Yi had no choice but to allow him to roam freely in the chief worlds, much like the Huangpang Supreme.

When all was said and done, it turned out that Yun Yi underestimated Chu Xingran. Yun Yi was a tremendous heavyweight far beyond supreme. He stood at the apex of strength, but there was one area in which he fell far short of Chu Xingran.

Stratagem.

Born into a royal family and growing up as the nation's crown prince, Chu Xingran had lived through circumstances much more complex than what a cultivator like Yun Yi would ever experience in his life. Seeing as the latter held even a supreme in the palm of his hand, he naturally thought lightly of Chu Xingran on a subconscious level.

That was precisely the blind spot that Chu Xingran took advantage of and made good his escape.

Yun Yi's three concubines were also existences beyond supreme. He'd directed them to keep watch over the passages outside the three Hell Tombs to prevent Chu Xingran from escaping in that direction.

However, Chu Xingran smartly broke through the blockade and utilized his connection to the dragons to leave the Land of Reincarnation. He also employed a small trick to have the Azure Dragon King take him as a foster son, thus further deterring Yun Yi's plots.

Chu Xingran encountered the azure dragon ancestral god early on during his time in the Land of Reincarnation. He obtained some of the ancestral god's heritage then and also let the god know that the heritage of the primeval heavenly court was on himself.

It was such a prodigious matter that the ancestral god didn't dare speak of it, not even when Lu Yun asked.

When Chu Xingran raised the proposal of taking Ao Qin's Sea Dao Flower in the Abyssal Tomb, he hadn't wanted the flower. He wanted to revive Ao Qin and communicate with the dragons through the genius. That would be the final stroke of completion in his plans involving the azure dragon ancestral god

He was successful, but the series of maneuvers created so many karmic repercussions between him and Lu Yun that he had to pay off the debt. Hence, he was here in the ruins of the Firmament Prison with Xie Tianxun.

At the same time, Yun Yi had known that Chu Xingran would return at some point, even if not for Lu Yun's sake. It wasn't that easy for an ant to thoroughly dismantle Yun Yi's scheme. The titan had created so many karmic ties in the ruins that Chu Xingran would have to make a repeat trip, no matter the reason!

Thus, Yun Yi was hot on Chu Xingran's heels after the latter reentered the ruins and kept the genius trapped inside. But this time, he discovered that Chu Xingran no longer possessed the Imperial Seal. Hence, he was forced to send a replica to the Land of Reincarnation—ostensibly to work with the god of Mount Tai, but really to search for the seal.

Someone as strong as Yun Yi could see through all of the cycles of reincarnation at a glance, but it still cost him a great deal to actually find the seal. This was primarily due to the Tome of Life and Death being present in this loop, preventing him from seeing through Lu Yun's true nature.

However, since the Imperial Seal had been on Lu Yun in previous cycles, Yun Yi's strong conjecture was that it remained on Lu Yun this time around. Thus, even if Lu Yun hadn't deployed his final trump card in the form of Diexi and her crystal coffin, Yun Yi still would've found an excuse to retreat.

After that search attempt, he didn't try, or need to try, to affect Lu Yun with any other ploy. He just needed to keep Chu Xingran in the Firmament Prison to eventually draw Lu Yun's presence as well.

.....

Lu Yun peered into some secrets only after he entered the prison proper. In order to confirm his suspicions, he kept probing whether or not Yun Yi was still physically present. Yun Yi had likely discovered him in the Wind and Cloud Pagoda and then arranged for the spacetime tide to happen ahead of time.

The king soldier was also specially arranged for him.

If it was only a realm monster that the original king soldier was up against, he would be able to withstand the enemy. But combined with a Yun Yi? Not even the collective might of all of the yin soldiers and king soldier could last one second in defiance. They were almost instantaneously assimilated by the realm monster's will and became its puppets.

Yun Yi left the king soldier's mind intact in order to lay a trap for Lu Yun. He didn't know that Lu Yun could summon the yin soldiers through his soybean art, but he knew that the Army Pagoda was on the young man. Once Lu Yun refined the king soldier with the pagoda, Yun Yi would be able to control the young man through the soldier. He would keep Lu Yun here and sacrifice all three to the realm monster!

The only thing that Yun Yi was mistaken about was that this time around, Lu Yun depended on the Tome of Life and Death instead. Chu Xingran had used formula dao to discover certain secrets about this place, but it was the young man in white that most surprised Yun Yi.

"If my guess is right, Yun Yi is here for a woman," Lu Yun suddenly said.

"A woman?" Chu Xingran and Xie Tianxun paused.

"He should be... I tried provoking him earlier and found that one sentence in particular really angered him." Lu Yun carefully mouthed the key word.

"...cuckold?" Xie Tianxun repeated. The color drained out of his face in the next second. It felt like there was a pair of furious eyes glaring at him.

"Yes, that keyword infuriates him, so I promise that he's here for a woman," Lu Yun murmured. "I used the Ancestry Bridge to make a few calculations when Jian Bu'er killed Yun Lang. Yun Lang is not of Yun Yi's bloodline, but he is the Cloud Atlas Supreme's son. Therefore, my hypothesis is that Yun Yi has no children. Even his concubines are just a front."

Xie Tianxun curled his lip, he wasn't interested in Yun Yi. What mattered was that Yun Yi was using them as sacrifices to the realm monster. Up 'till now, Lu Yun and Chu Xingran were unable to determine why Yun Yi was going to the trouble of having someone bearing the heritage be the sacrifice. The realm monster was about to take form regardless.

Did he want the realm monster to inherit the primeval court's legacy? But try as Lu Yun might, he couldn't think of a way that would enable a realm monster to obtain this heritage. In his eyes, this inheritance was nothing desirable. It represented decay and isolation—trash that had been eliminated by the times. The truly desirable were recorded in the order of heaven and earth. Even if someone kept it to themselves and took it to the grave with them, there would be another who somehow obtained the marvelous knowledge.

Lu Yun and Chu Xingran looked at each other, both of them completely baffled.

"I say, can you figure a way out of here first? We can discuss this when we're all safe," Xie Tianxun complained with trepidation. He was highly put out at how animated the two were in their conversation.

"I might know why," the king soldier suddenly said. "A realm monster is a savage, there is nothing else in its thoughts apart from violence and destruction. If one wishes a realm monster to be intelligent, it must be baptized by civilization."

"He wants the realm monster to have the intelligence of a living being?" That made even less sense to Lu Yun.

Civilization... he didn't know what heritage Xie Tianxun possessed, but the Imperial Seal and primeval heavenly court were certainly ancient civilizations! Even though they were decrepit and run-down, they were still complete civilizations.

"What does he want to do?" Lu Yun couldn't help a shudder.

"I have no idea." Chu Xingran shook his head blankly.

"Enough, all of you!" Xie Tianxun stomped his foot with anger. "Can we get out of here first?!"

They were out of the darkness now. If they died here, they would resurrect back in the darkness.

Chapter 1859: Running Away With Tails Between Our Legs, Fleeing Helter-Skelter

“We can go anytime, I just wanted to know what Yun Yi is up to.” Lu Yun looked calmly at Xie Tianxun.

Chu Xingran was in no hurry either. Lu Yun refusing to subdue the king soldier was another one of Yun Yi’s miscalculations. He’d read Lu Yun’s personality incorrectly.

The young man would indeed risk his life to save Chu Xingran and Xie Tianxun—of that Yun Yi had determined correctly, but Lu Yun wasn’t the sort to lose his head when he saw treasure. He was very well aware of what he could and could not take.

In the great burial mound of the Myriad Formation Summit, he’d given the Scroll of Shepherding Immortals to Qing Yu without even knowing who she really was. Though he’d wanted it, he knew that he had to keep that greed in check. Such was the instinct of a tomb raider.

If the goods were unevenly divided in an excavation, or if the tomb raider took too much, that would attract disaster.

Capturing the king soldier would bring the core essence of the Firmament Prison into Lu Yun’s hands, combining the three hells as one and manifesting the true power of reincarnation. However, the young man refrained from doing so. He had his own plans.

In short, Yun Yi had miscalculated.

At the same time, he didn’t anticipate that his spacetime tide would summon countless headless supremes and an even more bizarre young man in white. He and the realm monster were now preoccupied by the young man.

If ants weren’t dragged into the fights of gods, then they might very well benefit from the confusion.

“You guys aren’t going back in, are you?” Xie Tianxun wanted to cry. He’d excavated tombs of countless heavyweights in the chief worlds, but these ruins were the most uncanny of them all. It was thanks to the Resurrection Talisman that he was still alive, or he would’ve died ten times over already.

A place that ensured the death of a sequence cultivator was no laughing matter. Lifeline Talismans were useless in a location like that as there were many dangers that could destroy both talisman and owner in one blow.

“No,” Chu Xingran shook his head. “Yun Yi hasn’t really done anything because he doesn’t want to form karmic ties to this place. He’s just being a middleman and connecting all of the plots together. But he himself is steering clear of everything. If there comes a time in which he’s forced to take action himself, all of us will have no choice but to stay here.”

“Mhmm,” Lu Yun nodded in agreement.

“Then what are we waiting for?!” Xie Tianxun itched to knock both of them out and drag their pretentious asses out of here. He couldn’t leave by himself because the way back was too dangerous. They needed to travel together—or at the very least, he needed Chu Xingran.

“The realm monster put a layout on me,” the king soldier finally spoke up. “I cannot undo it, but you must take me out of here.”

"Understood," Lu Yun nodded. The king soldier was a puppet manifested from a yin spirit instead of a real living. If he wanted to refine the soldier, he would have to do so using his own mind and immortal force. But in the process, Yun Yi could use whatever was in the soldier to control Lu Yun.

Lu Yun hadn't noticed anything off about the king soldier through his own observations; he'd deduced through formula dao that Yun Yi and the realm monster had set something up. There should be no issues if he simply departed with the king soldier and did nothing else.

"Be careful of Yun Yi planting spatial coordinates on him," Chu Xingran raised worriedly.

"I'd be more concerned if he didn't," Lu Yun grinned. "Come on, let's go. We won't get to the bottom of anything if we stay here guessing. Fellow daoist in white!" he suddenly called out. "My thanks for getting in Yun Yi's way. If we so happen to meet again, I would be happy to be your strategist. I just don't want to stay in this endlessly dark Firmament Prison."

"Deal!" came the young man's voice. "I will tell you my name next time we meet!"

Yun Yi's furious thought ripples flooded over them, but he didn't have the energy to spare for anything else. If he relaxed his guard ever so slightly, the young man in white would slay the nascent realm monster.

"Let's go," Lu Yun nodded to the king soldier. The soldier would lead the way.

Thanks to the king soldier's guidance, they met no danger on the way back. The four quickly exited the Firmament Army Pagoda.

"King soldier of another pagoda," the Firmament king soldier immediately identified when he saw his kind waiting outside.

"So you haven't come under Lu Yun's banner yet, hmm?" the Soldier King smiled.

"You... you're alive again?" The king soldier lit up. Being a puppet of the pagoda like his men, returning to the land of the living was a farfetched dream beyond his grasp. But here was a living, breathing sample of his brethren! He looked at Lu Yun in a different light.

"There's something else on you still, I don't dare resurrect you yet. C'mon, let's go." The death arts returned to Lu Yun's command and he summoned the Gates of the Abyss with a wave. Instead of the kingdom of hell being on the other side, it was Lu Yun's origin hell.

The group entered hell after Lu Yun stowed the Army Pagoda; the gates vanished after the last person walked through. As they did, a pair of crimson eyes opened in the void. They were the same as the Firmament king soldier's eyes.

.....

"We won? Just like that? We won over Yun Yi??" Xie Tianxun plopped onto the ground after they entered the origin hell, his eyes full of incredulity.

"Won?" Lu Yun and Chu Xingran looked at him as if they looked at an idiot.

"This isn't winning, this is called running away with our tails between our legs. It's fleeing helter-skelter!" Chu Xingran snorted with laughter. "He's got us in the palm of his hands and you're talking about winning?"

Lu Yun curled his lip as well. "If it wasn't for the unknown young man, it'd be up to Yun Yi's mood of the day as to whether or not we made it out alive."

Xie Tianxun swallowed hard.

"We only made it out of one of his plots, who the heck knows how many he's got waiting for us? I actually have another thought—maybe he let us go on purpose. Maybe we would've been able to leave with Lu Yun even without the young man in white he speaks of," Chu Xingran's tone took a dark turn. "Maybe he wanted us to bring the king soldier here."

Everyone looked at the king soldier from the Firmament Army Pagoda. He quietly met their gazes.

"Even if he is one of Yun Yi's pawns, he is no longer one anymore," the Soldier King chuckled. "Right?"

The king soldier rolled his eyes. "I just want to live."

"Looks like it," the Soldier King laughed heartily.

"There's finally living people here... Yo master, do you know how boring it is to talk to yourself?" A lazy voice carried from the depths of hell. Its owner seemed to have just woken up.

A yawning, grumbling Diexi walked into view. As the new resident sprite of hell, she oversaw every part of it. The three hundred and sixty-five zombie kings and their formation had also entered hell. They safeguarded the premises from the eight directions

Lu Yun's ten Yama Kings had also been in residence, but with the increasingly chaotic situation in the fourth realm and outsiders infiltrating the world of immortals, they had to take their halls back to the kingdom of hell and oversee things there.

There was an ascension pool in the kingdom that led to the mortal world. The ramifications would be enormous if anyone from the outside realm snuck into the mortal world. As it was, the mortal world was the foundation for the world of immortals, its source of replenishment. It was to be safeguarded at all costs!

Lu Yun had been at ease when Chen Xiao and Qing Buyi were the guardians of the ascension pool. But after their primary bodies left the world of immortals, the Yama Kings had to fill their shoes.

"Didn't I send Violetgrave in to keep you company?" Lu Yun looked blankly at Diexi. "Where is she?"

"She's asleep," Diexi fidgeted awkwardly. "I'm suppressing her with my empyrean crystal coffin. The god of Mount Tai has compromised her replica—I'm worried he'll do something and corrupt Violetgrave as well."

"Good call," Lu Yun nodded. "How about I leave the Firmament king soldier here to keep you company too?"

He winked at the king soldier, but the latter was staring fixedly at Dixie and beginning to tremble.

"Do you know her?" Lu Yun asked curiously.

The king soldier nodded with an extremely unpleasant expression. "To think that she'd escape from the coffin's seal!" he voiced with thick horror.

"I didn't escape, there's still a skeleton inside. It's probably mine." Diexi merrily skipped up to the king soldier. "Tell me, who am I?"

The king soldier frantically backed away, his face as white as a sheet.

Chapter 1860: A Clean Break

"You seem very afraid of me." Diexi advanced on the king soldier. She was no match for him at her current strength, but he seemed extraordinarily terrified of her. He stumbled over his feet and plopped to the ground.

"Don't, don't force me!" the king soldier stammered. "You better put that crystal coffin away. The chief worlds will be doomed if it splits open! You're nothing good either, you're a demon! A perverse demon!"

"That coffin of empyrean crystal isn't meant to bury you, but to seal you away!" A strange curve flashed across the king soldier's lips and he turned to Lu Yun. "Didn't you ask about the mistress? I can tell you that she sealed this person into the coffin!"

"Mo Yi?" Diexi blinked, the look in her eyes clear. She didn't seem like the demon that the king soldier spoke about, one that could destroy the chief worlds.

A tiny ripple appeared in the void before a delicate figure appeared. She reached out with a slender hand and struck the king soldier in the chest. Color drained from his face as he flew backward and crashed heavily to the ground.

"You're here." The king soldier struggled up with a slight smile.

Mo Yi.

"If you hadn't mentioned me, Yun Yi, I wouldn't have broken the rules to interfere with your affairs." Dressed in the same masculine outfit as usual, a lack of makeup didn't detract from Mo Yi's stunning face.

"Yun Yi?!" Chu Xingran, Xie Tianxun, and Lu Yun jumped with shock. "The king soldier of the Firmament Prison is Yun Yi?!"

The soldier in front of them was Yun Yi?!

"You put on a good act," Diexi grumbled and sat on the ground, watching the show.

"Of course it is me." Yun Yi wiped away blood at the corner of his mouth and smiled more easily. "I finally managed to make it past everyone to see you."

"You did all this and set up all these plots just to see Mo Yi?!" Lu Yun's jaw dropped. If that was the case, Yun Yi was seriously wrong in the head.

"Of course not." Mo Yi shook her head and looked at Yun Yi still sitting on the ground.

"The idea struck me when I happened to be at the right place at the right time." Yun Yi shrugged. "I thought you were limited by the rules, but you still hit hard."

Mo Yi's palm strike had truly injured him.

"There are no rules that can impose limitations on me. I just didn't want to break them," Mo Yi shook her head.

"I need your help!" Yun Yi looked solemnly at Mo Yi.

Diexi yawned and interjected lazily, "I bet Mo Yi won't help you, but I might be interested."

Yun Yi ignored her and remained looking at Mo Yi.

"Not interested," she shook her head.

"Are you really Yun Yi?" Lu Yun asked dumbly. "I thought Yun Yi placed a special mark or brand on the Firmament king soldier. But... you're here yourself? What about the king soldier?"

"In the Firmament Army Pagoda, of course." Yun Yi flicked a glance at Lu Yun.

"Here I was thinking that no matter how bedraggled, we made it out of this round alive. Escaping from your claws is a victory regardless, but really, we still lost in the end," Chu Xingran sighed.

Yun Yi knew what Lu Yun's trump cards were. Since he'd dared come regardless, that meant he was no longer afraid of the zombie king formation or crystal coffin.

The man shrugged.

"You do put on a good act, I thought you really meant what you said." Lu Yun looked at Diexi. Yun Yi should win an Oscar for how terrified he'd been earlier.

"I wasn't lying, I meant every word," Yun Yi replied calmly. "There is indeed a demon sealed within the crystal coffin, one sufficient to destroy the chief worlds."

Chu Xingran barely repressed a shudder and Lu Yun frowned as well. Diexi paused, then looked wordlessly at the coffin behind her.

The atmosphere grew odd.

"Is this your primary body, or a replica?" Lu Yun asked. "Or have you occupied the king soldier's body?"

Meanwhile, the Soldier King shifted awkwardly off to the side. He'd thought that letting his brethren see that he'd revived and become a real living being would be sufficient to recruit the Firmament king soldier to Lu Yun's banner. Who would've thought that it wasn't one of his kind at all, and more egregiously, he hadn't realized anything was off?

"I'm not here to pick a fight. I need your help, so I thought it'd be more sincere if I came in person." Yun Yi shifted slightly as he spoke, separating himself from the king soldier. The king soldier immediately turned into something like a sculpture and sat down, motionless.

Yun Yi was dressed in purple robes and looked around with a feminine hint between his brows. His face was ever-so-slightly wan—Mo Yi really had injured him with her blow.

"I can have Mo Yi help you if you give me the core essence of the Firmament Prison," Lu Yun smirked.

"I can give it to you, but do you dare accept it?" Yun Yi smiled craftily.

"Of course I dare," Lu Yun snorted. "I can return the Imperial Seal to you too, but you must change who you'll sacrifice to the realm monster. Its return will signify the end of all karmic ties between you and me, and you and Chu Xingran!"

Lu Yun remained coolly composed, even though he faced a being like Yun Yi. The Imperial Seal appeared with a flip of his hand.

"Possessing the Imperial Seal means power over the primeval heavenly court and receiving a most wondrous heritage. You will automatically command the loyalty of its old troops. Are you not moved by it?" asked Yun Yi instead of accepting the seal.

Mo Yi was surprised as well. Chu Xingran didn't want the seal because he was terrified out of his mind by it. As a rational person, he knew that he couldn't possess a treasure like that. It wasn't a fortuitous opportunity, but a seal of his death.

On the other hand, Lu Yun didn't want the seal because he... didn't want it. The thing had ended his family in thirty-three loops and caused his friends to die such awful deaths that they couldn't be buried. His own end was to wither away in the void, accompanying the death of the immortal dao.

At one point, he'd mistakenly assigned all of the curses inflicted on him to the withered wood. But no, they came from this seal.

"Nope!" he responded decisively.

"The heritage of the primeval heavenly court lies within it. That is the faction that ruled all of the chief worlds, back in the day," Yun Yi chuckled. "You can give it a try. You escaped from my grasp in the Firmament Prison, so you might be stronger than me and can fully control the primeval court."

"Is it worth it though?" Lu Yun tossed the seal onto the ground since no one wanted it. It was like he'd thrown away an old shoe. "Is a primeval faction eliminated by the times worth risking my life for? Is it worth becoming enemies with someone like you for? I am confident in my future, but being enemies with you right now is a death wish."

Yun Yi registered the young man's words with an unpleasant expression.

"The destruction of the primeval heavenly court wasn't an elimination by the times like you speak of. It was an accident," came the Dao King's voice. However, he didn't show himself. "It had yet to reach its prime when it perished."

"Do you mean that it had yet to acclimate to its time, that it was powerful enough, but destroyed because it went against the heavens?" Lu Yun clarified.

The Dao King paused, he didn't know how to explain it to Lu Yun.

"Yun Yi is the primeval heavenly court's crown prince. Do whatever you want with that information." Annoyed, the Dao King fell silent.

Lu Yun looked at a slightly mollified Yun Yi with surprise.

“I get it!” the young man shouted. “You don’t want Mo Yi’s help, you want the Dao King’s! Where she goes, he will follow!”

“No wonder. I was wondering why you’d come for me,” Mo Yi grumbled.

Yun Yi coughed sheepishly. He’d come up with the idea after his replica sensed Mo Yi and the Dao King’s existence when he briefly joined hands with the god of Mount Tai. His previous plots had indeed been to sacrifice Lu Yun, Chu Xingran, and Xie Tianxun. But when he realized that Lu Yun had gone to the Firmament Prison, he’d modified his plans to nudge the young man into bringing him here.

Apart from the few on the scene, no one else knew that Lu Yun had entered the chief worlds with his primary body. All of that took place under Yun Yi’s watchful eye. While it looked like he was hunting the trio, his real goal was to quietly make his way here.

Though the young man in white seemed to be a surprise element, that had been part of Yun Yi’s calculations as well. Lu Yun was a fresh-faced innocent when going up against someone who’d lived through countless eons.

Thus, he decisively gave up the Imperial Seal. He lacked the qualifications to be enemies with someone like Yun Yi. Lu Yun bent down and picked up the treasure, handing it to the Dao King.

“Please save me, senior!”