

Necropolis 431

Chapter 431: The Owner of the Sword of Chaos

The ten lords, and most of their followers, were firmly trapped in Lu Yun's layout of Ghost Hits Wall. The silverback gorilla remained in the layout to confuse them, while Lu Yun and the little nun quietly made their escape.

Naturally, Lu Yun didn't seek Qing Han out.

The immortal light in the distance remained bright. With his Spectral Eye, Lu Yun could see Qing Han quietly reading a book, accompanied by the Silvermoon Wolfking. Sensing Lu Yun's gaze, the disguised girl looked up and blinked.

A wry smile played across Lu Yun's lips.

"Now what?" asked the little nun. She'd copied some of the ten lords' combat arts into her nascent spirit while she'd watched them fight the silverback gorilla through the water screen, which greatly boosted her strength.

"We go raid some burial mounds, of course." Lu Yun smiled at the mountainous mounds in the area.

Qing Han was right; what he needed was a solid foundation. He had to keep accumulating resources in order to achieve his goals. Although he'd raided the North Sea Palace and stolen House Donglin's ancestral land, and was thus awash in great fortune and countless crystals, he still lacked resources.

His Envoys of Samsara were powerful, and he had a few dao immortals—even arcane dao immortals—serving him. However, that was nothing compared to what the major factions had accumulated over the past dozens of thousands of years.

It wasn't just about wealth or bloodlines. Those factions had built up a system of heritage of their own. Even if they were destroyed one day, as long as their heritage remained, they stood a chance of recovering.

The Lu and Chen Clans were good examples.

They'd suffered serious blows and had nearly been wiped out, but they still possessed their heritage. They would be able to rebuild themselves, if provided a good environment. They had settled down in Dusk Province, but didn't serve Lu Yun. It was a temporary arrangement prompted by their relationship with Lu Yun and Qing Han.

Once they recovered, they would certainly leave the province. The restriction against immortals made it so that Dusk would never be a good headquarters for the clans to develop.

Lu Yun needed his own people. While the Skandha Range and Star Demon Sect hailed Lu Yun as their master, they weren't truly his to command. Their members didn't respect Lu Yun, but merely followed the orders given by senior members of the factions.

In the Sovereign World, or the central world of the world of immortals, the burial mounds housing ancient legacies were the perfect chance for him to build a foundation for himself. Each of the legacies

would give him heritage and cultivation systems of his own, and wealth and resources were most essential if he was to build his own forces.

Over the next seven days, Lu Yun and the little nun wandered around the shrinking dark world, raiding burial mounds and unearthing their legacies.

The burial mounds were deadly dangerous, with countless monsters lurking within. Some of them had already been broken open, but the legacy remained since the cultivators couldn't find the entrance.

They were no challenge for Lu Yun, however.

In a week, Lu Yun had managed to acquire hundreds of ancient legacies. Most of them were left by genius origin dao immortals from the Primordial Era!

Green-eyed monsters firmly set in in all the immortals watching from Destiny City. He'd acquired more legacies than the ten lords combined! Meanwhile, the ten lords were still being led on a merry chase by the silverback gorilla, unable to escape the layout. Worse, they didn't even know their surroundings were fake.

"Why isn't he Lu Yun?!" An immortal seethed at Lu Yun's spoils. "If he were Lu Yun, he wouldn't be getting out of Destiny City alive!"

"If he were Lu Yun, both you and I would be running away!" snorted another immortal. "He's slaughtered even origin dao immortals! If any of those old freaks dared make a move against him, nothing would stop him from turning Destiny City into a smoking crater. We can all die together then!"

The notion sent a collective shudder down their spines, reminded as they were of the terrifying weapons of war in Lu Yun's possession, which could be used anywhere without tethering them to the underground veins. It only made sense that Lu Yun would have the weapons with him at all times.

If Lu Yun really had attended the Sovereign Meet, those old fogeys would've destroyed Jadeite Manor as soon as his consciousness had entered the other world.

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Darkness continued inching upon the Sovereign World, slowly turning it into an empty void.

The burial mounds on the fringes had already been devoured by the emptiness. Lu Yun had once checked the edge of the darkness with his Spectral Eye, but couldn't see anything except for an emptiness that reminded him of the depths of hell, which imparted him with a great sense of danger.

"Oh?" Lu Yun came to a stop when he was about to leave.

There was a divine in black in front of him, and none of the ten lords were of the divine race.

The divines had eliminated other cultivators outside the central world, but they'd been unusually quiet after arriving in the second round. In fact, Lu Yun hadn't seen any of them over the past month.

Now, however, one of them had come to him.

He hovered quietly in the air, his figure burly, his arms long and strong. Lu Yun couldn't get a good look at him, as if he were but a lingering shade. His presence was more than ten times stronger than that of the ten lords, a returned void cultivator!

"No wonder I haven't seen any divines around," Lu Yun said. "You killed all of them."

Swoosh!

A dark cyan sword manifested in the divine's hand, pointed at Lu Yun.

Lu Yun's pupils contracted violently. The Sword of Chaos! He was certain the man was holding the legendary sword of the divine race!

He'd guessed correctly that the owner of the Sword of Chaos had come to the Sovereign Meet as well, but he hadn't expected the divine to seek him out before the third round of the competition. This also meant he knew who Lu Yun was.

"It's you guys." Lu Yun's expression darkened.

Three figures had suddenly appeared to surround Lu Yun from three other directions: Wu Tulong, Mo Qitian, and Zi Chen!

The three of them had thrown themselves under the banner of the Human Lord, but they hadn't followed him to the burial mound. Instead, here they were, emanating the presence of returned void cultivators!

Lu Yun's chest tightened. The three dao sovereigns of the Dao Flower had been enthralled by the wielder of the Sword of Chaos and turned into divines!

"Are you guys..." Lu Yun inhaled deeply, staring at Wu Tulong. "Are you alive or dead?" He couldn't tell even with his Spectral Eye!

Chapter 432: Sword Tribulation

"What's wrong with Qing Yu's Sidekick?" Many immortals in Destiny City were keeping an eye on Lu Yun, and quite surprised to see the grave look on his face. They'd never seen him with that expression in all this time.

"Has he discovered some kind of danger?" someone said bemusedly. "He looks like he's facing his worst enemy."

In their eyes, the little nun was the only one standing beside Lu Yun. They couldn't see the wielder of the Sword of Chaos, Wu Tulong, Mo Qitian, or Zi Chen.

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Wu Tulong and the others looked at Lu Yun with chilling eyes.

"It would behoove you to stop interfering with my business," the sword's master suddenly said, his voice hoarse and deep like that of a growling beast. "I won't even break a sweat if I wanted to kill you. The attack back in Dusk Province was merely a warning."

Wu Tulong, Zi Chen, and Mo Qitian uniformly cackled eerily in low tones before they slowly vanished into thin air. Lu Yun's face tightened further.

"What's happening?" asked the little nun. "What's with the dreadful look, and who are you talking to?"

"Wait," Lu Yun blurted out, "you couldn't see them?"

The little nun shook her head in confusion.

Lu Yun lowered his chin, his expression thick with tension. "The man was right, he can easily kill me with a single slash. I'm not yet his match." A great pressure weighed on his chest. "Don't interfere with his business... Does that mean he's going to start making his moves now?"

The Sword of Chaos was the last hope of the ancient divine court. Forged after the divine race had been toppled, it'd arrived in the world with the intent to restore the race's position as the overlord of all.

Now that the sword had found its master, its next step was to rebuild the ancient court, and Lu Yun was the only one who knew about the events to come.

"Killing me won't even make you break a sweat?" Lu Yun huffed out a laugh. "This was originally none of my business and I wouldn't have bothered getting involved. However, since you specifically came all this way to threaten me..."

His lips twisted into a cold smile. He never tolerated being pushed around; threats would only make him more eager to do something.

"There's something the divine race needs from the central world." Lu Yun turned around with a slight frown and looked in the direction where immortal light was still surging.

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Nearing the end of the second round of the Sovereign Meet, everyone chose to preserve their strength. Even the ten lords trapped in Ghost Hits Wall had given up on chasing Yuan Tong, instead settling down where they were with resigned glances at each other.

Finally, it reached the thirtieth day since the competition had commenced. Under the encroachment of the dark void, the world was now only a thousand kilometers wide, within which were seven mountainous burial mounds and three tombs.

One of the tombs had already cracked open, spilling immortal radiance into the skies. Many cultivators sat around the tomb, waiting for it to completely open. However, that didn't take place even after the end of the second round.

A loud bang resounded through the sky, gold luminescence pushing away the encroaching darkness as the giant Sovereign Ranking slowly unfurled.

On it were the names of more than thirty million cultivators, but more than ninety percent of them had gone dark, marking their elimination. Only about thirty thousand names were still glowing, but even those began to blur. They didn't go dark, but those outside could no longer glean any information about them, nor could they match the names to the cultivators.

Then, all of the cultivators in the Sovereign World turned into streaks of light and entered the Sovereign Ranking, returning to Destiny City.

“I... I actually really did ascend to the void realm!” marveled a surprised voice in the city.

“Heavens, I’ve reached the unravelled void realm and this... this is the ancient legacy I found in the Sovereign World! It was all real!”

“I was able to go toe-to-toe with a golden immortal while I was a perceived void realm cultivator. If I meet the guy again, I’ll beat the crap out of him!” Cultivators who’d returned from the Sovereign Ranking were shaking their fists with great confidence.

Many sucked in sharp breaths at this new development. Those who’d been eliminated had also returned with their cultivation, but theirs were flawed, much weaker than what it’d been in the Sovereign World. They’d also completely forgotten the ancient legacies they’d unearthed from the burial mounds.

These thirty thousand cultivators, on the other hand, had returned with perfect cultivation, heritage items embodying ancient legacies, and all of the combat arts and techniques they’d learned from the items.

“What happened? Why did they suddenly return from the ranking?”

This question beset many immortals. According to their speculations, they’d thought the cultivators wouldn’t return from the mysterious world until the Sovereign Meet had ended.

“The last battle of the Sovereign Meet will commence in three days.” The powerful will of the Sovereign Ranking descended once again. “Cultivators who have just returned shall digest what they learned and recover to their peak in preparation for the last round of the tournament!”

Only then did the immortals understand what the Sovereign Ranking wanted.

Elimination had always been a lurking danger when they were in the dark world. Here in Destiny City, they would be able to cultivate and recuperate in peace under the protection of their elders. More importantly, they’d be able to hand over the opportunities and heritages they’d gained to their respective factions.

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“Surrender our traitor, Wolfking!” demanded the elder of the silverback gorillas of the old wolfking of the silvermoon wolves.

“I...” The wolfking scowled. “Silverblaze and Yuan Tong have already left.”

“What?! Wolfking, this seat calls you by your title only as a show of respect for your seniority. Don’t take that as us silverbacks actually being afraid of you!” The silverback gorilla’s voice rumbled through the city like thunder, attracting many gazes. Many other people were delighted to see monster spirits fight among themselves.

“Hmph!” the old wolfking scoffed, its expression a shade darker. “This seat wasn’t the one who let them go—it was the Life Glyphs who took them.”

That gave everyone pause. The Life Glyphs had taken them away? What was that? Was there something the Life Glyphs could do that they didn't know?

What surprised them even more was that the old wolfking had actually given the silverback gorillas an explanation. The silvermoon wolves had always been the fierce and unyielding sort.

"So that's what happened..." The elites of the silverback gorillas nodded.

Bam!

A deafening explosion rang out as a giant silver crescent moon emerged over Destiny City, a terrible pressure rippling out in all directions.

Pfft!

The old wolfking raised its front leg and clawed through the silverback gorilla's chest, seizing its beating heart. The gorilla elder stilled, then lifelessly collapsed to the ground with a loud thud. Its nascent spirit hovered helplessly in the air, surrounded by eight arcane dao fruit.

"I destroy only your physical body today. If you dare talk to this supreme like that again, I will slaughter your entire bloodline!" The wolfking's voice rang like a death knell from hell, eliciting shudders through the crowd and abruptly delivering understanding of what the gorilla had done.

There were only seven wolfkings of their tribe, marking each of them noble and sacrosanct. Even the great one on Levitating Island showed them great respect. They were the only tribe that could rival the gold bloodlines.

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Lu Yun and Qing Han opened their eyes at the same time. Before them was a scattered pile of countless bodies of different shapes and forms. They were neither humans nor monster spirits, but divines.

"No wonder the owner of the Sword of Chaos didn't attack me in the central world..." Lu Yun's face darkened. The divines had already made a move against him in Jadeite Manor, but failed. Xi Yingchen, first disciple of the Destiny city lord, must have protected him.

Lu Yun looked around and saw that the Silvermoon Wolfking and gorilla had showed up next to them at some unknown time. By Qing Han's side was a jade-colored longsword.

"What's that?" Lu Yun turned to Qing Han in surprise.

"It's the treasure hidden in the tomb, but it's nothing good." Qing Han pursed her lips with a resigned shake of her head. The sword seemed to have imprinted on her and would follow her wherever she went. "If I pick it up, I'll be possessed by the will of immortal dao and lose myself."

"Give it to me..." sounded a bleary voice. "Give it to me, give it to me... I didn't expect this sword to show up. I won't have to eat Lu Yun if I eat the sword!"

Lu Yun and Qing Han blinked, dumbfounded.

Hum.

A strand of violet sword light came out of nowhere and slashed at the jade-colored sword of dao.

The dao sword shuddered, as if it'd been given an enormous fright, and rushed out as a streak of light. Seeing that her attack had been dodged, Violetgrave paused, then chased after it.

"She... she was going to eat you?!" Qing Han looked at Lu Yun with wide, worried eyes.

"None of its historical owners have fared well. The previous owner of Violetgrave was..." Lu Yun frowned.

"Me," Qi Hai said broodingly from hell. "I was its last owner, and I did get eaten."

Qi Hai was a special case. Once Violetgrave had eaten him, he'd seized the opportunity to disappear from the world of immortals and enter the dragon tomb in the North Sea.

Chapter 433: Chaos

"What exactly is Violetgrave?" Lu Yun asked with a frown.

Hearing the name of the sword sent a chill down Silverblaze's spine, her eyes shining with fear. As a Silvermoon Wolfking, one of the greatest immortal beasts in the world, she'd inherited her ancestors' memories. To her knowledge, Violetgrave was a vicious weapon that no one should approach.

"I don't know." Qi Hai shook his head. "There seems to be a large mausoleum within the sword, where eras and civilizations are buried." After a pause, he continued, "It's been around since the era of the human dao. Even then, its owners always suffered a terrible end."

The era of human dao.

That was what Qi Hai called the time he hailed from. As for the time after that, including the present, the Primordial Era, and the time before, Qi Hai called it the era of immortal dao.

"Back then, the woman Violetgrave helped me become the greatest pill master in the world of immortals... However, that also caused my death." By now, Qi Hai had recovered his memories of the Primordial Era with Su Xiaoxiao's help. After conveying his story, he fell silent once more.

Lu Yun's heart sank. Violetgrave had refined a corpse puppet that would grant him the power of a celestial emperor three times, after which the puppet would be freed. Now it seemed that the moment the puppet was freed was the moment it would strike back at Lu Yun.

"Don't trust her," Qi Hai warned again.

Lu Yun nodded without a word as the color drained from Qing Han's face. The two hadn't kept their conversation a secret from her.

"I brought this to you," she said in a low voice. "I should've been its owner."

Lu Yun smiled. "Don't worry. It's just a sword."

Meanwhile, Violetgrave and the sword of dao engaged in battle over Destiny City. Violet and jade sword light each occupied half of the firmament, triggering powerful phenomena and casting the entire city in the two colors.

Streaks of violet and jade repeatedly collided against each other in midair while countless shocked immortals bore witness from below.

"It's the sword from the immortal tomb!" The Thunder Lord shot to his feet. He was incredulous at the sight of the jadeite sword in the sky. "Has someone taken ownership of it?"

"No." A violet-robed counselor shook his head. "It followed the two people in the tomb to Destiny City. Qing Yu and Silverblade." He glanced toward Jadeite Manor with a frown. "Although, what can that violet sword be?"

The conflict was evidently a battle between two greats, and the power radiated by the two swords was climbing to heights of absurd intensity.

"Qing Yu can't be the master of that jade sword, he's just a cultivator. Can the sword have its own spirit? Can the violet sword's master be trying to tame it?" The man scrunched up his face; he desired the jade sword for himself, but didn't dare act on that desire. The swords' duel in midair required intervention on the level of at least the old wolfking.

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"Thank you for your protection, senior." Lu Yun bowed to the sudden arrival.

Xi Yingchen blinked, then shook his head. "For ten billion crystals, I can hold off outside pressure for you. Offending the divine race like this would cost far more than that."

Divine corpses were strewn about all over Jadeite Manor—most of them high-ranking dao immortals. If Xi Yingchen was the one who had intervened, he would only have thrown them out.

Although the divines were currently hiding themselves from the world, they'd never changed their *modus operandi*. Whoever made an enemy of them would gain one unto the bitter end.

"With that senior here, you really didn't need to pay the ten billion anyway," he remarked after a brief pause.

"That senior?" Lu Yun tilted his head toward Qing Han.

"There's probably someone else here. When we were in the Sovereign World, someone protected me from the Sword of Dao's influence," Qing Han messaged him about what had happened before.

"Come out, whoever you are!" Lu Yun bellowed in a low voice, wanting nothing left to the unknown.

"Ah... ah, yes!" a somewhat obsequious voice came from a nearby corner. The old man who emerged looked rather different, but he couldn't fool Lu Yun's eyes.

"What are you doing here?" Lu Yun frowned.

"Your humble servant was worried about you and the matriarch, sir. I, er, decided to come on my own." Ge Long's smile was simperingly pitiful, but his words were quite gratifying. The word 'matriarch' was particularly satisfying.

Qing Han reddened immediately and glared at Lu Yun, but stayed quiet.

“Matriarch... she was female all this time, huh?” muttered Yuan Tong.

Xi Yingchen was dumbfounded. The old man looked like an average core realm cultivator, yet he’d slaughtered a large number of divine dao immortals, seemingly without much ceremony. If he hadn’t witnessed it for himself, he would’ve never made the connection. The man’s wrinkles and skulking appearance hid incredible expertise—he was at least as strong as the old wolfking.

That he called himself a ‘humble servant’ before Qing Yu and Sidekick doubled his surprise. What kind of background did these two youths have?

The ten billion crystals felt a bit hot in his pocket. The more he watched the still-dueling swords in the air, the more he sensed a deep impenetrability in the juvenile couple.

Lu Yun breathed a sigh of relief when the disciple finally left.

“Take these back to Dusk Province, Bing Ling.” He handed off the heritage treasures he’d received in the Sovereign World to the rimesnake king.

“Understood.” The Infernum summarily departed.

Lu Yun turned to Qing Han. “Oh, yeah... How’d you get inside that tomb, anyway?”

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Destiny City sank into bloody chaos for three days. Some factions were entirely wiped out, dao immortals and all. Among the thirty thousand returning geniuses, more than half were lost, including a few of the ten lords.

No one could’ve expected such a disastrous aftermath. Not even the Destiny city lord’s intervention could stem the bloodshed; after making an example out of two arcane dao experts when he killed them, he was ganged up on by several more.

“If we were in Dusk Province, these dao immortals wouldn’t possibly be so reckless!”

Countless cultivators shared the same disgruntled thought. What should’ve been a showcase and exchange between cultivators had turned into an extermination of geniuses by older-generation immortals.

“If Lu Yun had hosted the Sovereign Meet, those old dogs would have the fear of death drummed into them, restriction or no!”

“His war treasure can annihilate those old farts in a single shot!” Many instinctively began missing their province lord.

“Hahaha! Lu Yun is also the lord of the Star Demon Sect,” a few sect members snickered from the side, shutting the previous commenters up.

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Jadeite Manor was assaulted as well. The previously resplendent manor was left in a shambles, the majority of its protective formations having fallen in the turmoil.

Xi Yingchen set foot on the battlefield to carry out his duties, but was heavily injured and taken out of the fight midway. Only the Destiny city lord's interference had saved his life.

"Wolfking—" The city lord was cut off by the hundreds-meter long wolf.

"Anyone who stands in my way today shall die." The old wolfking was entirely emotionless, and its greenish eyes shone a gleaming silver. Today, its savage aura showed that it was infinitely more serious than its last visit a month ago.

The lord pressed his lips together. The wolfking had retreated last time out of respect for him, but such insubstantial things no longer mattered when its descendant was on the line. The wolfking was no match for the city lord, but there was a monster ancestor behind him.

"Ancestor, the gentleman invites you for a discussion inside the manor," a crisp, sonorous voice came from within the walls.

"Silverblaze!" The old wolfking relaxed minutely. Silverblaze wasn't enslaved; she still sounded like herself!

"If the manor's owner is inviting you in, far be it from us to refuse. Come, Yingchen." The city lord dragged his disciple off, thankful to wash his hands of the affair.

The wolfking was a little bewildered by the development, then dismissed its image projection and walked inside.

Chapter 434: Human Form, Beast Form

Dismissing its image didn't make the old wolfking any less wary. That Silverblaze was so willingly following a human was abnormal unto itself. She didn't speak to him after returning to the manor, either.

Moonlit silver exuded from the old wolfking, casting his fur in bristling embers.

Although Jadeite Manor was in shambles outside, its interior remained magnificently grandiose. It was as if it hadn't been affected by the devastation at all. Moreover, layer upon layer of formations scrambled the fabric of reality here, disconnecting the wolfking from the world outside. The whole place was like an enormous maze.

"Wherefore art thou a beast?" a cold voice slipped into the old wolf's ear, and it shivered in awe and disbelief.

"Impossible!" The old wolf shrieked. It projected a forceful aura that threatened to tear the maze-like world asunder. Alas, an invisible pressure bounced it right back as soon as it materialized.

"How can this be... how can this be! Didn't you fall many tens of thousands years ago? How can you manifest in this present age!" the old wolf howled with all its might.

"Wherefore art thou a beast?" the voice sounded again.

The wolfking's chest heaved with rapid violence. Then a different, softer light blossomed all over its body. When the light disappeared, a slightly hunched old man stood in its place.

The old wolfking's eyes seemed to open to the world in the next moment. Still in a daze, he found the maze's haze clearing away from his field of view. Reality sharpened into focus out of the layers of formations and he came tumbling back to his senses. His face flickered through several colorful shades from the change.

"Who is it? Who dares skulk in the shadows like this... come on out!" The man-shaped Wolfking's roar was nevertheless enough to shake the entirety of Jadeite Manor. Intense power flooded to the sky, destroying at least half of the formations here.

However, his expression suddenly froze as a silver-haired girl in a white chiffon dress strolled up to him, barefoot.

"Why is a monster spirit pretending to be a beast?" The girl's silver eyes radiated an innocent curiosity. "Doesn't that big monkey know? The whole reason humans taught monster spirits to take on human form in the first place was to make up for their natural deficiencies."

"Is... is it really you?" The old wolfking's cultivation was already at origin dao realm. His severe injuries hadn't diminished his status as one of the strongest below the nine celestial emperors. Furthermore, he had an incredible amount of experience and seniority. Having already gained renown in the Primordial Era, he was a tenacious veteran of the war between immortals.

The great immortal restriction over the world of immortals—that, and all the rest—had struck him down to mortality like everyone else. But despite the broken path of cultivation, he'd managed to reach origin dao immortal once more.

However, he'd also sustained severe injuries in the process of plucking his origin dao fruit. If it weren't for the importance of the Sovereign Ranking, the wolfking wouldn't have accompanied Silverblaze to Destiny City in the first place.

Yet this old soldier of a wolfking was trembling in reverence before the silver-haired girl.

"Can... can it really be you, patriarch of the water qilins?" the old wolfking quavered.

The strongest of the silver bloodline wasn't the Silvermoon Wolfkings, but the water qilins.

In the Primeval Era, humanity had established the dragon, phoenix, qilin, and turtle as the four true spirits, but they were in essence still monster spirits. It was only after the inauguration of immortal dao that dragons and phoenixes had split off into their own races. Qilins and spirit turtles, on the other hand, remained in their former classification.

Qilins, in particular, were monster spirit royalty, lords over the rest of the walking beasts. Additionally, water qilins ruled the silver bloodline. Once upon a time, the Silvermoon Wolfkings had served directly under their patriarch.

The old wolf had realized who the young girl was from a single glance. Even though Cangyin was only a peerless immortal now, his veneration for her remained unchanged.

"Silverblaze is now my disciple." Cangyin's reply was unrelated to the question, but hearing it made the wolfking beam in satisfaction. What an honor it was to be taught by the patriarch of water qilins herself!

"Alright, you may go now," said Cangyin.

“Patriarch, please allow me to stay!” The old wolf knelt to the ground in eager desire.

“Come find me again when you can take human form without reservation.” The girl shook her silver tresses from side to side.

The old man cracked a rueful smile.

“I am not telling you this for you to defy that monkey,” continued Cangyin. “Some things look very different, depending on what you are. Wasn’t your experience just now proof enough?”

The wolfskin blinked.

Nothing had changed in the formations ensnaring him. In wolf form, he’d been gravely hampered to the point of losing himself. After he’d turned human, however, he’d shaken off the layers of formations with trivial ease.

“Go on.” Cangyin turned, then melted into the mist.

The old wolfskin stood still a long while before he left Jadeite Manor.

When the immortals in Destiny City saw an old man in human shape come out of Jadeite Manor, a small uproar ensued. The strongest experts of each race recognized who it was from a mile away: the old wolfskin, in human form!

Many monster spirits began to panic, especially those affiliated with Levitating Island’s Sacred Land. Thankfully, the wolfskin turned back into wolf form shortly after.

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“The bait’s been cast, and the only thing left is for that big monkey to take it.” After the old wolfskin left, Lu Yun and Qing Han could finally emerge.

The events transpiring in Destiny City had far exceeded his expectations, and things were getting completely out of control. If they dared leave Jadeite Manor right now, they would be annihilated in the next moment.

An invisible hand was acting to kill every genius in the entire world. Without muddying the waters some, it was doubtful they’d be able to leave the city alive.

Scarlet Ape of the North Sea was a key agent of change.

It had the audacity to create a sacred land, divide the monster spirits, and resist the nine majors and ten lands, backed by its immense strength and deep charisma. There was really no other way to describe it.

It wouldn’t fail to notice the wolfskin’s meeting with a qilin patriarch. The ape’s deep-seated hatred of the four true spirits meant it would indubitably come for Cangyin. When it did so, it would go on a huge rampage, whether it wanted to or not. The hand in the shadows, therefore, would be forced to intervene.

Chapter 435: Soul Planting

Increasingly violent conflicts tore through Destiny City. Even the city lord was powerless to stop things as increasing numbers of genius cultivators lost their lives.

Soaring ambition had reared in a proud heart when the will of the immortal dao had first chosen his city to hold the Sovereign Meet. He'd pledged himself to organize the event as well as possible and set a precedent for the world of immortals.

Who would've ever thought that things would end up like this??

"Those old immortals wouldn't be acting like this if it weren't for the void realm." The city lord lifted his head and looked in the direction of Dusk Province, shaking his head with a sigh. "Qing Han... You are the greatest sinner of our world."

'A desperate frenzy' was no longer sufficient to describe the state of the world. Countless immortals had just about lost their minds upon facing the ruins of everything they'd ever lived for and an abject future of their long lives.

"Master," Xi Yingchen spoke up quietly. "Isn't there the Great Formation of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Demons? Once incorporated into the body, it'll—"

"Incorporated into the body?" the city lord sneered. "I've seen the formation for myself. Once incorporated, it'll only cause an overload of energy and detonate the body."

"Why else do you think the major factions of the world abandoned Lu Yun and sealed off Dusk Province? That's because the formation is a dead end. Lu Yun... is one of the greatest villains that can be found!"

Shock wrote over any expression on Xi Yingchen's face.

"However, the hand behind the scene right now is likely those old immortals who've severed their own cultivation... Though they slashed their cultivation, their replicas remain what they were." The city lord didn't wish to speak further about the formation.

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Destiny City was engulfed in utter chaos, but no one dared approach Jadeite Manor.

Even the old wolfking, the most senior member of the Silvermoon Wolfkings, had been thoroughly routed and slunk out in human form. The manor had thus gained a foreboding and mysterious reputation.

"Someone who can give away a hundred billion premium immortal crystals must be somebody."

The river of crystals remained coiled atop the manor like a river. A hundred billion in total—no more, no less. It wasn't that no one had tried taking the crystals, but that no one had succeeded so far.

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"Milord! We have a guest, milord!" The night before the third round of the Sovereign Meet, an unexpected guest visited Jadeite Manor. Ge Long welcomed the visitor with a smile, instead of barring him at the door.

"It's you." Lu Yun paused. He was both surprised and not surprised. The young man must've figured out who he was.

It was Mo Chenfeng!

Lu Yun had seen the Mo genius from Lazuli Major at the end of the Ingress Path, observing a young man so dominated by Mo Qitian that he'd become a shadow of himself. He hadn't expected his acquaintance to pay him a visit.

"It is indeed you!" Mo Chenfeng's eyes lit up.

"Oh?" Lu Yun neither admitted or denied who he was, but simply looked at Mo Chenfeng without a word.

"You've changed your appearances and bearing... Even the ripples of your nascent spirit are different. But that's not enough to fool me!" Mo Chenfeng inhaled deeply. "My sword intent recognizes you!"

Lu Yun nodded. His sword intent had started out inspired by Mo Chenfeng's. Although it'd now evolved into a different thing, it still couldn't escape Mo Chenfeng's notice.

"Out with it, what are you here for?" Lu Yun asked.

"Qitian..." After a long pause, Mo Chenfeng said, "He doesn't seem to be who he'd been before."

"Mo Qitian's probably dead. Whatever this Mo Qitian is, I'm not sure." After a moment of deliberation, Lu Yun asked, "What does your senior council think of him?"

"Qitian's really dead?" Dejection painted a thick stroke over Mo Chenfeng's face. "No wonder. No wonder he's been in closed door cultivation ever since returning to the clan..."

"Wait!" Lu Yun tensed and manifested a talisman, then stuck it to Mo Chenfeng's forehead.

"What's wrong?" Mo Chenfeng questioned in shock as a surge of golden light paralyzed him.

"Hehehe... So you noticed..." an eerie voice rose from behind Mo Chenfeng, sending shudders down the young man's spine.

"What a big yum yum..." Standing guard outside the door, Ge Long stared past Mo Chenfeng's shoulders. "But... I think I can't eat it... not just yet..." His expression turned uncharacteristically grave.

An infant with a bluish complexion crawled up along Mo Chenfeng's back, bearing a seventy percent resemblance to the young man. This must've been what Mo Chenfeng looked like when he was young.

Hum.

The talisman attached to Mo Chenfeng's forehead burst into blinding golden light. With a piercing shriek, the infant ducked back behind Mo Chenfeng's shoulders, attempting to burrow back into the young man's body.

"Think you're getting away on my watch?! Halt!" Lu Yun stepped forward and shot another talisman at the infant's forehead. Gold light flashed by, restricting the wide-eyed infant who'd opened his mouth. No sound or movement was forthcoming from it.

Lu Yun grabbed the infant from Mo Chenfeng's shoulders and removed the talisman on the young man's forehead.

"What's going on? What is that?!" Mo Chenfeng gaped at the infant, chilled to the bones.

"This is you." Lu Yun glared broodingly at the immobilized infant.

"...me?" Blaring confusion reigned.

"Once he grows up, he'll replace you and take everything from you. You'll never be you again. ...this is soul planting." Lu Yun rubbed at his forehead, his expression severe. "It's a technique of the shamanic race. Have they allied themselves with the divines?"

The shamans were the only descendents of the Primeval humans, while the divines had been deemed traitors by the Primeval humans. The two groups should've been the worst of enemies.

Why would they work together?

"Or perhaps..." Another possibility came to Lu Yun's mind.

No matter what the truth was, Mo Qitian was indeed dead. Like Mo Chenfeng, someone had planted the seed of a soul in Mo Qitian's spirit, which was in the process of growing up to eventually replace him!

Realization suddenly striking him, Lu Yun vanished into thin air.

"What's wrong?" Qing Han was startled by Lu Yun's sudden disappearance.

Bam!

Unceremoniously, Lu Yun stuck a golden talisman to Qing Han's forehead. She trembled as a trace of black smoke left her body, slowly taking the form of a human.

"I've already warned you, Lu Yun. If you insist on interfering with my plans, I will show you no mercy." The black figure stood atop Qing Han's head, its ruthlessly chilling gaze settling on Lu Yun through the black smoke.

"Why don't you stay, since you've come all this way?" Scoffing, Lu Yun grabbed at the smoke figure.

"Hmph!" It huffed and scattered in an instant.

Chapter 436: Scarlet Ape Arrives

"It's only a piece of his consciousness, rather than himself in the flesh." Lu Yun stared darkly in the direction where the figure had disappeared.

"What was that?" Qing Han was in an equally foul mood. If Lu Yun hadn't driven that thing out with a talisman, she never would've known there was something foreign in her body. Not even Empress Myrtlestar had noticed.

"It's the soul planting technique of the shamanic race," Lu Yun said in a chilling tone. "It seems that Dusk Province isn't as united as I thought it to be. There are traitors among us."

He immediately contacted his Envoys of Samsara to search through Dusk Province with a fine tooth comb. Only someone Qing Han knew and was close to could've approached her without raising the alarm.

Lu Yun didn't spell things out to avoid hurting Qing Han's feelings.

"Is this how Wu Tulong, Mo Qitian, and Zi Chen died?" Quick-witted as she was, Qing Han immediately connected the dots.

Lu Yun nodded silently.

"The technique is extremely complex. A powerful soul has to be used as the conduit, and it's very difficult to refine the seed." He lowered his head in contemplation. "Unless..."

Rumble.

Just as some sort of conclusion was in reach, a loud explosion ripped through the air and a violent tremor shook all of Jadeite Manor. Countless formations shattered and cracks snaked across the luxurious walls

Lu Yun's head snapped up, his Spectral Eye shooting thin beams of black light as he looked outside.

"Surrender our clan traitor or be razed to the ground along with the manor!" announced the cold voice of an origin dao immortal. As one of the most powerful clans in Lazuli Major, it only made sense that the Mo Clan would possess an origin dao immortal.

"I... since when did I become a traitor?!" Mo Chenfeng went white and threw up a mouthful of blood, a heavy heart weighing him down.

"Hehehe, don't worry, kid," Ge Long offered in reassurance. "That old guy outside is an origin dao immortal. His dao fruit will protect him from soul planting."

Mo Chenfeng's face was as pale as a sheet. Blood continued gushing out of his mouth and his greying eyes showed no will to survive.

Traitor?

A traitor of the Mo Clan?

As one of the elite core disciples of the Mo Clan, Mo Chenfeng had been infused with thoughts of clan loyalty and collective benefit in every aspect of his life since he was young. Obedience and loyalty had marked his childhood, and to be a Mo suffused every fiber of his being. It was devastating beyond words to suddenly be deemed a traitor.

If the Mo Clan considered him a traitor, there was nothing he could do to change that. This was also the worst thing possible that could ever happen to him.

Lu Yun and Qing Han came up to him and the latter shoved a pill into his mouth to stabilize his condition, but Mo Chenfeng didn't even try to consume the pill.

Bam!!

There was another great explosion outside the manor, collapsing countless structures and the last of the formations.

“Bastard!!” Lu Yun flew into a rage. That old fucker had just gone and destroyed the manor for no good reason! Not even the most cowardly of men would take that without putting up a fight!

“Kill that pig, Ge Long!” snarled Lu Yun.

“This, this old servant can’t, milord...” Ge Long wanted to break out into tears. He might have demonstrated great power when killing arcane dao divines, but when facing an origin dao immortal, he would be nothing but a punching bag.

A giant hand probed out and grabbed at the river of crystals encircling the manor. Not even origin dao immortals could resist the temptation of a hundred billion crystals.

Hum.

A sudden flash of golden brilliance marked the skies as a giant, pitch-black iron rod fell from the sky to crush the hand. Then it landed firmly in the center of Jadeite Manor, radiating golden ripples. The origin dao immortal shrieked with pain when his hand was smashed to a pulp.

“Scarlet Ape!!” growled the Mo origin dao immortal.

“Get out of my sight,” a voice boomed from above the iron rod. Color drained from the Mo immortal’s face and he dithered over his next steps.

“So it would seem that the divine race is as despicable as ever,” scoffed the voice.

That was the deciding factor that sent the Mo immortal fleeing. He didn’t dare remain longer now that Scarlet Ape had revealed his secret.

“Heavens, oh heavens, the monster spirit forefather! I’m, I’m-I’m-I’m so dead!” Yuan Tong, still in gorilla form, stared at the giant iron rod at the center of the courtyard with an expression of terror.

Lu Yun stared at the iron rod, a myriad of emotions flashing through his face. He’d thought Scarlet Ape would turn Destiny City upside down after coming in person, but it’d only sent its personal treasure. This was a marked difference from the Scarlet Ape of Lu Yun’s understanding—this action was one of calm and poise.

“You’ve recovered your ancestry,” came the voice. It was calm with no hints of violence, and it seemed to be implying something more than it was saying.

“Mi, milord...” Yuan Tong kept shuddering in fear.

“Since that is the case, you are no longer a silverback gorilla, but a Scarlet Ape.”

“Mi—huh?” Stillness and incomprehension descended in equal measure. It was a scarlet ape as well?

“There are two kinds of scarlet apes—gold scarlet apes and silver scarlet apes. The gold and silver bloodlines originated from us,” clarified Scarlet Ape. “You are a silver scarlet ape, now.”

Lu Yun gave Yuan Tong a closer look upon hearing those words. It did look somewhat similar to Scarlet Ape now.

As for reversion...

Lu Yun had raided the burial mound of a monster spirit heavyweight back in the central world and had Yuan Tong refine the legacy. That was most likely what had triggered its reversion and return to his tribe's roots. It seemed that dead immortal had been a gorilla as well.

"Alright, cut the crap." Lu Yun walked up to the iron rod. "I've misjudged you. You're a lot more rational than I expected. So tell me, what do you want? The broken shard of your iron rod has been refined into my trump card, so returning it to you is impossible."

The Black Emperor was how the feud between them had started.

"Besides, you slaughtered ninety percent of all inhabitants in Dusk Province and wrought devastation on my land. There will be no resolution for the grudge between us." Lu Yun bluntly spoke his mind.

Beating around the bush would only end up biting him in the ass when conversing with monster spirits. Since Scarlet Ape had come and driven away the origin dao immortal of the Mo Clan, it must want something.

"Alright," said Scarlet Ape. "I will not ask you for that segment of iron. I want a favor and will protect you and your people in Destiny City in return."

"What is it?" Lu Yun asked with a frown.

"Within the qilin nest and spirit turtle nest east of the East Sea is sealed a silver scarlet ape. Release it for me, it's my dao partner. Once you do that for me, I will leave Dusk Province in peace for the next thousand years."

Chapter 437: Death With a Single Glare

"You won't bother Dusk Province for a thousand years?" Lu Yun snorted at the black iron staff. "Who was it that a divine whelp had to save there last time, I wonder?"

Scarlet Ape fell silent.

Last time, the North Sea monster spirits had invaded Dusk Province en masse, only for Lu Yun to repel them completely. Many of the province's lives had been lost in the process, but the defenders had ultimately won a pyrrhic victory.

"That's not a condition," the young man shook his head. "Don't think for a second that your 'sacred land' and gathering of ragtag homeless monster spirits makes you a forefather of anybody. My strength has grown, too."

In addition to the North Sea Palace's riches, Lu Yun had robbed the Donglin ancestral home as well—roughly eighty percent of the house's wealth, to be exact. The monstrous amount of gains he'd reaped from the clan far outshone the royal court.

When Lu Yun had robbed the North Sea palace, he'd only taken immortal crystals and materials for the supplemental path. The rest of the treasures and precious materials had been taken by the six prodigals. In contrast, he hadn't shared House Donglin's spoils with anyone.

Indeed, several of the house's heritage treasures were now his. Empress Myrtlestar had removed the bloodline brands inside, allowing the arcane dao immortals under his command to use them. Huangqing and Feinie had also produced several more war treasures in the interim.

Scarlet Ape wanted to invade Dusk Province again? Lu Yun was half a mind to launch a counterattack on the North Sea.

"And what about now?" Scarlet Ape's voice sounded cold and murderous this time. "Right now, I can kill you with no effort at all."

"You're welcome to try." Lu Yun crooked a finger at the staff.

The iron staff trembled a few times, then stopped moving.

"State your conditions! What do you want?!" The ape growled. "There has to be a reason for you luring me here!"

"Dragon veins." Lu Yun cut to the chase. "I know the North Sea still has them, and more than one, in fact. Give me four, and I will release your dao partner from the East Sea's restricted area."

"What do you want dragon veins for?" Scarlet Ape was on high alert.

The world of immortals had a limited amount of dragon veins. The North Sea possessed five. One was subjugated by the blackwater snakes and buried under the monster palace. The other four were split between the Dark North Sword Sect and Ingress Island. However, obtaining them would pose little difficulty for the ape.

Ingress Island's crippled ingress immortal might have caused it some trouble in the past, but Scarlet Ape's recovery of his previous strength meant that was no longer true.

"Dusk Province is a barren place. I want them to nurture the land there," Lu Yun said matter-of-factly.

The ape mulled the offer over. The young man wasn't wrong about the province being barren.

During Scarlet Ape's last invasion of Dusk Province, it'd seriously considered abandoning the effort several times. In the era it came from, a place like that was entirely worthless. Most islands in the North Sea were leagues better in every way.

Yes, natural qi had begun returning to Dusk Province, but it would take goodness knew how long for it to reach parity with the rest of the world. With the help of dragon veins, on the other hand, the province would assuredly become a blessed locale in a thousand years.

Giving Lu Yun four dragon veins was tantamount to funding the enemy. Yet, thoughts of its dao partner occupied the ape's mind. Its partner's energy was still being drained inside a seal to fuel some nefarious curse. The North Sea didn't need dragon veins, either, so losing them would have minimal effect on the place.

Two fiery eyes manifested upon the iron staff, glaring down at Lu Yun.

The young man turned away, unwilling to look into them. The ape was very powerful; who knew what abilities it had? Lu Yun knew of at least thirty-two kinds of mind-controlling ocular arts.

“...how can I trust you?” Scarlet Ape intoned after a long while.

“When your dao partner returns, bring the four dragon veins to Dusk Province,” Lu Yun shrugged casually. “I believe the word of one of the oldest monster spirits to be trustworthy.”

“Alright.” The ape agreed readily. “For the next few days, I will protect your body in this city.”

The staff grew to the size of a mountain, then plopped down in the middle of Jadeite Manor. Everyone in the city could see it.

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“The two people inside Jadeite Manor belong to the forefather of Levitating Island! No wonder the wolfking behaved like that!”

The monsters inside the city were abuzz with activity. Never had they dreamed that Scarlet Ape would repel the Mo origin dao immortal like that, so many came up with what they thought was a believable version of the events. If that was the case, the silverback gorilla’s accompaniment of ‘Qing Yu’s Sidekick’ made sense, too.

The ape’s appearance also calmed down the chaos in Destiny City.

It was a real sovereign, every bit as strong as the nine celestial emperors. If it went on a rampage like the other immortals, no one here would be able to stop it—the Destiny city lord would be no exception.

Everyone else breathed a sigh of relief, only for their jaws to drop shortly after. Qing Yu and Sidekick walked out of Jadeite Manor!

“What are those two bastards doing? Do they think Scarlet Ape’s presence will scare off their would-be killers?” Onlookers were filled with trepidation. If someone attacked them right now, pandemonium would surely resume, one that even Scarlet Ape wouldn’t be able to stop. There was a secret hand behind everything, after all, a fact that many had already noticed!

As expected, scarcely half an hour after Lu Yun had left the manor, a ray of sword light descended from the sky upon his head. The rickety old man behind the young man suddenly raised his head, and opened his eyes to fire two opposing rays that intercepted the sword.

Bang!

The sword light was shattered. A corpse crashed from the skies onto the ground below, shattering the tiles near its point of impact. The body belonged to a thirty-meter-long winged leopard with black scales. The lingering aura upon its corpse indicated it had been a dao immortal.

Yes, Ge Long had glared a dao immortal monster to death!

“That’s Lie Yan! The first monster spirit to join the sacred land of Levitating Island. Why would it attack people under the monster forefather’s protection?” Some were thoroughly confused.

“Lie Yan isn’t one of the top experts, but an eight-fruit aether dao immortal is still a force to be reckoned with. How did it die from a simple glare?” Many more were nothing short of incredulous. The ordinary-looking old man behind Qing Yu turned out to be an unknown expert himself!

“Heheheh, there’s a tasty little morsel here...” Ge Long sucked up a black shadow from Lie Yan’s body.

Chapter 438: Guardian Spirits

Ge Long smacked his lips, then snuck a glance at Lu Yun. There was something even bigger and tastier on his master’s body. If he could eat that, he would become even stronger.

However, Lu Yun ignored both the old servant and the monster spirit corpse.

Inside Jadeite Manor, the Scarlet Ape’s visage appeared upon the iron staff once more, this time with its face contorted in a snarl.

“Brats of the divines! Your overreach goes too far! Don’t think you can do whatever you like just because you saved me once!”

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Ge Long wasn’t the only one following behind Lu Yun and Qing Han; Mo Chenfeng was bringing up the rear. The four of them were headed for the Mo clan’s accommodations here in Destiny City.

Because of what the old man had done only moments prior, the people around them dared not try their luck a second time. They could only watch as Lu Yun and company strolled through the city streets.

The group soon arrived at a different manor. This one also hovered in midair, but was inferior in many other respects compared to Jadeite Manor.

The Mo clansmen were shocked at their arrival with Mo Chenfeng in tow. After their origin dao immortal had been driven off by Scarlet Ape, he didn’t return to the clan residence. In light of that, Lu Yun’s appearance here seemed awfully condemnatory. Thus, it was natural for the Mos to be nervous.

“Where is Mo Qitian?” Lu Yun demanded, rising into the air.

“Senior brother Qitian isn’t here!” replied a girl. She sounded a little meek, but had nevertheless worked up the courage to respond in person. The Mo Clan was quite extensive, and many families and houses were entwined within. The girl had little blood relation to Mo Qitian, hence her referring to him as the ‘senior brother’.

“The forefather says Mo Chenfeng is a traitor...”

“Chenfeng is no traitor. Let us go inside.” Lu Yun’s voice softened and Mo Chenfeng smiled gratefully.

“Um, I...” The girl looked rather troubled, but in the next moment, the manor’s doors creaked open.

“Please, do come in.” A haggard middle-aged man emerged to address the sticky situation.

“Great-uncle!” Mo Chenfeng cried out when he saw the newcomer.

“Don’t worry about explaining. Inside first, yes?” The middle-aged man swept his gaze around the surroundings before receiving Lu Yun’s group into the manor.

After he stepped over the threshold, Lu Yun plastered a golden talisman on the middle-aged man's body. The man was visibly confused at this, but hadn't prevented his visitor from doing so. As an arcane dao immortal, he would've been able to easily avoid Lu Yun's talisman if he'd wanted nothing to do with it.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked.

"This is my great-uncle Mo Qu. He should be..." Mo Chenfeng said hurriedly.

"We'll talk in a moment." Waving his hand, Lu Yun strode into the main hall alongside Ge Long and Qing Han.

Mo Qu glanced at Mo Chenfeng quizzically.

"The clan has been infiltrated. The forefather... might be compromised." Mo Chenfeng shook his head as he transmitted.

His great-uncle paled and looked a bit ill as he plucked the golden talisman from his back.

"This talisman seems like it can deter ghosts and evil spirits... much like a Nineheavens Principal Talisman!" Mo Qu took a deep breath before quickly catching up to his friend.

Lu Yun's eyes had turned an inky black; no malevolent spirit could hide from his Spectral Eye!

"The Mo Clan isn't beyond salvation just yet," he huffed in relief a moment later.

"If I may..." An old man came out from the back. He was the clan's supervisor and chaperone here in this city, an eight-fruit arcane dao immortal expert.

After giving the old man a once-over, Lu Yun bowed. "Lu Yun of Dusk Province. Greetings, senior."

"What?!" The old man's eyes became the size of dinner plates. "You're Lu Yun? That Lu Yun?"

As soon as he blurted out these words, he pulled back his voice with immortal energy. It was best not to risk someone overhearing if a stray puff of wind carried his words away.

"Please, come in, young friend!" The Mo elder hurriedly brought Lu Yun inside; he hadn't expected the boy to actually come! If this was Lu Yun, the other youth had to be Qing Han.

At the same time, the reason why Lu Yun was here became clear.

Chenfeng must've invited him here! So why did the forefather... The old man's face shifted through a spectrum of emotions. He turned his hands over, activating the local formation to seal off the space.

The Mo Clan had set it up themselves. As one of the greatest clans in the world, they would hardly entrust their safety to anyone else.

"Look at this, senior." Lu Yun held a deep blue baby in his hands.

"This is... Chenfeng!" Mo Qu gasped; as Mo Chenfeng's great-uncle, he knew the boy well. "That's what he looked like when he was little! I remember—I baptized him when he was born!"

“What in the world is this?” the Mo elder quavered in concern. The baby looked identical to Mo Chenfeng, but it was clearly something much more sinister.

“It’s the shamanic soul planting art,” explained Lu Yun. “A soul seed is refined and planted into someone else’s soul. As it grows, it consumes, and eventually replaces, its host.”

The old man and Mo Qu exchanged deeply worried looks, immensely troubled by what they’d seen, and its ramifications.

“No wonder you stuck a Nineheavens Principal Talisman on me just now,” cried the latter.

“You had a soul seed within you as well, but the talisman has already gotten rid of it,” said Lu Yun.

Mo Qu couldn’t help shivering at the thought.

“Qitian is a friend of mine, I must look into why someone has used soul planting on him.” Lu Yun was very much intent on finding out the truth behind the Sword of Chaos’ owner. Mo Qitian, Zi Chen, and Wu Tulong were the only leads he had.

“So something really has happened to him!” The Mo elder and Mo Qu were appalled. They had noticed Mo Qitian’s abnormalities already, but had initially attributed it to a personality change after his encounter with the Dao Flower.

Reality was often much uglier than speculation.

“Who did he meet with after returning to the Mo clan? Be as detailed as possible!” Lu Yun demanded.

“Forefather Mo Xun! After Qitian returned, the forefather took him away on a journey for further training... the one who went to Jadeite Manor just now was also him!”

“Mo Xun?” The young man furrowed his eyebrows.

“Milord, the old guy from before didn’t have a human soul. He was a ritual divine spirit.” Ge Long piped up suddenly.

“Yes. Forefather Mo Xun is the guardian spirit for our clan. He was born of sacrifice and worship in one of the mortal nations under our rule. However, he already rejected his divinity in favor of kinship with us.”

“Do you mean... impossible! Forefather Mo Xun can’t have betrayed us!” The old man choked up.

“There’s nothing impossible about anything,” advised Lu Yun. “Can you find Mo Qitian for me?”

Chapter 439: The Immortal Dao of All Living Things

All the major factions in the world of immortals kept divine spirits as pet guardians. They were either born of nature, from primitive villages on the fringes of the world, or out of the rituals in the mortal lands the factions ruled over.

Mo Xun was the guardian spirit of the Mo Clan. He was a powerful immortal who’d plucked an origin dao fruit and ascended to the realm, but just like the other origin dao immortals, he’d suffered critical injuries in the process of doing so; thus, his cultivation was incomplete.

It now seemed to Lu Yun that the guardian spirits of the major factions had become latent threats. A simple showing from the Sword of Chaos would easily sway them into betraying their factions.

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“Qitian should be with Elder Mo Xun right now...” The Mo elder blanched as soon as he finished his sentence.

“How can this be? How is this possible? Elder Mo Xun is a ritual divine spirit born from one of our mortal nations. How could he ever betray us?”

All of the mortal lands under the Mo Clan’s rule were populated by their descendents. Not everyone had the potential to cultivate, especially in a world where a great war between immortals had destroyed many bloodlines and crippled many spirit roots.

Not even the major factions were any exception.

Therefore, the factions had gathered their members who were incapable of cultivating and created one or more powerful mortal nations to rule over the mortal segment of the world. These nations existed to create divine spirits!

Mo Xun wasn’t a wild spirit the Mo Clan had caught in the world of immortals, but a spirit of their own making, effectively a member of the clan. It didn’t make sense for him to betray them!

“You don’t have any evidence verifying your outlandish claims. Why should we believe you?!” An aether dao immortal emerged from the other side of the great hall at this time. Having plucked nine aether dao fruit, his cultivation exceeded that of Mo Qu’s.

“Elder Mo Xun is one of our forefathers, he would never betray us! But you, Lu Yun, are up to no good! Are you trying to destroy us by working with the North Sea monster spirits?” The speaker was several thousand years younger than Mo Qu and had been one of the greatest geniuses in the clan in his youth.

The Mo elder staggered and almost fainted when he saw the younger man’s appearance. His face became white as a sheet. “How, why... has this happened?”

“Grandfather, it’s me!” the younger man exclaimed. “Have you been fooled by an outsider?”

Bam!

Instead of responding, the arcane dao immortal knocked the younger man down with a palm strike.

“So it seems I can’t fool you, old man...” The peak aether dao immortal’s lips twisted into a vicious smile and his body glowed an unnatural gold.

“No, he’s detonating himself!” Mo Qu exclaimed in apprehension.

Lu Yun stepped forward and attached a deep blue talisman to the aether dao immortal’s forehead, quieting his agitated inner energy and stopping him from detonating his dao fruit.

“Soul planting has one major flaw.” Lu Yun pointed at his own head. “A soul is the most vulnerable part of a living being, so refining it into a soul seed is guaranteed to damage it. Once the soul matures, it’s most likely going to be a bit of a fool.”

Neither the one planted in Mo Chenfeng nor that in the aether dao immortal had known how to judge the situation and act accordingly. They'd both shown themselves before Lu Yun had even begun looking for them.

Of course, there were different levels of soul seeds. The flawless ones were mostly planted in those who played critical roles—Mo Qitian being a good example.

"I'm taking him with me to see if there's a way to remove the soul seed," Lu Yun looked at his quarry in a calculating fashion.

"Take him!" the Mo elder agreed without hesitation. "Is there really still hope for him?"

His gaze was hopeful. The aether dao immortal was not only a great genius of the Mo Clan, but also his grandson.

"I can try." Inhaling deeply, Lu Yun grabbed the Mo genius and threw him into the Resurrection Layout in hell, where Xingzi and Su Xiaoxiao awaited.

"Tsk, ts. Why would that idiot attempt to manipulate immortals with soul planting? What a fool, is he trying to create an army of idiots like him?" Xingzi scanned the aether dao immortal with a sardonic smile on her youthful face. "Hehehe, we're going to have some fun over the next few days."

Su Xiaoxiao looked equally excited.

The two had found kindred spirits in each other and now immersed themselves in experiments all day long. Everyday, desires flared anew for them to catch some strange and exotic specimen for poking and prodding.

Su Xiaoxiao's medicine dao had been inspired by what she found in one of the ruins left by the shamanic race. Their studies thus came from the same root, but each specialized in different fields.

In addition to Su Xiaoxiao and Xingzi, the other Envoys of Samsara each contributed their own expertise and combined their efforts. By now, not even Lu Yun knew what strange creations they would come up from their experimentation.

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Over the next short period of time, the manor where the Mo Clan resided saw a silent purge. Those who'd been planted with a foreign soul were identified by Lu Yun, and the soul seeds extracted.

"There's something I don't understand, young friend," An eight-fruit arcane dao immortal, Mo Lingyu, said with a frown. He, alongside Mo Xun, was in charge of the Mo Clan here.

Lu Yun nodded. "Please go ahead, senior."

"What's your relationship with the leader of the North Sea? Why would it help you?" Mo Lingyu was quite hesitant. Lu Yun had just helped the Mo Clan deal with an enormous latent threat, so questioning him at this junction really wasn't the thing to do. However, Scarlet Ape had set itself up as the enemy of the human race after establishing the monster spirit sacred land, so this line of questioning was imperative.

“There’s no need to worry, senior. Scarlet Ape and I are still enemies. We simply have a deal.”

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Jadeite Manor.

“That’s right. We simply have a deal.” Scarlet Ape’s voice traveled down from the iron rod, while Silverblaze and Yuan Tong stood before it with great deference.

“I was born in the late years of the human dao and experienced that great war. I witnessed the human revitalization and creation of the immortal dao, seeing humans regain their dominance in the vast cosmos. The immortal dao back then belonged only to the human race. One had to assume the form of a human in order to cultivate the immortal dao, and it was no different from the human dao of the past.

“Humans of that era prided themselves as the creator and distributor of civilization. They established the four palaces for the dragons, phoenixes, qilins, and tortoises, guiding them out of their nests. They invented cultivation methods for beasts and sparked their intelligence, turning mere animals into monster spirits. They established order for the divine spirits and propagated their bloodlines, turning them into the divine race. However...

“Humans of that time also dined on dragon liver and phoenix marrow. They used qilins as mounts and created armor out of tortoise shells. They consumed the flesh and blood and cores of monster spirits as medicine. Even the divine race, basking in all their glory as the favored ones of heaven, were nothing but slaves to the humans. They were just tools for the human race to control the heavenly dao.

“The immortal dao the three human sovereigns created was one humans—it followed the same path as the human dao. But now, it’s... changed.” Surprise colored Scarlet Ape’s tone. “The immortal dao has become the dao of all. Even humans cultivate the methods of the other races, of monster spirits.”

That was what it’d been questioning once it’d taken in more information about the current age, and the reason why it’d made up its mind to strike a deal with Lu Yun. The overweening, haughty humans, who’d once dominated the world, had incorporated the dao of other races into the immortal dao!

The cultivation methods of different factions, especially those for the nascent spirit, drew inspiration from monster spirits, among others. The Great Peng Spirit of the Exalted Immortal Sect, for example, turned one’s nascent spirit into a great peng with golden wings, and their combat arts were mostly from the great penguins as well. That never would’ve happened in the era of human dao, or even the beginning of the immortal dao!

Thus, Scarlet Ape believed the immortal dao today belonged to all living beings, rather than the human race alone. Likewise, this wasn’t solely the era of humans, either, but an era where all races might thrive. It was much more chaotic, but also more full of life than the time after the human dao was destroyed.

Scarlet Ape was still hostile to the human race, but it was willing to make compromises for the right reasons.

“...the two of you may stay with him,” muttered Scarlet Ape.

Silverblaze’s lips twitched, while Yuan Tong’s joy was clear on its face.

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“Scarlet Ape must’ve realized that the immortal dao has changed from what it was in its time. That’s why it took a step back and made a deal with me, a human.” After giving the elder an explanation, Lu Yun asked again, “Can you still not find Mo Qitian?”

The night had passed, and the first light of the day teased the eastern sky.

“We’ll have to wait for the third round of the Sovereign Meet to commence when the day comes,” Mo Lingyu said with a wry smile.

Lu Yun grew quiet.

“I know where Qitian is!” Mo Chenfeng broke his silence. “If the divine race is responsible, Qitian must be with them! Wu Tulong and Zi Chen, too.”

“The divine race...” Lu Yun had speculated as much, but there was nothing he could do if Mo Qitian and the others were with the divines. There were many powerful elites among the mysterious race.

The Sword of Chaos had preserved the last of the divine race’s hopes and fortunes, defying the curse of the Skandha Range. Thus, it’d been possible for the race to propagate its bloodline. Only the four cardinal tribes had died out due to being directly subjected to the curse. Even so, some of their descendents still existed across the world of immortals.

Eighty thousand years ago, the divine race had ruled over the world of immortals and grasped all of its resources and tombs. There was no way to tell how many heavyweights there were among them. Wherever they were settled, it would be too dangerous to blithely venture in.

Why do I find the owner of the Sword of Chaos familiar? I must’ve seen him before! The thought had been troubling Lu Yun ever since he met the sword owner in the central world.

He’d met this person before!

If he could figure out who the sword owner was, and his background, all of his problems would be easily resolved.

Chapter 440: Resurrection

When dawn broke, Lu Yun, Qing Han, and Ge Long left the Mo Clan manor.

“Do you trust them?” Qing Han asked Lu Yun with some puzzlement.

They’d been keeping their identities a secret for a reason: they had too many enemies in the world of immortals. However, Lu Yun had just plainly admitted his to the Mo Clan.

If the clan leaked the information, that, combined with Scarlet Ape coming to his rescue, would be a good enough reason for the top factions of the nine majors to attack Dusk Province. They’d annihilate the province with several blasts from weapons of war alone!

Lu Yun didn’t have a monopoly on weapons of war. All nine heavenly courts owned war treasures as well. The Aureate Court had refused to lend House Donglin theirs last time so as not to offend Lu Yun, but they would have no reason to refrain if Lu Yun involved himself with Scarlet Ape.

Allying himself with the ape after becoming head of the Star Demon Sect made him one step away from becoming the public enemy of the world, especially of the human race! After all, Scarlet Ape had driven humans out of the North Sea and shed tremendous waves of blood after establishing the sacred land for monster spirits.

"I don't." Lu Yun shook his head and turned up his hands in resignation. "But I don't have a choice. The Mo Clan is my only way into the mystery."

The Immortal Martial School where Wu Tulong was from, and the Zi Clan of Thundergale Major, would hardly believe his claims.

"Let's consider what the third round of the Sovereign Meet will be like." Lu Yun changed the subject.

The last round of battles would be commencing today, and they'd be coming face-to-face with the true opportunities provided by the Sovereign Ranking.

The ten lords had earned their titles not because of their strength, but their boastfulness. The real elites had avoided attracting attention through various means. A few of the ten had already been killed after returning to Destiny City, while the real powerhouses had continued keeping a low profile.

Whoosh!

A flash of violet dropped down from the sky and entered Lu Yun's body. He seemed to hear... a belch.

"Did you... eat the sword?" Lu Yun transmitted after taking a deep breath.

"I did," came Violetgrave's satiated tones. "I don't have to eat you now."

Lu Yun's expression darkened.

"I'm going to sleep now." She yawned and spoke no more.

Qing Han gave Lu Yun a worried look, to which he shook his head in response.

Another four hours passed after they returned to Jadeite Manor. When the sun rose in the southeast, the final round of the Sovereign Meet finally began.

The enormous Sovereign Ranking slowly unfurled, revealing 27,368 glowing names. These were the ones who'd remained in the second round of the competition and returned from the Sovereign World three days ago.

Hum!

A loud whirl rumbled through the air. All of Destiny City was cast in violet-gold splendor as a giant arena of light slowly formed in midair. Life Glyphs flashed and brought all of the contestants to the arena of light.

"What's going on? Aren't I dead? How..." The Thunder Lord stared at his hands in disbelief. He'd been slain by a dao immortal, his soul exterminated. Yet here he was, alive and well, albeit only as the replica formed by his Life Glyph.

His wasn't a unique case, either. Cultivators who'd died in Destiny City over the past three days, as long as they'd been to the Sovereign World, had all been brought back to life by the Sovereign Ranking.

Shock rippled across Destiny City as astonishment and incredulity flew thick and fast.

"They live only by virtue of their Life Glyphs, their true selves are still dead." One of the origin dao immortals had seemingly seen through to the truth of their condition. In a low voice, he added, "These cultivators are entirely dependent on the Sovereign Ranking. Once something happens to the ranking, they will die again."

"That's not it!" exclaimed another origin dao immortal. "The body created by their Life Glyphs has become their real bodies! The Sovereign Ranking has given them a second life!"

From within Jadeite Manor, Scarlet Ape was observing the Sovereign Ranking through its iron rod.

"All lives are equal under the immortal dao," it muttered. "The immortal dao truly doesn't belong to only the human race anymore."

Ge Long sat cross-legged beside Lu Yun and Qing Han, scowling at the iron rod like it was an enemy. At the same time, Empress Myrtlestar was present next to Qing Han as a hazy, violet figure. They weren't there simply to protect Lu Yun and Qing Han, but also to keep an eye on Scarlet Ape.

Although Scarlet Ape had struck a deal with Lu Yun, there was no telling if the ill-tempered ape would go back on its promise and destroy Lu Yun and Qing Han's physical bodies in a fit of fury.

Empress Myrtlestar had driven it away once before in the phoenix nest; it would have to think twice before making a move with her here.

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Close to thirty thousand cultivators landed on the arena at the same time. Almost all of them had ascended to the void realm, and the most powerful had even reached peak returned void realm. The ten lords didn't really stand out that much from the others.

The arena was vast, appearing to be a great continent with complicated terrain. Mountains and rivers crisscrossed all over it. It seemed empty, even with 27,368 contestants occupying the space.

The rules of the third round of the Sovereign Meet were finally announced: there were two stages to the last round of this gathering. The first stage was a round of elimination, until there were only thirty-six contestants left. That was the number of contestants that would be listed on the Sovereign Ranking.

Then, the thirty-six would fight to determine their ranking during the second stage.

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"It looks like we've underestimated the geniuses of the world. I thought the ten lords were the greatest of the cultivators when they rose to power, but no, there are cultivators much more powerful than them!"

"Look, Qing Yu and Qing Yu's Sidekick, the two humans who the monster ancestor of the North Sea protected, are still perceived void realm cultivators!"

“Qing Yu’s Sidekick was responsible for eliminating so many contestants and trapping the ten lords within a formation back in the Sovereign World. What a surprise that he’s still in the perceived void realm!”

“He’s talented, and a genius who’s been blessed by the Dao Flower. His cultivation shouldn’t be as low as it is.” Many didn’t believe what their eyes were telling them.

Numerous cultivators had ascended to higher realms in the Sovereign World, but a great number of them had only made breakthroughs after returning to Destiny City. The Ingress Path selected, and the Sovereign World nurtured. The last round of the Sovereign Meet was when the true competition began.

“No matter how much of a genius he is, there exists a great gap between the perceived void realm and the unravelled and returned void realms. He doesn’t stand a chance if he encounters cultivators of the higher realms!”

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Rumble!

With a great shake, the arena scattered the cultivators across the land.

“As I expected, the supplemental paths aren’t accessible here. We can rely only on our own cultivation and strength!” Lu Yun tested things and found that he couldn’t use his talismans, formations, or even treasures. He only had his personal strength about him.

“Tsk, tsk, initial perceived void realm?” said a pleased voice. “It must be my lucky day, running into someone with such a low cultivation first!”