

## Starlit Path 144

### Chapter 144: Beyond the Heavens

The breeze brushed the lakeshore, stirring the peach blossoms on the peninsula. Crystal raindrops slid from petals, faint currents of energy weaving through the buds.

On the second-floor terrace of White Jade Capital's pavilion, Lu frowned, a flicker of surprise crossing his face. His mind delved into the system's [Tasks] section, his emotions stirring.

\*Main Quest: Transform the Five Phoenixes Continent into the Five Phoenixes Great World (Accepted).  
Current Progress: Low-Martial (Evaluation Not Yet Available).\*

\*Task Prompt: Detected three individuals in the Body Zang realm. World Tier Upgrade Assessment Task can now be activated. Proceed?\*

The system's message deepened Lu's frown. A world tier upgrade assessment? He hadn't anticipated this. He'd estimated the Five Phoenixes Continent was nearing the threshold for a mid-martial world, but this was faster than expected—because of the Body Zang realm cultivators?

Lu's eyes narrowed, lost in thought. He sensed this task wouldn't be simple. The details were unclear, but a world tier upgrade was unlikely to be easy.

Staring at the system prompt, he pondered for a long time. "System, what are the specifics of the World Tier Upgrade Assessment Task?" he asked.

\*World Tier Upgrade Assessment Task: Once triggered, it cannot be canceled. If the Host chooses not to accept, the task will auto-activate in 30 days. Friendly Reminder: Due to the short time taken to trigger this task, difficulty is increased by 10%, with doubled rewards upon completion.\*

Lu froze, his fingers tapping rapidly on the armrest, betraying his inner conflict. Even if he delayed, the task would begin in a month. From the system's tone, it was no trivial matter.

"What happens if the task fails?" Lu asked, addressing his chief concern. Though it felt pessimistic to consider failure before starting, he needed to know.

\*Failure of the Upgrade Assessment Task will result in the removal of the World's Protective Force.\*

Lu's heart sank. The answer hinted at deeper implications. A protective force shielding the Five Phoenixes Continent? Why did it need protection? Were there other worlds beyond? If the protective force vanished, would the continent face invasion from other worlds? A low-martial world might be manageable, but a mid-martial or high-martial one could overwhelm them, potentially swallowing the Five Phoenixes whole.

Lu didn't want that. Beyond his efforts, Beiluo held his family—Lu Changkong, Ni Yu, Ning Zhao, and others. White Jade Capital was his creation. He wouldn't let it all vanish.

Leaning back in his Thousand Blades Chair, Lu exhaled, releasing his pent-up tension. "It's inevitable," he said, his gaze sharpening as he made his choice. "System, accept the World Tier Upgrade Assessment Task."

The system paused, then displayed a new prompt:

\*Task Description: Beyond the heavens lie other heavens. As one destined to forge a fantastical world, you must possess the power to protect it from violation.\*

\*Assessment Task: Repel the invasion of four Wanderers from beyond the heavens and the spiritual sense clone of a Mid-Martial World's Plane Lord. (Task Completion Condition: White Jade Capital must not fall.)\*

Lu's eyes blazed with intensity. The task's scope sent his spiritual energy surging, a terrifying pressure enveloping Lakeheart Island. The lake's surface sank under its weight. The island's occupants, startled, looked to the pavilion's second floor, baffled by Lu's sudden emotional surge.

"Indeed... beyond the heavens!" Lu clenched his fist. As a transmigrator, he could accept the existence of other worlds—he'd suspected it from the start. "The condition is White Jade Capital's survival? Sounds... brutal."

\*Task Accepted. Four Wanderers will descend in three months.\*

The system fell silent after the prompt. The shattered clouds above began to reform, dimming the sunlight. Lu gazed at the lake, his expression grave. Three months to prepare—but the system mentioned only the Wanderers arriving then. The Plane Lord's spiritual sense clone had no specified time.

---

In South County's Nanjin City, endless rain veiled the sky. As a border city, beyond it lay a wilderness, and past that, the lands of the Southern Barbarians, one of the Five Barbarian tribes outside Great Zhou. Conflicts with the barbarians were frequent, and the wilderness was a mass grave for their fallen, littered with unclaimed bodies.

After a skirmish, Nanjin soldiers tossed barbarian corpses into the wilderness. A soldier in cold iron armor wiped his hands in disgust. "Let's go. These barbarians are filth—leave the bodies here. The beasts will deal with them."

His comrades nodded, sharing his contempt. The barbarians had cost Nanjin many lives, shattering families. Yet the soldiers had to hold the line—if they failed, the barbarians would ravage the city.

Boom!

Thunder roared, tearing through the rainy sky like a beast. In the wilderness, hungry wolves emerged from the grass, their soaked fur dripping, green eyes gleaming with malice and greed as they eyed the piled corpses, saliva dripping.

The wolves exchanged glances, then charged, splashing through foul mud toward the bodies. Suddenly, a figure rose from the corpse pile, mud flying.

The wolves froze, baring their teeth at the figure. Crack, crack, crack... The figure twisted its neck, bones popping sharply.

“Hm?” it hummed softly.

The wolves lunged, the rain turning murderous, thick with the scent of blood. The figure stood shakily, eyes rolling rapidly, scanning the wolves. Their fierce gazes dimmed, and they collapsed, twitching, lifeless. The rain washed away their lingering warmth.

“What fragile creatures. How fortunate to find a tender, newborn low-martial world...” The figure pinched its fingers like an orchid, brushing its face, and laughed.

---

In Nanjin City, Tang Baiyun felt uneasy. Across from him stood a figure cloaked in black, its sharp, wild eyes burning with ferocity beneath the hood. “Young Master Tang,” the figure said, “your father, the Governor, struck a deal with our tribe’s High Priest. We’ve shown our sincerity. Now it’s your turn. I hear South County has a Dragon Gate Secret Realm—why not let our warriors see it?”

Tang Baiyun’s face darkened, though he forced a faint smile. “The agreement between my father and your High Priest didn’t include the Dragon Gate. It’s a perilous place—for your warriors’ safety, it’s best they stay out to avoid unnecessary losses.”

The cloaked figure chuckled hoarsely. “Young Master Tang... I hear your father’s third son, Tang Yimo, is a mysterious cultivator, renowned across Great Zhou, as strong as any grandmaster.”

“Oh? My third brother?” Tang Baiyun’s expression remained calm. “Yes, he’s gained an immortal’s legacy, my father’s right-hand man.”

“Right-hand man? Or perhaps the future Governor of South County?” The figure’s voice turned sinister, laughing. “Heh heh heh.”

Tang Baiyun’s pupils shrank, his fists clenching. “My father has no use for a bastard born of a slave woman. Half his blood is lowly—my father’s no fool to name him heir.”

“Tsk, tsk, tsk...” the figure taunted. “Who’s to say? Your father values cultivators, and your brother’s strength far surpasses yours. The possibility exists, doesn’t it? Deep down, you’re worried too, aren’t you?”

Tang Baiyun’s smile vanished, his face cold as ice. “I’m a cultivator now too.”

“But he’s far stronger,” the figure pressed.

Bang!

Tang Baiyun’s eyes narrowed to a pinpoint, his palm slamming the table, face livid. The cloaked figure watched, amused.

“In our tribe, strength rules. Even a tribal leader can be overthrown if weak. Strength is everything, Young Master Tang. You’d better take it seriously.” The figure smirked.

Tang Baiyun’s face trembled. After a long pause, his clenched fists loosened, and a slow smile spread across his face.