

Starlit Path 177

Chapter 177: I, the Overlord, Am Not Just a Tank!

A single glance, distant yet piercingly close, drenched the evil Buddha in cold sweat. He wanted to retract his step, but the gentle, jade-like gaze carried the weight of mountains, pinning him in place. “Who is that?” he stammered, heart trembling. The wheelchair-bound youth seemed fused with the world itself, exuding the oppressive aura of a Golden Core elder.

“Is this the plane’s lord?” The evil Buddha exchanged a look with the golden-haired youth, both shaken. The world was transforming rapidly. The Overlord, newly ascended to Body Zang, seized the moment to refine himself, demonic energy swirling into a vortex above his head. His laughter, a release of pent-up frustration, echoed across the battlefield.

The evil Buddha and the youth yearned to disrupt the transformations of the Overlord, Nie Changqing, and others, but an unseen gaze held them at bay. “Is this plane’s lord a Golden Core elder?” the Buddha asked gravely.

“Impossible,” the youth replied, resolute. “Golden Core elders only emerge in mid-martial worlds, and even then, rarely in newly ascended ones. This world isn’t fully mid-martial yet. The lord’s will must be merged with the world’s origin, creating this pressure. A low-martial world lacks the resources for a Golden Core.”

The Buddha nodded, their analysis aligned. They faced three choices: flee, kill those transforming, or wait. The sudden emergence of a world origin baffled them. They’d scoured this world and found no trace of it—yet now, a celestial phenomenon signaled its birth. Were they being toyed with?

The youth dimmed his golden glow, lips trembling. “What now? Escape?”

“No, let’s wait,” the Buddha said. “If the lord could kill us, why hasn’t he? He’s likely bluffing, borrowing the origin’s might—a false Golden Core.”

They gambled that the lord wasn’t Golden Core, that he was a pretender wielding the origin’s power. The odds, they believed, favored them.

This was a transformation of heaven and earth. Lu had unleashed the world’s origin, shattering its barriers with a single finger. The Five Phoenixes Continent was now poised to become a mid-martial world; a single cultivator surpassing Body Zang would cement the transition. Lu’s own strength didn’t count.

Spiritual energy surged through the eight dragon gates, flooding Zhou. Areas with dragon gates brimmed with dense energy, while those without were thinner, but the gates ensured a transformative wave across the empire. This was dubbed the “Spiritual Tide,” a chance for all to bathe in energy and potentially become cultivators.

Previously, dragon gates were controlled by the court and White Jade Capital, leaving江湖 outcasts yearning for immortal opportunities. Now, the tide leveled the field. Spiritual energy merged with snow and rain, spreading across the land. Yet, few could condense it into their Qi Core to become cultivators.

On this day, the heavens shifted, and a cultivation storm swept Zhou.

In West County, the evil Buddha and golden-haired youth were paralyzed by Lu's gaze. In South and North Counties, the wanderers also froze, sensing his warning glance. "A gaze backed by the world's origin?" the Xirong King muttered. When the pressure lifted, it felt like a passing cloud—a warning, not a strike.

North County's spiritual storm enveloped all but the wanderers, who, as outsiders, couldn't absorb the energy. Even Xirong natives could partake. Bai Qingniao stood dazed, glimpsing the world's secrets. A crimson glow bloomed before her, deepening her understanding of Nine Phoenix Transformation. Previously obscure insights became clear, her mind sharpened by the tide.

Spiritual energy flooded her, feeding her three chicks. Xiao Fengyi, the most sentient, benefited most, its cries resonating with power. Xiao Feng'er and Xiao Fengsan echoed it. Jiang Li, pulled to safety by Chi Lian, caught a snowflake. It melted, its spiritual energy seeping into him. "This is spiritual energy," he murmured, emotions swirling.

He'd avoided the capital's black dragon gate to allay Yuwen Xiu's suspicions, who saw him as a threat, even more than the Overlord, Tang Xiansheng, or Dantai Xuan. Yuwen Xiu, shaped by palace intrigue and his father's death, distrusted Jiang Li and Kong Xiu most. Yet now, Jiang Li absorbed energy, his heart conflicted. Chi Lian, too, felt a new world open as she absorbed a wisp.

The tide's generosity allowed most with talent to condense energy, except the truly mundane.

At Lakeheart Island, Lu sat at the storm's epicenter, untouched by the energy, his robes and hair fluttering. He observed Zhou's transformation, focused on the empire. Beiluo City, closest to the epicenter, saw citizens awestruck by the swirling clouds and blue celestial glow, kneeling as if before immortals. Ailments healed, the weak grew strong, and some condensed energy, unaware they'd become cultivators.

Lu's fingers tapped his phoenix-feather armrest, noting the storm's brevity. The origin, now part of the world, would grow with its people, potentially reaching mid- or high-martial levels. Without intervention, this would take eons, but Lu's hand accelerated it.

In West County, Nie Changqing opened his eyes atop Hu Rao Pass, glowing as if ascending to immortality. Five vortexes—heart, liver, spleen, lungs, kidneys—formed a faint spiritual armor. He'd completed Body Zang, his heart racing with excitement. Drawing his butcher's knife, he stepped onto the rampart, gazing at the evil Buddha and youth. "Demons from beyond," he muttered, recalling ancient secrets from the dragon gate's palace.

For three months, he'd traveled and trained relentlessly to face these demons. Five vortexes surged, and he leaped from the wall. The Overlord, eyes blazing, gripped his axe and shield, joining him. "The bald donkey's mine!" he roared, seeking vengeance for prior humiliations.

Nie Changqing didn't contest it. The Overlord's temper was fiery, and with the world's shackles broken, they sensed Body Zang wasn't the end. A higher realm awaited. Xiliang warriors, invigorated by the tide, rallied behind the Overlord, charging the Peacock Kingdom and Guifang forces.

The evil Buddha sneered at the Overlord's approach. "Using us as whetstones? Arrogant plane lord. I'll drag this world to hell!" His blood-soaked robes flared, a golden Buddha statue forming behind him, its

eyes dripping blood, evoking a hellish vision. Chanting monks amplified the oppressive chant, slowing the Overlord.

From the ramparts, Mingyue's pipa played, its transformed notes suppressing the chant, igniting the Overlord's blood and will. He glanced at her, emotions complex, then hurled his axe, cutting down the chanting monks in a spray of blood. Retrieving it, he leaped, demonic energy drawing battlefield blood to him, charging the Buddha with fierce intent.

"I, the Overlord, am not just a tank!" he roared. Once suppressed, now he'd strike back.