

## Starlit Path 195

Chapter 195: Nine Phoenixes... Second Transformation!

**\*\*Beiluo, Lake Island\*\***

Mist swirled around the island, where everyone was immersed in rigorous cultivation—except Ni Yu, who tinkered with her black cauldron, refining pills. For cultivators, relentless practice was the norm. Advancing from Qi Core to Body Zang required forming spiritual energy vortexes, followed by the tedious process of tempering the five organs. True cultivators endured such monotony.

Jing Yue practiced his swordsmanship, thrusting repeatedly in the lake. His sword intent amplified his strikes, cleaving the water for nearly five hundred meters despite its resistance—a force that could pierce city walls on land. Nie Changqing and Ning Zhao, however, pursued a different path, seeking to comprehend and manifest attribute spiritual energy. This uncharted journey was both dull and disorienting.

Atop White Jade Capital's pavilion, Lu Ping'an sipped warmed plum wine from a bronze cup, snowflakes parting around him. Before him floated the spiritual pressure chessboard, glowing pieces moving as if he played against an invisible opponent. Each move conjured glimpses of a person's life. When the final piece fell, ending the game, Lu exhaled, and the system panel appeared:

**\*\*Host\*\***: Lu

**\*\*Title\*\***: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

**\*\*Qi Refining Level\*\***: 3 (Progress to Level 4: 5012/10000 strands)

**\*\*Soul Strength\*\***: 108 (Convertible: 21)

**\*\*Physical Strength\*\***: 10 (Convertible: 10)

**\*\*Spiritual Energy\*\***: 4011 strands

**\*\*Distributable Attributes\*\***: 1083 points

Lu's lips curved upward. In half a month, the world's origin had coalesced, spawning over three thousand cultivators across Great Zhou. Their cultivation, combined with the celestial phenomenon's boost, had pushed his spiritual energy past five thousand strands, halfway to the fourth level. Studying Buddhism and mastering the chessboard's storm formation had also enhanced his soul strength.

He had processed the souls of the Xirong King and the golden-haired man, experiencing their lives—rich with stories, yet unremarkable in the grand scheme. With their souls extinguished, his mission was complete:

**\*\*Mission: Resist invasion by four wanderers from beyond and one mid-martial world plane master's spiritual clone (Progress: 5/5)\*\***

**\*\*Congratulations on completing the mission. Reward: Trial Tower.\*\***

Lu frowned. He'd expected a lavish reward for the enhanced mission difficulty, but only a Trial Tower? No attribute points? "The Trial Tower... for an enhanced mission, it must be extraordinary," he mused. With a thought, a radiant white jade tower materialized in his palm, ethereal and dreamlike, exuding a crystalline glow. He could manifest it anywhere with a thought, its weight seeming capable of crushing mountains.

The system's description was brief:

**\*\*Trial Tower: Low-grade Earth-tier spiritual artifact, 100 floors, crafted with extraterrestrial spirit stones and a mid-martial world's origin power, designed for talent cultivation.\*\***

Lu's brow furrowed. Not a weapon for attack or defense, but a tool for nurturing talent? Intriguing. It could ease the path to Golden Core or Heavenly Lock Realms, accelerating the world's growth. His eyes lit up—more strong cultivators meant faster progress for Five Phoenixes.

Where to place it? He considered outside Beiluo as an "immortal relic" but decided it should remain under White Jade Capital's control, within the city. Descending the pavilion in his Thousand Blades Chair, he called, "Old Lü."

Lü Dongxuan, sipping tea, snapped alert, shaking off snow. Seeing Lu, he grinned, his gold chain glinting. "Young Master, why leave the pavilion?"

"Come with me to Beiluo City," Lu said. Lü blinked, puzzled. Strolling the city? Lu, with such leisure? Though hesitant, he lacked the courage to refuse. On a wooden boat, they left the island, Lü chattering while Lu nodded, serene amid the lake's scenery.

At the lakeside, cultivators lingered from Lu's lecture, benefiting from the area's rich spiritual energy. Some had set up camp, bedding and all, planning to stay. Recognizing Lu in his wheelchair, they saluted, "Young Master Lu!" "What fortune to see you!" Lu nodded, unaccustomed to the attention, and proceeded with Lü into the city.

The Thousand Blades Chair glided smoothly, drawing Lü's envy—only Lu could make a wheelchair so elegant. "Young Master, why are we here?" Lü asked, skeptical of a casual outing.

"Divine it," Lu teased. Lü waved it off. "I'd rather not. Divining you would shorten my life. I want to see the era of contending schools." Lu smiled, guiding the chair through the city. Luo Yue arrived with the Dragon Blood Army but was dismissed with a wave.

They wandered to Beiluo's barren West Hill, covered in snow. Lü, observing Lu's neutral expression, sensed dissatisfaction until they reached the hill's peak, where Lu smiled. Relieved, Lü wondered why this desolate place appealed. "What do you think of this spot, Old Lü?" Lu asked.

Lü calculated, but the area felt shrouded, defying his divination. Before he could respond, Lu raised his hand, revealing a luminous white jade tower. Lü's eyes widened. "Young Master, what's that?" Lu didn't answer, tossing the tower upward.

**\*\*Boom!\*\*** The tower expanded, tearing through clouds, its peak vanishing into the sky. As it crashed onto West Hill, the ground roared like a waking lion. Beiluo's residents—commoners and cultivators—gaped at the towering white jade structure, half-shrouded in clouds. "What is that?" "So tall!" "It's suffocating to look at!"

The city erupted. The tower's appearance, like an immortal marvel, stunned all. On the island, Nie Changqing, Ning Zhao, and Jing Yue paused, Ni Yu's failed Body Tempering Pill exploding in a puff of

smoke. They stared westward, linking the tower to Lu's departure with Lü. The island's disciples rushed across the lake, joining awestruck lakeside cultivators. Under West Hill, Lü stood dumbfounded, having seen the tower as a tiny trinket in Lu's hand. \*Young Master's methods... like an immortal's!\*

---

**\*\*Imperial Capital, Imperial Garden\*\***

The Black Dragon froze, staring at the yellow fluff atop Jiang Li's head—a chick glaring back. Jiang Li, stunned, recognized the scene: Bai Qingniao was near. Knowing her temper, he wasn't surprised she'd come to break him out, though this chick's appearance was unexpected.

The garden's occupants were bewildered by the chick. Yuwen Xiu frowned. \*Where did this chicken come from?\* A fiery glow appeared in the sky, followed by a piercing phoenix cry. The Black Dragon roared in response. Two flame-wreathed birds soared overhead, carrying Bai Qingniao, clad in simple peasant clothes, her face blazing with fury. \*This damned dragon dares threaten Uncle Jiang!\*

"Little Phoenix One, attack!" she shouted, swallowing a Qi Gathering Pill. Little Phoenixes Two and Three descended, carrying her and Luo Cheng into the garden. Luo Cheng's face darkened, surrounded by black-armored guards. They'd planned to storm the dungeon, but Jiang Li's transfer to the garden forced a bold aerial assault. Now, with Zhou's elite soldiers and Black Dragon Guards mobilizing, escape seemed impossible with just three people and three chicks.

Little Phoenix One, hearing Bai Qingniao, stood tall, wings flaring with a spirited cry. Transforming into a blazing phoenix, it charged the Black Dragon, whose scales tightened. With a whip of its tail, it sent the phoenix spinning away. Bai Qingniao paled—the dragon's dominance was overwhelming.

Luo Cheng drew his knife, feeling the guards' pressure, especially the elite ones, who seemed extensions of the dragon. Jiang Li rose, and the trio regrouped. "Qingniao, control your phoenixes. We break out," Jiang Li said calmly, his general's instincts kicking in. "We leave as we came—by air." Flying risked making them arrow targets, but it was better than being surrounded.

The Black Dragon roared, scattering snow with its icy breath. It lunged, clawing the ground, aiming for Little Phoenix One, who collided with it fearlessly. The dragon's scales withstood the impact, swatting the phoenix into the snow. Bai Qingniao winced in distress. Jiang Li and Luo Cheng fought fiercely, repelling guards.

Yuwen Xiu, spotting Luo Cheng, narrowed his eyes. "Beiluo?" If White Jade Capital learned of this, their intervention could doom him. "Kill them all!" he ordered. The guards surged, weapons slashing. Luo Cheng unleashed his Dragon Blood aura, while Bai Qingniao, downing pills to replenish spiritual energy, directed her phoenixes against the dragon.

The dragon, a Heavenly Dragon species at Body Zang strength, overpowered her fire-attributed phoenixes. Bai Qingniao's face grew pale—she couldn't lose, or they'd all die. Gritting her teeth, blood trickling from her nose and eyes, she pushed \*Nine Phoenixes Transformation\* to its limit, recalling the near-breakthrough against the Xirong King.

**\*\*Boom!\*\*** A barrier shattered. Her vision blurred, a radiant phoenix cry echoing. A spiritual energy vortex formed above, warming her collapsing body. "**\*Nine Phoenixes Transformation\*... Second Transformation,**" she whispered. Little Phoenix One screeched, sprouting fiery feathers, its aura surging. Its claws tore bloody gashes across the roaring Black Dragon's body.