

Starlit Path 291

Chapter 291: Tantai Xuan, Insulated from Immortal Fate

White Jade pavilions.

Lu studied Dao intents; even he curious.

Five Phoenixes system: his creation—Qi Core, Body Storage, Heavenly Lock.

Post-Heavenly Lock?

Unplanned; highest Nie: second-extreme Heavenly Lock—far from ninth.

Unlike Golden Core (fifth turn shatter to Infant), Heavenly Lock: ninth-extreme mandatory.

Harder breakthrough.

Lu pondered next realm.

Primordial Infant exists, but no abandon self-system.

Fingers tapped armrest.

Brows furrowed; short-term blank.

Creation hard; no rush.

Nine Prisons accelerate, but time needed.

Nine Prisons: ruthless—not child's play, unlike trial tower (three lives/floor).

Here: death real—no revive.

Practice cruel; Tianyuan invasion: countless Infant, Golden Core dead.

Cruelty breeds true strong.

Five Phoenixes pressure low vs. Tianyuan—gap vast.

Nine Prisons: test.

...

Meng Haoran entered First Prison.

First unexplored secret.

Plunging soul-drag abyss.

Pain indescribable—soul, not body.

Cleared; dizzy, scanned.

Others gone—Mo Tianyu, Nie ahead vanished.

"Isolated? Scattered?"

Pondered; self-reliant.

Eerie dim.

No hell in Five Phoenixes; Lu modeled hell.

Cold winds drilled.

Inhaled; stepped.

Crack.

Low: crushed bone.

Skull stared empty sockets.

Paled; muttered eerie.

Over skull; forward.

Rustle.

Back: bones stack, blue ghostfire.

Shocked.

Spear down.

Hao Ran qi + spear.

Pierced skull explode.

"Qi Core strength!"

Inhaled.

More rose; graves hands clawed earth.

Terrifying scene.

Unknown others.

His start: bad.

Boom!

Pounced.

Solemn; no fear.

Retreat; spear horizontal, recite poems—sonorous, white qi Hao Ran.

Skulls melted sun-snow; wails.

Long.

Qi dispersed; pale sway retreat.

More dense.

Suddenly parted.

Hooves cracked.

Skeleton horse: twisted armor leader, spear, blue flames.

"Kill..."

Charged; speed horrified.

Body Storage!

Meng spear burst qi clash.

Coughed blood; steps back.

Leader steady; recharge.

"No; two storages!"

Meng one; loss.

Fled.

Hooves; army pursued.

Injuries; sad—first secret despair.

Master: stimulating fun?

Roar.

Turn; spear chest—stare, close Hao Ran roar.

Effective repel.

Sudden: qi whip.

Leader head shatter; blue crystal rolled.

Snatched; fled.

Qi repelled; escaped weird.

Post hill: vine stone "Mass Grave".

Black: start Mass Grave—luck explode.

Out: no pursue; calm—illusion?

"What?"

Inhaled lean stone; crystal warm.

Qi surge—absorbable?

Stored; unknown.

Left.

Glance: train Hao Ran spot.

Explore first.

Left Mass Grave chaotic path.

Long: village.

Stunned: village in secret?

Entered: eerie gone—shelter.

"Young, refugee?"

Village mouth: old woman sat mild.

"Granny, where?"

"Dead Spirit Village; safe. 'Great Emperor Spirit' protects; outer evil souls (heaven demons) dare not."

Kind.

Stunned: Emperor Spirit? Heaven demons?

Kong ancient tales.

Ancient remnants?

"Blue spirit crystal?"

Took leader drop.

"Good; open Rebirth Pool—heal fast."

Pointed village laugh: "Enter."

"Safe rest warriors vs. evil."

"First free; later crystals."

Excited: warriors?

Smiled thank.

Entered.

Stunned: lively not desolate.

Blurred souls; rustic civilization—stir.

Master here: poem.

Buzz...

Street: female soul passed.

Splashed scold: "Blind?!"

Embarrassed.

Explored: no malice unlike skulls.

Dead: souls under Emperor; village life.

"Nine Prisons...?"

Mutter.

"Ancient collapse; souls gather villages relive?"

Inhaled.

Small complete: forge, herb, inn, tavern.

Center Rebirth Pool clear.

Center stone: familiar names.

Mo, Nie, Kong, Jing...

"What?"

Mutter.

His: "Meng Haoran, progress: 101."

Meaning?

Doubt: old beside.

"City entry progress."

Squint laugh.

City?

Gate = city? Reach = pass.

Connected.

"Injured? Pool? One blue."

No refuse; gave.

Guided pool.

Entered: vast force inflate.

Wounds healed.

Opened: wilderness.

Village gone.

Waist: crystal gone.

Real.

Condensed; understood.

Post-disappear.

Pool old changed.

Thousand Blades float stack chair; white drift.

Lu sat; tossed crystal.

"Luck; first blue..."

Smiled.

Test begin.

City hard.

Words; old again.

Village normal.

Meng back Mass Grave.

Only path city.

First hurdle.

Inhaled rub stone.

Step in.

Skulls rose pounce...

...

Wolong.

Unknown inside.

Dare not enter.

Tantai scanned gates, distant stele.

Overlord comprehending.

"King..."

Xuanwu hesitant.

"Tear... who?"

Silent.

Great Xuan no Overlord level.

Waste.

"King try?"

Proposed.

Glanced; moved.

Hot-blooded bid.

No user.

Why not?

Hesitant: bitter path; insulated fate.

Break curse?

Thought: dynasty dragon qi—luck ok.

"Try?"

Stepped gates.

Qi absorb; weak talent.

Dragon qi resist pressure; else wolf.

Roar!

Gold flash; dragon back.

Strong eyes bright; North Xuan famed.

Tang glanced wrinkled twitch.

Robes hunt; pressure forward.

Vs. Overlord.

Dragon qi: no fifth like Overlord Liu.

Sweat gasp.

"Can't!"

No calm; roar.

Tear hand; expect.

Crush.

Others crush: pressure off elegant stele.

Imitate.

Force.

Harder...

Teeth grit; milk strength!

Red face.

Despair: uncrushable.

Beiluo island.

Lu expected Tantai comprehend.

Appreciated philosophy.

But uncrushable...

Stunned.

Fate front; tofu Tear uncrush...

Insulated legend...

Something.

Chapter 292: Without Madness, How to Grow Stronger

The atmosphere grew painfully awkward.

Dantai Xuan couldn't crush the Dao Tear.

Not only was Dantai Xuan himself stunned, but everyone watching from outside Wolong Ridge was dumbfounded by his attempt.

Tang Xiansheng was at a loss for words, his wrinkled face creasing further as he couldn't hold back a chuckle.

The Northern Xuan King... truly had a unique aura about him.

Perhaps it was this refusal to conform to the mundane ways of cultivation that made Tang Xiansheng favor the Northern Xuan King and choose to back him.

Switching hands, he squeezed with all his might several times.

Still unable to shatter the Dao Tear, Dantai Xuan gave up trying.

He glanced at the tear in his palm, his lips trembling. This was something he'd spent over ten million taels of silver to acquire, yet he couldn't even use it. A wave of inexplicable bitterness stabbed at his chest.

"Damn this twisted stroke of fortune!"

Dantai Xuan couldn't help but curse.

It felt like this opportunity was deliberately toying with him.

The heartbreak dulled the terrifying pressure emanating from the Nine Prisons Gate, as if it had faded significantly.

Shrouded in bewildered imperial dragon aura, Dantai Xuan slowly retreated.

Onlookers couldn't contain their laughter at his actions.

Dantai Xuan kept a straight face—he'd been through embarrassments like this plenty of times.

“What’s so funny? Keep laughing all you want, but the Dao Tear is still in my hands, and none of you are getting it.”

He swept his gaze across the crowd and bellowed.

Several Xuanwu Guards shielded him, utterly unprepared for this turn of events.

The guard who had suggested Dantai Xuan use the tear himself felt overwhelming guilt.

He never imagined the king wouldn't be able to crush it.

How could it not shatter?

Dantai Xuan was furious but didn't leave.

He pondered what to do next with the tear—perhaps wait for the Xuanwu Guard commander to arrive.

If this tear could cultivate a peak Body Repository or even Heaven Lock realm commander...

Then maybe the ache in Dantai Xuan's heart would ease a little.

Hope for the Dao Stele was lost.

Many turned their attention to the Nine Prisons Secret Realm.

Beyond the stele, this refreshed Wolong Ridge held the Nine Prisons Gate—perhaps another rare cultivation ground?

Noble families exchanged glances.

Since Nie Changqing and others had already entered...

The families wasted no time.

Cultivators under various patriarchs prepared and stepped into the First Prison Gate.

They knew reaching the Second required passing the First.

Many Qi Core realm cultivators buckled under the gate's pressure, collapsing before even approaching.

Patriarchs watched coldly.

Those who couldn't reach the First Gate had flawed Qi Core cultivation.

The gate's pressure was a test in itself.

Finally, figures vanished into the gate.

...

Tang Yimo stared at the Dao Stele, his mind enveloped in strange fluctuations.

Memories surfaced.

Being bullied, living in the Tang family woodshed, body aching, toiling under servants' scoldings...

Everything replayed.

He recalled the massacre in the Tang manor.

Cold blood seemed to awaken his demonic nature.

Tang Yimo felt lost, doubting the path of protection he clung to.

He remembered defending Southern Prefecture against the southern barbarians.

Was he a good person?

No, he wasn't—for his loved ones, he'd do anything.

Buzz...

As he comprehended...

Demonic qi surged around him, coiling tightly.

Demonic technique!

Eight Meridians Escape Armor Demonic Technique!

Thick demonic qi roiled, but Tang Yimo sank deeper into insight.

His visions differed from Ye Shoudao and Du Longyang's.

No past events, no washed-away cultivation path.

In his mind: the heavens crumbling.

White Jade Capital vanishing.

From the shattered sky, terrifying beings descended.

Like the southern barbarians invading Southern Prefecture.

Slaughter rained down; countless powerhouses fell, blood soaking the earth.

Corpses everywhere, rivers of blood.

In the horror...

Tang Yimo saw Tang Guo and his mother crushed into pulp by a claw.

His heart convulsed.

He saw Tang Xiansheng in his rocking chair, eyes closing slowly, obliterated—only splintered wood left.

Boundless demonic qi erupted.

Tang Yimo roared, voice piercing the heavens.

Transforming into a demon, two meridians opened—but no match for the creature.

He pushed his technique to the limit, blood seeping from his skin, fearless.

Yet sometimes, rage can't bridge power gaps.

Tang Yimo lost.

Behind him, Southern Prefecture in ruins.

He knelt like a failure amid the wreckage.

His strength couldn't protect what mattered.

Suddenly...

From the ruins...

A black-robed figure strode through the air, steps firm.

A towering presence, demonic qi sweeping.

Bleeding profusely, Tang Yimo looked up, face blank.

“Who are you?”

His voice hoarse.

“The world calls me the Demon Lord.”

The figure spoke softly, like a breeze.

“You cultivate demonic arts, but you don’t grasp the true essence of demons.”

“You’re just skimming the surface of the Eight Meridians Escape Armor Demonic Technique...”

The Demon Lord said.

“Immortal cultivation is superficial dabbling, but demonic cultivation... demands deep emotion.”

“That’s why you’re stuck at a bottleneck.”

Tang Yimo froze.

Immortal, demonic.

“Immortals are the front; demons, the back.”

“You claim to protect, but it’s just words.”

“To truly master the Eight Meridians and walk the demonic path... risk your life for it. Bind your fate to theirs. Without madness, how can you protect?”

The Demon Lord’s calm words shook Tang Yimo to his core.

The figure twisted and vanished; the vision shifted.

Now...

Tang Yimo’s eyes blazed red, body swelling massively, skin crimson, scarlet spiritual energy exploding.

Facing the claw at Tang Guo and his mother, he became a monster, armored in bizarre flesh.

The battle shook the world.

The outcome brutal, yet Tang Yimo felt clarity.

His body cracked, blood gushing; he lay staring at the sky.

The Demon Lord appeared, back turned.

“Without madness, how to master demonic arts.”

“Without madness, how to grow stronger.”

The faint laughter echoed.

Then, steps shaking heaven and earth, he vanished.

Tang Yimo’s eyes emptied, pupils unfocused.

Finally...

Light gathered, solidifying.

One last vision.

No epic fights, no slaughter.

Deep night.

Moonlight dim.

In a rundown woodshed, young Tang Yimo punched diligently.

Back then, he sought strength to shield his sister and mother from harm.

Buzz...

Invisible waves rippled.

Tang Yimo opened his eyes, heart oddly calm.

On the Dao Stele...

Mysterious fluctuations enveloped him.

Du Longyang and others opened their eyes; even Ye Shoudao, who'd grasped intent, glanced back.

At the stubborn youth.

Overlord and Liu Yuanhao turned, staring...

Had Tang Yimo comprehended it?

Du Longyang, the Empress, and Young Master Tianxu felt unconvinced.

As Infant Transformation experts, they hadn't grasped intent—why this Foundation Building youth first?

Outside Wolong Ridge...

Chatting with Dantai Xuan, Tang Xiansheng shuddered.

Not just him—patriarchs watching their cultivators enter the gates turned to the stele.

New text emerged:

“Tang Yimo, Fifth Sequence Intent: Intent of Protection.”

It clashed with Ye Shoudao’s inscription, rising and falling in contest.

Seeming to vie for superiority.

Many gasped.

Ye Shoudao narrowed his eyes.

Du Longyang and the Empress grew curious.

This Foundation Building cultivator’s intent rivaled Ye Shoudao’s?

Infant Transformation experts were proud, unyielding—especially blade masters like Ye Shoudao.

Tang Xiansheng's face twitched, beard quivering.

His heart unrested.

“Intent of Protection.”

He shook his head, understanding why.

All of Tang Yimo's protective resolve?

Tang Guo, his mother—what he'd always guarded.

Wonder if it included Southern Prefecture.

Same fifth sequence, yet they ranked.

Finally...

Tang Yimo's couldn't surpass Ye Shoudao's Heartless Intent.

Ye Shoudao relaxed, almost pleased.

Others sighed in regret.

On the stele...

Tang Yimo's inscription settled second.

"Intent of Protection?"

He murmured, unbothered by rank—intents could improve.

A bitter smile.

"Not Guardian Intent... My level can't grasp it yet."

“What sequence would Guardian Intent be?”

He whispered.

Overlord was shocked.

Tang Yimo had comprehended intent.

He didn't know its exact benefits.

But something Lu praised so highly must be vital on the path.

Overlord gritted his teeth, jaw clenched.

He resumed.

Tang Yimo's comprehension continued.

His aura surged.

Booming drew thick clouds.

Seated on the mat, he growled, veins bulging on his neck.

Essence, qi, spirit soared.

Two meridians opened; the third hit a wall.

“This kid’s technique... interesting.”

“Neither fully righteous nor evil, impenetrable... but undeniably powerful.”

Du Longyang and Tianxu commented.

Not ordinary—rivaling the Martial Emperor Scripture or Tianxu Art.

No wonder it nearly suppressed Ye Shoudao’s intent.

In their view, as Infant Transformation, their first intent grasp should outshine a Foundation Building's.

Tang Yimo's feat stemmed from strong intent and technique.

His skin reddened, vital blood thundering inside.

Impacting the third meridian.

"Break!"

Spiritual energy exploded.

Roar!

Hair standing, beastly bellow.

Purple patterns emerged on crimson skin...

Boom!

Like a membrane shattering.

Third meridian opened; another vessel pulsed.

Three Meridians Realm!

Equivalent to Heaven Lock.

Tang Yimo gazed skyward, eyes flickering.

But clouds gathered... then dispersed quietly.

“Hahaha... With the Dao Stele here, even thunder tribulation fears to strike.”

Young Master Tianxu laughed.

Tang Yimo pondered, then shot off the mat, leaving the area.

Soon...

In Wolong Ridge...

Thunder crashed down.

Heaven Lock tribulation's pressure was real.

But to Du Longyang and others, mild—they'd survived Infant Transformation ascension tribulations.

...

On the lake island.

White Jade Capital pavilion.

Dantai Xuan's failure saddened Lu slightly; Tang Yimo's breakthrough pleased him.

"Pity, not Guardian Intent."

“But Guardian is at least third sequence—with his realm, normal he can’t grasp it.”

“He needs more trials.”

Lu understood: intent comprehension fused experience, soul, and character.

Mind stirring...

His soul’s Dao Stele showed Protection Intent.

Fifth sequence; he fused it with Soul Extinction Intent.

No ripples.

Intent unchanged—still fourth sequence.

Unbothered.

White robes fluttering in the breeze, Lu sat calmly on the Thousand Blades Chair, listening to wind and rustling bamboo.

His mind shifted to the Nine Prisons Gate.

Something explosive had emerged inside.

Chapter 293: Who Comprehended the Dao Intent?

Beiluo, White Jade Capital.

Lu sat on the Thousand Blades Chair, the island floating on Origin Lake like a celestial isle.

White robes fluttered; he placed pieces on the spirit pressure board—elegant, unhurried.

Each fall: mystic soul waves diffused, strengthening his spirit.

Game ended; mountains-rivers momentum swept.

Exhaled; beckoned bronze cup, sipped—throat warm, leisurely.

Island quiet; Ning Zhao, Ni Yu etc. in Nine Prisons for breakthroughs.

Even refiner Gongsun Yu left for gates.

To forge higher spirits: need stronger self.

Capital clear.

Island serene—save Little Yinglong's lake splashes.

No distractions; leaned wheelchair, pondered post-White Jade path.

World: "White Jade Era"—like Hundred Schools; led by philosophers then, White Jade now.

Purpose achieved: retire.

Eternal White Jade: world trembles, hinders growth.

Thus: concepts—spirit stones currency, auctions pills/tools, spread methods.

Necessities.

Future: hide—not just mission, even without.

Dao/Sword Pavilions: leave.

Promote, constrain.

Chin hand, blanket knees; sunset squint.

...

First Prison.

Meng Haoran gasped.

Rushed Mass Grave—small battlefield, end to end.

Wounds covered.

Qi near dry; multiple Hao Ran exhaust.

Failed; retreated entrance.

Weak.

Kong: Hao River/Sword annihilate Qi/Body skulls.

"Strength insufficient."

Eyes firm.

Gains: another blue crystal—vital.

Enter Dead Village heal.

Suspect: enough blues—cultivate Rebirth Pool; energy abundant.

Guess.

Gripped blue: village.

Stele: bottom.

Many passed.

Top: Master Kong... 110.

Red.

Master 110; he 101...

Shame!

Exhaled; healed pool, re-challenge.

Stimulated.

Mass Grave: Lu's first mini-boss.

Skeleton Great Leader.

End: red-tinted huge skeleton—2m+, oppressive.

No retreat—blocked.

Secret chance + danger.

Felt.

Today: despair.

Break or die.

No choice—fight.

Spear pointed.

Battle: essence soared.

Key: Hao Ran invincible.

Boom!

Great Leader five storages—strong sans attribute qi.

Spear snapped.

Chest pierced bone blade.

Despair: mouth Hao Ran.

Condensed Hao Spear...

Pfft.

Head pierce.

Explode.

Unlike normals: red crystal.

Snatched; rolled crawl out—skulls mad post-death.

Out: chest pain.

Endured.

Blues: miles to village.

Healed.

Progress: 101 → 105.

Rank up.

Small joy.

First red: vast energy... impulse crush.

Did.

Crack; energy orb.

Shrank eyes: pill bottle.

Swallowed: Qi Core surge, organs temper faster.

"Master's White Jade Qi Gathering Pill?"

Bright.

Operation!

Out village; back—revived leader.

Battle intent; fought.

Elevated, 生死 insights.

Two fails.

Third: killed.

Red.

Crush hope: two blues.

Black.

Qi Pills > blues.

Luck.

No re-challenge; forward.

...

Dead Village.

Kong pool sat; blues floated.

Head: brilliant Golden Core.

Rumble!

Rotated; brighter.

"Second turn!"

Inhaled gleam.

Pool + practice excellent.

Great cultivation spot.

Done; stele.

Led: 130.

Nie 125.

Competition surged.

Scanned: Meng 110.

Lips up: "Not bad... Body strong but gates hard—enemies tough."

"Good trial."

Smiled.

"Hope no death."

Smile faded sigh.

Greeted messy villagers; out.

...

Nie pool.

Spine dragon rumble.

Gold flow...

"Third extreme Heavenly Lock..."

Excited.

Thought ordinary like dragon gates—wrong.

Sequence: Wolong Qi Core, dragon Body, Nine Heavenly Lock.

Pressure vast.

First pressure; second, third... ninth?

Smiled.

Young Master saw; sent.

Pool origin—仙 modified, absorbable.

Treasure.

Ten blues: third temper.

Out.

Gloomy sky.

Show true strength.

...

Mo Tianyu no easy; divined bloody, nosebleed—worst.

But "great evil": survived.

Rubbed red; grinned.

Crush: orb.

Buzz...

Attracted.

Orb: mini black stele.

"This..."

Crush.

White Jade: Lu knew extraordinary.

"Mo Tianyu..."

Twitch.

Reds normal: 2-3 blues.

Low: Qi Pills.

Stele slot: dogshit luck.

Setting: rare—1/1000.

Mo third.

Diviner.

Rumble!

Robes hunt.

Wide eyes: sky stele shadow—Wolong center.

Tear-needed!

"Haha... stele slot?"

Understood great evil!

Excited; focused comprehend.

Tear: hundreds stones, millions silver.

Luck millions...

Joy!

First Prison.

Shadow: all sensed.

Looked; blurred— no comprehend.

"This..."

Kong inhaled.

Reds good—his Qi bottle.

"Stele slot too?"

Breath quick.

Nie, Ning recalled Lu—bright.

Young Master true!

First: storm.

...

Wolong out.

Exit: clan practitioner.

Excited shared.

Silent.

Stele slot in secret?!

Heads breath quick; mad sent elites.

Slot: save millions!

Even Qi Pills...

Tantai red.

Ordered Xuanwu challenge.

First news spread.

World boiled; jianghu rushed.

Vs. gates clamor.

Stele quiet.

Three days flash.

Gates lively; entries.

Deaths many—no news.

Silent three: reaction!

Tianxu trembled; opened, turbid exhale.

Thrill joy.

Comprehended!

"Haha! Du Longyang! I first!"

Vast energy.

Stele text.

"Tianxu, fifth: Yin Water Sword Intent."

No clash; third.

Careless rank; smug Du laugh.

You bully centuries; insight lose.

Smug: Du face shift, killing wave.

But...

Du provoked; paused.

Squint stele.

Not just; consolidating Ye looked.

New sequence.

Who?

Empress, Overlord, Liu opened—confused.

All opened?

Whose?

Outside.

Changes noted.

New: crushed all, first!

Noise guessed Empress/Overlord...

Text clear.

Stunned.

Guesses stop; wooden.

Stared.

"Mo Tianyu, fourth-sequence Dao intent..."

Chapter 294: Mo Tianyu's Dao Intent

"Fourth-sequence Dao intent?"

"It's actually fourth? Heavens..."

"The first fourth-sequence, right?"

Wolong Ridge echoed with shocks; eyes wide, distant stele text blurry but visible to cultivators.

Fourth crushed Ye's Heartless Knife—first place.

"Mo Tianyu, fourth-sequence: Fate-Reversing Intent."

Gasps at "Fate-Reversing."

Reverse heaven change fate?

Name extraordinary.

Mo Tianyu known: Kong Xiu's chief disciple, once unrestrained.

Faded with practitioner era.

Now: stele name—world shocked!

“How?”

Du Longyang stunned.

Limited slots; Mo no Tear—how?

Where?

Wolong boiled.

“Master Mo... incredible.”

Tantai sighed; knew divination path.

Unexpected extent.

Ximen Xianzhi arrived black-faced.

Li Sansui odd: that babbler fourth?

Explosive.

Clans mad.

No Tear yet comprehended: Nine Prisons slot real!

Even equal Tear.

Clans stuffed practitioners First.

Ximen resentful; sword box, entered.

Even babbler fourth—he no less.

...

Beiluo island.

Lu mid-game paused, smiled.

Continued.

“Fourth... unexpected.”

Joy.

Unthinkable: reverse-diviner fourth.

How? Feet?

Recall: divined heaven penalty, saved Kong—normal.

Piece tap fall.

Eyes deep.

Soul: his fourth Soul Extinguish, Mo's Fate-Reverse.

Fuse to third?

Pondered; direct fuse.

Soul quake waves.

Long; opened exhale.

Stele: still fourth Soul Extinguish.

Power up; Fate-Reverse weaker—no big change.

No pity.

Third: stele limit.

Hard.

Focused; chess soul strengthen.

Refine fused realms qi.

...

First Prison.

Mo opened; eyes vicissitudes.

“Fate-Reversing... reverse fate?”

Smiled.

Different: combat same, divines unique.

Change possible.

Great evil: now great auspicious.

“But need combat... match intent, else pit kill no escape...”

Nose touch laugh.

Stepped deeper.

Comprehension outside uproar; inside unknown.

Sky stele shadow vanish.

Nie etc. excited.

Chance inside.

Vigor; push First.

Nie, Kong thought.

First through: extra reward?

Stele slot!

...

Wolong out.

Tianxu stiff; just comprehended, smug insufficient—slapped.

“Mo Tianyu...”

Squint cold laugh.

“Good!”

Remembered!

Du, Empress anxious: Tianyuan four, two left.

Blow pride.

Overlord, Liu pressure... hope.

Mo can—why not?!

Ye stood; Tianxu glance—hearsay.

“Gates slot...”

Ye frown.

“What?”

Tianxu gleam.

Met eyes laugh—same mind.

“Great disciple training...”

Ye.

Yes!

Slot: value soar.

Tianyuan-Five Phoenixes fused Tianyuan Domain; contact inevitable.

Tianyuan higher now; Five Phoenixes center—future strong surge.

Tianyuan lag.

Must strengthen!

“Find Young Master Lu.”

Ye.

Unsure Lu or high martial.

High martial: extraordinary.

Tianxu no refuse.

Vanished; outside pressure.

Back stele: lost.

“No re-entry...”

Ye blank.

“Normal; Tear used.”

Tianxu careless.

Flash; four hags sedan—he sat.

Oppressive.

Clans retreat shock.

Tantai frown.

“Flashy.” Ye arm hunt glance disdain.

Knife threw enlarge; carried fly.

“Envy my pomp.”

Tianxu cold.

Hags move.

Petals trumpets grand.

Vanished stares.

“Who...?”

“Too strong!”

“Top!”

Shocks.

Tantai sense change.

Tianxu Ye left.

Infant speed.

Hags mobility.

Origin Lake.

Ye float.

Tianxu lakeside; island solo.

“Young Master.”

“Brother Lu.”

Bow.

Lu chess; brow “What?”

Tianxu smile: “Intent enhance?”

Lu nod: “Yes, elevate transform...”

Relief; fear stuck.

Lu guessed; no explain.

Harder cultivation.

Ye bow: “Tianyuan practitioners enter secret?”

“Heard slot...”

Lu brow; piece.

“Tianyuan enter Nine Prisons?”

Ye nod.

Lu smile: “Fused one; you Five Phoenixes. Origins merged—welcome.”

“Call Tianyuan Ancients.”

Ye bright.

“Thanks.”

Bow.

“Go.”

Lu faint.

Worlds touch; no block.

Answers; no linger.

Oppressive; Lu stronger—terrifying.

High martial backer.

Unprovokable.

Retreat.

Beiluo out; eyes.

“Lu says... wary.”

“Outsiders; master Five Phoenixes—face but no excess.”

“Person List prodigies exchange.”

Tianxu turn.

Smart.

Ye nod.

Tianxu jade; brow soul thread message in.

Crack; miles to Tianyuan.

Tianyuan.

Forces.

Martial Emperor City, Absolute Knife, Tianxu Palace, Great Qian...

Top Infants opened.

“Message!”

Read frown.

“Person List to unknown; no Infant...”

Inhaled curious.

No go.

Soul: "Spread; gather prodigies."

...

Time passed.

Peacock mature Five Barbarians; proud vs. four, wary Great Zhou.

Post-defeat: quiet.

Suddenly.

Peacock earth wall; guards stunned language shout.

Chaos; spears up.

Desert sun-twist sand.

Figure slow.

Bald cassock monk.

Recognized terror roar.

Mystic bald conquered royalty; mad attack Great Zhou—destroyed.

Now bald!

Ding Jiudeng palms; cassock desert slow.

“Peacock...”

Eyes peaceful.

Mind voice louder.

Smiled.

Chant; back vast gold Buddha.

Buddha quake waves.

Wall.

Guards arrows sieve.

But...

Buddha eyes pity ants...

Opened.

Voice drum boom.

Arrows powder.

Ding wall under; gate explode; slow enter.

Spears surround...

Ding smile.

Sat.

Voice change.

“Feel Buddha baptism... believers.”

Words.

Center: energy lotuses mystic.

Guards drop weapons kneel devout.

Converted.

Soon Ding opened.

Chant low; aura converge no move.

Lotuses wilt.

...

Island.

Lu chess brows cluster.

Head west.

Chapter 295: Chess with the Demon Lord

Lu's brows knitted slightly as he gazed westward. Just moments ago, a peculiar energy surge had flickered from that direction—brief, vanishing as swiftly as it appeared, extinguished amid the heavens and earth.

His soul, now vastly strengthened, far surpassed its prior sensitivity. Even that fleeting pulse registered clearly: an odd fluctuation from the west.

Eyes narrowed, a realization dawned.

“The west...”

Lips curved upward. Leaning back in the wheelchair, fingers tapped the armrest.

As expected, the fusion of realms had finally stirred external troubles.

He’d anticipated this, unconcerned, unhurried.

Intrigued, even.

Special thanks to Ryan Buck

for always supporting me. Thank you.

...

Imperial Capital, Purple Gold Palace.

Luo Mingsang glided in resplendent palace robes. An Xiang Family Army soldier appeared behind her, bowing.

“Any movement from the Black Dragon Cult?”

She stared northwest—toward Wolong Ridge.

The guard shook his head.

“Since White Jade Capital’s auction and Wolong news, the restless Black Dragon Cult fell silent. Even their subordinate gangs grew docile.”

“Docile?”

Luo pondered, then smiled helplessly. “Good. Saves bloodshed and trouble.”

“Still, watch them. Their ambitions run deep.”

A pause. “Has the King comprehended any Dao intent at Wolong?”

The soldier faltered.

He glanced cautiously. All Xiang troops knew: an invisible rift now lay between Overlord and Luo Mingsang. Mention either—tread carefully.

After careful wording: “The King... remains in contemplation.”

Luo’s lashes trembled; her expression dimmed.

“Understood. Dismissed. Monitor the Cult—any anomaly, signal immediately.”

She managed the capital adeptly for Overlord.

Sky bright, clouds idle—serene.

Yet beneath, vast undercurrents churned.

A storm, once unleashed, would sweep thousands.

Soon after the soldier left, hooves thundered outside.

Another Xiang trooper.

Luo's orderly rule earned their loyalty. Overlord had commanded obedience to her.

Absolute dispatch authority.

Seeing him, her eyes lit.

"Found it?!"

"Subordinate... mission accomplished."

Dust-caked, soil-stained.

"Six hundred li from the capital, a mountain range—spirit stones. Personally verified: a minor vein!"

Fist clasped, thrilled.

A vein—how could he not be?

White Jade's auction rippled worldwide: spirit stones, future currency—analyzed by all powers.

Had Xiliang or Great Xuan proposed unification: resistance, doubt.

White Jade? Unquestioned.

Luo dispatched seekers immediately.

Targeted: post-transformation blessed lands, new terrains.

Harvest now.

“Estimate: ten thousand stones... but durable—mining difficult.”

“Beasts around, qi-nurtured—ferocious, hard.”

Luo resolute: “Send more hands. Control veins—future voice...”

Not just Xiliang—clans, Great Xuan sought.

Auction’s aim: launch stones.

Qi within accelerated practice.

Vein mastery: faster cultivators, Body Storages galore—immense.

...

Time trickled.

Post-Mo Tianyu: no new intents.

Comprehension’s difficulty dawned.

Nine Prisons: no slot news.

But entrants spread another.

First Prison progress rankings.

Real-time transmitted.

Outside Wolong aware.

“Kong Nanfei: 180.”

“Nie Changqing: 180.”

“Jing Yue: 170.”

...

Top three.

Progress: distance in First—gates varied.

Strength needed.

Clans treated as talent gauge.

Competitive eyes on list.

...

Overlord mind steeped in stele.

Mystic waves; comprehension urge.

But unrest scattered focus.

Sweat beaded.

Du Longyang: fifth Brave Spear—rivalled Ye, slight loss, third.

Empress soon: fifth—behind Ye, above Tianxu.

Lu unsurprised: all fifth, talents matched.

Mo's fourth: sole surprise.

Diviner luck.

Overlord, Liu persisted.

Sweat; unknown sequence.

Higher better.

No laggard.

Three days post-Empress...

Liu: sixth Cold Fire.

...

Stele: Overlord alone.

Pressure crushed.

Once prodigy, glorious.

Now last.

Failure.

Fists clenched; stele glare.

Unbelievable!

Du, Empress opened—brow raise.

Two energies: black demonic, gold dynasty qi.

Clashed, unmerged—cause confusion.

“Dual powers?”

Du frown.

“Talent strong, but heart-bound, powers tangle—lost.”

Empress nod: “Choose. Greed chokes.”

Familiar dynasty aura—emperor’s.

She too ruled millions.

Purer.

Du agreed: obvious at their level.

Liu squint.

Bottleneck!

Good!

Flicker; tempted sabotage.

Dared not—public, low means risk White Jade wrath.

Crowded; no move.

Abandoned; consolidated.

Intent boosted combat, fire mastery.

Sixth—future more.

No discouragement.

Overlord entranced.

Time passed.

World stormed.

Wolong one; veins another.

Xiliang vein news spread.

Vital.

Soon Great Xuan: Tail Ridge vein.

Surge.

Clans abandoned Wolong—hunt veins.

Discovered, claimed.

Undercurrents.

Clans standoff veins.

Wars: blood-soaked earth.

...

Vast ocean.

Lights cleaved sea.

Post-Ye/Tianxu message.

Tianyuan Person List prodigies—half mobilized.

List: Golden Core rank; weakest fifth turn.

Feng Yilou lone boat.

Pride: mostly solo.

Purple robes hunt.

Seventh turn, List ninth—apocalypse breakthrough eighth.

Rank rise pending.

No update: summons to unknown world.

“Secrets?”

Lips up, immortal air.

Glanced: lone boats.

Monsters gathered.

Days trek.

Tianyuan geniuses: Dongyang coast.

Governor spotted—bitter.

Whale gone; new unknowns.

Sea origin?

No malice: Tianyuan Ancients, mentioned Lu.

Fusion secret.

Ideology fed: believed or indifferent.

Governor post-Lu: eased.

To Wolong—tense again.

Provoke?

White Jade: no waves.

Blind trust.

No block—powerless.

Watched depart; exhaled.

World lively.

...

Beiluo island.

Lu opened; island qi waves.

“Practice, refine—shorten Tianyuan qi conversion...”

Lips up; expectant.

Ten months base.

Heaven Chess Momentum shortened.

Leaned Thousand Blades.

Gaze vacant; Little Yinglong lake.

Sensed; wary—no bully?

Overthought.

Lu pondered new Momentum.

Board float; chin hand, box pinch.

“New game...”

Smile.

“Heaven Chess: Yin-Yang Game.”

Eyes brilliant; head up opposite.

Boom!

Demonic qi poured eyes nose.

Before: converged figure.

Vast.

Black hair shirt; eyes pure black.

Demon Lord Lu!

“Please.”

Light laugh.

Demon Lord mirrored.

Floated rail outside; board opposite.

Hand black piece.

Special thanks to Ryan Buck

for always supporting me. Thank you.

Clack.

Fall; board black-white flow.

Yin-yang.

Chapter 296: Why Not Quietly Develop in Seclusion?

Nine Prisons Secret Realm, First Prison Gate.

Kong Nanfei opened his eyes in the Rebirth Pool; surrounding blue spirit crystals drained, cracking.

Exhaled; felt strength rise.

Battles + pool: third Golden Core turn in days of toil.

Wanted more blues, reds—but reds yielded blues; lost hope.

Luck no match for diviner Mo.

No linger; aim first to Second.

But hard: Nie, Ning Zhao, Jing Yue, later Li Sansui/ Sansi closing.

Third turn cost time; others caught.

Stele: "Kong Nanfei: 190."

Squint: 190—final gate, city.

Granny mentioned Dead City above villages.

Buzz...

Exited; lively vanished—ghost market odd.

Tidied tattered robes; forward sway, recite wild poems.

Long; body shock.

Ears: bells drums boom.

Head up: distant yin city emerged.

Vast towering; black bricks blood-stained walls.

Gate: knife-horse yin officers.

Chained ghosts heavy steps in.

Inhaled: last gate.

Pass: Second.

Plaque: "Qin Guang City?"

Recite.

Boom!

Heart quake; terror attention.

City revived.

Yin surge.

Thud!

Wall: burly yin officer complex eyes.

“Endless war; only myriad dead; ancient perished. Rebirth land; mortals barred.”

Grand boom; Kong tremble.

Stared: neck square metal yoke.

Yin dense.

“Spirit tool!”

Pupil shrink pressure.

No... crush.

Stronger than any!

How fight? Pass?!

Despair.

No entry hope.

Golden Core+?

Officer smile; countless ghosts stare back.

Next...

Yoke flung enlarge wrap Kong.

Clang...

Soul detained; evaporate bind.

“Rebirth city; enter endure 100 soul bites. 100 pass; under 50 extinguish.”

Grand heaven-earth.

Moved: not fight—chance.

Soul fearless arms open.

Gate.

Chained ghosts freed attract; twisted pounce.

Bang!

One hit: tear pain bloodshot eyes.

Soul pain; temper.

100: 100 pains.

Heart shrink.

Torture.

Early endure; later unconscious roar.

“62 bites: fail.”

Cold; yoke return hand stand wall oppress.

City vanish.

Kong numb open...

Failed.

Thought soul tough 100—overconfident far.

Sweat soul weak cold... deathlike.

Not just.

Nie same city soul bites.

"52: fail."

Cold echo; steps back fear.

Half death.

Under 50: likely die.

Death breath felt.

First through contest continues.

...

Peacock Kingdom.

Transformed: all shaven monks.

Ding Jiudeng cushion merciful smile.

Mind voice lure; strength grew—chants prayers pure energy fuse.

Stronger.

Kingdom Buddhist; all faith his dharma.

Palms bare walk.

Observed monks.

Court center: sweat build stupa vast.

Satisfied.

18 layers hard craftsmen.

Command: obey.

Sat carve patterns knife.

Mind: Buddha Realm Tower.

Instinct bad.

But uncontrollable.

...

Heaven Chess Yin-Yang.

Extreme; summoned Demon Lord co-place.

Demon black; Lu white; clack forceful.

Soul mobilize; piece yin-yang balance seek.

Hard.

Ten days first complete.

Done: soul reforged stronger denser.

Momentum tempers soul; consciousness condense.

Demon dispersed.

Lu no continue.

Ten days one: unbelievable.

Effective.

Breeze bamboo rustle.

Origin ripples real.

Rail leisure.

Checked First: efforts; no more.

Nine Prisons harder perfected than immortal/dragon; better results.

Monitor fix bugs.

Thousand Blades second floor.

Table; white flame boil wine.

Plum in stir.

Eyes lines worldwide.

Saw...

Tianyuan Person List cross sea Wolong.

West Peacock...

...

Wolong out lively.

Many sit cultivate qualify First.

Suddenly.

Du Ye etc. intent done lost qualify; distant watch.

Day.

Rocks roll; strangers approach.

Clans stunned: strong auras!

“City Lord.”

Feng Yilou purple hands behind brilliant eighth Core smile.

Du bright.

“Eighth... good.”

“List top five.”

Laugh.

“Immortal fate; ninth!”

Expectant.

Feng blessed: stuck seventh lifetime; Lu possess apocalypse breakthrough eighth.

Timing.

Solemn.

Genii bow.

Clans agape.

Cores disciples... how strong masters?

Unimaginable!

Who?

Rumors: overseas Tianyuan Ancients.

Developed continent.

Goal: Nine Prisons.

No talk; First.

Firm: pressure breeze easy enter.

Clans bitter: their struggle wind.

Despair rivals.

...

Lu uncaring goldens.

His gates hard.

Good: pressure Kong etc.

Slow month no First exit.

Disappoint.

Mind shift.

Peacock sense.

“Buddha Tower.”

Cold arc.

Guess confirmed.

Bitter Apprentice? High martial Buddha?

Tower: signal emitter.

Impure.

Ignore develop; harvest.

But signal trouble.

No.

Quiet develop bad?

Good Buddhism strong bad?

Flashy.

Unknown controller: Apprentice or high.

Lazy guess.

Trouble...

Slap dead.

Chapter 297: Keep Going, Don't Stop

Origin Lake rippled with mystic waves.

Ding Jiudeng's matter caught Lu's eye.

Idle anyway.

Stored spirit board; beckoned Little Yinglong—eyes bright, wings flap, shoulder perch.

Bamboo rustle, sky chrysanthemum sway, peach serene.

Lu light laugh; unhurried down pavilions.

Dense qi cloaked lake.

Yinglong Gate floated quiet.

Island isolated skyward—ethereal untouchable.

Beiluo boaters dwindled.

Serene.

Wolong drew practitioners.

Lu Thousand Blades; chair lake glide no ripple.

Entered Yinglong Gate.

To Xiliang Mirage Dragon Gate.

Dongyan River Gate: Xiliang root, practitioner army base.

Overlord valued; strong Xiang garrison.

Lu slow emerge.

Xiang alert.

Stared Gate.

Xu Chu trusted; trained for months vs. Great Xuan scholars.

“Who?!”

Xu Chu condense; stare.

Most practitioners Wolong—who cross now?

Xiang weapons; Xu stare.

Suddenly.

Gate behind.

Wheel ground faint.

White youth silver chair; shoulder young dragon slow appear.

Plain; aura unfeeling.

Xu Chu stunned.

Not recognize first...

Seconds brain turn; soul explode.

“Beiluo... Young Master Lu?!”

Inhaled; left Beiluo to Xiliang.

Lu calm sweep Xiang.

Finally Xu Chu.

“Fools, weapons down!”

“Brandish? At who?!”

Xu roar Xiang.

Sweat dense pressure.

Lu Ping’an temper known.

Weapons at Lu—petty slap, Xiang gone!

Lu twitch.

Temper... that bad?

Xiang lower hasty fear.

“Name?”

Lu glance Xu Chu.

Twin spiked balls interesting.

“Report Young Master: Xiliang King first general, Xu Chu!”

Straight roar.

“Hm...”

Lu nod.

“Promising. Practice well. Favor you.”

Words; chair out; Xiang part no block.

Xu Chu head scratch—praise?

Favored?

Soon sharp deep.

Led ten squad; dash distant tail—see White Jade Lord Xiliang purpose?

Lu knew track.

Uncaring.

Thousand Blades slow.

Seem slow; Xu full run barely keep.

Liangzhou City soon.

Lu stop; Xu ten sweat gasp.

Peacock beyond.

Lu bypass city; desert.

Xu glance ten collapse.

Teeth.

“Useless, train!”

Curse.

Balls back; distant desert follow.

...

Peacock.

Buddha Realm Tower.

New sharp knife skyward.

Base dense nobles shaven nuns monks sit chant.

Ding Jiudeng calm; sudden east gaze.

Abrupt struggle face; mind boom chants.

Fists pound head; no fade.

Memory blur emotion loss.

Flashes: pawnshop clerk, happy little monks—fade.

Belated fear.

Unsuppressable.

Long; face normal.

Stood enter tower.

Door boom shut lock.

Peacock out.

Desert sand storm roll.

But.

White youth silver chair appear; storm halt.

Hard tail Xu gasp.

Curious start.

Desert to Peacock.

No fondness.

Five Barbarians; border raids Xiliang deaths.

Overlord beat fear; war pain unforgettable.

Not forget!

“Young Master purpose?”

Xu ragged curious.

Miles Beiluo Peacock—purpose.

...

Peacock south endless desert.

Two black conical hats sudden stop.

“Familiar terror aura...”

Hoarse.

Other tremble excite.

“Young Master!”

No hesitate; sand explode long shadows capital dash.

...

Lu calm capital gaze.

Chin hand; armrest tap.

Soul sense: weird monk aura gone isolated.

First such.

Tower glance.

Tower reason here.

Entered capital.

Guards block; spirit pressure release prostrate immobile.

Distant Xu surprise.

Peacock changed: devout fanatic.

Unusual.

In.

Lu dense bald citizens sit.

Cold stare chant.

Soul shake faint.

Tail Xu urge shave chant.

Panic.

Lu tap armrest.

Indifferent.

Chants annoy; no soul affect.

Noisy.

Pat Little Yinglong rump.

Understood.

Mouth dragon roar; walls collapse.

Chants stop.

Hand down; pressure prostrate.

Little Yinglong addicted.

Wings sky dash roar evil dragon.

Monks ears bleed pale.

Roar cleared minds.

But.

Boom!

Tower bell drum.

Boom!

Top mallet bronze bell pleasant city.

Recovered fanatic again.

Ignore pressure twist struggle escape.

“Mad!”

Xu inhale.

Peacock catastrophe; alert.

Today Peacock tomorrow Xiliang?

Monks remind Liangzhou temples.

Lu ignore; toure to tower.

Xu hasty.

Sudden Xu pause distant two hats rush.

Tower obvious.

Vast stone stairs plaza tower center.

Stairs royalty nobles monks sit.

Cold stare Lu.

Lu ignore tower.

Sensed Ding + other.

“Not Bitter Apprentice...”

Lips.

“Yuan Shang?”

Dawn: Ding disciple then tampered.

Yuan Bitter; Bitter high martial Buddha.

Tower: lure descent?

Ponder likely.

High martial descend?

System: world protection rules—ignore?

Thinking.

Three whoosh.

Xu two hats.

Lu head glance.

One hasty hat off: Yi Yue face.

“Young Master!”

Eyes fluctuate complex kneel tremble.

Fear blame.

Maid duty fail.

“Stronger; found path?”

Lu smile.

Yi Yue stunned head up lips.

Mo Liuqi hat off bow.

Long; Beiluo Young Master courage none.

Mo Lou assassin path.

Body Storage; courage assassinate Heavenly Lock Nie.

Vs. Lu: approach impossible.

Too strong.

Xu awkward track?

Temper kill?

Lu ignore; monk glares.

Tower top.

Bronze bell under Ding sit.

Brow blood dot palms white eyes smile Lu.

Xu shock.

Promising Ding thus.

Mo Liuqi complex; pawn stranger.

“Late.”

Ding voice overlap two.

“Should block anomaly start.”

“Overconfident arrogant.”

Lu stunned unclear.

“Tower built seed planted; root germinate world Buddha vassal all convert.”

Words.

Ding aura explode.

Buddhist runes float.

Qi surge.

Body to Golden Core; turns no stop.

Back great Buddha aid.

Elevate energy tower lines gold glow.

Chants endless.

Base royalty monks chant.

Brow split blood drops.

Blood float pearls obsession embed tower.

Tower eerie blood eyes rotate.

Waves top.

Bronze blood bell.

Behind.

Mo Yi pupil shrink.

Bad.

Xu inhale track horror.

Lu odd Ding top.

Controller unaware.

Ding rise Lu harvest more.

Sense harvest sigh.

High martial generous.

Sudden Ding stop.

Controller sense wrong.

Ding rise Lu no tense... enjoy.

Stop.

Lu regret loss.

Doubt Ding top inquire eyes.

Why stop?

Continue, don't stop.

Chapter 298: One Sword to Extinguish the Buddha Seed

Golden Core realm: Lu harvested 100 strands of qi.

Meager to him now, but strength accumulated drop by drop.

Leaning in Thousand Blades, Lu sighed—Ding Jiudeng's empowerment akin to initiation.

Forced growth.

Ignored Ding; scanned tower.

Runes array-like; eyes lines danced, analyzed.

Arrays: Lu unmatched in Five Phoenixes.

Tower peak.

Empowered Ding seized mallet; smashed.

Boom echoed; mystic waves skyward, beyond nine heavens.

Signal.

Lu condensed—tower messenger as guessed.

Worlds in void; infinite. Without rules, finding one: needle in ocean.

Even high martial hard.

But coordinates: swift arrival.

No more watch.

Brief scan: array learned.

Planned destroy.

But space profound—interest; replicate.

Learned; no mercy.

Soul surged.

Vast aura.

Raised hand.

Clouds whirl; qi converged vast palm.

Cloud-stacked; soft yet invincible.

Swept.

Slam!

Tower exploded.

But blood bell hovered Ding head.

Ding white eyes; brow dot vivid.

Palms bell.

Continued.

Lu tap armrest; flick.

Thousand Blades out; chaos shield.

Waves rebound.

“Spirit tool?”

“Inferior to Gongsun’s.”

Lips.

Palm seized blood bell; crush.

Shatter.

Pfft!

Kingdom monks spat blood; dim slump.

Ding fell flee.

Lu silent.

Palm down.

Sky-cover chased ant Ding.

Golden Core Ding roar; Buddha seal blast.

Explode waves.

Useless.

Palm seized return.

Behind.

Mo Liuqi inhaled crush.

Simple palm all.

Yi Yue known; reverent.

Xu Chu fist thrill; Xiliang warriors revere strong—conquered.

Blades disperse; silver vanish chair.

Sat; gaze captured Ding.

Finger brow.

Buzz...

Impact; Ding howl twist.

Behind fuzzy soul eject.

Occupier.

Ding limp.

Lu calm fuzzy soul.

Calmed; refined Buddha white cassock clean.

Palms; smile Lu.

“Donor, cannot kill; nor can.”

White Buddha laugh.

“Why?”

“Seed; great one sows faith. Each linked soul. Death: wave hundred thousand times prior.”

“Expose world clear.”

Obvious.

Death: position out; high martial trace.

Gamble Lu dare not.

Unkillable soul; even Infant Transformation maybe not.

Lu smile: "Non-high; rules protect. Found—so?"

White palms smile.

"Wrong."

"Myriad mid birth one high. Means beyond frog well; joy rules."

"High destroy mid: thousand ways."

Lu interest lean: "Tianyuan your collapse?"

"Influenced Bitter; world-ender hand—one way?"

Slow.

White surprise: "Found?"

Lu disdain.

“To high Buddha, Bitter nothing. Will descend mask you?”

White palms mercy.

“Donor, Tianyuan near bliss pure land... ruined. Tianyuan sinner.”

“Seem save; eternal doom.”

Lu idiot gaze.

Tap: “How dispose?”

White smile.

Compromise.

“Amitabha. Unkill; let attach, build Buddha land, spread, believers... monitor expose.”

Serious.

Lu twitch laugh.

Fool?

Build spread...

Means + high back: overshadow Lu path.

Buddha ok.

Lu's own.

World his; no meddle.

No qualify.

Smile fade.

Indifferent.

“Dream on.”

White stiff.

Unexpected.

“Cannot kill; dare not.”

“So...”

Lu cut: “Great cannot descend; fearless.”

White frown: “Subordinates top mid; expose siege... still?”

“Rules limit great; not same mid.”

Imply.

But words end.

Lu eyes bright new continent.

“Top mid siege?”

Lips: “True?”

Odd.

White wise.

Deceive capable.

But Lu undecivable.

Silent.

Lu laugh understood.

Kill seed: attract siege.

Lu... desired.

"You..."

White rage.

Lu act!

Boom!

Tap; Phoenix Feather burst.

Fire tear Buddha.

Pfft!

Sliced; explode fragments.

Soon reform intact.

Laugh: "Cannot."

Lu brow.

Soul Phoenix slice shatter.

But recover?

High marvelous.

Hundred slashes.

Air fracture.

Reform...

Mock.

Lu irk.

Flick; white bone fire.

Envelop burn.

“Amitabha: not hell who?”

Chant kingdom.

Brainwashed royalty nobles tears devout.

Lu laugh.

Hypocrite.

Use him propagate...

Temper no.

Heaven fire unburn; high odd.

Pre-stele Lu unable.

But stele fused intents: soul easy.

Mind.

Sky change.

Bone fire calm Buddha face shift.

“Sequence intent?!”

Horror.

Lu flick.

Five Phoenix stack red sword.

Fourth Soul Extinguish!

Intent soul extinguish!

Swept.

Buddha fear slice.

“Cannot kill!”

“World catastrophe!”

“Sinner!”

Roar.

Pfft!

Extinguish intent Phoenix over.

“Why comprehend intent?! Why?!”

Roar; extinguish!

White Buddha light bloom; void gold lotus.

Enlarge...

Lu suppress fail.

Wave hundred thousand prior!

Space involve; unstoppable.

Lu lazy stop.

...

Endless void.

Deep eyes open swallow heavens.

“Seed... dead...”

“Dare cut faith!”

“Die!”

Cold void boom.

Eyes pierce void; dark bloom gold lotus.

...

Lotus light scatter half tea.

Quiet.

Ruined tower ground.

Xu, Mo, Yi soul unsettled Lu.

What...?

Ding woke.

Pale empty; belated wrong.

Crawled Lu.

"Young... Master..."

Pain.

“Monk wrong.”

Pain world enemy.

Lu glance.

No speak.

Around...

Royalty nobles tears crawl rage Lu.

Lu devil sinner!

“Buddha say world catastrophe!”

“Sinner! Buddha say sinner!”

“Die evil!”

Roar point fury.

Lu thousand fingers.

World sinner.

Ding pale.

Stood face shaven monks: “Young Master no sinner!”

“Monk sinner!”

None listen.

Fury spit Lu.

Ding cold.

Xu fist; barbarians rebel?!

Mo indifferent.

Yi kill intent glare.

Lu laugh.

“This Buddha your path?”

Ding cold shake.

“No...”

Own path.

“Good.”

“Expect day... your Buddha crush high Buddha.”

Ding pressure vast.

People curse.

Lu calm chair.

Chin scan cursers.

Watched...

Curses fade...

Silent needle drop.

Chapter 299: Severing the Dragon Qi, the Overlord’s Enlightenment

To the royals and nobles of the Peacock Kingdom, Lu was little more than a rumor—a young master from Great Zhou, a name whispered in distant lands. They had never laid eyes on the man himself.

So they cursed him freely, drawing courage from their faith in Buddha, letting their rage and fear spill out in a torrent of insults.

The white-robed youth in the wheelchair said nothing. He simply watched them, silent and unmoving.

One by one, the voices faltered and died.

An inexplicable chill settled over the crowd, as if an invisible glacier had descended, freezing their blood and locking their bones. Under Lu's gaze, each of them felt an enormous hand tighten around their throat, stealing their breath and their words.

"Do you really think you're qualified to judge whether I'm a sinner?"

Lu's voice was soft, almost lazy.

His fingers tapped lightly on the armrest of his wheelchair—tap, tap—each sound ringing clear across the desert like the toll of a death knell.

Mo Liuqi and Yiyue watched in cold indifference.

Xu Chu clenched his fists, eyes blazing with excitement and worship.

This was their Young Master Lu.

The unrivaled cultivator under heaven.

“Buddha has foretold...” the King of the Peacock Kingdom roared, bald head gleaming under the sun, “you will bring catastrophe to the world! The world will perish because of you!”

Lu propped his chin on one hand, flicked a finger against the armrest.

A silver flash.

The blade returned before anyone saw it leave.

The king’s roar cut off mid-breath. With a dull thud he collapsed to his knees, head bowed, lifeless eyes wide. Blood poured from the neat line across his neck.

In that instant, terror crushed every last shred of faith in their hearts.

The sound of knees hitting sand rose like a wave.

Lu gave a bored yawn, spun his wheelchair, and rolled slowly away from the Peacock Kingdom's border.

"You're Xu Chu, right?" he asked without looking back. "Can you clean up the rest?"

Xu Chu thumped his chest. "Leave it to me!"

Lu smiled faintly, reached out, and patted the man's belly as he passed. Then the Thousand-Bladed Chair vanished into the swirling yellow dust.

Mo Liuqi drew a deep breath as he watched Lu disappear.

Yiyue's emotions were far more complicated. She tightened her fists—she had to work harder.

Ding Jiudeng's pupils shrank to pinpricks; his whole body trembled. He wanted to shout that he was the real sinner, that everything was his fault.

But none of the Peacock nobles had spared him a glance. They had only wanted to curse Lu.

And Young Master Lu was not someone trash like them could curse.

Ding Jiudeng's eyes lost focus.

Xu Chu strode over. He had once admired the monk, but now only disappointment remained.

"No matter your reasons," Xu Chu growled, "consorting with foreigners is a stain on Xiliang's honor."

He jabbed a finger toward the kneeling Peacock nobles. "Are you pitying them?"

"When these people invaded Xiliang, burned our cities, slaughtered and plundered, did any of them pity the civilians drowning in blood and fire?"

"The little monks in your temple—why did they become orphans sold into slavery across the border? Because their parents died fighting these same Peacock soldiers!"

The more Xu Chu spoke, the louder and angrier he became. He, too, had lost family to these invaders.

Ding Jiudeng crumpled to the ground, speechless.

"All that cultivation," Xu Chu spat, "and you wasted it on a dog."

He turned his back on the monk and walked toward the kneeling nobles.

Two spiked iron balls clanged down from his back.

Whoosh—

The chains whirred as the massive weapons spun like windmills.

Step by step, the giant advanced.

Blood soaked the yellow sand.

Ding Jiudeng stared in a daze.

Mo Liuqi and Yiyue remained unmoved, their faces cold as frost.

Three days later, Xu Chu returned at the head of Xiliang's iron cavalry. With every royal and noble dead, the Peacock Kingdom offered no resistance.

The kingdom fell.

...

Lu paid none of it any mind. With all of Xiliang backing Xu Chu, cleaning up had never been in doubt.

He returned to Beiluo City, emerged from the Dragon Gate, and drifted across the lake to the island at its heart.

The island was as tranquil as ever.

On the second floor of the White Jade Pavilion, Lu settled into his Thousand-Bladed Chair and sank his consciousness into the preaching platform.

He began studying the formation he had copied from the Buddha's pagoda.

At first glance he had noticed something extraordinary: it involved space itself.

The eight Dragon Gates already contained traces of spatial manipulation to shorten distances, but this formation was different—deeper, more dangerous.

Lu constructed rune after rune in the air. They stacked and floated, soon forming an enormous spinning disk of light inscribed with ever-shifting symbols.

He rose into the air, narrowed his eyes, and stepped inside.

BOOM!

A terrifying suction yanked at his body.

The world flipped. For a moment he was lost in endless, directionless void.

When the formation ran out of energy and spat him back out, Lu landed cross-legged on the Eight Trigrams platform, frowning in thought.

“The spatial element in that pagoda is incomplete. It can’t form a proper teleportation array. Activate it, and you’re dragged into the endless void—no destination, no return.”

He refused to give up. For days he did nothing but study that broken spatial formation.

Every so often he would emerge, summon the Demon Lord’s clone, and play a game of chess—using the matches to accelerate the conversion of the spiritual energy he had proposed.

His cultivation rose steadily.

...

Meanwhile, the Overlord sat motionless before the Dao stele for an entire month.

At the Body Storage realm, circulating spiritual energy through the body's hidden reservoirs allowed one to forgo food and water entirely—the principle behind “abstaining from grains” in cultivation.

Inside the Nine Prisons Secret Realm, everything had changed.

Genius cultivators from the Tianyuan Region had poured in, and everyone already inside felt the pressure like a storm on the horizon.

The stone monument in the Village of the Dead updated constantly with unfamiliar names climbing at terrifying speed.

At first Kong Nanfei and Nie Changqing still held the top two spots.

But soon the native Five Phoenix cultivators began sliding down the ranks.

Cong Zha, once third, plummeted all the way to eighth.

“Feng Yilou (Tianyuan) — Progress: 190”

“Xiao Yue’er (Tianyuan) — Progress: 190”

“Zhong Nan (Tianyuan) — Progress: 190”

Soaking in the Pool of Rebirth, Cong Zha watched name after name surpass hers. Her long lashes trembled.

“The Nine Prisons are brutally difficult for Body Storage cultivators. Even someone at the peak like Jing Yue only reached around 180. To hit 190 you need at least a Golden Core Heavenly Lock... Are all these people Heavenly Lock experts?”

She crushed another blue spirit crystal; the energy drained and the crystal crumbled to dust.

The pool water churned.

Cong Zha stepped out, wrapped a white dress around her damp body, and took out a red spirit crystal.

She had tried many times before—mostly getting more blue crystals or a single bottle of Qi Condensation pills.

This time, though, her eyes lit up.

Something different emerged from the light.

Not a crystal.

Curious, she pulled out the object: a bamboo scroll.

Disappointment flickered across her face—she had hoped for a chance to comprehend the Dao stele. Those were impossibly rare.

She unrolled the scroll.

Profound-tier low-grade offensive technique: Iceheart Moon Slash.

Her disappointment vanished instantly. According to the Young Master, techniques and arts were ranked Heaven, Earth, Profound, and Yellow.

Everything she had used before was merely Yellow tier.

Now she held a genuine Profound-tier skill.

From that moment on, Cong Zha devoted herself entirely to mastering Iceheart Moon Slash.

In the first prison city, Qin Guang City, Kong Nanfei staggered back from yet another failed soul attack, drenched in sweat.

He stared at the monument—dozens of new names had nearly caught up to him.

“Who are these people...?”

Anyone who reached this far had to be at least Golden Core.

Had that many Golden Core experts suddenly flooded the secret realm?

Nie Changqing, on the other hand, felt only fighting spirit when he saw those familiar names.

“They really came.”

His gaze locked on Feng Yilou, the monstrous genius from Martial Emperor City who had always pressured him.

When Du Longyang and the others appeared, Nie Changqing had suspected the rest would follow. Reality had proven him right.

He took a deep breath and charged into Qin Guang City’s soul trial once more.

...

Before the Dao stele, the Overlord continued his silent vigil.

Sweat beaded on his forehead; blood threaded the whites of his eyes. He looked half-mad.

Many shook their heads and sighed at the lonely figure.

Liu Yuanhao was secretly delighted—the longer the Overlord failed, the better.

Liu had only comprehended a sixth-grade Dao intent, but even that had dramatically increased his strength. He was now confident he could take the Overlord in a fight.

Let the man sit there forever and comprehend nothing.

Word spread quickly: the Overlord had gained nothing after an entire month before the stele.

Imperial City.

Luo Mingsang heard the news and worry creased her beautiful face.

She paced her palace chambers, staring at drifting clouds for a long time before letting out a soft sigh.

She ordered a carriage prepared and set off for Wolong Ridge.

She remembered this place vividly—the man who had once stood against ten thousand soldiers, carving a river of blood through the enemy ranks.

Back then he had been unstoppable, full of fire and ambition.

Now he was blocked, the brightest star of the cultivation era dimming, on the verge of falling.

Watching the scenery flash past the carriage window, a thousand emotions surged in her heart.

She knew the knot in his heart.

It was both a promise and a chain.

When her carriage appeared at the entrance to Wolong Ridge Secret Realm, many noticed.

The heads of the great families recognized her; their expressions turned strange.

Everyone knew her relationship with the Overlord—and that she had been planted by the philosopher Kong Xiu as a spy at his side.

Yet no one mocked the Overlord.

Even heroes fell for beauty.

But the fact remained: his cultivation had stalled.

He had sat before the Dao stele for a full month with nothing to show for it.

Others had already grasped Dao intents—even Mo Tianyu, who hadn't won a comprehension slot, had obtained fourth-grade intent!

Most now believed the Overlord would fade into mediocrity in this new era of cultivators.

Luo Mingsang stepped down from the carriage, skirts gathered in her hands.

She ignored the stares and looked toward the lonely figure beneath the Dao stele.

“My Lord,” she called softly.

The Overlord's motionless body shuddered. Slowly he opened bloodshot eyes filled with frustration and exhaustion.

He turned and saw the face he had avoided for so long.

“Mingsang...”

Luo Mingsang smiled gently. “My Lord, you’re finally willing to look at me.”

Silence.

Then she began walking forward—straight into the pressure zone of the first prison gate.

Immense pressure slammed down on her.

She grunted, face going deathly pale.

She was no great cultivator.

“What are you doing?! Get back!” the Overlord roared.

She only smiled and kept walking. “Do you remember this place, my Lord...?”

“That day, watching you hold the line against an army alone, I felt safer than I ever had. But I always understood—you never truly wanted to conquer the world. You wanted to chase the Dao.”

Every step brought more pressure. Blood trickled from the corner of her mouth.

If she continued, her organs would rupture.

She stopped speaking. Countless memories flooded her eyes.

The Overlord who had once carried his Ganqi axes and looked down on the world with unmatched arrogance.

Beneath the stele, the man with blood-streaked eyes grew frantic.

“My Lord... follow your heart.”

Luo Mingsang wiped the blood from her lips, swaying as she stood straight, voice soft but resolute.

To the Overlord, those words struck like thunder.

Follow his heart?

In an instant, his entire life flashed before him.

In the era of martial artists, he had been a heaven-defying prodigy, the youngest grandmaster, invincible in battle.

In the era of cultivators, he had walked the waves to Beiluo, sought audience in White Jade Pavilion, pursued the Qi Core, charged into Body Storage...

Every breakthrough had been agony, every step paid for in blood and pain.

Yet he had never stopped. He had loved it.

That was his true heart.

Dragon qi surged behind him.

The Overlord began to laugh.

That dragon qi represented imperial authority—but to him it had become nothing but shackles.

His heart demon was not just Luo Mingsang; it was the choice between power and the Dao.

The dragon qi was a thick fog obscuring his path.

Her words were the blade that cut through the fog and shattered his chains.

A wild grin split his stubbled face.

His eyes sharpened with new determination.

Luo Mingsang could walk no farther. Two soldiers from the Xiang Army braved the pressure to carry her out.

The Overlord gazed at her deeply, then closed his eyes.

ROAR!

Golden dragon qi exploded from his back.

Seated on the prayer mat, demonic black qi boiled around him as he laughed.

The golden dragon coiled in the sky and bellowed at him in fury.

“Imperial dragon qi...”

The Overlord’s laughter grew louder.

From the moment he had obtained it, the dragon qi had weighed on him like duty made manifest.

At first it had slightly boosted his combat strength. But as time passed, it helped him rule yet shrouded his cultivation path in mist, leaving him lost.

Today he would choose.

He raised his hand. Demonic qi condensed into a black axe.

No more hesitation.

One swing—

He severed the dragon qi!

To the onlookers, the golden dragon qi peeled away from his body in sheets, rising into the sky as a true golden dragon that roared across the heavens before vanishing.

Before the Dao stele, the Overlord sat free and unburdened.

Torrents of demonic qi surged. His aura climbed higher and higher...

His spine thundered. Blood and qi roared like a storm.

BOOM!

His eyes snapped open, sharp as blades. He stared at the stele as realization crashed through his mind like a tidal wave.

His soul itself trembled.

His Dao intent...

He had grasped it!

Chapter 300: Third-Sequence Intent — Unyielding!

Endless darkness enveloped the Overlord.

He stood tall, gazing at the sky where the severed imperial dragon qi scattered like fading smoke.

Everything in the world was fleeting as clouds—why cling to obsessions?

A true demonic cultivator followed his nature and acted without restraint.

Enlightenment bloomed in the Overlord's heart.

In the distant heavens, he glimpsed a towering figure slowly turning its head.

When the Demon Lord looked back, it felt as though the entire world was crumbling around him.

Demons are born from the heart!

The Overlord shattered the shackles within his soul, breaking free from chains that had bound him for far too long.

A wave of joy and liberation surged through his chest like a gushing spring.

His spine roared like a dragon with every thunderous pulse.

The cultivation that had stagnated for so long finally shattered its barriers—he stepped into the Heavenly Lock Realm!

And with his newfound mindset, his blood and qi boiled violently, tempering his spine with relentless fury.

He had already refined his Body Storage Realm to the absolute limit. The moment he broke through, that ferocious blood qi tempered several vertebrae in rapid succession.

He directly entered the Second Stage of Heavenly Lock—without even undergoing the tribulation yet.

Once he survived the Heavenly Lock Tribulation and bathed in the origin feedback, he would rise even higher.

...

The Overlord's transformation shook everyone atop Wolong Ridge.

Some looked up to see black clouds gathering overhead, thick with churning lightning.

Someone was about to face tribulation—but because of the Dao stele's presence, the tribulation clouds could not descend.

“The Overlord has broken through!”

“The man who was stuck for so long has finally stepped into Heavenly Lock!”

“The Overlord is back—the true hegemon of Xiliang has returned!”

...

The heads of the great families watched with complicated emotions.

The axe-wielding, god-like demon of war had returned!

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and the others stared in astonishment.

“What terrifying momentum... Breaking into Golden Core, yet it feels like years of accumulated power finally exploding.”

“This man has the makings of the top of the Human List.”

Du Longyang sighed in admiration.

With his Nascent Soul Transformation cultivation, he could clearly sense the metamorphosis occurring within the Overlord—a transformation of the heart and mind.

Such changes were crucial for cultivators.

Some heaven-defying geniuses spent half their lives haunted by a single doubt.

If they couldn't break through that doubt, they might never advance another step.

Du Longyang and the others understood this deeply—they had lived it.

As Nascent Soul Transformation experts, they too felt lost on their path forward, shrouded in thick fog they could not pierce.

That was why they had remained stuck at this stage for so long.

But this Overlord had faced such a trial early, solidified his heart, and now his future path would be unstoppable—like a mountain-splitting blade!

Young Master Tianxu rolled his eyes at Du Longyang. “Give it a rest. You say that about everyone.”

“The current top of the Human List is Zhong Nan from the Absolute Blade Sect. That kid is a true monster—his blade intent rivals Ye Shoudao’s, his combat power is insane. Eight revolutions in Golden Core, yet he can fight Nascent Souls!”

“You really think this guy measures up to Zhong Nan?”

Ye Shoudao’s usually expressionless face cracked into a faint smile. Zhong Nan was his disciple—his pride and joy.

It was rare for Tianxu to praise anyone.

The Empress glanced over, red lips curving slightly. “Don’t underestimate this world. Their cultivation may be low now, but the foundation Young Master Lu built for them is terrifyingly solid.”

“They grow fast. The future... who knows?”

Her words silenced Ye Shoudao and Tianxu.

She was right.

Many cultivators they had met in the Five Phoenixes had absurdly stable foundations.

Nie Changqing, Kong Nanfei, the painter Sima Qingshan, Jing Yue...

Their foundations were rock-solid. In terms of talent, they were not far behind the monsters on Tianyuan’s Human List.

“I said he has the makings of the top of the Human List, so he does. Have I ever been wrong?” Du Longyang huffed.

Then he fell silent and stared at the Dao stele.

He—and everyone else—was dying to know what kind of Dao intent the Overlord had comprehended.

The Overlord sat cross-legged on the prayer mat, his robes fluttering without wind.

Luo Mingsang's face was pale as paper. Though she cultivated, most of her time and energy had been spent governing Xiliang for him.

Her cultivation was only at the second or third stage of Qi Core.

Walking that far under the first prison gate's pressure had injured her organs to varying degrees.

But seeing the Overlord succeed filled her with joy.

As expected, what he truly loved was pursuing the heart of cultivation. Power and dragon qi had only ever been obstacles to him.

Her long lashes trembled as happiness for him welled up in her heart.

"May you one day stand at the pinnacle of cultivation."

"In this era of cultivators, if you are strong enough... Xiliang will endure for eternity."

She whispered to herself.

In the distance, Liu Yuanhao's eyes narrowed. His fists clenched, his face cold with fury.

The Overlord... had actually comprehended a Dao intent after all?!

Liu Yuanhao had not forgotten his mission—the Black Dragon Cult's mission.

His gaze shifted to the paper-pale Luo Mingsang.

...

“It's here!”

“Words are appearing on the Dao stele! What is the Overlord's Dao intent?!”

“It can't be that strong. Ever since the cultivation era began, the Overlord has lost his dominance...”

Murmurs filled the air.

Then the intent appeared on the stele.

And every voice died instantly.

Everyone held their breath, staring in disbelief.

The Overlord slowly opened his eyes and looked up.

“Xiang Shaoyun, Third-Sequence Dao Intent: Unyielding Intent.”

Third-Sequence.

Actually third-sequence!

The entire ridge fell deathly silent—even the Nascent Soul Transformation experts like Du Longyang and Tianxu lost their composure.

“How is this possible...?”

The Empress's red lips parted in shock. She had only managed fifth-sequence herself.

Just how powerful was third-sequence?!

Du Longyang's eyes blazed with excitement.

Ye Shoudao's blade intent surged uncontrollably, as if it wanted to cleave the heavens.

Buzz...

Du Longyang moved.

In a flash, he entered the pressure zone of the ninth prison gate, standing close to the Overlord, staring intently at both man and stele.

After a few seconds of silence...

Wolong Ridge exploded.

“My god! Third-sequence Dao intent?!”

“The first third-sequence ever! The Overlord is still the Overlord—the true king has returned!”

“Third-sequence must have its own tiers too—we still don’t know where exactly he stands within it!”

All the family heads shot to their feet.

With this intent revealed, the power structure of the world was about to change forever.

Standing beside Tang Xiansheng, Tang Yimo’s face trembled.

“Third-sequence...”

His expression was complicated.

His own protective Dao intent was only fifth-sequence.

Of course, deep down he felt a twinge of regret.

If he had comprehended a true guardian intent instead of protection, he might have reached third-sequence too—on par with the Overlord’s Unyielding.

The Overlord looked up at the words on the stele.

A stubbled grin spread across his face.

“Unyielding Intent...”

He exhaled deeply. The clouds had parted; the moon had emerged. Perhaps this misfortune had been a blessing in disguise.

Du Longyang stood at the ninth gate and suddenly laughed. “Du Longyang of Martial Emperor City, Nascent Soul Transformation realm. Will you join my city? Your Unyielding Intent perfectly aligns with our teachings.”

The moment the words left his mouth—

Tianxu, Ye Shoudao, and the Empress all changed expressions.

“Du Longyang, have some shame!” Tianxu shouted.

The three vanished and reappeared beside Du Longyang in an instant, faces serious.

“If I’m not mistaken, you walk the path of following your nature,” Tianxu declared. “My Tianxu Palace is exactly that—no rules, no restraints, just pure freedom. Far better than Martial Emperor City’s rigid dogma. Take me as your master, and I guarantee you the top of the Human List!”

Ye Shoudao and the Empress opened their mouths... then closed them.

They had nothing to say against such shamelessness.

The Overlord stood up and looked at Du Longyang and Tianxu in confusion.

“Nascent Soul Transformation?”

“The realm above Heavenly Lock?” he asked.

Du Longyang shook his head. “What you call Heavenly Lock is Golden Core. Above Golden Core is Nascent Soul. Above Nascent Soul... is Nascent Soul Transformation.”

The Overlord narrowed his eyes.

So the path of cultivation stretched even further than he had imagined!

He had only just stepped into Heavenly Lock, and already the realm felt vast and difficult.

Yet there were still Nascent Soul and Nascent Soul Transformation above it.

Young Master Lu had been right—the path was long, and he had only just begun.

As for these people trying to take him as a disciple, the Overlord wasn't surprised.

Third-sequence intent—even he hadn't expected it.

“You want me as your disciple?”

He narrowed his eyes further.

“What can you teach me? Can you help me defeat Young Master Lu?”

Silence.

The air turned awkward.

The Empress covered her mouth and laughed, then vanished—she was staying out of this.

Ye Shoudao turned expressionlessly and left. He hadn't tried to recruit the man anyway; no loss of face.

Du Longyang and Tianxu both coughed dryly.

Defeat Young Master Lu?

This guy really dared to dream.

Du Longyang shook his head seriously. "Impossible."

"Even we are no match for Young Master Lu. Defeating him... is far too difficult."

The Overlord wasn't surprised.

He knew exactly how terrifying Lu was.

Lu Ping'an of White Jade Pavilion—a true monster.

But then Tianxu's eyes lit up.

“What are you afraid of?! You have third-sequence intent! Under my guidance, you'll ascend sooner or later—punch Du Longyang, step on Lu Ping'an, easy!”

“Your intent might even be stronger than Lu Ping'an's! What can't you suppress?!”

Du Longyang's face darkened.

But the Overlord's eyes brightened.

Yeah... what was there to fear?

What is a demon? One who follows his heart and acts without restraint—that is a demon!

A demon fears nothing!

...

Beiluo, Lake Heart Island.

The Overlord had comprehended a third-sequence Dao intent.

Lu's soul stele registered the fluctuation, but he was in the zone and ignored it.

His thousands of simulations on the preaching platform had finally borne fruit regarding the spatial formation from the Buddhist tower.

Now all that remained was manifesting it in reality.

At first, he had treated it as a teleportation array—space usually meant distance, after all.

But the deeper he delved, the more he realized space wasn't limited to distance.

He changed direction—and succeeded.

Suddenly, Lu's brow arched.

Someone was provoking him?

He exited the preaching platform.

Lines of fate danced before his eyes.

The image of Young Master Tianxu spitting as he boasted filled his vision.

Lu smiled.

A smile that didn't reach his eyes.

Third-sequence intent from the Overlord—excellent. Lu was surprised and delighted.

But the one who comprehended it was the Overlord, not you, Tianxu.

Why were you the one getting cocky?

Punching Du Longyang, stomping on Lu Ping'an...

How many drinks did it take to get this drunk?

Lu chuckled coldly.

His soul vortex spun.

The next moment, he raised a hand toward Wolong Ridge.

He acted—not for any grand reason.

Just to get a little justice for Du Longyang.

...

Tianxu saw the Overlord wavering and grew excited.

“Believe in yourself! You can suppress Lu Ping’an!”

“If a man has no dreams, how is he different from a salted fish?!”

Du Longyang’s face grew darker and darker.

In the distance, the Empress covered her face, speechless.

Ye Shoudao’s cheek twitched as he stared at Tianxu like he was an idiot.

Tianxu opened his mouth to continue—

Then his expression changed.

Dark clouds suddenly boiled in the sky, descending with oppressive might.

BOOM!

The clouds formed a colossal palm that blotted out the heavens.

The Overlord saw it and all the fire in his eyes vanished.

He would follow his heart...

Young Master Lu was invincible.

Sensing the terrifying aura within that heavenly palm, the Overlord instantly retracted all bold thoughts.

Tianxu's face twitched.

He shot into the sky, red robes flapping like banners.

In a blink, he flew dozens of miles away.

Only when he was clear of Wolong Ridge did he turn back and shout seriously:

"Brother Lu! Not the face!"

The heavenly palm slammed down.

BOOM!

Mountains shook. Birds scattered in panic.

Everyone on Wolong Ridge felt the earth tremble and exchanged stunned glances.

...

Lake Heart Island.

Lu leaned back in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, expression calm—as if he had done something utterly trivial.

“Unyielding Intent...”

“Interesting. An indomitable will, an undying heart. Losing a thousand battles yet rising again—this is a Dao intent made for taking beatings.”

Lu's lips curved in amusement.

A third-sequence intent had appeared—he was naturally pleased.

Within his soul vortex, the stele glowed.

His fourth-sequence Soul Extinguishing Intent began merging with the new third-sequence Unyielding Intent.

This fusion took far longer than any before.

While it proceeded, Lu turned his attention to manifesting the spatial formation in reality.

He raised a hand. Liquid from the origin lake condensed and compressed rapidly.

It formed an amber stone.

Ghostfire burned. The stone melted into a viscous fluid.

Lu's spiritual sense surged, etching the formation into it...

Soon, the amber solidified into a thumb ring.

Warm against his skin, Lu slipped it onto his thumb and activated it with a thought.

A vast space unfolded within the ring.

He withdrew his mind, then with another thought, made the Spirit Pressure Chessboard vanish into the ring's inner space.

A third thought brought it back to his palm.

He tested it over a dozen times before stopping, satisfied.

"A legendary storage spirit tool... This formation gave me quite the pleasant surprise."

Lu murmured.

Then—

His eyes widened.

His soul trembled.

Within his soul vortex, the Dao stele thundered with earth-shaking force!

The fusion...

Was complete!