

Starlit Path 321

Chapter 321: Mortals Should Accept Their Place as Mortals

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

The island was serene, a gentle breeze whispering through, rustling the grass with soft susurrations.

In the bamboo grove, leaves swayed like an ocean, producing a melodious harmony that blended perfectly.

Lu Fan sat in the Thousand Blades Chair, jade crown atop his head, clad in white robes.

Leaning back, he fingered the Mysterious Ring on his thumb, a faint smile playing on his lips.

"Interesting... Defying Fate intent clashing with Unyielding intent produced an unexpected result."

Lu murmured with a chuckle.

Mo Tianyu's cultivation differed from the norm. He could advance step by step, but it demanded far more effort than usual.

Beyond standard breakthroughs, Mo Tianyu had a maverick path: reversing hexagrams!

Defying heaven to alter fate, going against the divination.

It felt like shattering shackles.

By breaking predetermined destiny, he achieved breakthroughs.

The greater the reversal's difficulty, the better the outcome.

This time, Mo Tianyu had pulled off something massive.

Without him, the Overlord would be truly dead, his soul dragged into the Nine Prisons Gate.

The Nine Prisons Gate wasn't just a simple cultivation secret realm; it was Lu's creation... a domain to harbor the souls of the dead.

Much like a reincarnation hell.

But with Lu's current power, crafting a full reincarnation world was still too challenging.

Yet, Lu believed that with growth, the Nine Prisons Secret Realm could evolve into a true reincarnation hell, cycling the souls of all beings in the Five Phoenixes world.

"Still... Mo Tianyu's Defying Fate intent is one thing."

"Pulling the Overlord from the grasp of the Nine Kings in the Necropolis? Mo Tianyu couldn't do that alone. It was more guidance and a call—the Overlord's own will did the rest."

"The Overlord manifesting the Demon Lord with demonic qi... he borrowed the Demon Lord's momentum to break the Nine Prisons' chains and revive."

Lu smiled.

In a way, the Overlord had borrowed his momentum.

The Demon Lord was Lu's avatar, and the Nine Kings were his creations. Facing the Demon Lord, they hesitated, giving the Overlord his opening.

In truth, the Overlord's demonic qi Demon Lord was just an empty shell.

"A little trickery, but no big deal..."

Lu tapped his armrest lightly.

He was curious, though—what collisions would follow between the Five Phoenixes Continent and Tianyuan?

Tianyuan, a well-developed top-tier mid-level martial world—not the pinnacle, but a massive boon for the current Five Phoenixes.

And with the spread of dao intents...

The Empress, Du Longyang, and others grew stronger comprehending them, as did Tianyuan's overall power.

Controlling the Thousand Blades Chair, he strolled leisurely across the island.

Ni Yu and Ning Zhao wanted to watch the Overlord's aftermath in the Universal Mirror.

But cultivation time arrived; the image cut off abruptly.

Ni Yu smacked her lips, reluctant to set down the mirror.

Ning Zhao showed no attachment, rising to cultivate on her own.

The Overlord had grown stronger...

She needed to catch up fast.

Young Master said when White Jade Capital reemerged, if she wasn't invincible, she'd embarrass him.

Thinking this...

Ning Zhao felt immense pressure.

Unlike Ni Yu, now the world's top alchemist, Ning Zhao's path was pure strength—many surpassed her.

...

Grains of sand rolled.

The Overlord, revived from death, erupted with extreme combat power. Headless yet demonic, breaking into Seven Extremes Heavenly Lock, he outlasted Zhou Haisheng until the man died of exhaustion.

The atmosphere turned deathly quiet.

Everyone stared at Zhou Haisheng's bowed, lifeless head, then at the Overlord collapsed on the ground, heart thundering like collapsing mountains. They gasped in unison.

Rumble!

Terrifying thunderclouds gathered in the sky.

Someone was crossing a Heavenly Lock tribulation!

Many eyes shifted to the figure below.

There, Kong Nanfei's tattered scholarly robes fluttered wildly in the wind, while Mo Tianyu's hair scattered like dandelion seeds.

Mo Tianyu was transcending the tribulation!

Jing Yue and others were stunned.

Nie Changqing nodded knowingly—of course, the Overlord's revival was Mo Tianyu's doing.

His methods... terrifying.

Defying Fate intent!

Was this its fearsome power?

Nie Changqing suddenly felt envy. After this, he should focus on comprehending dao intent.

But it wasn't easy; even qualification was rare and elusive.

Many from Tianyuan Domain turned their attention.

Heavenly Lock tribulations were commonplace now.

Mo Tianyu passed with some shocks but no real danger.

Though lightning charred him black, smoke rising... he survived.

"Old Kong, quick... get me out of here!"

Mo Tianyu glanced at Feng Yilou's cold stare from afar.

His face changed; he urged Kong Nanfei.

Kong Nanfei grabbed him without hesitation, hauling Meng Haoran as they fled swiftly.

Elsewhere...

Western Liang powerhouses swarmed in.

They supported the Overlord's massive frame, retrieving his severed head.

The Xiang Family Army soldiers exchanged glances—what now?

The King's head was gone, yet he lived... how to proceed?

Tianyuan powerhouses eyed Western Liang deeply.

Many departed.

Affair concluded, no point lingering; better to venture the Nine Prisons Secret Realm for comprehension qualifications.

Zhong Nan, Xiao Yue'er left.

Hidden Nascent Soul experts vanished like wind.

But undercurrents stirred quietly.

Even with the Overlord beheaded, White Jade Capital hadn't intervened...

The Five Phoenixes might face Tianyuan's full oppression next.

Yellow sands rolled in the desert.

Soon, Zhou Haisheng's cold corpse was buried under thick layers.

No one claimed it.

His status was tricky.

Tianyuan cultivators avoided touching him—pawns to test White Jade Capital, they feared karma and future reckoning.

Five Phoenixes cultivators dared not— a Nascent Soul's body might hold traps.

Suddenly...

The sweeping sands froze.

A figure floated in.

An elderly man in loose robes, vigorous despite age.

He landed before Zhou Haisheng, sighing at the lifeless form, Nascent Soul energy cracked and dry.

"Why bother?"

"You could have retreated and risen again... why fight to this end?"

The elder sighed.

He swept his sleeve; robes enveloped the corpse, whisking it away.

Sands rolled, leaving only dried bloodstains.

...

Outside Wolong Ridge.

Heavenly Mechanism Pavilion.

The tapping of a bamboo staff on ground halted abruptly.

Then, eyes opened slowly... gleaming with unusual light.

"The Overlord battles a Nascent Soul, finding life in nine deaths! Defying fate triumphs over Nascent Soul! Congratulations!"

Lü Mudui grinned, revealing gap-toothed smile.

He had a beauty fetch 玄黄 paper, dip in chicken blood, and write the Overlord's feats.

Sent via Heavenly Mechanism Pigeon worldwide.

The pigeons spread news lightning-fast; soon the world knew.

Great families, powers—all received it.

The Overlord defeated a Nascent Soul?

Shock rippled.

The Overlord invincible—Heavenly Lock Golden Core slays Nascent Soul!

A miracle!

Southern Command.

Tang Xiansheng read the pigeon message, his wrinkled face twitching.

"The Overlord... won?"

Unexpected.

Initially, when the Nascent Soul targeted him, Tang Xiansheng was pessimistic.

He guessed Lu and White Jade Capital wouldn't act.

The Overlord might sacrifice to usher Tianyuan's suppression era.

But victory surprised and relieved him.

After all, the Overlord was Five Phoenixes' own.

Represented them.

"Five Phoenixes, Tianyuan..."

Tang Xiansheng watered flowers, droplets sparkling.

Competing, progressing mutually?

He smiled wistfully—Young Master Lu's vision surpassed his.

Northern Command.

Tai Ridge, Asking Heaven Peak.

Dantai Xuan clenched fists at the message.

Rivals with the Overlord, but his erasure by Nascent Soul would choke him—fox mourns rabbit.

This outcome was perfect; the Overlord's battle boosted Five Phoenixes' momentum.

Dantai Xuan foresaw Tianyuan cultivators unleashing dominance soon.

But it proved Five Phoenixes could fight back!

In the distance...

Xue Tao rushed over.

"My King!"

He cupped hands, excited.

"Traced the 'Black Dragon Cult.' Liu Yuanhao leads remnants, planning to cross Tianhan Pass, leave the domain, enter the boundless desert..."

Xue Tao reported.

Dantai Xuan frowned.

"Liu Yuanhao dreams big—boundless desert means freedom..."

"But with world transformation, powerful beasts emerged... plus the repelled Maton Kingdom. Black Dragon Cult's days will be tough."

"Yet with Liu Yuanhao's cunning, he might control the beasts, even Maton—becoming a major threat."

Dantai Xuan paced the peak.

Breeze whispered.

"Xue Tao!"

"Here!"

Xue Tao bowed solemnly.

"Lead one thousand Xuanwu Guards—annihilate the Black Dragon Cult! No crossing Tianhan Pass!"

Dantai Xuan ordered.

"One thousand Xuanwu Guards—can we capture Liu Yuanhao?!"

Confidence flashed in Xue Tao's eyes as commander.

"Yes!"

...

In a barren Northern Command valley.

Black Dragon Cult remnants hid.

"Cult Leader... Great Xuan's forces hunt us relentlessly. We're trapped; surfacing means pursuit. We may not reach Tianhan Pass."

A douli-hatted Black Dragon Guard reported to Liu Yuanhao.

Campfire flickered.

Liu Yuanhao stood hands clasped, staring at flames, face impassive.

Events had spiraled beyond expectation.

Great Xuan's aggression—to eradicate them—was unforeseen.

Why the insistence?

"This Leader never provoked Great Xuan... has Dantai Xuan lost his mind?!"

Liu Yuanhao snarled, cold white flames coiling.

The Overlord was Great Xuan's enemy; targeting him should please them, yet Dantai Xuan hounded him.

Now, even fleeing via Tianhan Pass was denied.

"Fine Dantai Xuan..."

Liu Yuanhao clapped mockingly.

"Cult Leader... what now?"

"We'll be cornered and die."

A Black Dragon Guard urged.

"Even cornered dogs jump... Dantai Xuan's too arrogant."

Liu Yuanhao raised a hand; white flames surged with chilling vapor.

He stood, scanning.

Cultists stared hopefully.

He pointed at one Black Dragon Guard.

"You lead the rest to break for Tianhan Pass..."

"You come with this Leader..."

Liu Yuanhao said.

The guard blinked. "Cult Leader... what for?"

Liu Yuanhao gazed outside; red dawn rose slowly on the horizon.

"Dantai Xuan's arrogant... but does he think he's the Overlord?"

"The Overlord has peerless cultivation... but you, Dantai Xuan?"

"A mortal untouched by immortal fate, even as Northern Xuan King, remains mortal..."

"Now is the era of cultivators! Mortals should accept their place as mortals!"

Killing intent gleamed coldly in Liu Yuanhao's eyes.

Black Dragon Guards and cultists breathed heavily.

They sensed his madness.

"You and I assassinate the Northern Xuan King!"

Liu Yuanhao squinted at the guard.

Silence engulfed the valley.

Then... heavy breaths.

Assassinate the Northern Xuan King...

The Leader had gone mad!

This would churn the Five Phoenixes' waters!

But then...

The Northern Xuan King, severed from immortal fate... perhaps assassin's prey?!

...

Outside Wolong Ridge.

Nine Phoenixes Institute's blessed land.

At the mountain's base.

Spiritual qi formed mist, swirling like thick milk.

A carriage rolled slowly.

Neighs echoed.

Then, from the carriage, Bai Qingniao emerged, Little Phoenix One—now plumper—perched on her head.

Chi Lian and Jiang Li followed.

Jiang Li's heart shook; witnessing the Overlord vs. Zhou Haisheng taught cultivation truths—strength was everything.

Back at Nine Phoenixes Institute, Bai Qingniao beamed; it was home, her peaceful haven.

Feeding chickens, simmering soup, cultivating... carefree days she cherished.

"Uncle Jiang, hurry back to Nine Phoenixes Institute—Qingniao will make chicken soup for you."

Bai Qingniao hopped excitedly.

Jiang Li smiled.

Chi Lian pursed lips.

"Sister Chi Lian gets some too!"

Bai Qingniao said earnestly.

Chi Lian's eyes curved into crescents.

No more killing, no battlefields... this life seemed nice.

But Chi Lian glanced at Jiang Li; beneath his smile lurked depth.

Bai Qingniao missed it, but sensitive Chi Lian, following him years, sensed it.

Suddenly...

Jiang Li halted.

Little Phoenix One on Bai Qingniao's head raised its head, looking one way.

Jiang Li followed—afar, a hunched figure with bamboo staff approached slowly.

"Grandmaster?"

Jiang Li froze.

Mo Beike's heavy eye bags twitched; wrinkles creased into a smile. Seeing Jiang Li, he set down the staff, dusted robes, cupped hands:

"General Jiang, long time no see."

At the foot of the mountain.

They gazed across; a breeze stirred thick white mist.

Bai Qingniao's joyful smile faded bit by bit as she watched them.

Chapter 322: Can the King's Head Be Reattached?

Mo Beike's arrival shattered the tranquility of the Nine Phoenixes Institute.

Jiang Li smiled and invited him up to the institute. Though Bai Qingniao's face remained sour the whole way, Jiang Li could only smile bitterly inside and pretend not to notice.

Mo Beike knew full well Bai Qingniao disliked him, so he chatted only with Jiang Li along the path.

Once at the Nine Phoenixes Institute...

It truly was just a simple little courtyard.

Enclosed by a bamboo fence, forming a modest yard.

At the center stood a small bamboo building—not luxurious, but with the humble charm of a farmhouse.

Mo Beike was taken aback, not expecting this.

The "One Institute" of One Institute, Two Nations, Three Sects, Four Pavilions was really such a plain place.

Jiang Li and Mo Beike talked extensively.

From sunrise to sunset, they grew more engrossed.

Bai Qingniao, apron-wrapped, wiped her water-stained hands.

In the yard, under the sunset's glow, Little Phoenix One chased and pecked at Little Phoenix Two and Three, along with a few bewildered chicks.

Night fell.

Reluctantly, Bai Qingniao served Mo Beike a bowl of chicken soup.

The clear broth had little oil but exuded an irresistible rich aroma.

Jiang Li sipped blissfully—he adored Bai Qingniao's chicken soup.

Mo Beike lifted the bowl, inhaling deeply; the intense fragrance filled his nose.

He couldn't even identify the herbs used.

One sip: rich chicken flavor blended with unique herbal freshness, warming from mouth to throat, lungs, chest—like admiring a blooming udumbara flower.

"Excellent soup!"

Mo Beike praised.

Bai Qingniao huffed.

"My soup—even Young Master Lu raves about it!"

She declared.

Mo Beike smiled broadly, nodding repeatedly.

In the yard...

Little Phoenix One, Two, and Three played, then suddenly fought.

Little Phoenix One transformed into a fire phoenix, flames blazing half the sky. Two and Three refused to yield, joining the fray.

They ended up beaten by One anyway.

But their actions showed unyielding spirit.

Life at the Nine Phoenixes Institute was truly peaceful.

Peaceful enough to make one linger and forget return.

Mo Beike sipped contentedly, thinking this.

But alas...

The world's tides were shifting; one couldn't control their fate.

...

Dongyang Commandery.

Martial Emperor City Branch.

An old daoist carried Zhou Haisheng's corpse back to the grand hall.

He cupped hands toward the hall's interior.

After a long wait, a phantom flickered.

Du Longyang, in training attire, appeared and descended step by step.

"City Lord."

The loose-robed elder bowed.

Du Longyang nodded slightly, eyes on Zhou Haisheng.

After a pause, he sighed.

"Lifespan exhausted, Nascent Soul energy shattered, soul extinguished..."

"Forced to burn out completely."

Du Longyang said.

The elder sighed too. "Sect Leader Zhou had already won, but the opponent suddenly revived, breaking two realms in a row, combat power soaring. Amplified by a third-sequence dao intent, he drained every bit of Zhou's Nascent Soul energy."

"Sequence dao intent..."

"A entirely new path, profoundly deep, terrifyingly amplifying combat. Higher tier, greater boost. Zhou only lost regrettably."

Du Longyang explained.

The elder hesitated.

Finally, gritting teeth, bowed: "City Lord, is dao intent... truly that important?"

Du Longyang, hands clasped behind, glanced at him—he knew the question.

"Great Elder... you've been at perfected Nascent Soul for centuries, soon assaulting Infant Transformation. But beyond that, the only path is sequence dao intent."

"I don't know how high martial worlds cultivate past Infant Transformation, but... this seat knows dao intent absolutely breaks through!"

Du Longyang stated.

The elder's eyes flashed with realization.

"Sequence dao intent divides by Nascent Soul strength too: initial comprehension, minor completion, major completion, perfection..."

"Each level qualitatively transforms the intent's power."

Du Longyang inhaled deeply.

"Now, this seat's dao intent understanding is still 'initial comprehension.' I foresee minor completion condensing a 'Yin God Dao Lotus,' entering Three Gods Realm!"

His words shocked the Great Elder profoundly.

"Zhou used his life to probe White Jade Capital's bottom line..."

"Go, bury Sect Leader Zhou honorably."

"This seat enters seclusion next—disturb only for grave matters."

Du Longyang ordered.

With that, he vanished.

The Great Elder stroked his beard, eyes gleaming sharply.

Du Longyang's words clarified: the Four Great Holy Lands would lift restrictions on Tianyuan Nascent Souls...

To them, Five Phoenixes Continent was fat meat, rich in resources.

Like Nine Prisons Secret Realm, Dragon Gates, the Trial Tower.

Occupying them would greatly benefit sect juniors.

...

Western Commandery.

Xiliang Prefecture.

The entire city was deathly silent.

Xiliang soldiers clenched fists, staring toward the inner city.

How was the Overlord?

Every soldier cared deeply.

Luo Mingsang awoke, face pale as ash.

"Sister... the Overlord lives."

Luo Mingyue hugged her pipa.

Not consolation—fact.

Luo Mingsang's dead eyes sparked with light.

The Overlord indeed lived.

Carried back by soldiers, his heart still thundered like drumbeats.

He was too strong—Seven Extremes Heavenly Lock, spine nearly dragonized, vital blood like mercury, heart immensely powerful.

Xiliang's famed physicians were dragged in urgently.

Diagnosing his pulse, they froze, faces ghostly.

Headless... yet alive?

"Can the King's head be reattached?!"

Xu Chu, seeing one shake his head, temper flaring, grabbed him and demanded.

The physician shook head frantically—beyond his skill.

They'd never seen this; no daring to try.

Luo Mingsang arrived, seeing the headless Overlord, blood draining from her face.

But touching his chest, feeling the mighty heartbeat, color returned.

The King... truly lived!

But head severed from body—how to save?

Would the Overlord... go without his head forever?

All Xiliang chaos ensued; everyone scrambled for ways to reattach it.

...

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

Lu Fan returned to White Jade Capital's pavilion.

Ning Zhao cultivated; Lu brewed plum wine himself. Green plums tumbled in the pot; clear liquor poured into a bronze cup, diffusing rich aroma.

From the Mysterious Ring, he drew the Spiritual Pressure Chessboard, placing pieces in a yin-yang setup.

His yin-yang chess research deepened; spiritual sense and soul strengthened greatly.

Sipping fine wine, Lu smacked lips, missing Bai Qingniao's chicken soup.

That girl's brew was delicious.

Placing a few pieces, he leaned back, gazing at sky's colorful clouds.

The giant whale breached the sea, spouting water, leisurely gliding.

Once, it hid; now, with Lu, no need—his power erased its trace from worldly eyes.

Sunset bathed the calm sea in ripples.

Reflecting the whale, Origin Lake, and Heart Island on its back.

"The sunset is endlessly beautiful, yet near dusk."

Lu leaned, smiling suddenly.

Pinching a chess piece, tapping the armrest.

Feeling strength grow with more cultivators... he sensed faint boredom.

Suddenly, something occurred.

Gazing at the firmament.

He recalled in Peacock Nation, crushing a Buddha seed. It threatened: killing it would draw the Great Buddha's notice, sending top mid martial worlds to punish.

How...

Still no sign?

Lu sighed.

...

Northern Commandery.

Cold winds whistled.

At horizon's end, iron-clad cavalry charged, dust billowing.

Ahead...

Black Dragon Cult members fled like startled birds into dense forest.

A Black Dragon Guard in douli leaped, landing atop trees, racing on branches.

Cavalry dreaded forests—speed plummeted, horses hindered.

Xue Tao led one thousand Xuanwu Guards in pursuit.

Cultists wouldn't wait for death.

Seeing the guard vaulting above...

Xue Tao unslung his bow, nocked an arrow, drew full—string taut.

Like bending bow to shoot great eagles.

Fingers released; string snapped back explosively.

Arrow flew.

Sky seemed cleaved.

"Get down!"

Xue Tao roared.

He dismounted, spear in hand.

Xuanwu Guards followed suit.

Drawing back blades.

Step by step into the forest.

Boom boom boom...

Forest quaked.

Trees blocking? Blades slashed, halving them.

Unstoppable, like terrifying war machines flattening all.

Xue Tao's arrow closed on the leaf-treading guard.

Douli pierced.

Bang!

Spiritual qi-infused arrow exploded.

Sharp head shattered into deadly shards, blasting the guard.

Pfft!

Guard dodged midair.

But shards struck; he grunted, crashing down.

Xue Tao charged foremost, spear gleaming with qi.

Swept it, massive arc clashing with the guard.

One thrust—guard retreated steadily.

Xue Tao's strikes heavy, wide.

Though Body Storage, the guard was utterly suppressed.

Cultists fled madly regardless.

But Xuanwu Guards faster—in squads, corralling scattered prey like cornered beasts.

Pfft!

Spear pierced.

Qi transfixed.

Nailing the guard to ground.

Blood gushed; Xue Tao stood spear poised, scanning cultists.

Suddenly...

Something off.

"Missing people."

"Where's Liu Yuanhao?"

"And one Black Dragon Guard?"

Xue Tao demanded.

Hearing the pinned guard's low chuckle.

Rage surged; Xue Tao gripped spear, thrusting repeatedly.

"Where's Liu Yuanhao?!"

He bellowed.

Pain drew roars from the guard.

Bloodshot eyes glared, veins bulging, sinister laugh only.

Chilling Xue Tao's heart.

Diversion?

Liu Yuanhao targeted... the Northern Xuan King?!

...

Liu Yuanhao in douli, beside another douli-clad Black Dragon Guard.

Gazing at the flickering lights of Great Xuan Academy, his lips curled.

Eyes shifting to Tai Ridge above.

Dantai Xuan resided there.

"The Northern Xuan King is indeed confident."

The guard's hoarse voice.

"Choosing not the heavily patrolled palace but a cold, isolated peak... if attacked, who saves him?"

"Confidence is good; without it, Dantai Xuan wouldn't be king."

"Nor endure repeated immortal fate misses without crumbling."

Beneath douli, Liu Yuanhao's eyes gleamed.

"Of course, his confidence stems from Xuanwu Guards."

"But dispatching a thousand to eradicate us... total annihilation."

Liu Yuanhao's face iced over.

"I'll ask him face-to-face... why despise my Black Dragon Cult so?"

Against the king, Liu Yuanhao cared not.

His strength... mere Qi Core.

First or second stage—ant to Liu Yuanhao.

Even with dynasty dragon qi.

Useless for cultivation—limited, ribald.

Thus, with most Guards gone, assassination failure? Unthinkable.

Words fallen...

Liu Yuanhao blurred, rushing silently—only fallen leaves' warmth hinting prior presence.

...

Tai Ridge Summit.

A modest pavilion—not lavish—served as the Northern Xuan King's quarters.

Defenses solid.

Xuanwu Guards patrolled; a Body Storage commander guarded.

Pavilion lights flickered, candle flames swaying in midnight mountain chill.

Dantai Xuan, thin cloak wrapped, reviewed Great Xuan Academy students' scrolls.

The academy now thrived.

Mo Beike's returned Hundred Schools paths let students shine, easier finding their dao.

Of course, Dantai Xuan demanded rigor—not just cultivation.

Calligraphy, politics, military—all assessed.

These students: Great Xuan's future pillars.

Hm?

Suddenly...

Desk candle flickered.

Icy wind-like chill brushed face.

Outside: blades unsheathed.

Dantai Xuan paused, set down scroll, looked up.

At the door...

As exclamations erupted outside.

A black shadow stood; arms ablaze with pale white flames, blade-shaped, piercing two Qi Core Xuanwu Guards' throats...

Flames fiery yet chilling, distorting air.

Dantai Xuan's eyes narrowed.

Killing intent crashed like waves.

He frowned.

Eyes on desk, carefully tidying students' scrolls, then looked up coldly at the douli shadow. Drew a sharp guard sword from behind; blade reflected candle's dim light.

Dantai Xuan seemed to guess the intent—surprised but calm, unflustered:

"Who are you?!"

"Breaking into this king's quarters is death."

Words fallen...

Suppressed laughter from beneath douli.

Figure raised head, slowly withdrawing flame blades from the Guards, smiling at Dantai Xuan.

"Northern Xuan King, a pleasure... I am Black Dragon Cult Leader, Liu Yuanhao."

Chapter 323: A Man Blessed with Immortal Fate!

Dantai Xuan gazed calmly at the smiling, composed Liu Yuanhao before him.

This wasn't his first encounter with Liu Yuanhao; he'd seen him at White Jade Capital's auction before, though they hadn't interacted much then.

Only now did Dantai Xuan truly size him up.

Cultivation strong—Body Storage peak, plus comprehended dao intent. The aura alone was oppressively heavy.

"Black Dragon Cult Leader?"

Dantai Xuan smiled at Liu Yuanhao.

Killing intent circled the eaves like inverted sharp blades hanging from the roof, slicing the air above into fragments.

The two Xuanwu Guards lay lifeless, blood pooling across the floor.

The room filled with a thick, acrid bloody scent.

Liu Yuanhao remained calm and in control, as if he held everything in his grasp.

He did feel that way.

Defenses at Tai Ridge summit were weaker than imagined.

Dantai Xuan was too confident.

But Liu Yuanhao understood—as Northern Xuan King, lord of Great Xuan, commanding the mighty Xuanwu Guards.

Even Body Storage peak experts wouldn't dare storm the summit to assassinate him.

The risk was too high; likely costing their lives.

Yet, dispatching a thousand Xuanwu Guards to hunt the cult created the vulnerability.

Liu Yuanhao seized it.

He wiped blood from his hands with a silk handkerchief.

Stepping slowly into the pavilion.

Clear footsteps echoed like those from hell, shaking souls.

Dantai Xuan's expression barely changed.

Gripping his guard sword, he actually smiled at Liu Yuanhao.

Liu Yuanhao approached the desk, sitting cross-legged on a cushion.

Dantai Xuan swept his sleeve and sat too.

His stern face carried unhurried dignity and calm.

"The Black Dragon Cult... continuation of Great Zhou's Black Dragon?"

Dantai Xuan asked.

Liu Yuanhao shook his head. "Black Dragon is Black Dragon; the cult is the cult... it was just an excuse to build it."

Gazing at the calm Dantai Xuan with surprise, he chuckled lightly: "As a family scion, you should understand... actions need justification, excuses."

Liu Yuanhao's crisp voice bounced in the pavilion.

Outside, chaos erupted like boiling porridge.

Remaining Xuanwu Guards mobilized.

Roars echoed.

"Protect the King!"

The Body Storage commander strode furiously, but found a douli-clad black-robed figure blocking the pavilion entrance.

Black Dragon Cult's protector!

Seeing the two dead Xuanwu Guards on the ground...

Xuanwu Guards' eyes reddened.

The King was in danger!

"Don't act rashly... or the Northern Xuan King dies."

The Black Dragon Guard's hoarse voice emerged from beneath the douli.

He alone barred the door, buying Liu Yuanhao time to capture the king.

The relentless pursuit had worn them down.

Now, Liu Yuanhao striking into Great Xuan's heart, seizing the one who ordered the hunt—this Black Dragon Guard felt a rush of satisfaction.

Yes...

Satisfying!

Suppressed too long; sudden release felt exhilarating.

The guard suddenly sensed...

Liu Yuanhao was ambitious, cautious, yet bold when needed.

That's what he admired most—why they, Great Zhou remnants, followed him to the death even when weak.

Without fighting, they'd live well.

With cultivator strength, claim land, be carefree landlords—how comfortable?

Yet they chose to risk life for Liu Yuanhao.

Originally four Black Dragon Guards; now two.

No regrets...

Who wants a flat, uneventful life?

Following Liu Yuanhao gave hope, vision of glorious rise.

"Clang!"

A sharp ring.

The guard drew a chilling blade, reflecting light.

Xuanwu Guards froze.

The Body Storage commander's face iced over, eyes panicked endlessly.

If Dantai Xuan died...

Great Xuan... what then?

...

"Northern Xuan King, I've always had a question?"

Liu Yuanhao asked relaxedly, smiling at Dantai Xuan.

"Speak."

Dantai Xuan gripped his guard sword, calm.

He wasn't weak; once a grandmaster, vital blood exploding multiple times.

But grandmasters were mere mortals—no chance against Liu Yuanhao.

The sword was his final defiance.

He wouldn't surrender easily.

Liu Yuanhao ignored the sword as if unseen.

A mortal's blade... useless?

He dismissed it.

"Why must the Northern Xuan King oppose my Black Dragon Cult?"

"Great Xuan and Xiliang are enemies, no? Helping eliminate Xiliang—wouldn't that benefit you?"

"Why send troops to aid Xiliang?"

Liu Yuanhao pressed.

His smile faded gradually.

Dantai Xuan paused—unexpected question.

This was why the assassination?

He suddenly found it amusing.

Fingering the sword hilt, Dantai Xuan eyed Liu Yuanhao: "Because you colluded with Tianyuan Foreign Land powerhouses..."

"Just that?"

Liu Yuanhao narrowed eyes, suppressed anger in his voice.

Dantai Xuan's lips curled. "Or simply... this king finds you displeasing."

Words fallen...

Dominance burst from Dantai Xuan.

Liu Yuanhao's face darkened.

"Northern Xuan King... times have changed."

Liu Yuanhao said.

"Five Phoenixes Continent is no longer White Jade Capital's era; it's a new cultivator age..."

"The Overlord fought a Nascent Soul, beheaded... yet White Jade Capital didn't intervene. Know what comes next?"

Liu Yuanhao's finger burned a strand of pale white chilling flame.

Crackling quietly, as if consuming air.

"Tianyuan Foreign Land teems with experts. Four Great Holy Lands: Martial Emperor City, Qian Female Palace, Absolute Blade Sect, Heavenly Virtual Palace... all with Infant Transformation overlords!"

"They feared White Jade Capital before—Young Master Lu's peerless brilliance suppressed an era."

"But now, with Young Master Lu and White Jade Capital hidden, this probe shows even without Infant Transformation tops, Nascent Souls suffice to crush Five Phoenixes' cultivation world."

Liu Yuanhao clenched fist; the flame exploded.

"A brutal era, one of upheaval."

"When Tianyuan invaders come, the world falls under their control... overturned. Rather than foolish resistance, ally or submit early—avoid tragic suppression."

Liu Yuanhao's words carried suppressed ambition.

Dantai Xuan fell silent.

He eyed Liu Yuanhao—each had their views and paths.

Compared to Tianyuan, Five Phoenixes experts were weaker.

The Overlord-Zhou Haisheng battle lit the fuse; future... perhaps tougher.

Liu Yuanhao grinned: "Northern Xuan King, I know you're smart..."

"I know in your eyes, I'm the villain..."

Complex emotions in his eyes, he chuckled lowly: "But this world forced me into villainy."

He recalled pre-growth, pre-immortal fate—without Black Dragon Guards, bullied in the gang, beaten like a cockroach, rat in shadows; survival a luxury.

From then, he vowed to stand at the peak.

Dantai Xuan watched—this man had a story.

But...

Who didn't?

Just "different paths, no common ground."

...

Dongyang Commandery.

Whistling breaks sounded endlessly.

Tianyuan forces had gathered in Dongyang, awaiting White Jade Capital's stance.

Now probed: Nascent Soul actions didn't cross the line.

Thus... unrest stirred.

Five Phoenixes' resources too tempting to ignore.

Nine Prisons Secret Realm, Trial Tower, Dragon Gates... spirit stone veins—all alluring.

Four Great Holy Lands stayed put.

But...

Other Tianyuan forces departed Dongyang, spreading across Five Phoenixes.

Especially Wolong Ridge—more disciples learned Nine Prisons gates yielded spirit crystals, opening to pills, methods, artifacts. They flocked outside.

Original family cultivators stationed clashed with Tianyuan disciples; conflicts brewed.

...

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

Giant whale bore the immortal island, bobbing in vast seas.

On the island...

Ni Yu finished daily cultivation, Little Ying dragon atop her head, hugging the Universal Mirror gleefully.

With Little Ying controlling the mirror, Ni Yu waited no more for Ning Zhao.

Ning Zhao cultivated maniacally—beyond Young Master's plan, adding more, squeezing every moment.

Ni Yu hugged the mirror.

Watching Xiliang chaos.

All Xiliang in uproar; Ni Yu watched amused.

Xiliang powerhouses puzzled: how to reattach the Overlord's head?

Live headless forever?

Renowned physicians rushed in, but shook heads in failure.

Reattaching...

Impossible.

One planned glue; Ni Yu laughed till sides split.

A thirty-year embroidery auntie invited by Xu Chu to teach stitching the head.

Xu Chu, burly oaf, fearing mishaps, stitched himself.

Poor Xu Chu's eyes bloodshot from strain.

Neck and head sewn finally.

But...

Useless; head wouldn't connect to body.

The auntie politely lifted and tossed out by Xu Chu.

Ni Yu nearly teared from laughter.

Reattaching the Overlord's head...

These people were hilarious.

"But it is a problem—how to reattach?"

Ni Yu pondered post-laughter.

A breeze blew.

Lu Fan in white sat in Thousand Blades Chair, gliding slowly.

Ni Yu spotted strolling Lu Fan; eyes lit.

"Young Master... can the Overlord's head be reattached?"

Ni Yu asked curiously.

Plucking peach petals one by one, Lu Fan paused at the question.

Glanced at Ni Yu and mirror scene.

"Reattach... of course possible."

"Three ways."

Lu Fan said, stripping petals.

"Three ways?"

Ni Yu stunned.

"First: this young master acts..."

Lu raised a finger.

"Second: not hard—look to Gongshu Yu..."

Ni Yu frowned.

Gongshu Yu?

That iron-forging old man?

"Gongshu Yu excels at hidden weapons; now Heavenly Lock, crafting a spirit tool to fix the Overlord's head isn't difficult."

Ni Yu inhaled deeply. "And the last?"

Lu glanced at her.

"Last, simplest: Overlord breaks to Three Gods Realm... with Unyielding intent, regrow a head—no issue."

Lu said.

Then controlled the chair, floating away lightly as he came.

Leaving shocked Ni Yu pinching a sugar-coated Body Tempering Pill from her pouch, swallowing to calm nerves.

...

In truth...

Lu's three ways made sense.

Outside Wolong Ridge, small city.

Sweaty from forging, Gongshu Yu sipped hot tea, eyed wooden apprentice Ah Lu hammering blankly, wiped beard.

"Ah Lu, come."

Bare-chested Ah Lu dropped hammer, wiped sweat, approached.

"Master."

Ah Lu grinned foolishly.

"Go to Xiliang; tell those fools to bring the Overlord and head..."

"Tell them: for reattachment help, trade 'Dragon Saliva Stone' from Dongyan River Dragon Gate."

Gongshu Yu said.

Ah Lu blinked: "What's Dragon Saliva Stone?"

"Since Dragon Gates' birth, spiritual qi geysers—each yields one 'Dragon Saliva Stone.' Five Phoenixes' rarest material for profound-tier spirit tools."

Gongshu Yu stroked beard.

As refiner, he eyed materials.

Of course, Dragon Saliva Stone info from Lu Fan.

Lu said touch after Heavenly Lock.

Now crossed, Gongshu Yu could safely.

Ah Lu half-understood, but profound-tier material? Definitely treasure.

...

Northern Commandery.

Tai Ridge summit.

Atmosphere froze to extreme.

Every Xuanwu Guard sweated palms in tension.

They stared at Dantai Xuan's pavilion—silent inside, but the silence nightmare-impacted hearts.

How was the king?

Killed by Liu Yuanhao already?

Fearing for his life, Guards dared not move.

Black Dragon Guard gripped sword, pole-like at door.

Inside...

Terribly quiet.

As "no common words," Liu Yuanhao spoke no more; pale white flame danced on fingers.

Long after...

Liu Yuanhao smiled.

"Northern Xuan King..."

"Since no more to say, on your way."

Liu Yuanhao said.

Rising slowly.

Boom!

Body Storage peak aura spread, filling.

Winds howled inside.

Great Xuan Academy students' exam papers scattered.

Dantai Xuan saw—furious!

Sword raised standing.

Liu Yuanhao sneered.

To him, the sword was final stubbornness.

How could a mortal fight a cultivator?

Dantai Xuan wasn't the Overlord.

For the Overlord, he'd plot carefully.

But...

Dantai Xuan: incomplete Qi Core mortal.

"Die."

Liu Yuanhao's face iced.

Kill Dantai Xuan—Five Phoenixes chaos...

Waters muddied enough; Black Dragon Cult gains in turmoil.

Hum...

Pale white flames morphed.

Soon, a pale white flame blade.

Thrust at Dantai Xuan's face.

Heart tightened.

Too fast!

Liu Yuanhao too swift!

Dantai Xuan barely reacted; the blade reached his nose tip.

One more inch: pierce brain.

Death... so close to Dantai Xuan.

Yet his heart stayed untensed—mysteriously calm, composed.

Ding!

The enlarging flame blade halted in his eyes.

Strands of profound yellow qi cascaded like bolts.

Liu Yuanhao froze, then pores contracted, hairs stood!

A golden dragon roar exploded the firmament.

Seated Dantai Xuan, hair flying, eyes torch-like; one hand sword, the other drew a great seal.

Seal gleamed gold.

Interplaying with imperial dragon qi draping his back.

Dantai Xuan eyed the seal, then horrified Liu Yuanhao.

Stunned momentarily—didn't expect himself this strong!

Turns out, he too was a man blessed with immortal fate!

Dantai Xuan grinned wildly.

Hefted the seal, smashing toward Liu Yuanhao's head.

Chapter 324: The Northern Xuan King's Roar Dispels Evil!

Dantai Xuan never imagined the Imperial Dragon Qi could do this.

Was Liu Yuanhao strong?

Absolutely—comprehending dao intent placed him among the absolute peak of Body Storage Realm.

His killing strike would doom any ordinary Body Storage opponent.

Dantai Xuan had initially resigned himself to death.

But he refused to cower.

As lord of Great Xuan, the Northern Xuan King, even in death he would go out gloriously.

Only standing!

So he swung his guard sword.

Yet the sword proved near-useless. Liu Yuanhao's flame blade not only failed to harm him—it activated Dantai Xuan's Imperial Dragon Qi!

“Imperial Dragon Qi?”

Liu Yuanhao's face changed. His flame blade struck something like iron armor.

He couldn't pierce Dantai Xuan with one strike!

Why?

Strands of profound yellow qi cascaded, forming a golden dragon phantom.

Noble, overlooking all.

Mighty and upright!

Radiance bathed everything!

This was Imperial Dragon Qi—how could Liu Yuanhao not recognize it? The very qi the Overlord and Dantai Xuan had vied for, crafted by Young Master Lu of White Jade Capital!

To Liu Yuanhao, Imperial Dragon Qi had always seemed underwhelming.

A peculiar power, yes, but it hindered the Overlord's cultivation.

Thus, Liu Yuanhao dismissed it as a ribald symbol of status.

But now...

He was wrong!

Dead wrong.

Imperial Dragon Qi... was far from simple.

Of course—could anything from White Jade Capital's Young Master Lu be ordinary?

Lord of the world, will of all beings!

Liu Yuanhao's face turned ashen.

He'd calculated everything—except that Imperial Dragon Qi could protect Dantai Xuan, blocking his assault!

Seeing Dantai Xuan shift from calm composure to wild joy...

He realized: this bastard had no idea the qi could do this. His earlier calm was pure stubbornness.

The guy had been suppressed—now with protective Imperial Dragon Qi, he had confidence.

Instantly cocky.

Even pulling out the Emperor Dragon Seal, swinging it right at him.

Liu Yuanhao's heart screamed danger.

A terrifying crisis enveloped him.

If that seal hit, he'd be in bad shape.

So Liu Yuanhao retreated.

Toe tapped ground; he shot backward. Dantai Xuan's slow seal posed no threat.

"Don't be scared!"

Dantai Xuan shouted.

“Come on, hit this king—hit hard!”

Chest puffed, face flushed, he roared.

He’d turned the tables!

No more pretending!

Thought he could be bullied for lacking immortal fate and weak cultivation?

He was Great Xuan’s king, gatherer of all Imperial Dragon Qi—the world’s common lord.

With dragon qi shielding, evil fled!

Dantai Xuan gripped the Emperor Dragon Seal; profound yellow qi draped like curtains, golden dragon swaying around him.

Paired with his arrogant expression, the qi seemed to roar silently.

“Worthy of White Jade Capital’s methods... truly miraculous.”

Liu Yuanhao murmured.

Complex emotions as he eyed the Imperial Dragon Qi.

Next moment, pupils contracted, light seemingly sucked in.

“This seat refuses to believe a mere mortal, relying on ethereal Imperial Dragon Qi, can block one who comprehended dao intent!”

Killing intent blazed in his eyes.

His face burned with shame.

He’d been so sure of victory, chatting idly with Dantai Xuan.

Now... he couldn’t even breach the defense!

His earlier confidence—clownish.

“Die!”

Liu Yuanhao’s hair whipped; robes billowed like inflated by gusts.

Pale white flames erupted from pores.

“Chill Fire Dao Intent!”

Icy words hissed through teeth.

Next instant—he became a man of fire!

Boom!

Flames surged skyward, igniting the ceiling.

Palm raised, struck fiercely.

Air twisted from burning; Chill Fire Dao Intent unleashed his ultimate killing blow.

His strongest card, his foundation of confidence.

Dantai Xuan's brows knit.

Heart clenched.

So strong!

This... was dao intent's might?!

Could Imperial Dragon Qi block dao intent?!

Dantai Xuan stood firm; loose robes hunted in wind.

Dragon qi strands fell like curtains before him.

Liu Yuanhao, like a fire god, controlled pale white flames, striking with extreme power.

Crack crack crack...

A flame palm swept across.

Where it passed, ground crystallized in ice.

Dantai Xuan's spirit jolted.

Now he felt cultivators' terror.

Power far beyond mortal!

Spiritual qi boiled from burning.

Dantai Xuan bellowed, thrusting his guard sword.

Blade met draping Imperial Dragon Qi.

Hiss hiss hiss...

Instantly, the iron sword melted into droplets on the floor.

This horrific sight chilled Dantai Xuan's soles.

He stepped back.

Boom!

The flame palm slammed the dragon qi curtain!

Boom boom boom!

Visible shockwaves rippled from Dantai Xuan, spreading.

Bang!

Pavilion pillars snapped from impact.

Floors collapsed; countless woods tumbled.

Outside...

The lone Black Dragon Guard blocking thousands startled, whirling back.

What massive commotion?

The Leader's strength—to kill an immortal-fate-severed, powerless Northern Xuan King—caused this?

The collapse paled Xuanwu Guards' faces.

Such noise—how could the king survive?

“My King!”

The lead commander roared.

Drew waist sword, face crimson!

“Villain! Dare assassinate Great Xuan’s lord! Death!”

Xuanwu Guards burned with rage; weapons drawn, charging fearlessly at the lone Black Dragon Guard.

The guard’s expression shifted.

As he readied to fight...

Behind—another explosion!

Bang!

Splinters flew.

A figure wreathed in pale white firelight burst from ruins.

Heavy footsteps spread.

From debris, a figure draped in profound yellow qi, faint golden dragon coiling, walked unhurriedly.

Dantai Xuan's hair flew; body glowed gold.

"My King!"

"Our king... lives!"

"Long live our king!"

Xuanwu Guards mixed shock and joy.

Bang!

Liu Yuanhao spun midair, crashing down, scattering stones.

One arm hung limp; eyes bloodshot.

"My dao intent..."

Liu Yuanhao gritted teeth, heart trembling.

Full-power strike on Dantai Xuan—not only failed to kill, but backlash.

Not just the striking arm necrotic from rebound—even his proud dao intent felt erased from mind.

“Fortune?”

“Imperial fortune?!”

Liu Yuanhao inhaled deeply.

Glanced deeply at Dantai Xuan.

Killing him impossible now—unless Young Master Lu or Four Holy Lands’ Infant Transformations acted. Otherwise, Dantai Xuan could stand and let you hack—maybe unharmed.

Imperial Dragon Qi represented the world’s fortune.

Will of myriad people.

Shattering it meant opposing myriad wills, crushing their fortune.

How could ordinary cultivators?

They'd suffer backlash!

Liu Yuanhao's heart chilled.

An ominous premonition.

This Imperial Dragon Qi was Young Master Lu's creation—meaning Dantai Xuan might be his chosen.

Had he crossed Young Master Lu's line?

Liu Yuanhao was arrogant, mad.

But before Young Master Lu... a grandson.

Petty Young Master Lu—he dared not offend.

“Leader!”

Black Dragon Guard stunned.

What situation?

A dao intent peak Body Storage couldn't kill a mortal?

Dantai Xuan gripped broken sword, glaring.

He felt immense now; no evil could approach.

“Assassination failed!”

“Withdraw!”

Liu Yuanhao decisive—he knew no chance to kill Dantai Xuan now.

This failure choked him.

But fear of crossing White Jade Capital's line erased care for failure.

He just wanted to flee, hide.

Ten days, half-month—watch White Jade Capital's reaction.

Flee?

Just like that?

Black Dragon Guard confused.

Dantai Xuan... this strong?

Injured Liu Yuanhao to where he lacked fight?

“Where are the Xuanwu Guards!”

Dantai Xuan, shrouded in Imperial Dragon Qi, commanded with full vigor.

Xuanwu Guards knelt one knee, faces fanatical.

“Capture the villains!”

Dantai Xuan raised hand, pointing afar at Liu Yuanhao and the guard.

Words fallen...

Xuanwu Guards’ spirit seemed boosted.

Faint gold light bloomed on them.

They grew stronger in this moment.

The lead Body Storage’s body formed a new vortex—completing a storage under Dantai Xuan’s roar!

“Flee!”

Liu Yuanhao’s face twitched.

What Imperial Dragon Qi!

He stomped; all flames focused underfoot, exploding.

Flame beam propelled him skyward, arcing far.

Black Dragon Guard roared.

Lightfoot unfolded; vaulted walls to roof, escaping!

Xuanwu Guards now blood-raged.

Even with true strength edge, the guard fled.

“All land under heaven is the king’s soil...”

“Flee?”

“Generals, seize them!”

“Ha!”

On collapsed pavilion ruins, Dantai Xuan stood with broken sword.

Golden dragon qi soared; he seemed transformed—confidence, all-in-grasp aura rising and falling.

He eyed fleeing Liu Yuanhao and guard, gaze grand.

Raised hand pointing, low roar.

Rebuke echoed in every ear.

Including Liu Yuanhao and the Black Dragon Guard...

Liu Yuanhao's face changed sharply, as if sensing something horrific!

Imperial qi—specializes in purging evil!

Though Liu Yuanhao's method wasn't evil, his "Bone Nether Fire" carried sinister intent.

The Black Dragon Guard, cultivated with black dragon scales, brimmed with draconic malevolence!

Dantai Xuan's roar.

Carried open, upright, noble, majestic oppression.

Words fallen...

Like tolling bell.

Winds surged; sky and earth shifted hue.

Night yet felt like day!

Roar!

Tai Ridge, Asking Heaven Peak.

The noble, aloof azure dragon coiled on the Dragon Gate suddenly opened eyes—dark gold.

Sensing Imperial Dragon Qi, faint surprise flickered.

Then, five claws slapped the gate; body spiraled skyward!

“Leader!”

Black Dragon Guard panicked!

This Dantai Xuan clearly mortal, barely spiritual fluctuation.

Why did one rebuke seem to shatter his courage!

Gales wrinkled like golden dragon breaching sea.

Dantai Xuan didn't fully understand why now he felt... so mighty!

Azure dragon soared; its roar harmonized with Dantai Xuan's.

Panic flashed in Liu Yuanhao's eyes.

Gaze fell on Black Dragon Guard.

Mind moved.

Countless flames burst, forming pale white flame giant palm!

"Leader, save me!"

Golden dragon qi spread.

Imperial Dragon Qi's restraint on evil made the guard howl in pain.

His body felt burned.

Liu Yuanhao gritted teeth, hardened heart.

Flame palm swatted the guard away.

Guard's heart shattered; disbelief, faith collapsing.

“Why?!”

He roared.

But Liu Yuanhao ignored.

Azure dragon and Imperial Dragon Qi sensed the guard's evil.

Liu Yuanhao, one arm wasted, like sky-piercing arrow, arced to city at ridge foot—leg bones nearly shattering, tumbling pathetically.

The evil-laden guard drew aggro.

Letting him escape alive.

Thought sure assassination—nearly became his grave!

With Imperial Dragon Qi, Dantai Xuan might truly become world lord!

Liu Yuanhao looked back unwillingly at sky.

Eyes cold.

But... times changed.

Imperial Dragon Qi?

Might make him a target!

On Tai Ridge...

The guard swatted back.

Imperial Dragon Qi smashed him; douli exploded, black dragon scale on forehead hissed black vapor.

Pfft!

Guard wailed.

Skin like grilled.

Dantai Xuan's roar nearly killed a Body Storage Black Dragon Guard?!

Xuanwu Guards poised to act—stunned.

Their war-five-scum king...

So strong now!

Azure dragon flew from Dragon Gate.

Azure scales noble glow; even in night, star-brilliant.

Dantai Xuan met azure dragon's gaze.

Rarely—saw approval in its eyes.

Then, dragon opened maw.

Azure beam like thunder cracking sky.

Pfft!

Wailing guard hit by dragon breath.

Instantly atomized to dust.

Black dragon scale powdered.

Draconic evil vanished from heaven and earth.

Azure dragon done; twisted body, spiraled into sky, returned to Asking Heaven Peak, coiling on Dragon Gate.

On pavilion...

Dantai Xuan lowered hand; Imperial Dragon Qi dispersed.

But heroic spirit surged in heart.

“Imperial Dragon Qi... world’s common lord, beings’ will—the stronger people’s support and reverence for this king, the stronger the qi!”

“This is... the Human Emperor Path!”

Dantai Xuan’s eyes gleamed, murmuring.

Now, qi protected; even Liu Yuanhao couldn’t harm.

One roar wounded Body Storage Black Dragon Guard.

If qi grew further—one roar might slay Heavenly Lock Golden Cores, even Nascent Souls of crooked paths!

Calmed Dantai Xuan eyed reverent, fanatical Xuanwu Guards below.

Pointed where Liu Yuanhao vanished.

“Generals, hear order—capture Black Dragon Cult Leader Liu Yuanhao!”

Words fallen...

Lead commander bowed accepting.

Sword at waist, aura restless; led Xuanwu Guards in clangorous steps, chasing swiftly to foot city.

City already sealed on commander’s order.

Liu Yuanhao fell in—escape impossible!

Dantai Xuan stood peak.

Robes hunting in wind.

Hands behind; pavilion ruins dust rising behind.

When atop the summit, all mountains small.

He raised head, gazing afar.

Horizon's end—dawn's first ray sprinkled, faint purple qi wrapping, shining on Dantai Xuan...

As if scattering golden light!

Chapter 325: This King Isn't That Strong

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

Lu Fan sat in the Thousand Blades Chair, leaning on the railing. Wind fluttered his plain robes; a simple jade crown bound his flying hair.

He held a chess piece between index and middle fingers, thumb tapping rhythmically.

“Finally, someone’s the first to eat the crab...”

He smiled. Liu Yuanhao’s assassination of Dantai Xuan—he’d seen it all.

The Overlord severed all Imperial Dragon Qi, letting Dantai Xuan unify it, becoming world lord.

With Imperial Dragon Qi shielding, even a ninth-turn Golden Core cultivator might fail to harm him.

Possessing it, Dantai Xuan walked the Human Emperor Path...

What was the Human Emperor Path? The path of myriad people—gathering hearts, enlightening the world.

The Spiritual Pressure Chessboard floated before Lu. Pinching a piece, his eyes gleamed faintly.

Then, it fell on tengen, enlivening the board.

Not the yin-yang setup from Heaven's Might.

He played against himself.

In idle moments, Lu chose self-duels.

“Human Emperor Path... isn't a cultivation path; cultivators can't walk it.”

Lu murmured, leaning back.

Yet it wasn't weak. At grand completion, a non-cultivator Human Emperor's roar could shatter great cultivators' dao hearts.

That was the terror.

Pity... non-cultivators couldn't seek longevity.

Even with Imperial Dragon Qi and spiritual qi aid, hard to endure ages.

Perhaps a flaw.

But...

Lu smiled, placing another piece.

The path could inherit, generation to generation—only needing to uphold people’s hearts, earn myriad support.

As long as hearts endured, Imperial Dragon Qi guarded the emperor.

Of course...

If hearts scattered, qi unstable—a dynasty shifted.

New Human Emperor Path born.

Lu placed pieces repeatedly; board fell, eyes brilliant, as if perfecting something.

...

Hooves thundered.

Dawn's light tore the horizon, surging like tides, covering earth.

Tai Ridge.

Xue Tao galloped in armor, face grim.

Reaching the summit, seeing collapsed pavilion—face paled, blood drained.

But relief: afar, guards surrounded Dantai Xuan.

“My King!”

Xue Tao knelt, face full of fear and blame.

He'd planned everything—missed Liu Yuanhao's mad assassination.

Northern Xuan King dead? Chaos not just Northern Commandery—whole world.

Overlord just beheaded, alive but Xiliang in uproar.

Northern Xuan King too...

Five Phoenixes would quake.

Dantai Xuan flushed, waved Xue Tao up.

“Not your fault...”

“Liu Yuanhao daring Tai Ridge surprised this king too. Fortunately, Imperial Dragon Qi shields, counters Black Dragon evil—they walked into the net.”

Dantai Xuan beamed.

Once resentful as immortal-fate-severed.

Now, he felt too strong.

Qi shielded; one roar nearly killed a Body Storage Black Dragon Guard.

How was he this awesome?!

“Human Emperor Path...”

Dantai Xuan’s eyes shone.

Epiphany struck.

Young Master Lu extracted black dragon qi for Imperial Dragon Qi—Great Zhou dynasty fortune; dragon qi its inheritance.

As Great Xuan lord, inheriting half—represented Great Xuan’s people.

Now, Overlord severed; he unified, Emperor Dragon Seal complete—represented all under heaven.

Suddenly...

Dantai Xuan frowned faintly.

Pressure felt.

After sensing Human Emperor Path's might, worry surged—immense duty.

Not just power—responsibility.

Accountable to myriad people.

Fail stable world—what face to walk the path?

“My King! Found it.”

As Dantai Xuan pondered, a Xuanwu Guard rushed joyfully from ruins.

Held half-reviewed exam scrolls from Great Xuan Academy students.

Dantai Xuan took them, exhaling relief.

Xue Tao, seeing king alive, stone lifted from heart.

From other commander: king's prior dominance—Imperial Dragon Qi shielded, wounded Liu Yuanhao, roared a Black Dragon Guard to death.

Xue Tao's eyes burned.

Their king—truly qi-blessed sovereign.

Then heat faded; killing intent rolled.

“Liu Yuanhao gravely wounded—order all Xuanwu Guards, city-wide hunt! Capture the villain!”

Xue Tao bellowed.

Orders spread; Xuanwu Guards exploded out.

...

Liu Yuanhao leaned on straw hut, breathing ragged like bellows.

This time... huge loss.

Never thought Imperial Dragon Qi this strong.

“Dantai Xuan...”

Blood from mouth/nose—backlash.

Dao intent assault failed; qi rebounded, intent slashed.

Without kicking away the Black Dragon Guard, that azure dragon might've blasted him dead.

“This grudge... Liu Yuanhao remembers.”

Covering blood.

Staggered up.

Flicked white flame, burning bloodied straw—erasing traces.

Dragged wounded body, hid deeper.

Must escape the city.

Xue Tao returned with army.

Stay—trapped forever.

But at hut door—whistling air sensed.

No Golden Core Heavenly Lock, no divine sense—but instinct crisis.

Clanging armor.

Xuanwu Guard squad arrived, led by Xue Tao.

Xue Tao gripped spear, eyes icy scanning.

Smelled blood—cut off here.

“Search homes; say capturing felon.”

Xue Tao ordered.

Tai Ridge city new, but with Great Xuan Academy, goods influx—more common folk.

Thus, many civilians.

Xuanwu Guards strong, but under Dantai Xuan’s rules—dared not rampage.

Guards knocked doors; sleepy folk saw armored Xuanwu—jolted awake.

“Officers, please—search freely!”

Cooperative.

Thanks to Dantai Xuan's rule—stable lives.

Xue Tao's killing aura softened before them.

Search smooth.

Footsteps neared.

Liu Yuanhao's body iced.

Burst out silently—hut couldn't hide.

Xue Tao sensed airflow shift.

“Who!”

Spear pointed, roared.

Ground exploded; pursued.

But Liu Yuanhao swift; Xue Tao sensed only flow, reached hut—empty.

Liu Yuanhao endured wounds.

Hid in grand courtyard.

Xue Tao followed instinct; Xuanwu Guards rushed in.

Owner baffled.

Xue Tao explained; cooperative, search began.

Xue Tao's eyes sharp, scanning.

Long after, Guards returned—shook heads, nothing.

Xue Tao cold; gripped spear, spiritual qi surged in, smashed ground.

Qi waves spread...

Long after, dissipated.

Xue Tao squinted, led Guards away.

Owner respectfully saw off.

Xuanwu Guards' fame in Great Xuan—who dared provoke?

Where'd Liu Yuanhao go?

Courtyard...

Secluded latrine pit below.

To evade hunt, survive—Liu Yuanhao discarded dignity utterly.

...

Wolong Ridge.

Situation shifted greatly over time.

Tianyuan cultivators flooded in.

Original Five Phoenixes family rules shattered by influx.

Tianyuan had many: Qi Condensation, Foundation, Golden Core—all levels.

Five Phoenixes resources stirred insatiable greed.

Qi Condensation via Dragon Gates—70% speed boost!

Foundation via Trial Tower—50%!

Golden Core via Nine Prisons...

Five Phoenixes' cultivation path paved perfectly—enviable!

争夺 inevitable.

Of course, Tianyuan powerhouses knew limits.

Dared not overstep.

Four Holy Lands sent only Golden Core disciples to Nine Prisons; others stayed Dongyang.

Reason clear to many: feared White Jade Capital. Though Zhou Haisheng nearly slew Overlord without intervention—signaling true seclusion.

But Five Phoenixes was White Jade Capital's home.

Overdo—White Jade Capital returns, perhaps reckoning.

Thus...

Tianyuan cultivators rarely killed; oppressed via strength duels, forcing Five Phoenixes to yield resources.

Trial Tower, Foundation site.

Limited slots—originally families, Great Xuan, Xiliang breakthrough spots.

A Tianyuan Nascent Soul led disciples.

Negotiated with family heads; set qualification battles outside Tower.

Victors enter.

Family heads raged inwardly, but Nascent Soul pressure—couldn't refuse.

Battles brutal.

Families crushed; only Beiluo's Dragon Blood Army iron warrior blood-fought one slot.

Battle showed Five Phoenixes the gap.

Just beginning.

Tianyuan eyes turned to eight Dragon Gates.

Gates aided Qi Condensation—vital stage, contested; many Tianyuan forces coveted slots.

...

Liu Yuanhao lived.

Hid ten days in courtyard latrine; seized chance, controlled owner, slipped during lax patrols.

Black Dragon Cult crippled.

All Black Dragon Guards dead; remaining cultists hid—no response to calls.

Great Xuan's wave nearly doomed him.

Cult ruined.

Hate burned.

No place in world—so planned beyond Tianhan Pass.

Heard vast lands outside; perhaps rise again.

But before leaving—not letting Dantai Xuan off easy.

Spread Dantai Xuan possessed Imperial Dragon Qi.

Exaggerated its power vastly.

News reached scattered Tianyuan powerhouses.

Seemed to open hope path for dead-end tops.

After spreading, Liu Yuanhao smiled coldly, vanished in Tianhan Pass desert sands.

Before, leaving with cult hard.

Now alone—easy.

...

Mo Ju returned.

Dantai Xuan laughed, emerged from pavilion, grasped Mo Ju's hand.

Mo Ju in scholar robes, bowed.

“My King, you can still laugh...”

Mo Ju grave; from Nine Prisons return, knew Dantai Xuan's shine.

Imperial Dragon Qi; one roar slays Golden Core—rumor, but chilling.

Before, qi effects unearthed—Mo Ju unworried, even joyful.

Now... heavy.

As Liu Yuanhao said: times changed.

Dantai Xuan's qi now coveted by many Tianyuan Nascent Souls.

Key to breaking shackles.

“Liu Yuanhao's nonsense, exaggerating till this king's embarrassed.”

“Qi shields, Nascent invulnerable; one roar shatters Golden Core... this king isn't that strong—just roared a Body Storage to grave injury.”

Dantai Xuan laughed.

Mo Ju helpless—times like this, still posing?

“Now, Five Phoenixes cultivation weak, suppressed by Tianyuan. White Jade Capital deters excess, but... My King, some dead-end Nascent old monsters may break rules for breakthrough.”

“Minister from secret realm: Tianyuan second-rate 'South Dou Mountain' Nascent Supreme Elder leads team to Great Xuan. My King... dangerous.”

Mo Ju serious.

Dantai Xuan's smile faded; eyes sharp.

Waved confidently.

“Borrow Imperial Dragon Qi to break shackles?”

“They don't understand Imperial Dragon Qi, Human Emperor Path...”

“Come—empty-handed return.”

Dantai Xuan calm.

Mo Ju frowned—not worried that, but Supreme Elder rule-breaking for breakthrough.

“Haha, Ju, happy news: Old Mo messaged—Brother Jiang agreed to emerge, en route.”

Dantai Xuan joyful.

Jiang Li retired; Dantai Xuan lamented long—now return, delighted.

Mo Ju nodded—unsurprised.

“General Jiang emerge—as expected. World storms, Five Phoenixes weak, chaos comes—no one untouched. Good.”

“My King, ‘South Dou Mountain’—prepare worst.”

Mo Ju inhaled.

But mid-talk...

A Xuanwu Guard rushed gravely.

“My King!”

Respectfully handed letter.

“Below Tai Ridge, top cultivators lead arrival—they say Dragon Gates to the capable; divide cultivation slots!”

Guard urgent.

Words changed Mo Ju’s expression.

Didn’t expect such speed.

“My King, they... came.”

Mo Ju solemn.

Hearing demand for Dragon Gate slots...

Dantai Xuan’s smile... gradually vanished.

Chapter 326: The Path of the Human Emperor – Can It Grant Eternal Life?

Outside Wolong Ridge, in a small frontier town.

The Forging Pavilion – a humble smithy.

The relentless clang of hammer on steel echoed through the air.

Alu stood shirtless, his back arched like a dragon's spine, corded arms swinging the heavy hammer down in rhythmic fury, sending showers of sparks flying.

Inside the pavilion, however, the mood was anything but casual.

Gongsun Yu wore a rumpled robe that hung loosely on his frame, his beard wild and unkempt, giving him the look of a man who hadn't seen a comb in weeks. Yet his expression was deadly serious.

The air in the room felt thick with tension.

Luo Mingsang clutched Luo Mingyue's hand so tightly her knuckles had gone white. After so many crushing disappointments, she could barely allow herself to hope.

Luo Mingyue squeezed back gently, trying to comfort her. She knew Gongsun Yu well—they had both spent time on Lake Heart Island—and she still had full confidence in the old master's craftsmanship.

Xu Chu, the towering warrior, stared wide-eyed, his usual bravado replaced by a rare flicker of unease.

Overlord sat on a wooden chair like a mountain of muscle and armor, his headless body perfectly upright while he cradled his own severed head in his massive hands. The sight was grotesque—few things are more unsettling than a man casually holding his own head.

Gongsun Yu finally lifted the finished piece: a suit of armor, the centerpiece being an intricately forged helmet. He had worked on it for seven straight days and nights, using his spiritual sense to fine-tune every minute rune inside so the helmet could bridge Overlord's soul awareness to his detached head.

Ordinary nerves were beyond repair—too many severed strands, too delicate. Even Gongsun Yu admitted that only the Young Lord of Lake Heart Island might manage such a feat.

So he took a different path.

Overlord was strong enough that nerves were optional. With the aid of a spirit artifact, soul awareness alone could control the head—amplified and stabilized.

“This spirit armor is custom-made for you, Overlord. I've named it the Tyrant King Armor. It does far more than reattach your head—it's built to take punishment.”

“You walk the Path of Unyielding Defiance. The more you endure, the harder you hit back.”

“So what you need,” Gongsun Yu said with a grin, “is the thickest damn armor anyone has ever worn.”

He helped Overlord don the suit piece by piece. It was a deep, glossy black, every scale gleaming with inner light.

Once the body was clad, the head was set in place and the helmet locked over it. From the outside, no one could tell it had ever been severed.

“Now, Overlord—reach out with your soul awareness and take command of your mind.”

A low thrum filled the room.

Under everyone’s breathless gaze, Overlord slowly opened his eyes. Sharp, blade-like glints shot from his pupils.

“My king!”

Luo Mingsang and Xu Chu cried out in joy.

“I’m... fine,” Overlord rasped. His voice sounded like gravel dragged across iron—he hadn’t spoken in far too long.

Gongsun Yu stroked his beard with satisfaction. A craftsman's pride.

"Perfect fit."

He laughed heartily, then grew serious again.

"There's a price, of course. The helmet will always consume a portion of your soul awareness to keep the connection stable. It will limit your movements and increase energy drain. While wearing the full set with your head attached, expect roughly forty percent of your true strength to be sealed."

"Once you reach the Nine Extremes Heavenly Lock, that penalty drops to thirty percent."

He shrugged. "Or just rip the helmet off in battle. Then there's no restriction at all."

Overlord rose, clasped his fist toward the old smith, and bowed deeply. This man had forged his axe-shield and now given him back his head.

"No need for thanks," Gongsun Yu said, waving it off. "A fair trade. That Dragon Saliva Stone you paid with? I'm not the one losing out here."

Humming a tuneless song, he pocketed the precious material and shuffled back to his forge.

Overlord turned to the others, a rare spark of warmth in his eyes.

Xu Chu's face was flushed crimson with excitement.

"How long were we holed up here?" Overlord asked.

Xu Chu's smile faltered. He knew exactly what was happening beyond these walls.

"Half a month."

With Overlord whole again, there was no reason to linger. They left the small town behind.

...

The world outside had already begun to shift.

The struggle for the Dragon Gates had ignited.

To the invaders from the Tianyuan Domain, the gates were far too valuable to ignore—both as strategic chokepoints and as unparalleled cultivation accelerators. Countless Qi Condensation disciples could be pushed into Foundation Establishment in record time.

In Dongyang Prefecture, the Red Dragon Gate fell first.

At first, only Golden Core disciples dared challenge the crimson dragon within.

They were incinerated on the spot.

One after another, Golden Core cultivators tried and were sent limping away, half-cooked.

That angered the Tianyuan powers.

Nascent Soul experts finally moved.

Several sects joined forces and stormed the gate together.

The skies above Dongyang burned for days. Flames stretched for hundreds of miles.

The Red Dragon was fierce, but not fierce enough. It was subdued.

Because of its past ties to the Lord of White Jade Capital, they spared its life—no one dared kill it outright.

The dragon, humiliated, no longer blocked passage but repeatedly challenged whoever sat guard. Any unguarded moment and it would roast every Qi Condensation disciple that stepped through.

Still, for Tianyuan, the Red Dragon Gate was now open.

Eyes turned to the rest.

South Prefecture.

Tang Yimo had raced home the moment Tang Xiansheng warned him.

He trusted his father's read of the situation completely.

Sure enough, the Coiled Dragon Gate shuddered, and a Golden Core cultivator ranked 30th on the Tianyuan Prodigy List stepped through.

Arrogant didn't begin to describe him. He looked at Wuphong Continent cultivators like ants.

He challenged Tang Yimo: winner takes the gate.

"All eight Dragon Gates will belong to Tianyuan in the end," he sneered. "You locals are too weak to even know what treasures you're sitting on."

The battle turned the entire swamp into a crater.

Tang Yimo opened three meridians at once and fought with the raw strength of a Heavenly Lock cultivator.

Mud exploded skyward. The earth quaked for hours.

The prodigy was stunned—he couldn't end it quickly.

Against a freshly advanced Golden Core, he was actually struggling.

Worse, Tang Yimo only grew more ferocious the longer they fought.

Demonic aura rolled off him in waves. His eyes glowed with a single crimson line.

He looked like Overlord in his berserk state—only more savage, every inch of his body a weapon.

His Dao Intent erupted with terrifying power.

Amplified by his cultivation method, Tang Yimo traded blow for catastrophic blow with a fifth-rotation Golden Core genius—and held his own.

In the final exchange, he took a grievous wound to drive his fist clean through the prodigy's guard.

Tang Yimo walked the Path of Guardianship.

He would protect everything he had.

Lose the Dragon Gate, and South Prefecture's lifeline would be in enemy hands.

So he fought until his veins burst and blood poured from his skin, until the prodigy's arrogance cracked—he no longer dared trade his life for victory.

Tang Yimo stood last.

The Tianyuan genius crawled away, chest caved in, pride shattered.

When it was over, Tang Yimo couldn't even lift his arms—only his mouth still worked.

Tang Xiansheng rushed forward, trembling, and caught his blood-soaked son as he collapsed.

...

Tiandang Mountain, Cloud Dragon Gate.

Dao Pavilion disciples sat cross-legged atop Star-Plucking Peak.

Three Golden Core prodigies from second-tier Tianyuan sects emerged from the gate, tasked with claiming it.

They met Xie Yunling.

With a relaxed smile, she activated the mountain's grand formation. Countless bamboo leaves whirled into an impenetrable array that trapped the trio for half a day.

In the end, the gap in raw power broke the formation. Xie Yunling coughed blood and fell back.

Li Sansui and Li Sansi arrived just in time.

For the first time, Li Sansui lost her composure.

She summoned the Cloud Dragon and wove a grand mist array, dragging one of the Golden Core cultivators inside. With only Body Repository strength yet aided by the dragon, she pinned him down completely.

But two more remained.

The black-robed Li Sansi moved.

It was the first time Li Sansui had ever seen him fight.

His wide bamboo hat fell away.

Blood painted Star-Plucking Peak crimson beneath the moon.

When Li Sansui finally released the drained Golden Core cultivator from her array, she saw Li Sansi commanding every vine and root on the mountain to tear the other two intruders apart.

Under the night sky, Li Sansi turned his vine-wreathed face toward her and gave a gentle smile.

The surviving prodigy stared in horror and screamed, "Demon race!"

A flash of steel.

Li Sansui's daoist robe flapped in the wind as her dagger opened the man's throat. Blood sprayed across the stone.

Li Sansi chuckled. "It's fine. It was only a matter of time before they found out."

"This vine demon body of mine came from Tianyuan anyway."

Li Sansui shook her head stubbornly. "I'll keep your secret as long as I breathe."

...

Beiluo, the Dragon Gate there.

Nie Changqing sat in white robes by the lake shore, Zhanlong sheathed at his waist.

Jing Yue sat beside him.

Days turned to nights. Sun and moon traded places.

No Tianyuan invader ever stepped out of that gate.

The two men exchanged glances.

“Didn’t they say Tianyuan was going to seize every Dragon Gate?” Jing Yue asked.

“Why haven’t they come here?”

Nie Changqing thought for a moment. “Because this is Beiluo. The place White Jade Capital once claimed.”

“That’s all it takes.”

...

Tail Ridge, beneath Asking Heaven Peak.

Dantai Xuan strode forward in luxurious robes, his guardian sword at his hip.

Mo Ju followed in scholar’s garb, gently waving his feather fan.

Xue Tao led the Xuanwu Guards behind them, their aura like an advancing wall.

Uninvited guests had come to the Great Xuan Academy.

Mo Ju had only just returned from Wolong Ridge with news: a second-tier Tianyuan power called South Dou Mountain had set its sights on Dantai Xuan.

They wasted no time.

The speed left even Mo Ju uneasy.

Of course, the shifting tides explained everything.

Tianyuan cultivators grew bolder with every resource they seized.

Mo Ju's heart was heavy with pessimism.

Wuphong Continent didn't even have a single Nascent Soul. How could they hold back an entire domain?

When one side utterly outclasses the other, arrogance is inevitable.

South Dou Mountain was second only to the four holy lands in Tianyuan, boasting more than three Nascent Soul cultivators—including one at the peak of perfection.

And the leader of this delegation was that very peak Nascent Soul.

Inside the Great Xuan Academy, the atmosphere was suffocating.

South Dou disciples radiated crushing pressure.

Great Xuan students turned red-faced under the oppression.

From afar, Dantai Xuan saw it all—and rage exploded in his chest.

The students of Great Xuan were his reverse scale, the future pillars of his kingdom.

These outsiders dared threaten them?

With a roar that carried across the valley, he thundered, “Get your hands off my people!”

Xue Tao leveled his spear at the South Dou group, fury rolling off him in waves. The Xuanwu Guards advanced, armor clanking like war drums, shattering the oppressive aura.

“Worthy of the Northern Xuan King who carries imperial dragon qi,” an ancient voice praised.

An elder with one foot in the grave stepped forward from the South Dou ranks, smiling faintly.

“This old man is Nan Yuefeng, Supreme Elder of Tianyuan’s South Dou Mountain.”

“I come to discuss... the allocation of Dragon Gates.”

His lifespan was nearly spent—much like Zhou Haisheng once was.

“Allocation?” Dantai Xuan’s hand settled on his sword hilt. He barked a laugh full of scorn. “I tamed that Azure Dragon with my own flesh and blood, drop by drop. And you fossils crawling out of whatever backwater grave think you can just waltz in and pick the fruit?”

“Get the hell out!”

The words rang like iron—domineering yet regal.

Behind him, Mo Ju’s fan froze mid-wave. His face stiffened.

He had specifically warned the king to negotiate politely.

Instead, Dantai Xuan opened with a barrage of insults straight to a peak Nascent Soul’s face.

...How exactly were they supposed to talk now?

The Xuanwu Guards roared their approval. The students clenched their fists, blood surging.

Mo Ju gave a helpless smile, lowered his fan, and let the warmth drain from his eyes.

If His Majesty was going to throw the first punch, then courtesy was officially dead.

Nan Yuefeng blinked, then chuckled.

“Youth and fire... I like it. No need to waste time on pleasantries.”

The old man's withered finger flicked.

Boom!

Terrifying pressure erupted—the full might of a peak Nascent Soul.

The Xuanwu Guards' formation shattered like glass.

“Northern Xuan King,” Nan Yuefeng said, voice soft but carrying across the peak, “besides the Dragon Gate, this old man has one more desire.”

“I wish to witness the Imperial Dragon Qi with my own eyes.”

“Tell me—”

His robes whipped in a sudden wind, hair dancing though no breeze stirred.

“Does the Path of the Human Emperor... grant eternal life?”

A faint, eager laugh.

Then the elder reached out.

Spiritual energy surged like a tidal wave, condensing into a gigantic palm that blotted out the sky as it descended toward Dantai Xuan.

Chapter 327: The Poor, Pitiful, Helpless Little Azure Dragon

Dantai Xuan had been having an absolutely miserable time lately.

Not long ago, he'd barely survived an assassination attempt by Liu Yuanhao, the Black Dragon Cult's leader. If he hadn't ignited his imperial dragon qi at the last second, the entire Great Xuan Kingdom would be holding his funeral right now.

And just when that mess was behind him, another disaster showed up.

This time it was a supreme elder from South Dou Mountain—a peak Nascent Soul cultivator—who had come specifically for the imperial dragon qi coursing through Dantai Xuan's veins.

The old man didn't even bother with words. He attacked the moment he arrived.

From that withered, ancient body erupted a terrifying surge of power. He looked one foot in the grave, but the truth was far deadlier.

Boom!

Spiritual energy condensed into a colossal palm that blotted out the sun, looming over half the capital like the hand of judgment itself.

"How dare you!" Dantai Xuan roared, veins bulging on his forehead.

This South Dou Mountain monster was actually attacking inside the Great Xuan Academy!

“Protect His Majesty!”

The Xuanwu Guards, shaken by the Nascent Soul pressure, drew their weapons and threw themselves in front of their king.

Xue Tao bellowed, his Body Repository power flaring as spiritual armor cloaked his frame. He thrust his spear straight at the descending palm.

It wasn't even close.

The strike was too strong.

Nan Yuefeng had lived longer than even Du Longyang and the others. A perfected Nascent Soul's attack wasn't something a Body Repository cultivator could hope to block.

Crack!

Xue Tao's spear shattered. Blood exploded from every pore as he was hurled backward like a broken doll, carving a long furrow in the ground.

One casual touch had nearly killed him.

That was the gap between realms.

That was Nascent Soul.

Fury and helplessness warred inside Dantai Xuan.

This was the world of cultivators—might made right.

If monsters like this ruled the heavens, how much suffering would ordinary people endure?

In the eyes of true experts, mortal lives were less than ants.

And that was exactly why the Path of the Human Emperor existed: to shield those mortals.

Every life had its reason to exist.

Dantai Xuan caught Xue Tao as he slid to a stop. The man looked like he'd been flayed alive.

A feather fan swept in front of them.

“Your Majesty, fall back! Retreat to the Azure Dragon Gate!” Mo Ju said gravely.

Dantai Xuan’s eyes were ice. He shook his head.

“This king does not retreat. If I run, what happens to all of you?”

“Mo Ju, do you take me for a coward who fears death?”

“I stand right here. Let’s see if the old bastard dares kill me!”

He planted his feet, back ramrod straight, refusing to yield even an inch against a Nascent Soul’s onslaught.

“All the dragon qi in the world was gathered into one body. The Young Lord of White Jade Capital created it for the sake of the common people.”

“Let’s see if this old fossil dares touch me!”

Dantai Xuan had seen through it clearly.

The imperial dragon qi came from White Jade Capital itself. That was his trump card.

Mo Ju sighed inwardly.

True enough... but His Majesty had overlooked one thing.

When a man's lifespan is running out, how insane does he become?

What wouldn't someone do for just a little more time?

Nan Yuefeng wanted to live.

He had lingered at perfected Nascent Soul for centuries. He refused to die like this.

He wanted to walk further down the path.

White Jade Capital's name might not be enough to deter a man staring death in the face.

Boom!

Sure enough, the palm kept coming—stronger, faster, deadlier.

Mo Ju's robes whipped in the wind. He faced Nan Yuefeng.

“Senior... this imperial dragon qi was personally bestowed upon the Northern Xuan King by the Young Lord of White Jade Capital.”

“Do you truly dare seize it without the Young Lord's permission?”

He had to try.

Maybe—just maybe—the old monster still feared White Jade Capital.

But Mo Ju's heart sank instantly.

Nan Yuefeng didn't even slow down. His attack grew more ferocious.

“Hahaha...”

“This old man only wishes to know one thing: can the Path of the Human Emperor grant eternal life?”

The suffocating palm bore down on Dantai Xuan.

Xuanwu Guards were forced back step by step.

Dantai Xuan’s robes flapped wildly, face flushed crimson as blood surged to his head.

“You old geezer, keep dreaming! ‘Old but not dead makes a thief’ —and you still want immortality?!”

Dantai Xuan’s infamous temper finally snapped. He cursed at the top of his lungs under the crushing pressure.

Mo Ju was speechless.

Your Majesty, mind your image a little...

But there was no more holding back.

He couldn't stop the palm, but he could buy even a second.

Mo Ju shouted, and righteous haoran qi poured from his mouth.

White light crashed against the giant hand. It didn't budge the attack an inch, but ripples spread outward.

Pfft!

Mo Ju went pale, stumbling back, blood staining his white scholar's robe.

Dantai Xuan's eyes turned red with rage.

But he had no time to help.

The Nascent Soul palm finally slammed down, reaching to seize him.

“Ha!”

Imperial dragon qi exploded from Dantai Xuan once more. Golden dragons coiled above his head.

Mysterious yellow energy cascaded down like the sturdiest barrier in the world, blocking the strike.

Greed flashed in Nan Yuefeng’s cloudy old eyes.

“So this is imperial dragon qi!”

BOOM!

The palm smashed against the barrier.

Shockwaves ripped through the academy.

Dantai Xuan felt like he’d been struck by lightning. Cold dread pierced his body.

He staggered back two steps, blood trickling from his lips.

A Nascent Soul strike—even without Dao Intent—was leagues beyond Liu Yuanhao’s desperate attack.

“To think a mortal body could withstand one blow from this old man...”

Nan Yuefeng’s gaze burned hotter.

He sensed something extraordinary in this Human Emperor’s path.

If he could comprehend even a fragment... he might truly break through to Infant Transformation!

Another palm came.

No fancy techniques—just overwhelming, brute force.

On Asking Heaven Peak, the Azure Dragon lying atop its gate opened its eyes again.

Why does this Dantai Xuan keep having such rotten luck?

The next instant, the dragon slithered out of the gate, coiling into the sky.

ROAR!

A cyan beam shot from its maw, smashing straight into Nan Yuefeng's second palm.

The collision sent shockwaves tearing through the Great Xuan Academy, reducing buildings to rubble.

Every Xuanwu Guard and student stared upward, eyes bloodshot with emotion.

The Azure Dragon had descended from the heavens.

Dantai Xuan, coughing blood, threw his head back and laughed.

"That's it, old buddy! Beat his ass!"

He had no idea if the Azure Dragon could win, but momentum mattered.

Nan Yuefeng glanced at the dragon, brows furrowing.

“One of the heavenly dragon seeds from the gates...”

His ancient voice echoed.

The next moment, Golden Core disciples from South Dou Mountain shot forward, locking down the entire academy.

Nan Yuefeng’s plain robes flapped.

“Azure Dragon, leave now. This is none of your concern. Otherwise... this old man will butcher a dragon today.”

In his eyes, the dragon’s aura wasn’t overwhelmingly strong.

Heavenly dragon seeds couldn’t be judged by aura alone, but Nan Yuefeng was confident.

Imperial dragon qi was his once-in-a-lifetime chance to break through. He would not let it go.

The Azure Dragon’s presence was noble, majestic, righteous...

It perfectly complemented Dantai Xuan's imperial qi.

No wonder it kept helping the king.

The dragon gave no reply to the threat—too beneath it to acknowledge.

A sweep of draconic might whipped up a gale.

Nan Yuefeng's wrinkled face twitched.

"I've heard dragon blood prolongs life... Today, this old man will drink heavenly dragon blood!"

He had no choice.

His lifespan was ending. Without Infant Transformation, he would die.

That was heaven's law—no one could defy the cycle of life.

So even knowing the heavenly dragon seeds were tied to White Jade Capital, he attacked.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Nan Yuefeng soared into the sky. Nascent Soul cultivators could fly.

Tail Ridge became a battlefield.

Rocks shattered and tumbled endlessly.

Nascent Soul was too strong.

At least... too strong for the current Azure Dragon.

Heavenly dragon seeds grew through evolution. Right now, the Azure Dragon was roughly on par with an ordinary Nascent Soul—but against a perfected one like Nan Yuefeng, it was at a disadvantage.

Dark golden ripples surged in the dragon's eyes.

It roared.

Imperial dragon qi surged from Dantai Xuan, bathing the Azure Dragon in gold. Its cyan scales shimmered, turning regal gold.

As a golden dragon, its attacks became sharper, more decisive. Golden beams erupted from its jaws as it clashed with Nan Yuefeng.

The battle shook the entire Tail Ridge.

Students of the Great Xuan Academy looked up, faces burning with awe.

They had all cultivated inside the dragon gate and seen the gentle, serene Azure Dragon.

None had imagined it could unleash such terrifying power.

The dragon was protecting them!

Dantai Xuan's imperial qi continued pouring out.

He drew the Emperor Dragon Seal.

With a shout, the seal shot skyward, growing massively in the wind.

The Azure Dragon's tail coiled around the enormous seal and swung it like a titanic hammer toward Nan Yuefeng.

The old man was smashed into the ground.

"A top-tier spirit tool?!"

Nan Yuefeng stared at the expanding seal, face twisting.

With the Human Emperor's blessing, he actually couldn't subdue the dragon quickly.

But the stronger the path revealed itself, the more excited he became.

He formed seals.

Above his head, a Nascent Soul materialized—identical to him, untransformed, yet brimming with energy at the perfected stage.

Nan Yuefeng howled, hair and beard flying.

With the Nascent Soul above him, his battle power became peerless.

Unlike Zhou Haisheng, who had pinned his hopes on Zhou Liusheng and collapsed when his disciple died, Nan Yuefeng trusted only his own strength.

Light cascaded from him. His ancient body began to rejuvenate, just like Zhou Haisheng once had.

These old-generation Nascent Souls all had terrifying trump cards.

At their peak, restored to youth, their power was monstrous.

“So this is Nascent Soul...”

Mo Ju coughed blood, watching the sky with complicated awe.

Soaring through the heavens, turning back the clock on age...

Nascent Soul cultivators truly seemed like immortals.

Dantai Xuan snarled—Immortal my ass! In his eyes, Nan Yuefeng was just a bully hiding behind power!

“Kill him!”

Yet reality was cruel.

Nan Yuefeng grew stronger with every exchange, hope igniting within him like a second youth.

His power seemed to ascend.

The Emperor Dragon Seal was sent flying.

The Azure Dragon coiled in the sky, scales shattering under blows, dragon blood raining down.

South Dou disciples grinned with excitement.

If their supreme elder broke through to Infant Transformation, South Dou Mountain would leap into the top tier—rivaling Martial Emperor City, the Palace of the Heavenly Maiden, the four holy lands!

Infant Transformation was the hallmark of a first-rate power.

Without it, you were forever second-rate.

In the entire Tianyuan Domain, only the four holy lands possessed Infant Transformation experts.

That was why Nan Yuefeng craved it—craved metamorphosis, the true evolution of the Nascent Soul, the leap to a higher form of life!

The Azure Dragon bled across the heavens.

Draconic qi shook the world.

The fight turned brutal.

Nan Yuefeng shone brighter with every heartbeat.

Dantai Xuan's heart sank.

The Azure Dragon... was losing.

It was injured!

He drew his guardian sword and began climbing the ruined ridge.

Nan Yuefeng stepped through the air, descending slowly.

The Azure Dragon's claws gouged the ground like tofu.

Dantai Xuan crawled from the rubble, sword pointed at the old man.

Nan Yuefeng smiled.

"Imperial dragon qi... energy even this old man can't break through easily. What a waste on a mortal like you."

Dantai Xuan spat blood. "Bullshit! You wouldn't know greatness if it bit you!"

He turned to the dragon.

Their eyes met—dark gold and determined human.

Man and dragon shared a moment of perfect understanding, just like the first time Dantai Xuan had begged for entry to the gate.

“Old buddy... what if we can’t win?”

“Run. Get stronger. Come back and avenge me later!”

Dantai Xuan gripped his sword tighter.

The Azure Dragon shook its head.

Then it opened its massive jaws... and sighed.

The next second, it threw its head back and unleashed a sky-shattering dragon roar!

The cry rippled outward like a stone dropped in still water.

Hmm?

Nan Yuefeng's face changed. Something felt wrong.

Then, to everyone's horror, the Azure Dragon began tearing its own scales off.

Rip! Rip!

Blood sprayed.

It even stabbed a claw into its own flank, drilling a hole. Dragon blood gushed.

Nan Yuefeng was stunned.

Dantai Xuan was stunned. "Old buddy, no—don't hurt yourself!"

Suddenly the dragon whipped its gaze to Dantai Xuan, slammed a claw down, and pinned the king to the ground—hard enough to make him cough blood and look utterly pathetic.

Then it roared again.

A heartbreaking, pitiful, utterly helpless wail of agony and despair.

Nan Yuefeng's face twitched violently.

What the hell was this dragon doing?

Dantai Xuan, face smeared with blood and dirt, suddenly understood.

A honey trap?

This dragon... was savage!

...

Buzhou Peak.

Lush and blooming, vines trailing down the cliffs, flowers everywhere.

On a massive green stone sat a figure in meditation, breathing in and out streams of milky-white energy laced with the faintest trace of primordial chaos.

If Lu were here, he would recognize it instantly.

Suddenly, the figure's eyes snapped open.

From the dragon gate behind her came the most wretched, soul-tearing dragon cry—full of grief, pain, and desperate attachment to life.

BOOM!

Terrifying aura swept across Buzhou Peak.

Zhulong swallowed the milky energy and turned her head.

“Little Qing?”

What had happened?

Why was the Azure Dragon crying like it was dying?

She stood. As the eldest sister of the eight dragon gates, how could she sit idle?

Her figure blurred. She stepped through the gate, crossed the iron chains, and emerged from the Azure Dragon Gate.

...

Back on Asking Heaven Peak.

Nan Yuefeng's cheek twitched harder.

The Azure Dragon looked even more pitiful now—fresh claw marks everywhere, holes gouged in its flesh, blood pooling beneath it.

This was one ruthless dragon.

Nan Yuefeng paused, listening warily.

Something was very wrong.

Was it... calling White Jade Capital?

He erupted with power. The Nascent Soul above his head opened radiant eyes.

Every muscle tensed.

Then—

Before the Azure Dragon Gate.

A graceful, ethereal figure stepped out.

The young woman was breathtakingly beautiful, brows like distant mountains, lashes trembling over closed eyes.

Sensing the dying, blood-soaked Azure Dragon, murderous intent exploded from her.

ROAR!

The Azure Dragon charged—fearless, suicidal—straight at Nan Yuefeng.

The old man frowned. Suspecting White Jade Capital's arrival any second, he only flicked his sleeve to brush the "dying" dragon aside.

But halfway through the motion, the Azure Dragon suddenly flew backward five hundred meters, coughing blood dramatically, emitting the most weak, pitiful, helpless whimpers imaginable...

Nan Yuefeng: "..."

Dantai Xuan, sprawled in the dirt and covered in blood, saw Zhulong streaking through the sky.

That terrifying girl from Buzhou Peak—he remembered her all too well!

Watching the Azure Dragon writhe and wail on the ground...

Dantai Xuan instinctively flattened himself further and let out a few pathetic groans of his own.

Old buddy... you absolute legend!

Chapter 328: Zhulong Opens Her Eyes

Lake Heart Island, at the very center of the Origin Lake.

Little Yinglong perched atop Ni Yu's head. Girl and dragon both had their butts in the air, staring intently at the scenes playing out in the Heaven-Spanning Mirror.

"Pfft—!"

Ni Yu suddenly burst out laughing so hard she nearly choked.

"I thought the Azure Dragon was stabbing holes in himself for some noble reason—turns out he was just faking it for sympathy!"

"Hahaha! Can't win? Call big sis Zhulong! That's... genius!"

She laughed until tears formed, even spitting out the sugar-coated Body Tempering Pill she'd just popped into her mouth. It rolled across the floor, wasted.

Little Yinglong's eyes spun. A lightbulb clearly went off—he'd learned a new trick.

“I always thought Azure was the aloof, dignified type. Who knew the cold act was all fake?”

Ni Yu gave the little dragon’s rump a playful smack.

Her gaze returned to the mirror, brows knitting with worry.

She solemnly tossed another candy-coated pill into her mouth.

“The Azure Dragon couldn’t handle that South Dou Mountain Nascent Soul... Can big sis Zhulong actually beat him?”

Little Yinglong let out a dismissive snort, utterly unimpressed.

He pointed one claw at Nan Yuefeng in the mirror, then at himself, smacked his lips, and shoved the air forward with a single claw.

Ni Yu blinked.

“You’re saying... you could take five of him?”

Little Yinglong huffed indignantly, puffed out his cheeks, and sprayed her face with ice-cold dragon spit.

Wrong answer.

“...One of him could take five of you?”

Little Yinglong’s eyes lit up. He cackled and flapped his wings in delight.

Ni Yu had no idea why he was so happy.

Then he pointed at Zhulong in the mirror, then at himself, pushed forward with both claws—once, twice, flipped them, and kept pushing...

Ni Yu sucked in a breath.

“One big sis Zhulong... can beat a hundred Little Yellows?”

SPLASH!

Another faceful of cold water, followed by frantic wing-slaps.

She got it instantly this time.

“A thousand?!”

Little Yinglong practically danced with glee.

Ni Yu’s eyes sparkled. She stealthily pointed toward the White Jade Capital pavilion and whispered conspiratorially:

“Then... how many Little Yellows could the Young Lord beat?”

The celebrating dragon froze.

His claw trembled. He couldn’t even begin to count that high.

Ni Yu saw the sudden gloom and instantly felt bad for hitting a sore spot.

So she pointed at herself. “Okay, okay—how many Little Yellows could one Ni Yu take?”

Little Yinglong gave her a sideways glance.

Ni Yu's cheeks burned crimson.

What kind of look was that?!

She was the Young Lord's personally trained genius alchemist, thank you very much!

Comparing combat power felt like an insult to him somehow?

...

Up in the White Jade Capital pavilion.

Lu, who had overheard the entire conversation, couldn't help but chuckle.

He was fully aware of everything happening in the northern prefecture.

South Dou Mountain pressuring Dantai Xuan, the Azure Dragon's dramatic performance, Zhulong's arrival—he'd seen it all.

Fingers tapping lightly on his wheelchair armrest, Lu raised a brow in amusement.

“And the Oscar goes to...?”

Even he hadn't expected the Azure Dragon to pull a full-on “porcelain bump” scam—playing possum and selling misery like a pro.

Zhulong was genuinely furious. As the eldest sister of the heavenly dragon seeds, how could she not be when her little brother showed up covered in self-inflicted holes?

“That guy couldn't just learn from Little Red—endure, challenge himself endlessly, break through his limits...”

Lu shook his head with a smile.

Then the lines in his eyes shifted as he turned his full attention to the coming clash between Zhulong and the South Dou supreme elder.

...

Back on Tail Ridge.

Nan Yuefeng frowned.

He looked up—and saw a stunning young woman streaking across the sky toward him.

A girl?

The tension in his body loosened instantly.

He'd braced himself for the mysterious Young Lord of White Jade Capital himself. Instead, it was just some delicate-looking girl.

Her aura was decent, yes—but nothing he feared.

A perfected Nascent Soul like him had no reason to fear a mere girl.

From what he could sense, she'd only just stepped into Nascent Soul—barely stronger than the Azure Dragon.

Below, Dantai Xuan was still whimpering pathetically on the ground, twitching dramatically, the very picture of mortal suffering.

The Azure Dragon rolled to its feet, blood pouring from countless “wounds,” letting out a roar that somehow managed to sound both wronged and enraged.

Nan Yuefeng actually laughed.

He no longer felt the slightest worry.

“Pathetic acting.”

His expression iced over as he stepped through the air toward the dragon.

The Azure Dragon spotted Zhulong and bellowed as though this were their final farewell.

Then it launched itself skyward in a suicidal charge.

Nan Yuefeng’s eyes narrowed.

The Nascent Soul above his head blazed brighter.

“Courting death!”

Today, he would slaughter a dragon!

In the entire Tianyuan Domain there were no true dragons left—he never imagined he’d get the chance on the Five Phoenixes Continent.

“Enough.”

Halfway through its charge, the Azure Dragon skidded to a halt as Zhulong stepped in front of it.

Her closed eyes were cold and serene.

The dragon froze mid-air, looking utterly wronged.

Dantai Xuan coughed up blood and struggled to his feet, imperial dragon qi flaring dramatically around him—like a golden dragon roaring:

Big sis! We've got dragon qi! We're family!

Zhulong's lashes trembled slightly. Her head tilted a fraction toward Dantai Xuan, as if giving him a glance.

"Young lady, there's no need to get involved in this mess," Nan Yuefeng said with a smile, strolling through the sky.

Though ancient, in his rejuvenated state he still cut a dashing figure.

Zhulong ignored him.

His brow furrowed.

Was she human or dragon?

Why couldn't he see through her at all?

"Young lady."

The smile faded.

Still no response.

“Since you insist... then forgive this old man for offending you.”

He'd given her a chance.

Suddenly—Zhulong moved.

She raised a delicate hand, pointed at the wounded Azure Dragon, and spoke in a voice like clear spring water:

“This dragon is my little brother.”

The words fell.

Her figure vanished, leaving only afterimages as she appeared directly in front of Nan Yuefeng and swung a palm.

The strike collapsed the air itself.

In Nan Yuefeng's eyes, it looked like a colossal, multicolored dragon tail whipping down.

The void shattered.

He raised a spiritual energy shield instinctively.

Her aura wasn't that strong—he had nothing to fear...

BANG!

The seemingly soft palm struck the shield.

The shield didn't even slow her—it exploded like glass.

Nan Yuefeng's expression changed drastically.

How could the attack be this strong?!

That shield was a defensive battle art—even same-realm Nascent Souls couldn't break it easily!

Yet this girl shattered it with one casual slap!

BOOM!

The impact sounded like the sky splitting open.

Cold sweat soaked Nan Yuefeng's back.

He roared, crossing his arms to block.

CRACK!

Brilliant light exploded in the heavens like the first dawn piercing the dark.

Nan Yuefeng felt as though an ancient behemoth had rammed him.

Both arms shattered instantly.

His body lost all control, plummeting like a meteor, smashing a hundreds-meter-wide crater into the Great Xuan Academy grounds.

One slap.

The arrogant supreme elder—sent flying.

The entire Tail Ridge fell deathly silent.

South Dou Mountain's Golden Core disciples stood frozen, blood turning to ice in their veins.

Mo Ju, hair disheveled and blood at his lips, stared in stunned awe.

So... strong!

He recognized her—the mysterious girl from Buzhou Peak's dragon gate.

The one Great Xuan had flagged as an ultra-dangerous entity.

The Azure Dragon coiled proudly in the sky, dark-golden eyes gleaming at the crater.

Keep acting tough now!

Dantai Xuan's imperial dragon qi blazed as he struck a heroic pose—one hand on hip, the other gripping his sword, unable to hide his shock.

This lady was insane!

No wonder the Azure Dragon had put on such an Oscar-worthy performance—this was the real thigh to hug!

With the Young Lord away, she was the ultimate backer!

When all seemed lost, a new dawn!

Dantai Xuan had thought he was done for. Now hope burned bright.

Hugging a big thigh felt amazing.

In the rubble, Nan Yuefeng rose.

One arm was pulp and splinters, but Nascent Soul regeneration would mend it—given time.

“I misjudged you... You were hiding your strength.”

“Are you also Nascent Soul?” he asked grimly.

His heart sank.

He had stumbled upon a massive secret.

The Five Phoenixes Continent... wasn't as weak as they'd believed.

A hidden Nascent Soul expert.

And that Azure Dragon possessed Nascent Soul-level combat power too.

This continent was far from simple.

Zhulong hovered serenely, eyes still closed.

But Nan Yuefeng no longer dared underestimate her.

That gentle, fragile-looking girl had shattered his arm with one slap.

“Since you stand with the dragon... I will settle for the Path of the Human Emperor alone.”

He backed down, asking for less.

He didn't want an all-out fight—his lifespan was nearly spent. Overexertion could bring his end even sooner.

With this mysterious girl here, the Azure Dragon Gate wasn't falling today.

But the imperial path—he had to have it.

His last hope.

Zhulong's lashes trembled.

Then she raised her pale hand.

WHOOSH!

She answered with action.

Another casual palm descended.

Nan Yuefeng felt a terrifying pressure crush down from above.

He saw it—a radiant tail covered in seven-colored scales whipping straight at his head.

Every hair on his body stood on end.

He roared.

Nascent Soul aura exploded to its limit.

He raised both palms, forming an illusory towering mountain—South Dou Mountain’s ultimate defensive art.

The dragon tail struck.

The mountain shattered like sand.

Blood mist burst from Nan Yuefeng’s body. His flesh cracked. He was being toyed with.

BOOM!

The earth caved again, debris flying.

The Azure Dragon lay off to the side, casually squeezing more blood from its “wounds” and letting out the occasional pitiful whimper—just to keep up appearances.

Nan Yuefeng roared in fury and shot out of the rubble.

“Kill!”

Eyes crimson, he locked onto Zhulong with murderous intent.

He knew today would not end peacefully.

No more holding back—or he’d be slapped to death.

His spirit, energy, and essence peaked. His skin glowed like jade.

The Nascent Soul above poured down power.

Yet against his frenzied aura, Zhulong remained perfectly still, eyes closed.

ROAR!

He hugged an illusory mountain to his chest and charged—South Dou’s strongest offensive art: Mountain Embrace Rush!

He barreled toward her like a savage beast.

Wind howled against Zhulong's hair.

Her lashes fluttered. She turned her face calmly toward the east—toward the endless sea, toward that drifting island and the white-robed youth in the pavilion far away.

Lu sat gracefully, placing a chess piece with a soft clack.

Feeling her silent question, he smiled and gave a slight nod.

On Tail Ridge.

Zhulong received permission.

She faced the incoming Nan Yuefeng.

Her lashes trembled harder.

Then—slowly, like lifting the curtain between heaven and earth—her eyelids rose.

Black light burst from her left eye.

White light burst from her right.

The moment Nan Yuefeng unleashed his ultimate attack, mortal peril screamed in his soul.

A perfected Nascent Soul's danger sense was unmatched.

From those opening eyes he felt boundless doom.

Terror twisted his face.

“No...”

“All I wanted was longevity! A breakthrough!”

His voice cracked, almost pleading.

Far away on the ridge, the Azure Dragon gave one last dramatic squeeze of blood from a hole and whimpered weakly.

Nan Yuefeng's face went ashen.

Oh no—

Zhulong's eyes fully opened.

In that instant—peerless beauty.

Black and white swirled. Heaven and earth inverted.

Sun and moon lost their light. Color vanished from every watcher's vision.

BOOM!

Facing death, Nan Yuefeng detonated his own Nascent Soul.

Centuries of cultivation erupted in a final, glorious blaze.

In that moment he even touched the threshold of Infant Transformation for the first time.

He dared to hope he might survive.

But under the endless rotation of black and white, he was dragged into a terrifying domain.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

His body exploded—blood mist from every pore.

This girl... was Infant Transformation!

The thought flashed through his mind.

He stared dumbly at her distant figure, those black-and-white eyes locked on him.

What devastatingly beautiful eyes.

Then she raised a hand.

A strand of milky-white energy laced with primordial chaos shot from her fingertip.

Pfft!

It punched clean through his forehead.

Darkness swallowed his vision.

His spiritual sense collapsed. His soul crumbled. Even the fleeting Infant Transformation power shattered.

Black and white faded.

Color returned to the world.

Zhulong closed her eyes once more and hovered silently in the sky.

Nan Yuefeng's corpse plummeted, a neat hole in his brow, all life extinguished.

One look.

The supreme elder of South Dou Mountain—a perfected Nascent Soul—was dead.

Dantai Xuan sucked in a trembling breath.

Even the Azure Dragon’s dark-golden eyes widened in shock.

Big sis... just got stronger again!

Chapter 329: Twenty-Seven Nascent Souls Converge on Buzhou Peak

A perfected Nascent Soul at the absolute peak of power... was dead.

Killed in the time it took that young woman to open and close her eyes.

The entire Great Xuan Academy fell into deathly silence. The ground had cracked open into a deep crater, jagged earth flung outward like the claws of some ferocious beast.

Nan Yuefeng’s corpse knelt on the ground, a single crimson dot between his brows—not even a trickle of blood escaped.

All life had fled his body. Skin that moments ago glowed like warm jade now withered and crumpled like dead branches stripped of moisture.

He knelt in perfect posture, as though in final repentance.

No one dared breathe.

The fall of a Nascent Soul was always earth-shattering news. A single Nascent Soul could found an entire sect.

Back then, the battle between Overlord and Zhou Haisheng had shaken the world. Overlord had dragged the dying Zhou Haisheng into exhaustion and death, earning fame that echoed across Tianyuan.

But that fight and this one were nothing alike.

Overlord had overwhelmed Zhou Haisheng through sheer endurance, wearing the old man down until his lifespan ran out.

The girl in the sky had crushed Nan Yuefeng outright.

A man far stronger than Zhou Haisheng had been erased without the slightest chance to resist—one finger through the forehead.

The Golden Core disciples of South Dou Mountain trembled uncontrollably.

One of them shot forward, staring at Nan Yuefeng's lifeless body and shaking like a leaf.

"You..."

"You actually killed our supreme elder?!"

He glared at Zhulong, who now hovered in the sky with her eyes closed once more.

Zhulong tilted her head slightly, her exquisite face turning toward him—as if to say, And why shouldn't I?

Dantai Xuan was already stunned senseless by her power.

This was the ultimate thigh to cling to!

Hug it tight, and Great Xuan would never fear another soul. Anyone who came would die!

The students of the academy could barely contain their excitement.

What kind of peerless goddess was this?

A land immortal like Nan Yuefeng—crushed like an insect.

The Azure Dragon coiled proudly and let out a low roar: Big Sis is invincible!

Zhulong remained ice-cold.

Eyes closed, lashes trembling faintly, she ignored the world.

She had killed Nan Yuefeng only because he dared dream of butchering a dragon.

As if dragons were so easy to slaughter.

“Thank you, young lady, for saving us!” Dantai Xuan rose, covered in blood and looking wretched, yet unable to hide his exhilaration. He cupped his fists in deep gratitude.

Zhulong ignored him too. She turned to the Azure Dragon, lifted her smooth chin, and spoke softly:

“Too weak. Come to Buzhou Peak. Train.”

Short, direct, and unmistakable.

The Azure Dragon coughed up another mouthful of blood, dark-golden eyes flashing with refusal.

But the memory of that single finger piercing Nan Yuefeng’s brow crushed all resistance.

He couldn’t say no.

Down below, the South Dou Golden Cores snapped out of their shock and fled in every direction, golden light exploding from their cores as they bolted from the academy.

This place was cursed—a graveyard where a perfected Nascent Soul had fallen!

Dantai Xuan’s expression changed—he wanted to stop them, but Great Xuan had no means to hold Golden Cores.

Everything depended on Zhulong and the Azure Dragon.

And Dantai Xuan had zero control over either.

Zhulong paid the fleeing cultivators no mind.

She stepped lightly through the air, robes fluttering, walked straight to the Azure Dragon, grabbed its tail, and dragged it toward the dragon gate.

The Azure Dragon wanted to protest, but the terrifying aura rolling off Big Sis silenced it.

It gave up.

With one last shred of dignity, it lifted its head high and allowed itself to be hauled through the gate.

Little Yinglong's old miserable life was about to have company.

Mo Ju clutched his chest—he'd taken internal injuries—and hurried to Dantai Xuan's side.

“Your Majesty, are you alright?”

He paled at the sight of all the blood.

Dantai Xuan, covered in gore, waved energetically.

“I’m fine! This isn’t my blood—it’s the dragon’s.”

He had simply followed the Azure Dragon’s example and made himself look a little more pitiful.

“Your Majesty... those South Dou survivors will spread the news fast,” Mo Ju warned.

“Let them,” Dantai Xuan said with a carefree laugh. “After today, who would dare look down on Great Xuan?”

“Even if the young lady didn’t act purely to protect us... that’s the story we’re telling.”

His eyes gleamed.

Buzhou Peak lay within Great Xuan's borders, didn't it?

Therefore, the young lady was Great Xuan's young lady!

"And don't forget—I bear imperial dragon qi. We're practically family," he added with a grin.

Mo Ju was speechless.

Your Majesty... have some shame.

...

Word spread like wildfire: Nan Yuefeng of South Dou Mountain had invaded Great Xuan under the pretext of "dividing Dragon Gate quotas," intending to seize the imperial dragon qi.

The aristocratic families and powers of the Five Phoenixes were outraged—yet powerless.

South Dou Mountain was a top second-tier force, and Nan Yuefeng a perfected Nascent Soul. Even nearing the end of his lifespan, he was terrifying.

Great Xuan was doomed.

Seizing the imperial dragon qi and turning it into Tianyuan's fortune seemed inevitable.

The atmosphere across the Five Phoenixes grew heavy with oppression.

Tianyuan cultivators still feared White Jade Capital and refrained from outright slaughter, but in the scramble for resources, Five Phoenixes practitioners were left only scraps.

Everyone endured, knowing strength was the only answer—only strength would let them stand as equals.

Then, just when all believed Great Xuan would fall...

A shocking rumor exploded outward, carried by the terrified, fleeing Golden Core disciples.

Nan Yuefeng was dead.

He had died kneeling in the Great Xuan Academy, as if begging forgiveness.

The entire world quaked.

A perfected Nascent Soul—dead in Great Xuan?

Did Great Xuan truly possess such power?

More details followed quickly.

“It was a mysterious young woman of unparalleled grace—she killed Nan Yuefeng with a single strike, as if she could overturn heaven and earth!”

A young woman?

The world erupted.

Tianyuan, which had grown increasingly brazen, received the greatest shock.

“The Five Phoenixes has a Nascent Soul?”

“No... someone who can kill Nan Yuefeng can't be ordinary. Could she be Infant Transformation?”

“Infant Transformation? Besides White Jade Capital, does the Five Phoenixes even have one?!”

The news shook both sides.

The long-suppressed cultivators of the Five Phoenixes felt new life surge through them.

Tianyuan’s arrogance was suddenly reined in.

Nan Yuefeng’s death was a warning—even in Tianyuan, he had been among the elite.

Wolong Ridge.

Beneath a black robe, Li Sansi listened in a daze.

A mysterious young woman who slew Nan Yuefeng.

“Zhulong...”

His murmur was soft beneath the hood.

Resolve hardened in his eyes. He had to grow stronger—much stronger.

Without hesitation, he stepped toward the Third Prison Gate.

Nie Changqing and Jing Yue heard the news too. They knew Zhulong—that quiet girl who loved playing the flute.

But they had never imagined she could annihilate a top-tier Nascent Soul.

Jing Yue gripped his Jing Tian Sword and sighed, “Worthy of a cub the Young Lord chose.”

Then urgency gripped him—he had to get stronger, fast.

He shouldered his sword and charged deeper into the prison gates.

Within the Nine Prisons Secret Realm, the third gate had been breached.

Zhong Nan still led the pack.

Overlord and Nie Changqing followed close behind.

Jing Yue and Feng Yilou vied for fourth and fifth...

Everyone felt the shifting tides—Tianyuan’s pressure—and burned to break through, to become the pillars that could hold the sky for the Five Phoenixes.

...

Dongyang Prefecture, outside the majestic city by the Red Dragon Gate.

Rosy clouds filled the sky.

One figure after another descended—Nascent Souls from every force in Tianyuan except the four holy lands.

Twenty to thirty in total.

They had formed an alliance—not just to divvy up Five Phoenixes resources, but to create a power that could rival the holy lands.

They elected an alliance leader: the Valley Lord of Thunder Sound Valley, Lei Liushui.

Half a step into Infant Transformation, and unlike Nan Yuefeng, he was far from his lifespan's end.

He was the cultivator most likely to become the fifth Infant Transformation expert in Tianyuan.

"Valley Lord Lei... a mighty Nascent Soul capable of slaying Elder Nan Yuefeng has appeared in Great Xuan. We cannot ignore this," the South Dou Mountain sect master said gravely.

Lei Liushui wore a black-and-white checkered robe, long beard flowing, face fair. A blue dot glowed faintly on his brow, crackling with restrained lightning.

He only smiled, saying nothing.

The other alliance Nascent Souls voiced their concerns.

"Valley Lord Lei, the Five Phoenixes has abundant resources, but previously lacked even a single Nascent Soul. Now one has appeared—and a supreme one at that—who killed Elder Nan Yuefeng and reignited their morale..."

“This is bad for our plan to fully control their resources.”

Lei Liushui kept smiling.

Finally he turned north, toward Great Xuan.

“You all speak wisely.”

A glint flashed in his eyes.

“In that case... why don't we pay Great Xuan a visit together? Greet this Nascent Soul, make a new friend.”

“The Five Phoenixes and Tianyuan were once one. The birth of a Nascent Soul there is cause for celebration.”

“We can invite her to join our alliance...”

The gathered Nascent Souls' eyes lit up.

Invite her to join?

They exchanged glances and saw the sharp intent in one another's eyes.

Lei Liushui was no saint.

Anyone who reached Nascent Soul had a complicated heart.

If he truly meant well, why bring the entire alliance?

Twenty-seven Nascent Souls—even an Infant Transformation expert would hesitate.

None of them believed Zhulong was truly Infant Transformation. That realm was not so easily attained.

Lei Liushui clearly intended to overwhelm her with numbers.

...

The next day.

Red Dragon Gate, Dongyang Prefecture.

Twenty-seven Nascent Souls gathered—robes fluttering, auras majestic, each a living immortal.

Led by Lei Liushui, they rose into the sky, laughing and chatting as they flew north toward Buzhou Peak.

They did not conceal their presence.

Terrifying auras rolled across the land. Clouds tore apart, mountains trembled.

In every city they passed, cultivators looked up in awe and fear—twenty-seven blazing suns crossing the heavens.

To mortals and lower cultivators, flying Nascent Souls were gods.

When word spread where they were headed...

The world exploded.

“Are all these Nascent Souls going after the mysterious young woman in Great Xuan?”

The Five Phoenixes cultivators, who had only just regained a spark of pride, burned with righteous fury.

Tianyuan’s intent was clear: crush the Five Phoenixes completely.

Wolong Ridge.

Overlord frowned and stepped out of the Nine Prisons Secret Realm, clad in Tyrant King Armor, axe-shield on his back, radiating terrifying might.

Nie Changqing and Jing Yue emerged behind him.

Sima Qingshan followed, book box on his back, refined and gentle.

They exchanged glances and, without a word, raced north.

They all knew what twenty-seven Nascent Souls meant.

They intended to suppress Zhulong.

The Five Phoenixes had finally produced a Nascent Soul—Tianyuan felt threatened and moved to smother it, to crush their rising momentum.

Overlord and the others would not stand idly by.

Not just them—cultivators from both Five Phoenixes and Tianyuan rushed toward the north.

Tiandang Mountain, Star-Plucking Peak, before the Cloud Dragon Gate.

Li Sansui stared at the black-robed Li Sansi.

“You’re really going?”

“Against Nascent Souls, you’ll be exposed.”

“Once they see what you are, they won’t let you live. To them, your constitution is evil.”

Her daoist robe fluttered as she spoke earnestly.

She didn't want him to throw his life away.

Li Sansi was strong now—enhanced by the vine demon body, stronger than she could guess.

But against Nascent Souls? He would be at a disadvantage.

The figure in black robes smiled.

“If she needs help, I can't sit by.”

That was all he said.

Then he stepped through the Cloud Dragon Gate, heading for the Azure Dragon Gate.

He still didn't dare take the direct route through Buzhou Peak.

Li Sansui watched him vanish and sighed.

...

Atop Tail Ridge.

Dantai Xuan read the intelligence report, eyes bulging with rage. He slammed a palm on the table.

“The absolute nerve!”

His chest heaved.

“These Tianyuan Nascent Souls think they can bully us forever! Twenty-seven of them heading here together—what, they want to kill Lady Zhulong?!”

Fury blazed inside him.

The Five Phoenixes had only just begun to rise—and they couldn’t wait to stamp it out, relying on superior numbers.

“Xue Tao!”

Xue Tao rushed in and saluted.

“Muster a thousand Xuanwu Guards! We ride for Buzhou Peak! We will not lose in momentum! They want a numbers game?!”

“YES, SIR!”

Xue Tao’s eyes burned with the same fire.

Mo Ju fanned himself silently.

A thousand Xuanwu Guards wouldn’t even register against one Nascent Soul.

The gap was too vast.

Numbers meant nothing here.

...

The twenty-seven Nascent Souls flew swiftly.

From Dongyang to northern Buzhou Peak—majestic, unstoppable, shaking the world.

On Buzhou Peak.

Zhulong remained unaware of the storm coming.

The Azure Dragon lay swollen and bruised, panting miserably.

Zhulong sat cross-legged on the green stone, bamboo flute to her lips, playing a clear, lingering melody.

At the foot of the mountain.

Dantai Xuan arrived with a thousand Xuanwu Guards, saber across his lap, sitting proudly beneath the peak.

Zhulong's flute paused. Her brows furrowed slightly—she didn't quite understand what Dantai Xuan was doing.

Then she sensed it.

Immense auras approaching.

She lifted her closed-eyed face toward the horizon.

There...

Clouds ripped apart.

A massive vortex of wind and storm formed.

Figures stepped out of the sky—one, two, three...

Twenty-seven supreme cultivators floated in a ring around Buzhou Peak.

The terrifying pressure rolling off them shredded the spiritual energy cloaking the mountain.

Chapter 330: Good Girls Should Have a Sweet Temper

On the back of the giant whale, Lake Heart Island.

Ripples spread across the Origin Lake, releasing strange pulses of energy.

Nie Zha ended her secluded cultivation for once. She sat cross-legged on the grass, Ni Yu (with Little Yinglong perched on her head) beside her. The Heaven-Spanning Mirror floated before them, showing the standoff at Buzhou Peak.

“Twenty-seven Nascent Souls...”

Worry creased Ni Yu’s face. “Can big sis Zhulong hold them off?”

She passed Nie Zha a sugar-coated Body Tempering Pill. Nie Zha accepted it without ceremony and popped it in her mouth.

Her expression was equally grave.

Though her time on the island had pushed her to the Five Extremes Heavenly Lock—far beyond her old self—she still had no confidence against Nascent Souls.

Zhulong was strong, but the enemy lineup was stronger.

Little Yinglong, however, lounged carelessly atop Ni Yu’s head, lazily crunching another candy-coated pill. The pills barely helped him anymore, but they tasted amazing.

As for the mess his big sister now faced?

He wasn't worried at all.

Even if Big Sis somehow lost—which was ridiculous—she had Dad.

A hundred Little Yinglongs' worth of battle power wasn't a joke.

He snorted smugly, eyes full of disdain.

Up in the White Jade Capital pavilion.

Lu poured himself a cup of green plum wine, swirling it gently as lines danced in his eyes.

"These Tianyuan cultivators have gotten a little too full of themselves..."

The liquid clinked softly inside the cup.

The ones moving now were all second- and third-rate Nascent Souls. The four holy lands stayed wisely silent—Du Longyang and the others knew exactly how terrifying Lu was and kept their people in check.

The lesser powers, however, were beneath his notice.

Lu tapped the armrest of his wheelchair.

Pressure bred growth.

The threat from Tianyuan had forced the Five Phoenixes' cultivators to improve by leaps and bounds.

Overlord, Nie Changqing, and the others were breaking through faster than ever.

Even ordinary practitioners, starved of resources, trained desperately—because only strength could win those resources back.

With the scraps they were given, they squeezed out maximum gains.

So far, White Jade Capital's seclusion strategy was working.

As for twenty-seven Nascent Souls ganging up on Zhulong...

Even Lu hadn't expected that.

Her appearance was meant to be a deterrent. Instead of scaring them off, it had drawn them together like wolves.

"That Lei Liushui cultivates some kind of ocular art. He's after Zhulong's eyes, isn't he?"

A dangerous glint flickered in Lu's gaze.

"That girl's temper... is nothing like mine. I'm the patient one."

He took a sip and chuckled.

Good, though. Tianyuan needed a beating.

After today, the balance between the Five Phoenixes and Tianyuan might finally settle into its proper track.

Once that happened, growth would accelerate.

Lu actually felt a spark of anticipation.

He looked up at the boundless sky.

He could already feel it—the powerful enemies drawn by the death of that Buddhist seed were almost here.

The Five Phoenixes' hope of leaping straight into a top-tier Mid Martial world, or even High Martial...

It all rested on just how strong the world those enemies came from truly was.

...

Buzhou Peak.

Zhulong sat on the green stone, long lashes trembling.

Twenty-seven Nascent Souls.

Her spiritual sense counted them clearly.

Five were no weaker than Nan Yuefeng.

One had half a foot in Infant Transformation.

A formidable lineup.

Yet her heart remained perfectly calm.

Behind her, the Azure Dragon roared. All traces of its earlier pitiful, bruised act vanished. Radiant light poured from its body.

Dark-golden eyes burned with fury.

They dared bully Big Sis?!

The dragon coiled into the sky, unleashing a roar that shook the mountain.

In the void, Lei Liushui and his twenty-six allies hovered, smiling as they looked from Zhulong to the dragon.

Their attention stayed mostly on the girl sitting quietly on the stone.

This was the one who killed Nan Yuefeng?

The two Nascent Souls from South Dou Mountain stared at her with icy hatred.

South Dou had been on the verge of becoming first-rate. Nan Yuefeng's death had dragged them back down.

Their remaining Nascent Souls—one early-stage, one minor accomplishment—had lost all voice in the alliance.

Fewer resources, lower status.

And the cause of it all was this serene young woman.

Lei Liushui had brought twenty-six Nascent Souls to crush her—they were delighted.

“Her aura isn’t even that impressive... just ordinary Nascent Soul.”

Many floated overhead, sizing her up.

“But she killed Nan Yuefeng. She must have some hidden trump card.”

“Her eyes—rumor says when she opened them, heaven and earth lost color and Nan Yuefeng fell instantly.”

“Some kind of divine ocular ability! Valley Lord Lei must want it!”

“He’s half a step into Infant Transformation. With that ocular power, he could rival Du Longyang and the others.”

Spiritual messages flew between them.

The four holy lands had suppressed Tianyuan for too long.

There had once been five—until the Bitter Buddha Temple launched its apocalyptic war and was erased.

The fifth holy land seat remained empty.

Lei Liushui wanted Thunder Sound Valley to claim it.

“Young lady.”

Lei Liushui floated forward in his black-and-white checkered robes, sleeves billowing like an immortal, smiling warmly.

“I am Lei Liushui, Valley Lord of Thunder Sound Valley. There aren’t many Nascent Souls in the world, so I formed an alliance...”

“Now that the Five Phoenixes and Tianyuan are one family again, and since you are a Nascent Soul of the Five Phoenixes, I have come personally to invite you to join us, to maintain order together.”

“Of course, as a member, you would have the chance to win many resources for the Five Phoenixes.”

At the foot of the mountain, Dantai Xuan stood with his thousand Xuanwu Guards.

Mo Ju fanned himself slowly. “This is an open scheme...”

“He wants to bind her and crush the Five Phoenixes’ rising momentum at the same time.”

“Win resources for the Five Phoenixes’ —empty words.”

“The alliance decides allocation. Alone, she would be at their mercy.”

Dantai Xuan’s rage boiled over. He bellowed up the mountain:

“Lady Zhulong! Don’t listen to that liar! Men are all deceivers! Don’t join their stupid alliance!”

Mo Ju’s mouth twitched.

Every Nascent Soul in the sky heard him perfectly.

Lei Liushui’s elegant smile froze, face turning livid.

“Hmph!”

“Noisy insect!”

“How dare an ant interrupt Nascent Soul talk!”

He flicked his sleeve.

Terrifying energy exploded overhead, thundering downward like a tidal wave.

Mo Ju paled.

Xue Tao roared, spear raised to the heavens.

BOOM!

Mountain-like pressure crushed down.

Suddenly—a sword beam slashed through the darkness like starlight, cleaving the oppressive aura in two.

Jing Yue gripped his Jing Tian Sword, thrusting upward as though splitting the sea itself.

Sword intent erupted, shattering the pressure.

Nie Changqing landed beside him, drawing Zhanlong in a flash of black.

Together their sword qi severed Lei Liushui's suppression completely.

In the sky, Lei Liushui's brow furrowed.

"Disciples of White Jade Capital..."

Caution flickered in his eyes.

White Jade Capital was still untouchable. He couldn't kill their people.

He dispersed the pressure and turned back to Zhulong with a renewed smile.

"Will you join us, young lady?"

Zhulong's long lashes trembled.

After a long silence, her full lips parted.

“Scram.”

Her clear, bell-like voice rang out.

Lei Liushui’s face froze, then twisted with rage.

The surrounding Nascent Souls looked stunned—this girl was insane!

Killing Nan Yuefeng was impressive, but Lei Liushui could do the same.

And there were twenty-seven of them. Was she not afraid?

All around Buzhou Peak, more figures gathered at a distance, watching the confrontation.

Twenty-seven floating experts surrounding one young woman...

“Are they saying the Five Phoenixes have no one?!”

A cold, domineering voice boomed.

Demonic qi surged like a tidal wave.

Overlord had arrived.

Clad in black Tyrant King Armor, eyes sharp within his helmet, axe-shield on his back, he strode up the stone steps.

With every step, his presence grew more terrifying.

Spine like a dragon, blood and qi roaring.

His Seven Extremes Heavenly Lock realm had fully stabilized—he was stronger than ever.

Beside him, Sima Qingshan walked leisurely, book box on his back, gentle as spring breeze.

The Nascent Souls above glanced down at Overlord and frowned slightly.

The man who killed Zhou Haisheng—Xiang Shaoyun.

“Sect Master Nan, stop Xiang Shaoyun. Can you manage it?” Lei Liushui asked the South Dou sect master casually.

The man’s eyes narrowed—South Dou had fallen so low they were being ordered around now.

But he didn’t refuse. Crossing Lei Liushui offered no benefit.

He shot downward toward Overlord.

Overlord’s pace quickened, then turned into a full charge!

BOOM!

One step cracked the stone.

Demonic qi exploded like a roaring devil.

He swung axe and shield, charging the sect master.

Sima Qingshan smiled, found a flat stone halfway up the peak, and sat cross-legged.

“Overlord, allow me.”

Ink and brush in hand, a blank scroll floated before him.

Spiritual qi became ink as he painted.

With each stroke, strange images flickered into being.

The South Dou sect master was furious—his supreme elder dead, his sect weakened.

Xiang Shaoyun was only Golden Core. The scholar too.

A minor accomplishment Nascent Soul afraid of two Golden Cores?

Overlord had killed Zhou Haisheng, yes—but he himself was in his prime!

BOOM!

He flicked his sleeve. Terrifying energy blasted Overlord's axe-shield, smashing him back to the ground.

But just as he moved to finish him—

A massive ink-painted boulder materialized and smashed down.

“Petty tricks!”

He shattered it with one punch.

Below, Sima Qingshan's expression turned solemn.

He painted faster.

A stroke—and an entire ink-black mountain crashed toward the sect master.

Lift brush, move mountain.

Overlord sprang up like a coiled spring, armor glowing, demonic qi swirling, and slammed into the sect master again.

Sima Qingshan smiled.

Together, the two Golden Cores actually suppressed a Nascent Soul.

He had kept a low profile in the Nine Prisons Secret Realm for too long.

But low profile didn't mean weak.

His eyes flashed. Ink surged.

He began his masterpiece: Genesis Painting.

BOOM!

The South Dou sect master suddenly found himself inside a world-ending catastrophe—sky splitting, continents falling, oceans pouring through the cracks.

What in the—?!

His face paled.

Overlord seized the opening, shield swinging like a battering ram.

CRACK!

The sect master was smashed across the face and sent flying.

The entire battlefield fell silent.

Above, Lei Liushui frowned.

“Useless.”

A minor accomplishment Nascent Soul—beaten by two Golden Cores.

But he ignored it.

His gaze returned to Zhulong.

“Scram.”

Zhulong rose from the green stone.

Lei Liushui’s unsaid words died in his throat.

Then he laughed, cold and furious.

His eyes spun. Tears of light glimmered—deep within his pupils, a thunder lake churned.

Heavenly Thunder Eyes!

“You will join this alliance whether you wish to or not!”

His voice thundered across the sky.

Dark clouds gathered instantly, as though heavenly tribulation itself descended.

Every Nascent Soul unleashed their aura.

Behind Zhulong, the Azure Dragon roared and shot upward.

An elder at greater accomplishment Nascent Soul stepped forward with a smile, locking the dragon in combat.

The remaining twenty-four locked onto Zhulong alongside Lei Liushui, ready to crush her.

On the green stone.

Zhulong held her bamboo flute. Her lashes trembled.

“You... threaten me?”

Her voice was soft.

She raised one delicate hand and pointed at the elder fighting the Azure Dragon.

A strand of milky-white chaos-infused light shot out.

Pfft!

A dull explosion.

Before the greater accomplishment Nascent Soul could react, his forehead burst open in a cloud of blood.

A tiny infant Nascent Soul fled from his skull in terror.

But it too bore a hole between its brows.

Soul and consciousness unraveled, dissolving into raw energy.

The Azure Dragon, who had been snarling ferociously at the elder, froze for a split second.

Then it smoothly resumed looking fierce, as if nothing had happened.

“Daddy was right,” Zhulong said lightly.

“Good girls should have sweet tempers.”

She raised her hand again, slender finger now aimed at Lei Liushui.

Her beautiful face tilted upward, closed eyes trembling.

“So, just like Daddy does...”

“Kill every last one of you.”

“No one will ever know I have a bad temper.”