

## **Starlit Path 331**

Chapter 331: The Girl... Was Actually a Dragon!

“Kill every last one of you, and no one will ever know I have a bad temper.”

Zhulong murmured softly after erasing a Nascent Soul with a single finger.

Her voice wasn't loud, but it carried clearly, sending chills down every spine.

Too arrogant!

She spoke as though these twenty-three Nascent Souls were nothing at all!

The Azure Dragon maintained perfect composure on the surface, but its dark-golden eyes blazed with excitement.

Big Sis is unstoppable!

Down below, Dantai Xuan clenched his fists and laughed wildly. Those domineering words were music to his ears.

Go ahead and slaughter them, Lady Zhulong! We saw nothing—we have no idea you have a temper!

Nie Changqing and Jing Yue stared in a daze.

In that moment, they seemed to see the faint shadow of a white-robed youth in a wheelchair overlapping with her figure.

That style... it was exactly like the Young Lord!

On the Tianyuan side, shock rippled through the ranks.

The battle had barely begun, and one of their Nascent Souls was already gone—dispatched by Lei Liushui to hold the Azure Dragon, only to have his forehead exploded by Zhulong's casual finger.

Even his infant Nascent Soul had been annihilated.

“So strong!”

Every Nascent Soul hovering above Buzhou Peak felt ice in their veins.

In a single instant, a Nascent Soul had vanished forever from the world.

It was terrifying.

And her words only deepened the unease.

“Insolence.”

Lei Liushui’s voice was low and cold. His checkered robes flapped violently. His hair whipped in the wind, his skin glowing as lightning crackled from every pore.

His eyes turned pure azure, thunder raging deep within the pupils.

His Heavenly Thunder Eyes seemed to summon heavenly fire—eerie and overwhelming.

“Pin the Azure Dragon down.”

He sent two greater accomplishment Nascent Souls to deal with the dragon.

Far from frightened, Zhulong’s strength only made him hungrier.

The two Nascent Souls floated cross-legged, sliding sideways to confront the Azure Dragon.

The dragon roared, claws lashing out like divine whips, cracking the air.

Lei Liushui moved.

The fight ignited in an instant.

The moment Zhulong killed that Nascent Soul, he could no longer sit still.

Lightning beams shot from his Heavenly Thunder Eyes, tearing through space.

He strode forward across the sky like a god or an immortal sovereign.

He bellowed.

His eyes widened in fury, thunder raging within.

BOOM!

Thunder crashed down, turning the space above Buzhou Peak into a lake of lightning.

The aura unique to Nascent Soul battles exploded outward.

All of Northern Prefecture seemed shrouded in apocalyptic pressure.

Imperial dragon qi flared around Dantai Xuan, shielding him from the suffocating might. He stared at the thunder-choked peak, fists clenched tight.

Overlord and Sima Qingshan were locked in their own brutal fight against the South Dou sect master.

That battle was just as fierce.

The sect master was livid—he was a Nascent Soul in his prime, yet two Golden Cores were holding him at bay.

Overlord was understandable—raw, overwhelming power—but that painter?!

Every brushstroke summoned ink-black mountains that crashed down, blocking attacks and paths alike.

Waves of formation energy rippled from the paintings!

Fighting a puppet master who controlled the battlefield from afar was infuriating!

The sect master's Nascent Soul hovered above his head, smashing mountain after mountain with furious punches.

Ink exploded across the sky.

Overlord roared, demonic qi coiling as he leaped.

At Seven Extremes Heavenly Lock, he was a demon god incarnate.

With profound-tier axe and shield, he actually suppressed the sect master for a time.

The sect master howled in rage.

His Nascent Soul burst from his skull, eyes blazing.

Overlord swung his axe.

The sect master met it with layered fist strikes—boom after boom—finally sending Overlord flying.

Overlord's armor dented deeply.

If Sima Qingshan hadn't painted a mountain to block the follow-up, Overlord's head would have been pulp.

The sect master's eyes boiled with fury.

That damned painter was going to be the death of him.

"Disgusting artist!"

He abandoned Overlord and shot toward Sima Qingshan.

First kill the controller—then Overlord would be easy.

Overlord flipped to his feet.

Seeing the sect master change targets, he exhaled slowly.

He removed his helmet.

And with it... his head.

Many onlookers froze.

The next instant—

Headless Overlord slammed axe against shield.

A sonic boom thundered outward.

Demonic qi surged like a tidal wave as the headless tyrant charged the sect master.

...

At the peak of Buzhou, lightning churned like a cauldron.

Halfway up the mountain, demonic qi boiled and ink mountains flew.

But all eyes were drawn to the summit—the battle that would decide everything.

**BOOM!**

Countless bolts rained down.

Zhulong stood motionless on the green stone, serene as a statue.

**CRASH!**

Heavenly thunder struck.

Zhulong's figure blurred and vanished.

When she reappeared, she was floating in the sky.

Lei Liushui said nothing—he treated her as a true equal now. That single exchange had shown him her strength was at least his match.

Zhulong kept her eyes closed. She would not open them lightly.

Lightning fell in endless torrents, yet she walked through it like a girl strolling beside a lotus pond.

Lei Liushui's thunder couldn't touch her.

Then she was in front of him.

She raised her hand and slapped.

The slap cracked the air like a divine whip, sonic booms ringing out.

Lei Liushui narrowed his eyes. Lightning coiled around his arm as he threw a punch without fear.

Fist met palm.

BOOM!

It sounded like two mountains colliding. Brilliant ripples surged outward in endless waves from the peak.

Figures were hurled backward.

Lei Liushui, clad in thunder armor, was the one sent flying!

Zhulong's lashes trembled.

She shot through the lightning arcs and slapped again.

CRACK!

Lei Liushui roared, raising his arms to block.

Another explosion—his flesh tore, lightning burst from his wounds.

He was smashed away once more.

Pure physical collision—he was utterly outmatched!

Lei Liushui had never imagined a body this powerful existed.

He felt like he was fighting an ancient primordial beast, not a delicate girl!

“Everyone—attack!”

Lei Liushui roared.

The remaining twenty-two Nascent Souls moved.

Twenty-two streaks of light dove toward Zhulong.

At Nascent Soul, flight came naturally—a liberation from mortal chains.

Twenty-three Nascent Souls, including Lei Liushui, surrounded her in the center like a cage.

The Azure Dragon faced two greater accomplishment Nascent Souls and held its own.

Its combat power was roughly equal to greater accomplishment level—neither side could dominate.

It had only played dead against Nan Yuefeng because he was perfected Nascent Soul.

This time...

Big Sis was being ganged up on.

The Azure Dragon decided it was time to step up!

Two wooden swords slashed in.

The dragon met them with claws—terrifying shockwaves erupted.

The two Nascent Souls grew solemn, forming profound seals from opposite sides that tried to cage the dragon.

But the Azure Dragon feared nothing. Among the eight heavenly dragon seeds, it was second only to Big Sis—it would uphold their pride!

Clank!

The two Nascent Souls summoned infant forms above their heads, power cascading down.

Strange chains forged from rare materials shot out, trying to bind the dragon.

Cold light flashed in the Azure Dragon's eyes. Cyan dragon breath blasted forth, clashing with both opponents.

Surrounded by twenty-three Nascent Souls, Zhulong floated calmly, cyan hair dancing.

Her beautiful face showed no joy, no sorrow—as though nothing could stir her heart.

“Formation!”

Lei Liushui's voice was grave. Only by trading blows did he truly understand her power. That slender body contained force beyond comprehension.

Yet the stronger she was, the more feverish he became.

It had to be those eyes!

If he could transplant them, he would shatter his shackles!

Even surpassing Infant Transformation wouldn't be a dream!

Lei Liushui took the central position.

Twenty-two Nascent Souls formed a grand array around him, each drawing their natal spirit tools.

“Kill!”

BOOM!

Twenty-three spirit tools unleashed the first wave.

Blinding beams of light engulfed Zhulong.

The explosion shook Buzhou Peak as though it might collapse.

Countless boulders were hurled into the sky.

When the smoke cleared...

Zhulong stood untouched.

But her lashes trembled harder than ever.

Slowly...

Her pale eyelids lifted.

Every Nascent Soul felt doom descend.

They wanted to unleash their strongest attacks, but Lei Liushui stopped them.

He stared with near-maniacal focus at the girl opening her eyes.

Sizzle...

Two beams of thunder shot from his Heavenly Thunder Eyes toward Zhulong.

He would test her ocular art with his own!

Just as the beams were about to strike—

Zhulong's eyes opened fully.

No beams came from her.

Only black... and white.

Endless black, infinite white.

**BOOM!**

Heaven and earth lost color. Yin and yang swirled.

Lei Liushui stared dumbly at those eyes—one sun, one moon...

His proud Heavenly Thunder Eyes were laughable before them—like fireflies beside the moon.

Black and white swallowed him.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Explosions erupted from every Nascent Soul's body.

Muffled groans filled the air.

When the light faded...

Silence.

Only the sound of dust settling.

Lei Liushui crashed into the ground, chest caved in, flesh melted away to reveal white bone, blood pouring.

One eyeball had burst.

Coughing blood, he crawled from the rubble, looking wretched beyond words.

Yet his remaining eye burned with mad excitement.

“Like the divine ability of an immortal!”

“Pity... that move didn’t kill us!”

He clutched his chest—he was gravely wounded.

The other twenty-two sat pale-faced on the ground, pulling out jade bottles and swallowing healing pills.

Lei Liushui swallowed his own. His wounds began to knit.

He stared at Zhulong and laughed.

“Such an ocular art... how many times can you use it?!”

“It must take ages to recover, or you wouldn’t keep your eyes closed.”

He was certain he had seen through her.

She was at the end of her rope.

As a fellow ocular art user, he knew the soul-draining cost.

Above...

Zhulong closed her eyes again.

Her serene face unchanged.

Hearing the sound of pills being crunched below, she suddenly felt a craving.

She pulled out a jade bottle of her own.

Out poured sugar-coated Body Tempering Pills—the ones she had confiscated from Little Yinglong during his “training.”

...

Lake Heart Island.

Little Yinglong’s eyes went wide as saucers.

Those were the pills he had sweet-talked out of Ni Yu with his cutest acts!

Big Sis had taken them all!

Watching her pop the pills that still carried his warmth, Little Yinglong covered his snout with a claw and sobbed silently.

Ni Yu patted him sympathetically.

Then, in front of him, she ate the very last sugar-coated pill she had hidden.

Crunch.

Now they were even—no one had any left.

...

“NOW!”

“Don’t give her time to recover!”

Lei Liushui roared, surging upward with the twenty-two others.

Spirit tools blazed with dazzling light.

Zhulong drifted back down to the green stone and sat.

Crunch.

Sweet candy coating shattered, filling her mouth with happiness.

She had opened her eyes once and not wiped them all out.

Unexpected, but unimportant.

As for Lei Liushui's talk of massive energy drain—she felt nothing of the sort.

She had stronger ocular arts.

But these people weren't worth it.

“Daddy said...”

“A girl should maintain the cold dignity of an iceberg...”

“And end fights quickly.”

So...

Zhulong decided to beat them to death.

BOOM!

As Lei Liushui and his twenty-two Nascent Souls rose again, hovering above the peak—

A chill gripped Lei Liushui's soul.

Dense spiritual energy turned to mist and swirled.

When it cleared, the quiet girl on the green stone was gone.

“Where—?!”

A sonic boom tore the air.

Iridescent dragon scales flashed like a rainbow across the sky.

CRACK!

Space exploded beside Lei Liushui!

A Nascent Soul with a spirit tool above his head burst into a cloud of blood mist!

His treasure fell dull and lifeless.

His infant Nascent Soul fled in terror.

What the—?!

Lei Liushui's blood ran cold.

Then he saw it.

A colossal dragon coiled around Buzhou Peak like a pillar.

Its head... was the girl—long hair flowing, eyes closed!

CRACK!

The dragon whipped its tail.

Another Nascent Soul popped like a mosquito—blood mist blooming.

Another infant Nascent Soul fled for its life!

Lei Liushui finally understood.

They weren't being killed by some technique.

They were being swatted to death by a heavenly dragon's tail!

"You... you..."

Lei Liushui sucked in a horrified breath.

He floated frozen in the sky.

The girl...

Was a dragon?!

Zhulong?

Candle Dragon!

This was the Buzhou Peak dragon gate—she was its guardian dragon seed!

Like the Azure Dragon, the Red Dragon...

Only far, far stronger!

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

The sound of tail whips filled the air.

Blood mist blossomed one after another like fireworks.

Lei Liushui saw the crimson clouds rushing toward him.

No!

Stay away!

He screamed inwardly.

His body shot sideways.

But space shattered—a seven-colored tail whipped through, black spatial cracks sucking in air as it came.

Lei Liushui roared.

Lightning exploded from his remaining eye, cascading into thunder armor.

At the brink of death—

He broke through!

His Nascent Soul turned one-eyed, wrapped in lightning.

Infant Transformation!

Lei Liushui achieved Infant Transformation in his moment of greatest peril!

“Hahaha!”

He laughed maniacally.

Thunder converged into war armor.

He threw a punch at the incoming tail!

Zhulong seemed to sense the change.

Her rainbow tail turned milky white in an instant.

Primordial chaos gathered.

CRACK!

A massive blood mist explosion lit the night sky.

Brighter and more gorgeous than all the rest.

The most dazzling crimson firework of the night.

Chapter 332: A Battle Worth Coughing Blood to Chronicle

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

The giant whale let out a deep, resonant cry. The Origin Lake on its back was churning violently.

Such upheaval in the Origin could only mean one thing: a new Infant Transformation cultivator had been born into the world.

Yet moments later, a terrifying divine sense swept out from the island's center—so overwhelmingly powerful that the whale's defiance withered instantly. The pressure soothed it like a master's hand, and the beast fell silent, sinking back into calm.

On the white jade tower.

Lu propped his chin on one hand, idly tapping a chess piece against the phoenix-feather guard in his other. Spiritual energy drifted around him in faint ripples.

Lei Liushui had broken through to Infant Transformation, offering Lu a modest influx of energy. To the current Lu, however, the harvest from a single Infant Transformation cultivator was barely worth mentioning.

“To think he actually stepped into Infant Transformation under Zhulong's pressure...”

Lu gave a small, amused smile. Unexpected.

What a pity.

He'd have been better off never breaking through at all. At least then he wouldn't have become the most pathetic Infant Transformation cultivator in history—one who got swatted dead the instant he ascended, exploding into the most dazzling blood-colored fireworks the world had ever seen.

Lu didn't know whether to laugh or sigh.

Truth be told, Lei Liushui shouldn't have ended quite so miserably. But to show proper respect to a newly ascended Infant Transformation, Zhulong had unleashed the half-chaos energy she'd only recently begun to comprehend. It wasn't true Chaos power, yet it far surpassed Origin-level force. That terrifying might had gathered in her already monstrous tail.

One whip-crack later... well, the fireworks were gorgeous.

Lu withdrew his attention. There was no longer any suspense in this battle.

Twenty-seven Nascent Soul cultivators were nothing before the transformed Zhulong.

She hadn't even used her strongest innate divine ability yet.

Danger? It didn't exist.

Having grasped half-chaos energy and awakened her innate gift, Zhulong's current combat strength could now stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the likes of Du Longyang.

The spirit-pressure chessboard glimmered faintly.

Lu placed the piece down with deliberate grace.

A gentle breeze swept across the island; the grass swayed, and from time to time came the delighted gasps of Ni Yu and Little Yinglong watching the fireworks.

Everything felt serene and refined.

...

Lei Liushui was stunned.

Breaking through to Infant Transformation should have been a joyous occasion. So why couldn't he feel happy at all?

Because the dragon tail filling his vision was growing larger by the instant, and even as an Infant Transformation cultivator, a wave of utter, crushing despair crashed over him.

This girl... was a dragon.

A terrifying, ferocious dragon.

Nascent Soul? Tears rolled down Lei Liushui's cheeks. No—this girl was the real Infant Transformation monster.

Crack!

A crisp explosion rang out.

Lei Liushui's body shattered under Zhulong's tail, bursting mid-air into a magnificent cloud of blood-mist fireworks.

The surging Origin energy in the heavens abruptly stilled and dispersed.

The onlookers below were speechless with shock.

They had just witnessed a scene they would never forget for the rest of their lives—a spectacular fireworks show performed with utmost dedication by twenty-three Nascent Soul cultivators.

Hidden in the shadows, the cultivators from the Tianyuan Domain stood frozen, bodies trembling, faces ashen.

Every burst of crimson fireworks in the sky represented a Nascent Soul cultivator's body being whipped into oblivion by an unstoppable force.

Just when despair began to settle in...

Lei Liushui rose from the brink of death, shattered his shackles, and soared into Infant Transformation.

He believed he now had the strength to fight.

He unleashed his ultimate attack, hurling a thunderous fist toward the descending dragon tail.

And then...

His body exploded.

A blood-colored firework far more brilliant than the rest lit up the sky.

Silence fell over the Tianyuan cultivators.

It was... tragic beyond words.

An unforgettable massacre.

Below, Tantai Xuan stood wrapped in imperial dragon aura, mouth slightly agape.

They couldn't see Zhulong's true draconic form.

But in a single instant, they watched twenty-three Nascent Soul cultivators—including the strongest among them, Lei Liushui, who had radiated an aura of apocalyptic terror—burst into gorgeous, tragic clouds of blood mist.

Tantai Xuan was shaken to his core.

The thousand Xuanwu Guards behind him were equally stunned.

The dragon-aura-wreathed Tantai Xuan was so overwhelmed with excitement he could barely speak.

All his thousand words boiled down to one:

“Holy shit, that was ruthless!”

All hail Sister Zhulong!

When the blood mist finally cleared, the air reeked of iron and death.

Zhulong reverted to her human form—demure as a sheltered young lady—and stood quietly atop the bluestone.

Twenty-three Nascent Souls, now stripped of their bodies, fled in mindless panic.

If they didn't run, they'd die.

They finally understood: this girl wasn't a Nascent Soul at all. She was a terrifying Infant Transformation dragon.

That idiot Lei Liushui had dragged them all here to die!

The Nascent Souls floated in the air, some the size of a fist, others barely half that—proof of the vast differences in their former cultivation.

Zhulong closed her eyes.

“Kill them all. That way no one will ever say I have a bad temper.”

She raised a slender hand. A thread of what seemed to be chaos energy coiled around her fingertip.

Flick!

A milky-white thread shot out faster than lightning.

Among the fleeing Nascent Souls, Lei Liushui’s was the most conspicuous—larger than the rest and wrapped in crackling thunder.

He became her first target.

“No!”

Lei Liushui’s soul, clinging to his Nascent Soul, roared in fury and summoned a storm of lightning to shield himself.

But—

Pfft.

Like an arrow piercing flesh, a tiny hole appeared between his Nascent Soul's brows.

Boom!

Burning agony erupted. His soul collapsed, his consciousness dissolved...

He turned to ash and scattered across the sky.

Thus was born—and ended—the shortest-lived Infant Transformation cultivator in history. Less than ten breaths from ascension to annihilation.

The milky-white thread did not slow. It streaked onward.

The remaining Nascent Souls burned through their divine sense and soul essence in frantic escape.

This place was a devil's lair!

Yet the thread was too fast—its trajectory impossible to track.

Pfft. Pfft. Pfft.

No more fireworks. Just silent, chilling extinction.

One by one, the Nascent Souls winked out, reduced to drifting ash.

A young girl flicked a thread from her finger and erased Nascent Soul cultivators like dust.

Boom!

A terrifying aura erupted in the heavens.

“Sister Zhulong...”

A towering figure appeared in projection across the distant sky.

“It’s City Lord Du!”

“Lord Du, save us!”

“I don’t want to die—please, City Lord Du, save us!”

Hope flared in the desperate Nascent Souls as they screamed for mercy.

The projection was Du Longyang’s divine-sense avatar.

Zhulong stood atop the bluestone, tilting her delicate chin upward.

Du Longyang—she knew he was strong.

But she wasn’t afraid of him.

She believed herself no weaker.

“On their behalf, I apologize,” Du Longyang’s projection said solemnly. “These men will never set foot outside Tianyuan again. Please, Sister Zhulong, spare their lives.”

When Lei Liushui's aura vanished right after his breakthrough, Du Longyang had sensed something wrong and immediately sent his divine sense through a nearby Martial Emperor City disciple.

He never expected to arrive to this carnage.

Twenty-three Nascent Soul cultivators... what a horrifying slaughter.

Zhulong considered for three full seconds, then gently shook her head.

"No. If they die, no one will ever say I lose my temper."

The moment the words left her lips, the thread quivered and shot forward again.

Du Longyang's projection sighed.

"Then... forgive my offense."

Boom!

Overwhelming spear intent exploded outward.

Terrifying will collided with the milky-white thread.

Yet Du Longyang's pupils shrank.

His spear intent—infused with his Dao Intent—shattered on contact.

Pfft! Pfft! Pfft!

One Nascent Soul after another had their brows pierced and vanished into nothingness.

A tragic dirge.

But one they had brought upon themselves.

Du Longyang's projection gave Zhulong one last deep look.

That milky-white power... was terrifying.

What on earth was it?

Wind swept past, lifting the hem of Zhulong's robe.

Blood mist and soul-ash drifted from the sky like crimson snow.

The world was steeped in sorrow.

At the foot of Buzhou Peak, a black-robed figure extended a vine-wrapped palm. A flake of blood-stained ash landed upon it.

A faint, wistful sorrow crossed the hidden face.

So... she never needed me after all.

The figure crushed the ash, turned silently, and vanished beyond the horizon.

...

Another battlefield.

Azure Dragon was being toyed with by two peak Nascent Soul cultivators. They kept their distance, attacking with artifacts like children flying kites.

Azure Dragon's greatest strength was his physical body—if he could land one solid hit, either opponent would die instantly. But they refused to close in, infuriating the proud dragon until his scales bristled.

High above, the two Nascent Soul cultivators chuckled leisurely.

“Fancy trying to slay a dragon?”

“Hardly realistic. Azure Dragon's scales are nearly impregnable. Killing him would be harder than climbing to heaven.”

They shook their heads and abandoned the tempting idea.

Azure Dragon grew anxious. He could win—he just needed them to fight properly.

Suddenly, his dark-golden eyes flickered with shock.

The next instant, one of the cultivators fired a beam of energy that struck Azure Dragon square on.

BOOM!

A violent explosion erupted.

Azure Dragon let out a tragic roar as scales shattered and dragon blood sprayed five hundred meters into the sky—exactly as scripted.

From deep in his throat came a low, unwilling howl of pain.

Roar!

The two Nascent Soul cultivators froze.

Wait...

They hadn't done anything special!

How had this thick-skinned dragon suddenly start bleeding like a fountain?

Yet when they looked into the distance and saw twenty-three brilliant fireworks blooming across the sky, their faces drained of color.

“Damn it!”

“This dragon played us?!”

Boom!

Space tore open.

Thick mist rolled, and a seven-colored dragon tail lashed out.

Crack! Crack!

The two peak Nascent Soul cultivators didn’t even have time to flee.

Their bodies burst into blood mist.

Their Nascent Souls were pierced by the milky-white thread and turned to dust.

Azure Dragon sucked in a cold breath and sealed his self-inflicted wounds.

Big Sis... is terrifying.

...

The sect master of South Dou Mountain felt chills crawl up his spine.

All will to fight had vanished.

Blood rain fell from the sky along with the ashes of destroyed Nascent Souls.

Twenty-three Nascent Soul cultivators—including Lei Liushui—wiped out entirely.

Heavens!

Was this a demonic abyss?!

“Fight!”

The headless Overlord, now restored to peak power and wreathed in demonic energy, swung his axe with Sima Qingshan’s inked mountains amplifying the strike.

The distracted South Dou sect master screamed as half his body was nearly cleaved apart.

He crashed to the ground, scrambled up, and fled in panic.

The headless Overlord stood domineeringly halfway up the mountain.

Sima Qingshan sat on a rock, brush dipped in ink, but did not paint again.

The sect master had fled.

When a Nascent Soul cultivator truly wanted to escape, they could not stop him.

**BOOM!**

Yet he didn't get far.

A colossal shadow blotted out the sky and whipped down.

BAM!

The earth cracked open like a dried riverbed.

Both the Overlord's headless body and Sima Qingshan shuddered.

The South Dou sect master's body exploded.

His Nascent Soul leapt out, shrieking, only to be instantly annihilated.

Twenty-seven Nascent Soul cultivators had come roaring from the east.

Now all returned to dust.

Atop Buzhou Peak, Zhulong sat cross-legged on the bluestone.

“Not one missing. All accounted for.”

She raised her pretty face, long lashes fluttering, and looked beyond the peak.

There, the hidden Tianyuan cultivators scrambled away in blind terror—even the proud geniuses of the Human List like Zhong Nan, Xiao Yue’er, and Feng Yilou fled for their lives.

Buzhou Peak was a devil’s den, a place of certain death.

Twenty-seven Nascent Soul cultivators had died here.

The thought alone was enough to give anyone nightmares.

Even many cultivators from the Five Phoenixes continent fled in fear.

They were technically on the same side... but still, she was terrifying.

Zhulong paid them no mind.

She drew the bamboo flute from her waist, brought it to her lips, and began to play.

A soft, lingering melody drifted across the peak.

...

Wolong Ridge, Tianji Pavilion.

Mo Tianyu, belly bared to the wind, climbed to the summit.

On the final step, Lü Mudui laughed heartily, thumped his chest, and coughed blood onto the inkstone.

“Above Buzhou Peak, twenty-seven Nascent Soul cultivators fell like gorgeous fireworks, quiet and beautiful as autumn leaves.”

On the profound yellow paper, the blood-red words burned into the eyes.

This battle was worth Lü Mudui coughing blood to record!

Mo Tianyu twirled three copper coins and chuckled.

Lü Mudui looked at him and grinned.

“Why didn’t you go to Buzhou Peak to admire the fireworks yourself?”

Mo Tianyu flicked his sleeve with a carefree smile. “No need.”

“When those twenty-seven Tianyuan Nascent Soul cultivators headed north, this humble one gave them a free divination.”

“Never have I seen such an auspicious sign. My heart couldn’t bear it, so I divined twice more... still greatly auspicious.”

He sat cross-legged.

Lü Mudui leaned on his bamboo staff. The two men looked at each other and burst into hearty laughter.

Coo-coo.

The Tianji Pigeon spread its wings.

A pure white feather fell, transformed into a streak of light, and shot across the sky.

...

Dongyang County, Martial Emperor City.

Within a sealed chamber.

Du Longyang opened his eyes.

Gravity and helplessness filled his brow.

“Idiots.”

Twenty-seven Nascent Soul cultivators.

One had even reached Infant Transformation.

A devastating loss.

All because that fool Lei Liushui coveted the Candle Dragon Eye.

Though the dead were only second- and third-rate powers of Tianyuan, the blow to the domain was still immense.

With a thought, Du Longyang sent a message.

The Grand Elder of Martial Emperor City hurried in.

“Inform the Qian Female Palace, Absolute Blade Sect, and Heavenly Void Palace...”

“Each of the four great powers is to dispatch Nascent Soul cultivators to take over those fallen second- and third-rate factions. Do not let chaos spread.”

The elderly elder was briefly stunned—he still didn’t know what had happened at Buzhou Peak.

But if the City Lord commanded it, there was reason.

“Yes, sir.”

He withdrew.

Soon after, another Martial Emperor City Nascent Soul elder arrived, face pale as paper, handing over a sheet of profound yellow paper from White Jade Capital’s Tianji Pavilion.

The message made the Grand Elder’s eyes sink deep into their sockets.

Now he understood.

Du Longyang closed the chamber door again and exhaled heavily.

“What exactly was that power?”

He stared into the darkness.

Zhulong’s milky-white energy had shattered his spear intent in an instant.

His spear intent carried Dao Intent!

Though not yet minor accomplishment, the boost was significant.

“What power could it be...”

Du Longyang drew a deep breath.

“Heh.”

“Want to know what that power is?”

Suddenly—

Du Longyang’s scalp exploded with dread.

A soft laugh had rung out inside his sealed chamber.

Someone had slipped in without him noticing?!

He whirled around.

In the shadows sat a white-shirted youth in a wheelchair, gazing at him with a half-smile.

Chapter 333: Storm Brews in the Little Tower, the Human Rankings Shake the World

In the silent sealed chamber, candle flames flickered.

A flash of light tore through the darkness, illuminating the figure in white seated lazily in a wheelchair forged from silver blades.

He had appeared without the slightest warning.

Du Longyang's entire body turned ice-cold, hairs standing on end. With one foot already in the Yin Spirit Realm of the Three Gods Realm, he hadn't sensed Lu's arrival at all!

Just how terrifying had Lu's strength become?

"Young... Young Master Lu."

Du Longyang forced a smile and rose to cup his fists in greeting.

Why had Lu come? Was White Jade Capital finally making its move?

Countless thoughts raced through Du Longyang's mind.

Lu leaned back in his wheelchair, eyes deep as the starry expanse, gazing calmly at Du Longyang with a faint, almost mocking smile.

That strange expression made Du Longyang deeply uncomfortable.

"Earlier, your projection appeared above Buzhou Peak and attacked that girl, didn't you?" Lu asked, voice casual.

Du Longyang blinked. He hadn't expected that to be the reason for this visit.

That girl was monstrous—one sweep had killed twenty-seven Nascent Soul cultivators, including one who had just broken through to Infant Transformation.

How could he sit by and do nothing?

Du Longyang gave a wry smile. "So Young Master Lu is here because of that."

“I failed to rein in the various Tianyuan powers. They grew too arrogant, too reckless. That was my fault.”

He spoke as if apologizing, assuming Lu had come to demand justice for the oppressed Five Phoenixes.

But Lu merely shook his head.

“That’s not why I’m here.”

“I want to know—did you attack that girl?”

Du Longyang’s cheek twitched.

Could he deny it?

He had indeed struck at Zhulong, trying to stop her and save those Nascent Souls.

“I heard you were bullying someone weaker than you?”

“I heard you were acting all high and mighty?”

Lu tapped the armrest of his Thousand-Blade Chair. Clear, crisp ding-ding-ding sounds echoed through the chamber.

Du Longyang’s mouth twitched. He was speechless.

When had he ever bullied the weak?

When had he acted high and mighty?

Don’t slander him!

That girl’s strange energy had shattered his spear intent in an instant.

He was the one who got wrecked!

“Young Master Lu, there seems to be a misunderstanding... I never bullied anyone.”

Lu stopped tapping, raised a brow, and glanced at him.

“So... you’re saying I’m slandering you?”

Du Longyang froze.

Remembering Lu’s famously petty temper, his face stiffened.

“She’s just a child. Don’t you feel guilty bullying her?” Lu asked.

Du Longyang didn’t know how to respond.

Just a child?

The girl who could whip a Nascent Soul to death with one tail and exude apocalyptic pressure—you call that a child?

“Don’t worry,” Lu continued. “I saw how fiercely you two were fighting, and my hands got itchy. Come on—let’s spar.”

With that, his figure blurred and vanished.

Du Longyang's face was full of bitterness.

He just... left? No room for refusal?

The chamber fell deathly silent.

After a long moment, Du Longyang took a deep breath, picked up his black spear, and resigned himself.

Fine. Let's fight.

Night.

Du Longyang emerged from the chamber, shot into the sky like a streak of black light, and vanished beyond the horizon.

Beyond Dongyang County, the boundless sea.

Waves roared, crashing against reefs and sending up towering sprays.

On the churning ocean surface, the white-clothed youth sat motionless in his wheelchair like a statue.

Du Longyang stepped across the waves, each footfall perfect, his aura pushed to its peak.

“Young Master Lu...”

He held his spear in one hand. Dao Intent surged around him, making him look like a god or demon.

Even the thunderous crash of the waves couldn't drown out his voice.

Lu nodded slightly, rubbing the dark jade ring on his thumb before flicking it lightly.

The Spirit Pressure Chessboard floated before him.

“Before we begin,” Du Longyang said, spear tip dipping into the sea, brow furrowed, “may I ask why?”

Lu smiled.

He picked up a warm, smooth chess piece from the white box.

“Because the girl you bullied... is my kid.”

The words fell.

Du Longyang’s pupils contracted.

Now he understood why Lu had suddenly appeared.

The young one got hit—so the old one came for revenge?!

Wait—no!

He hadn’t done anything to Zhulong!

He was the victim here!

BOOM!

As the words left Lu's mouth, he placed the piece.

Clack.

The piece landed on the Spirit Pressure Chessboard.

Invisible waves and pressure exploded outward. The world seemed to freeze.

The roaring sea fell instantly silent, as if a cascading waterfall had suddenly run dry.

Boundless pressure crushed down on Du Longyang.

His pupils shrank.

He whipped his spear out of the water.

**BOOM!**

A chasm thousands of feet long split the sea.

A water dragon formed at his spear tip, roaring ferociously as it surged forth.

Du Longyang unleashed every ounce of his Infant Transformation power.

But Lu placed another piece.

It was as if a colossal invisible hand dropped the piece from the heavens.

BOOM!

The sea exploded.

The water dragon shattered into pieces.

Du Longyang felt the sky itself crashing down.

He was smashed into the ocean like a cannonball, dragging a trail of white bubbles as he plummeted into the depths.

He... was utterly miserable.

Every time he burst out of the water, Lu's terrifying presence slammed him right back in.

He never even got a chance to swing his spear.

This was a one-sided beatdown.

That day, the people of Dongyang County heard the sea raging as if an earthquake had struck, massive waves exploding again and again.

Half a day later...

Du Longyang crawled out of the water, drenched and battered.

Though humiliated, he was still alive.

Lu had stopped. Du Longyang exhaled in relief, but the sense of defeat was overwhelming.

The gap... had grown too wide.

In the past, he could at least trade blows with Lu.

Now? He was just a punching bag.

What realm had Lu reached?

Yin Spirit Dao Lotus? Yang Spirit Nine Steps?

Or even... the legendary Primordial Spirit Unity Realm?

No matter which, Du Longyang knew he was falling further and further behind.

Bruised and swollen, he sat on the sea's surface and waved a weary hand.

No more... keep going and you'll kill me.

Enough, Young Master Lu.

Lu didn't press further.

He beckoned.

Du Longyang hesitated, then walked over.

The Spirit Pressure Chessboard hovered between them.

Lu poured wine into a cup and handed it over.

Beat him up, then offer a sweet.

The two sat on the ocean, drinking and playing Go.

If Du Longyang weren't black and blue, the scene might have looked immortal.

During this game, brilliance flickered in Du Longyang's eyes.

The blockages in his cultivation that had puzzled him for so long suddenly cleared—like a revelation.

When he snapped out of his enlightenment, Lu was already gone.

Despite his battered face, excitement shone in Du Longyang's eyes.

Getting beaten this time... totally worth it.

He bowed toward the rising sun on the horizon, gratitude in his heart.

Slinging his spear across his back, hands hanging limp, he walked across the sea back to shore.

The Yin Spirit Realm... he was close!

...

Tianji Pavilion sent word to the world.

The massacre at Buzhou Peak shocked every corner of existence.

Whether in the Five Phoenixes or Tianyuan, everyone was stunned speechless.

Twenty-seven Nascent Soul cultivators dead in a single battle.

One had even broken through to Infant Transformation on the spot.

Countless second- and third-rate powers in Tianyuan wailed—their sect masters and elders had all perished.

The balance of the world had shifted completely.

For weaker sects, losing a Nascent Soul meant not just a drop in status, but a fatal loss of resources.

Tianyuan descended into chaos.

Strong cultivators vied for power.

Fights broke out everywhere—between individuals, between sects, even between minor factions seeing opportunity in the vacuum.

The chaos lasted half a month.

It was called the Sect Upheaval.

Fortunately, the Four Great Holy Lands quickly dispatched Nascent Soul cultivators to take control of the fallen powers, restoring order.

Buzhou Peak became a forbidden zone.

To Tianyuan cultivators, it was now more terrifying than the former “Tianyuan Demon Domain.”

At the end of the first month after the battle, Martial Emperor City declared Buzhou Peak off-limits.

From then on, no Tianyuan cultivator—even peak Nascent Soul—dared step within its borders.

The girl atop the peak was dubbed the Forbidden Witch.

A great demon who slew Nascent Souls without blinking!

For the Five Phoenixes, this was joyous news.

The arrogant invaders from Tianyuan finally learned restraint.

Five Phoenixes forces reclaimed many cultivation resources.

The world settled into a rare period of stability.

Of course, the undercurrents of rivalry never ceased.

Outside Wolong Ridge, on a small peak.

Tianji Pavilion.

Ever since White Jade Capital withdrew, Lü Dongxuan had become a complete hands-off leader, traveling the world with Xie Yunling and Sword Saint Hua Dongliu.

Pine needles littered the cold stone steps.

Mo Tianyu and Lü Mudui sat across from each other, a pot of hot tea between them. The cooled tea in their cups still rippled gently.

They talked for a long time.

Mo Tianyu had now stepped into the Heavenly Lock Realm. With the Dao Intent of Defying Fate, his divinations were terrifyingly accurate.

Lü Mudui possessed his own exclusive Tianji deduction arts.

Their exchange brought mutual insight.

When Mo Tianyu finally left with his carefree swagger,

Lü Mudui tapped his bamboo staff. The beautiful woman brought him a porcelain bowl filled with pig blood.

He dipped his brush, took a sheet of profound yellow paper, and began to write.

Name after name appeared.

He calculated with his fingers as he wrote.

The beautiful woman's eyes widened.

She sucked in a cold breath.

"Old Lü, what are you doing?"

Lü Mudui smiled, a bead of sweat rolling down his forehead.

"Re-ranking the Human List."

...

Three days later.

After the horrific battle that claimed twenty-seven Nascent Soul cultivators,

the world had been quiet for some time.

Tianyuan cultivators tucked away their arrogance and focused on cultivation.

The terror of the forbidden zone taught them that even without White Jade Capital, the Five Phoenixes were not to be trifled with.

Though Tianyuan still had its Four Holy Lands, they chose neutrality and would not provoke the forbidden zone.

Thus, Tianyuan cultivators became remarkably low-key. The wise knew when to bow.

Five Phoenixes cultivators were equally reserved—they knew they still lagged far behind Tianyuan.

Tianyuan had countless Golden Core cultivators; the Five Phoenixes had only a handful of Heavenly Lock Realm experts.

This peace didn't last long.

On Tianji Peak, white feathers scattered.

The Tianji Pigeon once again delivered news to the world, carrying a list that spread like wildfire across both Five Phoenixes and Tianyuan.

The World Prodigy List!

Commonly known as—the Human Rankings.

On the profound yellow paper, blood-red characters glowed like hooks.

“Secret realms emerged, spiritual energy revived, the age of cultivation reopened...”

“Tianyuan—guarded by the Four Holy Lands.”

“Five Phoenixes—unmatched beneath White Jade Capital.”

“The winds of cultivation blow strong across the world.”

“Since ancient times, there is no first in literature, no second in martial arts...”

“Today, Tianji Pavilion re-establishes the ‘World Human Rankings’ to watch the prodigies of the world clash!”

...

The new Human Rankings spread like wildfire.

Nearly every faction had a copy.

The blood-red names on the profound yellow paper ignited a new peak in the cultivation frenzy.

It also symbolized the slow merging of the two great cultivation worlds.

Tianji Pavilion was born from White Jade Capital.

Though Young Master Lu had taken White Jade Capital into seclusion, he left Tianji Pavilion in the world—a constant reminder and deterrent.

Tianji Pavilion had no top-tier experts.

Not even a Heavenly Lock Realm cultivator.

Yet no power—neither in Five Phoenixes nor Tianyuan—dared offend it.

Northern County.

Mount Tai, Asking Heaven Peak.

In the small tower.

Tantai Xuan stood barefoot. Beside him, Mo Ju in scholarly robes gently waved a feather fan. Mo Beike hunched with heavy eye bags drooping. And one more—Jiang Li, clad in gleaming silver armor, exuding heroic spirit.

Jiang Li had finally left the Nine Phoenix Institute and returned to Tantai Xuan's army.

Tantai Xuan held the profound yellow paper.

“The Human List used to be just Tianyuan's thing. Now... it covers the entire world, including both Five Phoenixes and Tianyuan...”

He smacked his lips.

Mo Ju's eyes gleamed behind his fan. “Ever since Sister Zhulong slaughtered twenty-seven Tianyuan Nascent Souls at Buzhou Peak, the tension between the two sides has eased considerably.”

“Especially since the Four Holy Lands never stepped in, the two worlds have fallen into a strange peaceful coexistence.”

“Tianji Pavilion re-ranking the Human List... it feels like they’re stoking the fires of competition again.”

Tantai Xuan fell into thought, eyes dropping to the paper.

“World Prodigy List (Five Phoenixes & Tianyuan)”

“Rank 1: Xiang Shaoyun!”

Seeing the top name, Tantai Xuan inhaled sharply.

As expected—the Overlord.

His battle with Zhou Haisheng, slaying a Nascent Soul, had shaken the world.

At Buzhou Peak, he and Sima Qingshan had suppressed the South Dou Mountain sect master—a minor accomplishment Nascent Soul—though they hadn’t killed him. Still, a headless Overlord clearly possessed Nascent Soul-level combat power.

First place was well deserved.

The atmosphere in the tower remained calm.

Mo Beike squinted as if dozing.

They continued reading.

But as they went down the list, the names completely shocked them.

Rank 2: Li Sansi!

Rank 3: Zhong Nan.

Rank 4: Nie Changqing.

Rank 5: Feng Yilou.

Rank 6: Lu Changkong.

Rank 7: Bai Qingniao.

Rank 8: Sima Qingshan.

Rank 9: Demon Monkey King.

Rank 10: Tantai Xuan.

...

The list was long—one hundred names in total—but only the top ten truly mattered.

And this top ten... was insane!

What kind of monsters were these?!

Only two from Tianyuan made the top ten: Zhong Nan and Feng Yilou.

The other eight? Seven from Five Phoenixes, and one nobody knew where from.

And most shockingly...

Rank 10.

Outside the tower, wind and rain howled.

Inside, dead silence.

Mo Ju stared blankly at the paper.

Even the ever-steady Mo Beike was stunned.

Both looked up at the same time—at the barefoot man holding the paper, grinning so wide his molars showed.

Tantai Xuan, King of Northern Xuan.

Rank 10 on the Human List?!

Chapter 334: The One-Year Wager, Witnessed by White Jade Capital

The moment the new Human Rankings dropped, the entire world exploded.

Not just the Five Phoenixes—Tianyuan went berserk too.

What the hell was this?!

Only two from Tianyuan cracked the top ten?

Zhong Nan, the pride of the Absolute Blade Sect, a Nine-Revolution Golden Core genius, placed third?

The Tianyuan cultivation world could not accept this!

First place going to the Overlord? Fine, they could stomach that. The lunatic had literally outlasted Zhou Haisheng to death and could fight Nascent Souls head-on.

Yes—to Tianyuan powerhouses, the Overlord was a complete madman, through and through.

In a friendly spar, Zhong Nan might edge him out.

But in a life-or-death battle? Zhong Nan wouldn't stand a chance.

So Overlord taking first? Tianyuan had no complaints.

But second place—Li Sansi?

Who the hell was this guy?!

No one had ever heard of him. How did some nobody climb to second?!

Both sides—Five Phoenixes and Tianyuan—were utterly baffled.

Many inwardly cursed the list. If it hadn't come from Tianji Pavilion, they would've trashed it openly long ago.

Feng Yilou and Nie Changqing's placements also raised eyebrows.

On pure strength, Feng Yilou should crush Nie Changqing.

But Nie Changqing was a disciple of White Jade Capital. That title alone silenced most complaints.

You don't mess with White Jade Capital disciples.

Tianyuan experts were absolutely livid about the top ten.

"What's with this Lu Changkong at sixth?!"

In Martial Emperor City, a purple-robed Golden Core disciple demanded.

Who even was this guy?

"Lu Changkong... That's Young Master Lu Ping'an's father."

Someone who knew the name whispered.

Instant silence.

Young Master Lu's old man?!

Then he was everyone's dad!

No one dared speak again.

Sixth place was an insult—he should be higher.

Then the outrage shifted targets.

Seventh—some chicken-raising girl from the Nine Phoenix Institute?

Eighth—a broke painter who patched his own clothes?

Fine, those two were acceptable. One founded the Painting Sect; the other had made a name at Buzhou Peak—using spiritual energy as ink, splashing mountains and rivers, trapping a Nascent Soul. Their rankings were convincing enough.

But ninth and tenth...

How in the world did those two make top ten?!

Demon Monkey King—what even was that?!

A beast?

Some Five Phoenixes cultivators protested: “It’s not even human! Why is it on the Human List?”

Tianyuan cultivators, however, were unfazed. The old Tianyuan Human List had included demon races too.

Still—where did this Demon Monkey King come from? No one had heard of it.

And then... Tantai Xuan.

How did the King of Northern Xuan, a mere second- or third-stage Qi Core cultivator, make the list at all?

This guy was a glitch!

...

The Human Rankings shook the world.

Wolong Ridge.

Zhong Nan took the profound yellow paper from his blade attendant. Seeing himself ranked third, his face darkened.

“Bullshit ranking.”

He crushed the paper. Blade qi erupted, shredding it into confetti.

He stood and strode into the Prison Gate.

He refused to accept this.

As a proud blade cultivator, he wouldn't even accept the Overlord above him.

Now the world would think Zhong Nan was inferior to the Overlord—and that Tianyuan's geniuses were weaker than the Five Phoenixes'.

He would not allow that perception to stand.

He'd been too low-key for too long.

Time to let his blade speak.

...

Nie Changqing looked at his own ranking without joy or anger.

After tempering his body in the Rebirth Pool of the Dead Spirit City within the Prison Gate, and cultivating the Heavenly Lock path, he had reached the Seventh Extreme Heavenly Lock.

The later stages of Heavenly Lock were brutally hard, but the combat boost was immense.

Seventh Extreme Heavenly Lock was already comparable to an Eight- or Nine-Revolution Golden Core.

He wiped his Dragon Slayer with a cloth, aura faintly pulsing.

He was waiting.

He knew—this list would make some people restless.

Even if he could sit still, the world wouldn't let him.

...

Southern Commandery, Tang Manor gardens.

Tang Xiansheng rocked in his chair while Tang Guo peeked curiously.

“The World Prodigy List?”

Children were naturally drawn to such things, especially in this cultivation-crazed era.

“Yup, the Human List,” Tang Xiansheng smiled, white hair fluttering.

“Is big brother on it?” Tang Guo's eyes sparkled.

“Nineteenth—Yimo. Very impressive,” Tang Xiansheng patted her head.

Tang Guo pouted, clenching tiny fists. “Big brother will definitely make top ten!”

Tang Xiansheng laughed warmly.

“He will.”

But he knew Tang Yimo needed a true transformation first.

And such opportunities were rare.

Rubbing the profound yellow paper, Tang Xiansheng narrowed his eyes.

He didn’t question the rankings—Tianji Pavilion represented White Jade Capital’s face.

Lü Mudui wouldn’t publish without certainty.

“Such a shame...”

“The Five Phoenixes have talent, but only a handful can truly stand at the peak...”

“The balance is still too lopsided.”

He sighed.

Out of the top hundred, only a dozen or so were from the Five Phoenixes.

The rest were Tianyuan Golden Cores.

Still, Tang Xiansheng held hope.

He looked north.

Tantai Xuan was right to build the Great Xuan Academy. That was the future—the only way the Five Phoenixes could catch up.

He ruffled Tang Guo’s hair.

“Guo’er, do you want to cultivate like your big brother?”

Tang Guo’s eyes lit up like stars.

“Yes!”

She’d dreamed of it—wanted to protect everyone, just like Tang Yimo.

Every child idolizes heroes.

“Then one day you’ll go to a place called the Academy. You have to work hard, okay?”

Tang Xiansheng pinched her flushed, excited cheeks.

...

Dongyang Commandery, Martial Emperor City.

Du Longyang, Empress Ni Chunqiu, Ye Shoudao, and Young Master Tianxu gathered.

This meeting had been called by Du Longyang.

“Old Du, what happened to your face? Who beat you black and blue?” Young Master Tianxu asked curiously from his sedan chair.

Du Longyang’s face darkened.

He knew this guy would poke at his sore spot.

Lu hadn’t hit too hard, but the precision left bruises that wouldn’t fade for days.

Du Longyang had no complaints—he’d been the one dumb enough to attack Zhulong.

According to Young Master Lu, that girl was his little sweetheart.

If someone touched Du Longyang’s little sweetheart, he’d be just as merciless.

He ignored Tianxu and shared his insights on breaking through to the Yin Spirit Realm.

They were all exploring this new realm. Sharing breakthroughs accelerated progress.

For survivors of a world-ending tribulation, such camaraderie made sense.

“You’re saying... within half a year, you’re confident in reaching Yin Spirit Realm?”

The Empress’s red lips parted, eyes narrowing.

Suddenly she realized something.

“Du Longyang, be honest—did Brother Lu secretly give you pointers?!”

She glared.

Du Longyang rubbed his bruises righteously. “Absolutely not!”

“No way—I’m going to find Brother Lu too!”

The Empress fumed.

Du Longyang quickly changed the subject: “After today, I enter death seclusion. I won’t emerge until I reach Yin Spirit Realm.”

“Consider this a farewell. If my insights help any of you, I hope we can spar as Yin Spirit cultivators someday.”

His words stirred genuine emotion.

They had once been rivals atop Tianyuan.

Now they ruled the Four Holy Lands.

They cherished these moments. The path of cultivation was long and uncertain—death could come at any turn.

They drank and talked.

Eventually, the new Human List came up.

“Zhong Nan has grasped Sword Intent and is close to Dao Intent, yet he only got third...”

“What’s the deal with this Li Sansi?”

Du Longyang was curious.

The Empress and Tianxu were clueless.

One-armed Ye Shoudao finally spoke: “I know him.”

“He inherited the Vine Demon’s legacy. He has the Vine Demon Physique.”

The Vine Demon Physique?

The others’ expressions shifted.

“That woman’s physique?” Du Longyang asked gravely.

Ye Shoudao nodded. He had been the one to awaken it.

Without him, who knew how many years it would've taken.

"The Vine Demon had a tragic life," the Empress sighed, then shot Ye Shoudao a disdainful glance.

Ye Shoudao said nothing, his expression complicated as he touched his empty sleeve.

"With the Vine Demon Physique, his potential is limitless," Young Master Tianxu said.

"Second place makes sense. But the demonic qi is hard to control—one slip and he becomes a bloodthirsty monster."

Tianxu Palace walked the unorthodox path; they understood demonic qi well.

"Whatever," Du Longyang waved it off.

"The Five Phoenixes have terrifying potential. It's Young Master Lu's world, after all. The Overlord, Nie Changqing—they'll all reach Infant Transformation someday, maybe even the Three Gods Realm."

"We'd better not let them surpass us. That would be embarrassing."

Silence fell.

They bid farewell.

Ye Shoudao left with his blade on his back.

The Empress and Tianxu departed.

The Empress, unwilling to lose out, flew over the sea searching for the giant whale and immortal island.

The ocean was endless. She found nothing.

Her magnificent robes fluttered as she glared resentfully at the waves, then turned and vanished back to the Qian Female Palace.

...

Time flowed on, indifferent to all.

The Human Rankings from White Jade Capital were live-updated.

Lü Mudui tapped his bamboo staff, divining the world's cultivation affairs.

Whenever someone broke through, the list updated swiftly.

Naturally, controversy raged. Many felt slighted.

They wanted to storm Tianji Pavilion—but didn't dare.

So they took their frustration out on those ranked above them.

In the following months, countless battles erupted among the ranked prodigies.

Lower-ranked challengers fought those above them.

To everyone's shock—the results matched the rankings perfectly.

Even ninth-place Demon Monkey King and tenth-place Tantai Xuan faced challengers.

Traces of the Demon Monkey King were soon found: a desert beyond Great Xuan, shrouded in towering demonic qi.

Mount Tai.

Tantai Xuan stood outside the small tower.

Tianyuan Golden Core geniuses came to challenge the “Qi Core weakling” sitting at tenth.

Tantai Xuan smiled graciously, exuding the poise of a top master.

The fight began.

He let his opponent strike a hundred times.

Imperial dragon qi surged.

The challenger exhausted all spiritual energy without breaking his defense—and was even backlash-injured by the dragon qi, coughing blood, spirit wounded.

What the hell...

Tantai Xuan stood atop the peak the entire time, gazing at the heavens, robes fluttering in the wind.

The very picture of a lonely master.

After several Golden Cores failed, no one dared challenge him again.

With imperial dragon qi protecting him, he was a porcupine—attack and get stabbed.

If he had any offensive power, he'd rank even higher.

Another surprise was second-place Li Sansi.

At first, the top ten stayed quiet.

But as time passed, battles finally broke out.

Fifth-place Feng Yilou skipped fourth-place Nie Changqing and challenged second-place Li Sansi instead—shocking the world.

Everyone expected Feng Yilou to win.

Who was this unknown Li Sansi?

But the battle was held in secret at Li Sansi's request.

The result?

Feng Yilou nearly died.

Li Sansi's second place was cemented.

No one knew exactly how he was so strong, but defeating Feng Yilou proved he belonged in the top five.

A month after Feng Yilou's defeat, Zhong Nan—unable to progress further in the Prison Gate—emerged.

He didn't challenge Li Sansi.

Instead, he carried his plain blade all the way to the Western Liang capital.

He challenged the Overlord.

They agreed to fight on the Dongyan River.

Zhong Nan stood atop the river, arms folded around his blade, waiting silently.

...

As Zhong Nan issued his challenge,

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

Lu wheeled his Thousand-Blade Chair across the green grass.

He found Ni Yu hugging the Heaven-Facing Mirror under the morning chrysanthemums, giggling foolishly at the battles within, Little Yinglong sprawled atop her head.

“The one-year wager between Great Xuan and Western Liang is almost up. I set and witnessed that bet myself.”

“Ni Yu, you go oversee the duel. If anyone interferes, kill them. Your call.”

Ni Yu’s eyes lit up like fireworks.

Was she dreaming?

Happiness came too suddenly!

Little Yinglong lifted his head, eyes brimming with tears of hope as he stared at Lu.

From afar, Ning Zhao approached gracefully.

“Young Master...”

Lu glanced at her. “Keep cultivating. Ni Yu can handle this. You’re close to comprehending Dao Intent—don’t miss this chance.”

Ning Zhao bit her lip and nodded solemnly.

“You too, stupid dragon.”

Three Purple Spirit Crystals appeared in Lu’s hand.

“The winners get these three crystals as reward.”

He tossed them to Ni Yu.

She stuffed them into her pouch, cheeks flushed with excitement.

Finally—she could leave the island!

Finally—she could see the outside world!

Finally—no more looking at Young Master’s annoying face!

Her heart sang.

Little Yinglong flapped his fleshy wings in joy.

Lu's smile slowly faded.

As if reading her thoughts.

"Go."

He flicked a finger.

BOOM!

A terrifying blast erupted.

Ni Yu's heart clenched.

Did Young Master know?!

How did he always know?! Was he the devil?!

Before she could explain, she and the bewildered Little Yinglong were launched into the sky like cannonballs.

Their screams echoed over the island long after their figures had vanished into tiny black dots on the horizon.

Chapter 335: Forging an Unbeatable Path with a Wok and a Dragon

Wolong Ridge,

Nine Prisons Secret Realm — Third Prison Gate, City of Emperor Song.

Nie Changqing emerged from the Rebirth Pool, purple spirit crystals crumbling into lifeless dust around him. Energy coursed through his flesh and bones; his spine thrummed with newfound power under the baptism of violet light. Above his head, the Dragon-Slaying Blade hovered silently, while beads of sweat slid down his skin and vanished into the water.

“Eight Extremes Heavenly Lock... complete.”

He rose, water cascading from his body. Clenching his fist, he felt the terrifying strength now sealed within his frame.

“With this, I finally have the qualifications to challenge a Nascent Soul cultivator.”

His blade intent was no weaker than most, and unlike ordinary Golden Core cultivators, the Heavenly Lock realm only grew more ferocious the further one progressed. Eight locks alone could suppress even a Ninth Revolution Golden Core.

Still, he exhaled slowly.

“Too slow. I need to reach Nascent Soul as quickly as possible... and comprehend my Dao Intent.”

He donned his robes, slung the Dragon-Slaying Blade at his waist, and strode out of Emperor Song City without looking back.

This was the City of the Dead — the Third Prison Gate.

Only four people in the entire world had ever reached this far: Overlord, Nie Changqing, Zhong Nan, and Feng Yilou.

Li Sansi, ranked second on the Mortal List, remained as elusive as ever.

Nie Changqing tightened his grip on the hilt.

“Onward — to the Fourth Gate.”

He walked the pristine official road while bewildered souls drifted past like smoke. Yin enforcers patrolled the streets, each one radiating pressure comparable to a Ninth Revolution Golden Core. As for the city lords—the Ghost Kings—Nie Changqing didn't even want to think about them. Nascent Soul was the baseline; some were monsters among monsters. Fortunately, they rarely showed themselves.

He left the city and pressed forward, ignoring the cataclysmic battle currently shaking the outside world.

Dongyan River.

A duel that had drawn every eye in the Tianyuan Domain.

Months had passed since the latest Mortal List was released. The rankings beyond the top ten shifted constantly, but the top ten remained carved in stone. Feng Yilou's crushing defeat at Li Sansi's hands had already shaken the cultivation world to its core.

Now, all hope rested on Zhong Nan versus Overlord.

By rights, Zhong Nan should have challenged the second-ranked Li Sansi. Instead, the prideful former number one skipped straight to the top — to Overlord himself. After months of silent endurance, Zhong Nan had perfected his Ninth Revolution Golden Core and stood half a step from Nascent Soul. He wanted to use Overlord's pressure to force his breakthrough.

The Western Prefecture burned with anticipation.

In the dense forest beyond the Dongyan River, cultivators perched on branches or leaned against trunks, breath held as they watched the torrent below.

A lone figure stood calmly atop the raging water, hugging a plain saber — Zhong Nan.

Xiang Family soldiers glared from the banks. Western Liang iron cavalry ringed the perimeter like unsheathed blades.

Feng Yilou crouched on a branch, purple robes fluttering. The arrogance in his eyes had dimmed since his near-death experience.

“Think Zhong Nan can win?” Xiao Yue’er asked, brows knitted.

Feng Yilou shook his head. “If he doesn’t break through during this fight, he loses. Overlord sits ahead of that monster Li Sansi for a reason.”

A sudden hush fell across the forest.

He had arrived.

Clad in heavy armor and a cold helm, carrying axe and shield on his back, Overlord stepped forward. Each footfall seemed to quake the earth. The moment he appeared, the Xiang Family troops roared themselves scarlet, brandishing halberds and swords in frenzied salute.

Zhong Nan's eyes snapped open, blazing. He drew his saber and pointed it across the waves.

“Fight!”

He charged across the water, each step sending plumes dozens of meters high.

Overlord's eyes narrowed.

BOOM!

The riverbank exploded beneath his leap. Water erupted in a perfect ring as the armored titan crashed into the current. Zhong Nan cleaved straight through the tidal wall, saber intent surging like a storm tide toward his foe.

---

Northern Prefecture,

Foot of Mount Tai, Great Xuan Academy.

Dantai Xuan strolled in casual robes, hands clasped behind his back. Mo Ju and Mo Beike followed at a leisurely pace.

On the training field, Jiang Li — clad in silver armor — drilled the academy disciples with relentless precision.

“Grandmaster,” Dantai Xuan said, “you haven’t forgotten the wager with White Jade Capital, have you?”

Mo Beike, wrapped in thick furs, chuckled beneath heavy eyelids. “How could I?”

“A full year has passed already,” Dantai Xuan sighed.

“It’s time to select our finest disciple to honor that bet.”

His expression grew solemn. This duel would validate everything the Great Xuan Kingdom had poured into the academy.

He gazed at the youthful, vigorous disciples and felt warmth in his eyes. He had watched them grow, had poured countless spirit stones into their future — not just for the wager, but for the kingdom itself.

“Mo Ju,” he asked, “among the students you assess daily, has anyone truly caught your eye?”

Mo Ju waved his feather fan, a rare smile lifting his lips. “One.”

“A youth brought here from a tiny fishing village in Dongyang Prefecture... half a year ago, he had zero cultivation. Today he stands at the peak of the Fifth Internal Organ Realm. A genius rarely seen in this world.”

Dantai Xuan froze. “Half a year... from nothing to peak Internal Organs?”

Mo Ju’s smile widened at the emperor’s shock. “The boy learns as though he was born for the Dao. One hint, and he masters it.”

Mo Beike chuckled knowingly.

Dantai Xuan’s interest was thoroughly piqued. “His name?”

“Lu Jiulian.”

---

High above the continent, a scream tore through the sky.

A tiny black dot grew larger and larger until—

“The Young Master’s pettiness has evolved again! His heart-eye is smaller than a sesame seed now!”

Ni Yu’s indignant wail echoed as she plummeted.

Little Yinglong cackled without a care in the world — he could fly, after all.

With a flick of his finger, Lu Pan had launched Ni Yu clear across the vast sea.

She flipped mid-air, yanked out her black wok, and used it as a landing shield.

**BOOM!**

Smoke and dirt exploded through the forest.

Even with the wok cushioning the impact, Ni Yu felt her backside bloom into a firework of pain.

Crawling out, she rubbed her aching rear and muttered about the Young Master's tiny, vindictive heart.

She stood — butt still stuck out — when the sound of breaking branches reached her ears.

Several shadowy figures landed lightly on the surrounding branches.

“A little girl?”

“I saw her fall from the sky with my own eyes!”

Ni Yu ignored them, fished out a sugar-coated Body Tempering Pill from her pouch, and crunched it like candy. Spiritual energy flooded her bruised backside, easing the pain.

Little Yinglong landed on her head, staring in betrayal.

Wasn't that supposed to be the very last sugar-coated one?!

“Spirit pill?!”

“That aura... top-grade!”

“Look at that wok — it’s glowing with treasure light! At least a third-grade artifact, maybe higher!”

Greed flashed in the lurking cultivators’ eyes. A treasure that emitted such radiance, plus a pouch clearly bulging with pills — this girl was a walking fortune.

“Tianyuan cultivators?” Ni Yu muttered darkly.

She had spent days watching Tianyuan bullies torment Wuhuang practitioners through the Heaven’s Eye Mirror. Her opinion of the local populace was already in the gutter.

She slung the wok onto her back. Spiritual energy surged into it, and the humble cookware erupted in magnificent radiance.

Thanks to the Young Master’s recent upgrades, her personal wok had reached the profound tier — a first-grade spirit tool by Tianyuan standards.

The lurking cultivators lost all restraint.

“Take her!”

“She’s just a girl — kill her and grab the treasures!”

“She might have backing. Make it quick!”

They shot forward like panthers.

Ni Yu bared a mouth of gleaming white teeth.

“You asked for this.”

“The Young Master said: anyone who bullies Ni Yu gets beaten until they stop breathing.”

She charged.

WHAM!

The lead Foundation Establishment cultivator took a wok straight to the face and folded like wet paper.

Two more pounced from either side.

Ni Yu swung the wok in wild circles, giggling as blood sprayed and bodies flew. In moments, the forest rang only with groans of the dying.

The commotion drew stronger auras.

A Golden Core elder from nearby South Dou Mountain arrived in a fury when he saw his disciples bleeding on the ground.

“Who dares injure South Dou Mountain disciples? Court death!”

Ni Yu stuck out her butt, hefted her wok, and glared. “You yelled at me?”

Living with the Young Master had clearly rubbed off — her tolerance for insults now hovered around absolute zero.

She pulled out another sugar-coated pill, waved it tauntingly, and tossed it toward the elder.

He caught it reflexively.

A yellow blur streaked past.

Little Yinglong's tail whipped across the elder's chest like a golden dragon lash.

CRACK!

The Golden Core nearly shattered. The elder coughed blood and collapsed, twitching.

Little Yinglong snatched the pill mid-air, popped it into his mouth, and purred in satisfaction.

Ni Yu puffed out her (admittedly flat) chest and planted a hand on her hip.

"As the Young Master's favorite maid and dragon cub, we're finally out in the world. We can't embarrass White Jade Capital's name!"

She pointed dramatically toward the main road beyond the trees.

"We'll start right at the heart of Tianyuan territory — Dongyang Prefecture — and kick down every sect gate along the way! We're going to smash an invincible path straight through this continent!"

She slapped Little Yinglong's butt. "Little Yellow, you with me?"

The baby dragon sprawled atop her head gave an elegant, world-weary burp, dark-golden eyes rolling.

"Yeah," it seemed to say. "Let's go raise some hell."

Chapter 336: Little Yinglong's Ultimate Flex

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

White Jade Capital Pavilion.

Lu Ping'an lounged in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, elbow propped on the armrest, fingers idly spinning the dark ring on his thumb.

"Forge an invincible path,' she says..."

He chuckled and shook his head.

That girl really knows how to talk big.

Keeping Ni Yu cooped up for so long had clearly driven her stir-crazy. Letting her out to stretch her legs with Little Yinglong wasn't a bad idea at all.

A gentle breeze lifted his hair and robes.

His gaze drifted downward.

Around Ning Zhao, ripples of Dao Intent began to stir—she was on the verge of comprehending her own unique Dao.

No surprise there. The cultivation resources on Heart Island were leagues above the outside world, and with the Origin Lake's source energy bathing her day and night, her progress had been meteoric—even without the Nine Prisons Secret Realm, she wasn't far behind Nie Changqing.

Ning Zhao's breakthrough was her own fortune; Lu Ping'an didn't interfere.

He had bigger things to attend to.

He lifted his eyes to the sky, a faint smile tugging at his lips.

"Finally..."

“I’ve been waiting so long the flowers have withered.”

Nearly a year had passed since he crushed that Buddha seed. He’d assumed the retaliation would come swiftly, yet only now were they drawing near.

With a thought, the Thousand-Bladed Chair hummed to life. It shot upward in a sonic boom, vanishing from the giant whale’s back and piercing straight into the heavens.

On the island below, Ning Zhao’s long lashes trembled. She opened her eyes, black hair dancing in the wind, and glanced toward the direction Lu Ping’an had disappeared.

Somehow, she knew—the Young Master was about to do something huge.

He tore through the clouds and soon arrived before the swirling vortex of the world’s Origin.

The Tianyuan Origin orbited the Wuhuang Origin, releasing profound fluctuations.

World Origins needed eons to mature naturally. A single year was nothing.

Leaning back in his chair, Lu Ping’an drifted higher, clouds parting beneath his feet.

“So this is the void beyond the plane...”

He raised a hand, reaching out as if to touch the emptiness.

The moment his fingers brushed it, an invisible membrane rippled outward like water disturbed by a stone.

The World Protection Force.

A rule-based barrier designed to shield weaker worlds from predators, giving them time to grow.

Lu Ping’an could feel it weakening. The stronger Wuhuang became, the thinner this shield grew. Once Wuhuang broke free and ascended to High Martial, the protection would vanish entirely, leaving it exposed to every wandering hunter and High Martial power in the void.

But with him here, ascension was inevitable.

The barrier had simply bought him time.

He wasn’t worried about rogue wanderers—bunch of failures, really. But if they came in droves, even he would find it annoying. The barrier had kept things peaceful so far.

As for the Buddha seed he'd annihilated... its master had surely sensed it. The seed had boasted that nearby High Martial-controlled Mid Martial worlds would come to "exterminate" Wuhuang.

The World Protection Force could slow Mid Martial worlds, but not stop them completely.

Lu Ping'an's eyes narrowed.

He had broken through to Qi Refinement Layer Five—his true strength now surpassed Infant Transformation. He was confident.

Besides, fortune favored the bold.

If he could devour the Origins of those incoming worlds and fuse them into Wuhuang's...

Evolution through time was one path.

Devouring was the shortcut he'd invented.

And bait? The golden lotus light that had burst from the Buddha seed when he crushed it—that was the bait.

Even if the fish drawn in belonged to High Martial tigers, so what?

He, Lu Ping'an, aimed to drag Wuhuang all the way to Super Fantasy. Snatching food from a tiger's mouth? Child's play.

Spiritual sense surged from him like a savage beast, tearing a hole straight through the World Protection Force.

The Thousand-Bladed Chair carried him out into the endless void.

A boundless darkness, like an infinite starry sky.

Lu Ping'an gazed into the distance and felt a faint, awe-inspiring pressure.

His eyes narrowed; deep within his pupils, vortexes spun as he looked farther.

Countless worlds drifted in the emptiness—some bright, some dim, some shattered.

He quickly closed his eyes. Peering into the void like this drained spiritual sense at a terrifying rate—even for him.

“So many worlds floating in the void...”

“It’s similar to the universe I knew in my previous life... or rather, this void is the universe.”

But unlike that cold, dead cosmos of barren planets, this one thrummed with life.

No more pondering.

Lu Ping’an rubbed his ring.

Eight jade talismans materialized. With a flick, they shot away, orbiting Wuhuang like satellites.

He removed a milky-white miniature sword from his crown—the Sky-Covering Sword, the core of the Sky-Covering Formation, one of the Four Heaven-Slaughtering Arrays.

As the sword appeared, the eight talismans blazed to life. Mysterious runes burst from them, weaving together into a vast net that enveloped the entire world.

Formation complete.

Lu Ping'an tore back through the barrier and returned to Heart Island.

---

In the endless void,

A continent the size of a realm drifted through the darkness, crushing weaker worlds in its path like a cosmic bulldozer.

At its center stood a solitary, snow-capped peak piercing the heavens, surrounded by lesser spears of stone.

Atop the highest peak sat a humble temple.

Inside, a monk in plain white robes—not saffron kasaya—chanted sutras. Golden characters floated from his lips like living things.

Suddenly, he opened his eyes.

He lifted a golden alms bowl, walked to the backyard, and filled it with fresh snow.

The snow melted into clear water.

Sitting cross-legged in the blizzard, he gazed into the bowl.

Ripples spread across the surface, revealing an image—Wuhuang, bathed in golden lotus light.

“Amitabha.”

“Almost there.”

The monk smiled faintly.

He formed a mudra and dipped a finger into the water, plucking out the illusory golden lotus as though it were real.

The lotus rose into the sky and dispersed.

Invisible traction pulled the entire continent in a new direction.

“Amitabha.”

“The Buddha has lured two other worlds as well... I hope we arrive first.”

White robes whipped in the icy wind as the monk stood.

---

Dongyan River.

Water exploded again and again!

Zhong Nan, Absolute Blade Sect’s supreme genius, wielded a saber sharp enough to split the heavens.

He had comprehended Saber Intent—that was why his combat power was monstrous.

Overlord never removed his helmet.

The once-frigid river was boiling from their clash.

BOOM!

Zhong Nan flipped through the air and crashed onto the water's surface, gripping his plain saber tightly.

Silence.

Every spectator held their breath.

A peak Ninth Revolution Golden Core should absolutely be able to fight Nascent Souls.

Yet against Overlord, Zhong Nan kept eating dirt.

Overlord frowned, axe in one hand, shield in the other.

Zhong Nan charged again, saber slicing upward. White waves rose like dragons, water turning into whips infused with saber intent.

Overlord raised his shield—profound-tier spirit tool, immovable as a mountain.

Water and saber qi exploded outward, carving the river into blooming flowers of spray.

Western Liang cavalry watched without blinking.

The two traded blows across the surface, evenly matched for a long while.

Then both slid backward hundreds of meters.

Zhong Nan's emotions were complicated.

He had lost.

Because Overlord still wore his helmet.

Headless Overlord was his strongest state. Zhong Nan couldn't even force him to remove it.

And Overlord hadn't even unleashed his Unyielding Dao Intent yet.

Now he understood why Overlord sat at number one.

The current Overlord wasn't Seven Extremes—he was Eight.

His mastery of power and profound-tier axe-shield had reached another level.

Zhong Nan found no openings.

Still, a blade master never flees without a fight.

War intent blazing, he charged once more.

Everyone could see it—Zhong Nan had lost.

When Overlord finally released his Unyielding Dao Intent, returning every blow he'd blocked in a single devastating axe strike...

Zhong Nan was cleaved straight into the depths of the Dongyan River, vanishing without a trace.

Absolute Blade Sect disciples paled and dove in after him.

They dragged out a blood-soaked body.

Zhong Nan's eyes still burned with unwillingness.

Overlord stood calmly on the water, slung axe and shield onto his back, and turned away without a word.

The Mortal List meant nothing to him.

His targets were Nascent Souls.

In the distance, Feng Yilou and Xiao Yue'er watched with complex expressions.

Just as the crowd prepared to disperse,

Zhong Nan—after swallowing healing pills—sat cross-legged on the riverbank. Terrifying spiritual energy swirled around him like a vortex, devouring the heavens.

Overlord paused mid-step.

He glanced back.

“Breaking through to Nascent Soul?”

He murmured, then ordered Xiang Family troops to guard the area and prevent interruptions.

Only then did he stride away.

Back in the main tent,

Xu Chu came stomping in, dragging two spiked iron balls.

“My king!”

Excitement blazed in his eyes.

He had broken through—into the Heavenly Lock realm!

Overlord raised a brow. “What’s got you so worked up?”

Xu Chu grinned. “You forgot, my king! The one-year wager with White Jade Capital is due!”

Overlord smacked his forehead. “Got my head chopped off once—memory’s a bit fuzzy.”

“Already a year, huh...”

He sighed, then his gaze sharpened.

“The Northern Xuan King with imperial dragon qi is the true destined ruler.”

“But this fight... we’re still taking it.”

Xu Chu’s blood sang at the ferocity in Overlord’s eyes.

He’d been worried his king had gone soft!

“Pick the ten best from the Xiang Family army,” Overlord ordered solemnly. “We’re going to teach those soft academy brats a lesson.”

“YES, SIR!”

“Those delicate little scholars against my Xiang Family wolves? Ha!”

“We’ll beat them so hard they forget their own mothers!”

Xu Chu pounded his chest and laughed maniacally, practically bouncing with eagerness.

---

Dongyang Prefecture was in chaos.

Second- and third-rate Tianyuan sects had their gates kicked in—one after another.

A girl with a black wok on her back and a baby dragon on her head rampaged through the land.

No reasoning, no warnings—just wok to the face.

Even Golden Core elders got smashed into critical condition if they slipped up.

In three days, she bulldozed half the prefecture.

South Dou Mountain suffered the worst—their entire sect gate was demolished, every Golden Core elder personally wok'd until they spat blood.

When fifth- or sixth-revolution Golden Cores tried to stop her, she simply tossed pills to her dragon and let it handle business.

Not a single one survived a tail whip.

The entire prefecture wailed in despair.

They couldn't win.

So they begged the Four Great Holy Lands for help.

The Holy Lands took it seriously and dispatched Nascent Soul experts.

Against Nascent Souls, Ni Yu obviously stood no chance.

Her “unbeatable path” was mostly just loud talk.

The real fighter was Little Yinglong.

These Holy Land Nascent Souls had never visited Heart Island—they didn’t recognize Ni Yu.

If the Empress or Du Longyang had shown up, things might’ve been different.

But they were all in seclusion.

So conflict erupted.

Ni Yu stood with her wok on her back, facing four Nascent Souls floating in the sky.

She popped a calming pill into her mouth and crunched nervously.

Turning to Little Yinglong, she said earnestly,

“Little Yellow, your turn!”

“Sister Zhulong can solo twenty-seven Nascent Souls. You don’t need to do that much—just four, okay?”

“Don’t let the Young Master have raised you for nothing!”

“Come on, show some pride!”

Little Yinglong shot her a sideways glance and huffed hot air from his nostrils.

Compare him to Big Sis? Please.

He was the Young Master’s favorite dragon baby!

He turned to the four Nascent Souls, puckered his lips, and spat a cute little water arrow.

The four experts frowned—this dragon seemed... a bit slow?

Then—

BOOM!

Little Yinglong's body exploded in size, from fluffy bunny to mountain-crushing titan.

ROAR!

Wings unfurled, blotting out the sun.

---

Buzhoutian Peak.

Zhulong, mid-flute, suddenly tilted her head.

The next instant, she vanished.

Mount Tai, Asking Heaven Peak.

Blue Dragon's dark-golden eyes blazed. With a sky-shaking roar, he dove into the Dragon Gate.

At the same moment,

Every dragon breed lounging by Dragon Gates across the continent—Tiangang Mountain, Dongyan River, Southern Prefecture's Great Marsh—felt the call and plunged through.

Dongyang Prefecture, Red Dragon Gate.

Flames scorched the sky for hundreds of li.

Beneath crimson scales, fire danced.

From the palace at the gate's end, heavenly dragon after heavenly dragon soared forth.

ROARS shook the heavens!

Outside the gate, Tianyuan cultivators stared in dumbstruck horror at the dragons crossing the firmament.

At their forefront walked a blindfolded girl.

Every practitioner in Dongyang Prefecture felt a chill crawl down their spines.

---

The four Holy Land Nascent Souls stared at the now-gigantic Little Yinglong, unease creeping in.

Just as they prepared to strike—

All four froze.

They turned toward the horizon.

And went pale.

Black clouds boiled.

Dozens of heavenly dragons escorted a blindfolded girl as if she rode the very storm itself.

Ni Yu's jaw dropped.

The calming pill fell from her limp fingers and rolled away.

She looked at Little Yinglong in utter betrayal.

This little bastard...

...actually had this kind of ultimate flex?!

Chapter 337: Rendezvous at Beiluo, the Duel Begins

Dongyang Prefecture,

Qiannu Palace.

In the newly built palace, the Empress sat with light makeup, brows furrowed, red lips pressed tight as she stared at the Go board before her.

Black and white stones crisscrossed the board in seeming chaos, yet hidden patterns and profound mysteries lurked beneath.

Across from her sat an elegant female official in formal robes and tall hat.

“Your Majesty, it’s your move.”

The official gently reminded her.

The Empress waved her hand in irritation.

“No more today.”

She had wanted to master Go, to share at least one hobby with Brother Lu.

Brother Lu loved the game, and his skill was terrifyingly high—she knew that well.

Hadn’t Du Longyang gained enlightenment from just one match against him, and was now in life-or-death seclusion assaulting the Yin Spirit realm?

So the Empress had started learning too.

But now it was clear: her talent was mediocre. She was still galaxies away from playing against Brother Lu.

This female official was a national-level Go master, yet every time they played, the Empress was utterly crushed.

“Go requires a calm heart,” the official said with a smile. “Your Majesty’s heart is not still.”

The Empress rolled her beautiful eyes. “That’s enough for today.”

The official rose gracefully, bowed, and left with small, measured steps.

Leaning against the railing, the Empress poured herself a cup of fruit wine and took a delicate sip.

The warm, sweet-tart liquid slowly soothed her frustration.

Suddenly,

Her reflection in the cup rippled without wind.

Hm?

A feeling stirred in her heart.

She set the cup down and vanished from the balcony.

---

Above Dongyang Prefecture,

The four Nascent Soul experts from the Holy Lands turned ashen as terrifying auras converged from every direction.

“It’s the demoness of Buzhou Peak!”

One stared in horror at the blindfolded Zhulong.

Little Yinglong stood mountain-sized, wings spread wide enough to blot out the sky.

Heavenly dragons from all eight Dragon Gates had answered his call.

So many dragons gathered—the four Nascent Souls instantly lost all will to fight.

Fight? Against what?

Just the demoness who slaughtered Nascent Souls without blinking was enough to make them despair, never mind the dragons—Blue Dragon alone could trade blows with perfected Nascent Souls.

The four dropped to the ground, reining in every wisp of aura, afraid that the slightest movement would provoke annihilation.

Little Yinglong raised his draconic head proudly—he was the Dragon King summoning his legions!

This was the prestige of the Young Master's favorite dragon cub!

Four Nascent Souls?

He could take a hundred!

Ni Yu's eyes sparkled.

Zhulong had soloed twenty-seven Nascent Souls at Buzhou Peak and carved her name into legend. In Ni Yu's heart, Big Sis Zhulong now sat upon an unreachable throne.

She was officially Zhulong's little fangirl.

Seeing her idol descend filled her with giddy joy.

**BOOM!**

Blue Dragon landed, dark-golden eyes sweeping the area. Killing intent rippled outward.

The four Tianyuan Nascent Souls didn't dare breathe.

Hidden spectators from various sects trembled in their boots.

Zhulong drifted down gracefully, long lashes fluttering though her eyes remained closed.

She turned her lovely face toward Ni Yu and Little Yinglong.

“Dad’s not here?”

Her brows knitted slightly.

Noticing Little Yinglong’s smug posture, she vanished and reappeared right in front of his mountain-sized snout.

A delicate hand swung.

SMACK!

A thunderous slap rang out.

Little Yinglong’s massive head jerked sideways, utterly stunned.

Big Sis, give me some face in public!

“I asked you a question.”

Zhulong said coolly, eyes still closed.

Little Yinglong deflated, shrinking back to pocket size with a wronged expression.

He landed on her shoulder and grumbled in dragon tongue.

“The Young Master sent us to oversee the wager between Great Xuan and Western Liang...”

Ni Yu quickly explained from below.

Zhulong nodded lightly and descended.

Ni Yu’s big eyes blinked rapidly. She dug out a sugar-coated pill and offered it up.

“Big Sis, candy!”

Zhulong hesitated—she recognized Ni Yu as Dad’s little maid.

She accepted the pill and popped it into her mouth.

The surrounding heavenly dragons radiated menace.

Still sucking on the candy, Zhulong grabbed Little Yinglong by the scruff of his neck.

“I thought Dad came.”

“Don’t cry wolf next time.”

Little Yinglong pouted.

In the distance,

The four Tianyuan Nascent Souls were shaking.

From the conversation, they realized—this girl and this dragon were that terrifying existence’s maid and pet!

They had attacked that lord’s maid and pet!

Rumor said the lord's heart was smaller than a sesame seed. If he found out, their entire sects would be erased—even Holy Land masters couldn't save them.

BOOM!

A fearsome aura tore through the heavens.

Crimson robes fluttered.

A breathtaking, regal figure in red descended like a phoenix.

Zhulong's closed eyes trembled. Terrifying energy surged around her; a milky-white thread coiled silently around her slender finger.

But when she sensed who it was, the pressure vanished.

The Empress landed beside Ni Yu, eyes lighting up like stars.

"Little Ni Yu! Little dumb dragon!"

She laughed brightly.

The four Nascent Souls had hoped the Empress would take their side.

Instead... she was with them?

Their hearts sank into darkness.

War, mercifully, did not erupt.

The Empress's arrival dissolved the tension instantly.

Blue Dragon, Red Dragon, and the rest returned through their gates.

Zhulong—ever aloof—had only come because she thought Dad was here. Discovering it was just Little Yinglong showing off, she vanished in a streak of shadow back to Buzhou Peak.

Ni Yu and Little Yinglong were whisked away by the Empress to play at Qiannu Palace.

---

News exploded across the world:

White Jade Capital's maid and pet had appeared in Dongyang Prefecture!

After vanishing for nearly a year, this was White Jade Capital's first move.

How could the world not pay attention?

They said the maid, wielding only a black wok, had smashed countless Tianyuan sects into the ground.

Wuhuang cultivators grinned from ear to ear—White Jade Capital was their pride, after all.

But the bigger question: why had Young Lord Lu sent his maid and dragon now?

Was White Jade Capital returning to the stage?

Most dismissed the idea—too soon.

Then the truth spread:

Ni Yu had come to oversee the one-year wager between Great Xuan and Western Liang.

The world's gossip-loving cultivators immediately lost their minds.

The maid carried Young Lord Lu's will—she was his official envoy!

---

Mount Tai.

Dantai Xuan clutched the letter, eyes sharp.

“So it's little Ni Yu...”

“Young Lord Lu sent her personally to witness the duel.”

He took a deep breath.

In the small pavilion,

Mo Beike, Mo Ju, and Jiang Li sat sipping hot tea.

Mo Beike's heavy eyelids twitched. He chuckled, "Your Majesty, it seems we cannot treat this contest lightly."

"Young Lord Lu is watching. We must show proper respect—and full seriousness."

Mo Ju nodded, feather fan swaying. "This is Young Lord Lu examining the fruits of our Great Xuan Academy."

"One year is rushed, the results immature... but we must still display our academy's strengths."

Dantai Xuan turned to Jiang Li. "Old Jiang, do we have the advantage against Western Liang's Xiang Family army?"

"Slim advantage. Seventy-thirty," Jiang Li said frankly.

Then added, "Xiang Family seventy, Academy thirty."

Dantai Xuan's face darkened. "Old Jiang, are you raising the enemy's morale and crushing our own?"

The Academy was his baby!

Jiang Li remained blunt. "The Academy develops well-rounded talent. In pure combat? We can't match Western Liang's war machine."

"It will come down to the rules Young Lord Lu sets," Mo Ju said.

Even he wasn't optimistic.

The Xiang Family army was a terrifying cultivation legion. Even the Xuanwu Guards might lose in a straight fight, let alone a bunch of kids.

Dantai Xuan frowned. "No matter what, this king backs his cubs!"

---

The next day,

Heavenly Secret Pigeons flapped through the sky, dropping pure white feathers.

One flew into the small pavilion on Mount Tai.

One flew into the Western Liang main tent.

Dantai Xuan and Overlord received the same message from Heavenly Secret Pavilion.

“Location of the duel... Beiluo.”

Overlord raised a brow.

Beiluo—the city etched into his bones.

He immediately summoned Xu Chu.

Xu Chu arrived dragging his spiked iron balls. Behind him marched ten young Xiang Family soldiers clad in grim armor, steps shaking the ground.

Luo Mingsang and the veiled Luo Mingyue followed Overlord out of the tent.

Seeing the ten soldiers radiating furnace-like vitality, Overlord's eyes flashed with satisfaction.

“Heading to Beiluo to face Great Xuan Academy's students—are you confident?”

The ten armored youths stared at their king with fanatic eyes.

“YES, MY LORD!”

They roared as one.

Xu Chu grinned proudly. “My king, these ten are the best under twenty I could find. The strongest is Zhao Zixu—he completed his final Internal Organ tempering just yesterday!”

The named soldier stepped forward, chest high. Spiritual energy surged, condensing into lifelike spirit armor around his body.

“Peak Internal Organs realm?”

Overlord's eyes lit up in genuine surprise.

Even with the changed heavens making Body Forging easier, reaching the peak so fast was still monstrous talent.

He remembered how many beatings it had taken him.

"Good... very good."

"Fight well."

Overlord walked among them like a general reviewing troops before battle.

He raised his massive fist.

One by one, the soldiers met it with their own.

The moment fists collided, fire ignited in their hearts.

Their belief in victory burned hotter than ever.

Overlord turned eastward, hands behind his back.

He still remembered leaving Beiluo after making that wager.

Young Lord Lu had favored the Academy.

But Overlord refused to accept it.

His soldiers would never be weaker.

---

Meanwhile, at Great Xuan Academy's training field beneath Mount Tai,

Lines of students in training robes stood tall as Dantai Xuan rallied them.

“Building this Academy was no easy feat. You are this king's hope—Great Xuan's hope!”

“You are heaven’s chosen. You are the future!”

“This will be your first battle, but it is the most important battle of your lives.”

“The Xuanwu Guards forged this Academy with their blood and lives at the spirit stone mines, dying so you could have resources to cultivate.”

“Old Mo walked the jianghu alone, risking death to collect every school of cultivation...”

“For what?”

“To prove to the world that Great Xuan Academy was the right choice!”

His voice thundered.

The students’ blood boiled. Eyes red, fists clenched.

Dantai Xuan walked among the ten selected champions, patting their shoulders one by one.

They were Great Xuan’s future.

They fought for honor—for the Academy!

---

Beiluo City,

Perched atop towering Beiluo Peak.

Luo Cheng sat cross-legged before the city gate, aura deep and steady.

Peak Internal Organs—he had grown even stronger.

Suddenly he opened his eyes.

On the horizon, a figure approached at terrifying speed.

Immense pressure made Luo Cheng's breath hitch.

Then he saw the newcomer clearly and relaxed, a smile spreading across his face.

A woman in fiery red robes stood below the gate, carrying a little girl and a small yellow dragon.

Long time no see, Ni Yu.

---

The stage was set: Beiluo City.

The once-world-shaking city became the center of attention once more.

From Wolong Ridge's Nine Prisons Secret Realm,

Many paused their training. Jing Yue with Heaven-Span Sword on his back, Nie Shuang—now brawny and bronze-skinned—strode out with big steps.

Nie Changqing emerged from seclusion as well.

Together with Jing Yue and Nie Shuang, they returned to Beiluo.

Not just them—

Every major family, every sect, even Tianyuan forces sent experts rushing to Beiluo.

The city opened its gates wide, welcoming all.

Even without White Jade Capital overhead, Beiluo's confidence remained unshakable.

Lü Mudui arrived, showing his trademark gap-toothed grin.

Lü Dongxuan, Xie Yunling, and Hua Dongliu—the representatives of the Hundred Schools era—came too. Mo Beike had once sought their legacies; the Academy students now trained in those very arts.

They had to see this battle.

After the silence following Buzhou Peak, the world was lively again.

Three days later.

Western plains outside Beiluo City—

Dust clouds rolled.

Hooves thundered like judgment day.

Overlord rode at the front on his black-maned steed, mane whipping like dark lightning splitting the earth.

Behind him: Xu Chu and the ten chosen warriors.

Further back: hundreds of Western Liang iron riders come to cheer, disciplined and burning with fighting spirit.

Northern road—

Carriage wheels creaked with restrained excitement.

Inside, Academy students in scholarly robes sat in tense silence, awaiting battle.

Dantai Xuan's imperial carriage led the way.

Xuanwu Guards rode escort, no less imposing.

One from the west, one from the north.

After one full year,

Great Xuan Academy and Western Liang Xiang Family army finally collided at Beiluo.

Even before meeting, their unyielding convictions clashed like invisible sparks across the city—west against north.

The fire was lit.

The showdown had come.

Chapter 338: The Rotten Axe Handle Endgame, Birth of a Yin Spirit!

While the eyes of the entire cultivation world were fixed on Beiluo City,

Beyond Dongyang Prefecture, in the boundless Vast Sea,

On a solitary island,

Before a thatched hut, a withered figure sat motionless. His vitality seemed on the verge of extinction, so faint it could vanish at any moment—like an ancient man whose lifespan had run dry.

Yet within that frail body surged a terrifying power brimming with boundless life.

This was where Du Longyang had entered death seclusion.

For over half a year, he had sat here unmoving.

In truth, he had been a hair's breadth from breakthrough the entire time.

But that single hair's breadth had cost him countless attempts and endless effort.

Time after time, he failed.

Still, he never gave up.

His Fifth-Grade Sequence Dao Intent—“Valiant Spear Intent”—swirled around him, born after conquering his inner demons. It wasn’t the strongest, but Du Longyang was proud of it.

Once the “world’s number one spear” who lacked confidence,

Now he believed utterly in the spear he wielded.

Rumble...

The sky changed.

Thick clouds rolled in. The sea’s weather turned like a woman’s mood—sunny one moment, thunderous the next.

Lightning cracked across the heavens, thunder echoing for thousands of li.

Rain poured down, draping the island in a hazy veil.

Cold droplets hammered Du Longyang’s body.

He did not move.

He had endured this countless times.

His mind sank inward, again and again assaulting the barrier.

In his heart, a flower bud waited to bloom.

He would make it blossom in all its glory.

Suddenly,

His closed eyes snapped open.

A Go game surfaced in his mind—the game he had played against Young Lord Lu before entering seclusion.

That single game had given him endless enlightenment.

His consciousness seemed to leave his body.

He saw an immortal island rising from the Vast Sea, shrouded in dense immortal qi.

Heart trembling, Du Longyang stood uncontrollably.

In the storm, amid roaring thunder, he walked step by step toward that immortal island, black spear gripped tight—the source of his courage.

The thunder gradually faded.

At last, he stepped onto the island.

All sound of thunder vanished as if erased.

Birdsong and swaying grass filled the air. Lush green blades danced, releasing fresh fragrance.

The scent of earth thrummed with vitality.

A world bursting with life.

Du Longyang inhaled deeply, feeling body and soul both transforming.

He looked back—the Vast Sea was gone, replaced by endless gray mist.

No way back?

Then onward up the mountain!

Spear in hand, he climbed with carefree strides.

“Spiritual mountains abound in beauty; empty waters and mists entwine.”

Halfway up, his steps faltered.

An ancient pine twisted along the slope—needles dense, branches like coiling dragons, full of vigor.

But the tree was not what stopped him.

Beneath the pine sat a stone table and benches.

And on those benches—two figures!

One in flowing white robes, a handsome young man.

Opposite him, a black-robed figure wreathed in oppressive demonic qi.

A Go board was carved into the stone table.

The white-robed youth and the demonic black figure were locked in fierce play.

Du Longyang approached, curiosity burning.

He tried to see their faces, but both were blurred, impossible to discern.

So he looked at the board instead.

One glance, and his mind was sucked in.

The white-robed youth placed stones gently—like a refined, jade-like gentleman.

The black-robed player was vicious and domineering, every move carrying destructive force, as if trying to tear the white dragon apart.

White built a massive dragon; black drew sword and slaughtered it without hesitation.

Du Longyang forgot to breathe.

Each clack of stone on stone felt like watching two supreme experts trade earth-shattering blows.

**BOOM!**

Just as the game neared its end,

The white-robed youth chuckled lightly and vanished.

The black figure dissolved into demonic qi and soared into the clouds.

Pine needles drifted down, settling on the board—leaving only a broken endgame behind.

Wind whispered through the branches.

Du Longyang jolted awake, gasping.

He was drenched in cold sweat.

Only then did he notice—his beard had grown long and ragged, reaching his chest.

The black spear in his hand was covered in rust spots, as if centuries had passed.

“This...”

One moment of watching the game had felt like a thousand years!

Suddenly,

An immense pulling force seized him.

His mind felt ready to explode.

The immortal island vanished.

Bearded and soaked, Du Longyang collapsed unconscious.

When he opened his eyes again,

He was back before the thatched hut, rain still pounding down.

He stood slowly, robes plastered to his skin.

In the distance, the giant whale's tail flicked, stirring waves as it carried the misty immortal island away and disappeared...

Something shattered within Du Longyang's mind.

The mutated Nascent Soul within him unleashed boundless energy.

That energy condensed into lotus petals.

Wave after wave of Valiant Spear Intent hammered the petals.

The Dao Lotus bloomed.

A Yin Spirit was born.

Du Longyang stood before the hut, heart calm as still water.

---

Two white trails sliced across the Vast Sea.

Prince Tianxu and Ye Shoudao sped through the air.

An island soon appeared before them.

Moments ago, they had sensed a colossal shift in aura.

Rushing over, they exchanged a stunned glance in the storm.

“Du Longyang is breaking through.”

Ye Shoudao’s empty sleeve flapped in the wind.

“First of the Three Divine Realms... Yin Spirit Realm!”

Prince Tianxu clicked his tongue, envy flashing across his face.

Sure enough,

Before they could draw close, a terrifying presence swept outward.

The rain was forced back.

With the island at its center, the sea itself was pressed down—revealing a radiant lotus blooming in the void!

“It appeared! The Dao Lotus Young Lord Lu spoke of!”

“The Yin Spirit Dao Lotus!”

Ye Shoudao sighed in awe.

Du Longyang... had succeeded.

---

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

Lu Ping'an leaned back in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, eyes half-closed, fingers tapping the armrest.

“Yin Spirit Dao Lotus, Nine Steps of Yang Spirit...”

“The first Three Divine Realm cultivator has finally emerged.”

But his brows soon furrowed.

“I thought Infant Transformation was the limit of Mid Martial... apparently not.”

“Du Longyang broke through to Yin Spirit without triggering heaven’s shackles. Infant Transformation is not the ceiling after all...”

He closed his eyes.

The system panel appeared in his mind.

Host: Lu Ping’an

Title: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

Qi Refinement Layer: 5 (Progress: 358,045 / 1,000,000 wisps)

Seeing the sudden jump of 100,000 wisps, Lu Ping’an’s heart skipped.

One Yin Spirit cultivator granted him 100,000 wisps—a pleasant surprise.

But creating even one was insanely difficult.

Du Longyang had only succeeded thanks to extraordinary luck and that final push from the immortal island endgame.

The Empress, Prince Tianxu—they had touched the threshold, but without ten or twenty years, they had no hope.

Ye Shoudao might be faster, but still nowhere near Du Longyang's speed.

This was already Lu Ping'an secretly opening a back door for him.

"To reach Layer 6, I need at least ten Yin Spirit cultivators..."

That would take time.

In the short term, finding ten people capable of stepping into the Three Divine Realms was impossible.

Lu Ping'an opened his eyes and sighed.

It sounded simple, but execution was brutal.

“As expected... I still have to count on those big fish lured by the Buddha seed bait.”

He looked up.

Suddenly, faint lines flickered in his eyes.

His gaze pierced endless clouds, seeing beyond the world.

A continent of unimaginable size collapsed the void as it drifted closer, radiating oppressive might.

Atop that continent,

A white-robed monk floated in the air,

Gazing serenely at a faintly glowing land in the distant void—Wuhuang.

---

Beiluo City,

Focus of the entire cultivation world.

Great Xuan Academy students entered the field.

Western Liang Xiang Family troops arrived at the same moment.

The anticipated clash at the gates never happened.

Overlord remained cold and silent.

Dantai Xuan smiled and exchanged a few words with him.

Both sides entered the city peacefully.

Lu Changkong was absent; Beiluo was currently governed by the father-son duo Luo Yue and Luo Cheng.

They led everyone to the martial training grounds without fear.

Ni Yu, representing the Young Master, tried her best to act mature and solemn.

If she weren't wearing a big black wok on her back, she might have pulled it off.

Little Yinglong yawned lazily atop her head.

The Empress watched from the sidelines, smiling warmly at Ni Yu's performance.

"Let both sides take the field."

Ni Yu announced with a chubby, serious face.

Ordinary cultivators felt the weight of White Jade Capital's name and nodded respectfully.

But those who knew her—Nie Changqing, Nie Shuang, and others—couldn't help smirking.

This girl... really putting on airs now.

Outside the grounds, figures from every major family and sect gathered.

Even Tang Xiansheng had hurried from the Southern Prefecture, protected by Southern Prefecture troops, watching from afar.

Overlord sat with several hundred Xiang Family iron riders in the west, murderous aura thick enough to darken the sky.

Dantai Xuan sat in the north with the rest of the Academy students and Xuanwu Guards, equally solemn.

Mo Beike, Xie Yunling, Lü Dongxuan, and other Hundred Schools representatives gathered together, chatting and laughing.

The Dragon Blood Army maintained order.

After all, Beiluo was where White Jade Capital had risen.

No one—Tianyuan or Wuhuang—dared cause trouble here.

Ni Yu surveyed the crowd with practiced gravitas and nodded like a veteran.

“By the Young Master’s command, I oversee this wager between Great Xuan Academy and the Xiang Family army.”

“The victor shall receive the Young Master’s reward.”

As she spoke, three purple spirit crystals appeared in her hand, blazing with dazzling light.

The moment they emerged, everyone’s breathing turned ragged.

“Purple spirit crystals... only obtainable from the Third Prison Gate!”

“Each one can yield priceless treasures!”

“And these are personally given by Young Lord Lu—they’re guaranteed to produce something extraordinary!”

The crowd went mad.

No one expected such rewards.

Young Lord Lu's crystals might even contain Dao Stele comprehension chances!

Back then, Mo Tianyu had drawn a Fourth-Grade Sequence Dao Intent from one!

Both Overlord and Dantai Xuan froze, then locked eyes, sparks flying.

Purple spirit crystals... the ultimate prize.

The air between them crackled with competitive fire.

Ni Yu was very satisfied—see? That's the Young Master's prestige.

She put the crystals away and took out a small brocade pouch.

"Within this pouch are the rules set by the Young Master himself."

The atmosphere, already feverish from the crystals, instantly stilled.

Overlord and Dantai Xuan both frowned.

Mo Beike's heavy eyelids twitched—he knew there would be rules.

Jiang Li leaned forward to listen carefully.

Ni Yu opened the pouch.

BOOM!

A mighty aura shot skyward, exploding into glowing characters that formed the rules for all to see.

“This contest shall consist of three rounds. Best of three wins.”

“First round: Individual battles. Each side sends three champions. One-on-one. First to two victories wins the round.”

“Second round: Team battle. Full group clash. One match decides the winner.”

“Third round: Kill count battle.”

“Win two out of three rounds to claim overall victory.”

The characters hung in the air for a long time before slowly fading.

The rules stunned everyone.

Overlord’s brow arched.

These rules... blatantly favored the Xiang Family army?

“Didn’t Young Lord Lu favor the Academy? Why set rules that clearly benefit the army?”

“The Academy is doomed. Those students have never tasted true bloodshed. How can they compare to battle-hardened soldiers?”

“This is unfair! The rules completely favor Xiang Family!”

“Shh! You want to die? Questioning Young Lord Lu’s fairness?”

The crowd erupted.

Dantai Xuan's heart sank to rock bottom.

On the Xiang Family side, Xu Chu laughed—loud and triumphant.

These rules were made for them!

When it came to war, who could stand against the Xiang Family army?!

Victory was already decided!

Even Overlord's tension eased.

Did Young Lord Lu truly believe his soldiers would lose to a bunch of soft Academy brats in combat?

Best of three?

They might not even need the third round.

Chapter 339: A Game Between Two High Martial Sovereigns

No one dared question rules personally set by White Jade Capital's master, Lu Ping'an—even if they seemed blatantly unfair.

Three rounds: individual battles, team battle, kill-count war.

Best of three decided everything.

Yet anyone with eyes could see—these rules were tailor-made for Overlord's Xiang Family army.

Doubt rippled through the crowd.

Did Young Lord Lu actually favor the army over the Academy?

Was he still betting on the military model for raising cultivators?

After the rules were announced, the martial field fell silent, everyone waiting for the showdown to begin.

Xiang Family side: Xu Chu, newly stepped into Heavenly Lock, took command.

Academy side: Jiang Li, silver-armored and stern.

First round—individual battles. Three fighters each, first to two wins.

Both sides huddled to choose their champions.

Though the contestants were “only” Internal Organs realm, the stands were packed with Golden Cores, Heavenly Locks, even Nascent Souls from the Four Great Holy Lands.

To them, this was child’s play.

But the significance was monumental. A contest Young Lord Lu cared about this much? It carried the weight of destiny.

Western stand.

Xu Chu released his spiritual sense like an invisible dome, blocking eavesdroppers.

“Zhao Zixu, you’re up first. Smash them so hard their ancestors feel it!”

“I thought Young Lord Lu would favor the Academy—who knew he’d hand us rules like these? This was written for us! If we lose now, I’ll have no face to see the King!”

Xu Chu roared.

The Xiang Family soldiers stood ramrod straight, eyes blazing.

A young man in black armor stepped forward, long spear in hand, sword at his waist.

“Zhao Zixu!” Xu Chu barked. “As a soldier, what is most important when facing the enemy?”

“You may scorn them strategically, but once battle begins—give everything! Underestimating the foe kills you and your brothers!”

Zhao Zixu’s spine straightened like a spear shaft. “YES, SIR!”

Xu Chu clapped in satisfaction.

Eastern stand.

The Academy's mood was heavy.

Jiang Li stood with arms folded, brows knitted.

These rules crushed morale.

He had expected scholarly trials—alchemy, artifact forging, theory.

After all, Young Lord Lu had once openly praised the Academy path.

Yet these rules offered no hope.

“What is Young Lord Lu's true intention?” Jiang Li muttered.

“Everything except the third round feels designed to disqualify someone on purpose...”

He wracked his brain—who among the younger generation had offended Young Lord Lu so badly?

Eventually he gave up thinking.

He turned to the students, expression grave.

“First match—Lu Jiulian, you’re up.”

“You’re our only real chance at a win. Xu Chu will send his strongest to set the tone. Your job is to crush that tone.”

Gasps rippled through the Academy students.

Nine pairs of eyes turned to a youth in lotus-embroidered training robes.

Lu Jiulian stepped forward with a bright, infectious smile that seemed to lift everyone’s spirits.

The monster who had gone from zero foundation to peak Internal Organs in half a year—mostly spent reading in the library, no less.

“Confident?” Jiang Li asked.

Lu Jiulian tilted his head, grinning. “Should be.”

---

**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**

War drums thundered across Beiluo's martial field.

A bare-chested giant swung mallets like thunderclaps; blood boiled just hearing it.

Western gate.

Zhao Zixu strode out in black armor, spear dragging sparks across the ground.

Eastern gate.

Lu Jiulian walked forward like a lotus rising clean from mud—untouched, serene.

“Western Liang — Zhao Zixu.”

Spear point stabbed the earth.

“Great Xuan Academy — Lu Jiulian.”

A polite nod.

Silence.

No more words needed.

Fight!

BOOM!

Zhao Zixu exploded with qi. Spirit armor condensed over his body.

His black spear spun like a drill, tearing air with a shrill scream.

First fighter of Xiang Family—he had to win beautifully.

Three moves. He would end it in three!

He did not underestimate his opponent; from the first instant he unleashed his full power.

---

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

Lu Ping'an lounged in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, hair fluttering in the breeze.

He paid no attention to the contest in Beiluo.

Of course he favored the Academy—but with Lu Julian, his own cheat-code avatar, accidentally enrolled as the Academy's top genius, what could he do?

That kid's talent was guaranteed—he was literally Lu Ping'an's backup body, with perfect cultivation instinct.

Guilt gnawed at him.

But he couldn't exactly announce: "Sorry, my clone can't participate, carry him out chair and all."

That would scream rigged.

So he crafted rules that handicapped Lu Jiulian and tilted toward Western Liang.

Fair play.

As long as Overlord's side planned properly, they still had hope.

After all—there was only one Lu Jiulian.

He set the matter aside.

Something far more important demanded attention.

Beyond Wuhuang, three terrifying auras were closing in fast.

Even after fusing Tianyuan's Origin and ascending to top-tier Mid Martial, Wuhuang still felt fragile before them.

Origin-level fragility.

These three approaching worlds were likely peak Mid Martial—each stronger than the old Tianyuan.

“Three big fish, as expected.”

Lu Ping'an's eyes glinted with amusement.

He had planned to go easy.

But that High Martial Buddha Realm really held a grudge—one dead Buddha seed, and they sent three top-tier hunting parties.

He reached up and slowly drew the Sky-Covering Sword from his crown.

Fine.

He would give them the respect they deserved.

---

Rumble...

In the boundless void,

Wuhuang drifted peacefully.

From three distant directions, three continents tore through emptiness, closing in like predators.

They formed a perfect triangle of pressure.

Wuhuang was large—but dwarfed by these three.

On one continent, a white-robed youth stood smiling, gently spinning a golden compass that radiated strange light.

On another, a towering, muscle-bound giant stood, blood qi so dense each breath could shatter mountains.

On the third—the white-robed monk’s continent.

The moment they neared Wuhuang, all three silently halted their continents.

They looked up, gazes seeming to meet across the void.

“A newborn top-tier Mid Martial... its Origin isn’t even stable yet.”

The youth laughed brightly, playing with his compass.

“But it dared kill the Venerable One’s Buddha seed. This world has no right to exist.”

He glanced at the other two oppressive continents.

“Golden Body Continent and Prajna Continent... all three of the Venerable One’s strongest Mid Martial worlds are here.”

He clicked his tongue, then threw his head back and laughed.

“Guess I’ll move first—biggest reward goes to the quickest.”

Destroying a top-tier Mid Martial world yielded massive profit—spirit stone mines, treasures, and most valuable of all: the Origin fragments and dispersed spiritual energy released upon collapse.

They had clearly done this many times.

The void was vast.

Countless Mid Martial worlds had spawned over eons.

Some were claimed by High Martial powers.

Many were wild.

Wild ones were fat prey.

World Protection Force existed, but it mainly blocked High Martial incursions—between Mid Martial worlds, it was far weaker.

The three sovereigns exchanged smiles across the void.

Their spiritual senses clashed like tidal waves.

Then withdrew.

No need for pleasantries.

They were competitors now.

If necessary, they could cooperate.

But to crush a newborn top-tier Mid Martial? No alliance required.

The youth sat cross-legged in emptiness, compass spinning faster, golden characters blazing.

“Top-tier Mid Martial at most has Infant Transformation. Only by breaking into Spirit Severing does a world truly touch High Martial qualification...”

“First, scout their experts.”

Cautious.

The void birthed too many surprises.

Even though the Buddha seed died here, who knew if a High Martial sovereign backed this world?

Spiritual sense poured into the compass.

Buzz...

The compass expanded, becoming a massive golden star.

A giant swastika blazed at its center.

Golden light swept across Wuhuang like a laser, scanning from one end to the other.

Far away,

The muscle giant of Golden Body Continent grinned, punched out a strand of crimson blood qi toward Wuhuang.

The monk flicked his golden alms bowl.

Light poured down, trying to envelop the entire continent.

All three probed cautiously.

After the time of one incense stick,

The compass shrank.

The blood qi returned.

The alms bowl's light dimmed.

And in all three detection methods appeared the same shocking image:

Du Longyang standing blindfolded on his island, spiritual sense blooming.

The island became a lotus seedpod; petals unfurled in every direction.

Thunder gathered overhead.

The three sovereigns' eyes snapped open, sharp light flashing.

Spiritual sense blooming like petals—

“Spirit Severing Realm?!”

The youth was stunned.

“A newborn top-tier Mid Martial actually birthed a Spirit Severing expert... This world's master must be a heaven-defying genius!”

“But pity—he’s only just broken through and is still undergoing tribulation. Worth noting, but he cannot save this world.”

The youth laughed lightly.

His compass had scanned thoroughly.

One nascent Spirit Severing.

Three Infant Transformation.

Fewer than thirty Nascent Souls.

“Pathetic.”

“Besides that newborn Spirit Severing, the rest are trash. Easy.”

He grinned like sunshine itself.

Scouting complete.

He snapped his fingers.

Time to move—he would reach the world first, take the brunt of the World Protection backlash, and claim the lion's share.

BOOM!

He shot forward, turning into a golden streak that left his continent behind.

Far away, the giant and the monk's expressions changed—this bastard stole a march!

Without hesitation, they too launched.

Crimson and white lights streaked toward Wuhuang.

---

Lu Ping'an watched everything reflected in his eyes.

“Compass, blood qi, alms bowl...”

Probing Wuhuang’s experts?

He frowned, suddenly worried.

“I’m so ridiculously strong—if they detect me, will they turn their continents around and flee overnight?”

But he needn’t have worried.

In all three scans, Lu Ping’an registered as an utterly ordinary Qi Condensation nobody.

So fleeing? Not happening.

“Oh? They’re coming.”

“So decisive. Looking down on me?”

Lu Ping'an raised a brow.

He had been worried they might run.

Instead they charged without hesitation.

He smiled.

A drop of divine demon blood appeared above his palm.

The Sky-Covering Sword floated before him.

He let the blood fall onto the blade.

Spiritual sense surged.

“Sky-Covering Grand Formation—activate!”

With a flick, the sword rose, radiating profound fluctuations.

Earth-tier formation—awakened!

Rumble!

The eight jade talismans orbiting Wuhuang blazed.

Ripples spread; misty fog surged, soon veiling the entire continent in faint gauze.

Lu Ping'an controlled the formation with his mind.

He sensed three terrifying auras racing closer.

Golden light led the charge.

Red and white followed.

Lu Ping'an's lips curved.

So eager?

Then I'll grant your wish.

With a thought, he deliberately slowed the formation's full deployment by a breath.

The golden light—filled with triumphant glee—shot through the gap like lightning and slammed into the World Protection barrier.

BOOM!

The red and white lights arrived a heartbeat later—only to crash into the now fully activated formation.

Sky-Covering Grand Formation spun to life.

Impregnable.

Unbreakable.

Pfft!

Two furious roars exploded in the void.

The muscle giant's body was torn open, explosive blood pouring from countless wounds.

The monk shot backward, blood at the corner of his mouth.

Giant and monk locked eyes—shock flashing.

“Such a terrifying defensive formation!”

“This world definitely has a High Martial sovereign backing it...”

They sucked in cold breaths.

This meant...

They had become pawns in a game between two High Martial sovereigns.

But then they turned to where the golden light had vanished...

Their cheeks twitched.

What do we do about that guy?!

Chapter 340: A Simple, Pure, and Utterly Perfect Tool

Beiluo City Martial Field

A howling gale whipped across the arena, ripping the air with sonic booms.

Zhao Zixu—Xu Chu’s prized protégé—was a peak Internal Organs cultivator with monstrous talent and combat prowess, forged with endless spirit stones.

Normally, you saved your strongest for last.

But these rules had put Xu Chu completely at ease.

If it were any other kind of contest, he might worry.

But pure combat?

The Xiang Family army feared no one.

So he threw his ace straight into the first round, utterly unafraid of any sacrificial plays from Jiang Li.

And sure enough—

The fight detonated the moment the drum stopped.

The stench of gunpowder was thick. Both sides were giving everything; this wasn't just a match, it was proof of whose path was superior.

No one could afford to lose.

“Zhao Zixu, first battle is yours—show them our pride!”

Xu Chu's roar still echoed in his ears.

Zhao Zixu's eyes narrowed. Spirit armor clanged into existence. His black spear whipped forward like a dragon striking, tearing the air with a vicious shriek.

Three moves.

He would end it in three.

Yet—

First thrust—empty.

The spear stabbed the ground, sparks exploding.

Lu Jiulian drifted backward as lightly as a lotus leaf on water, a slender sword appearing in his hand—his chosen weapon from the Academy.

The entire field went dead silent.

Even the war drums ceased.

Only the flash of sword and spear remained.

Lu Jiulian activated his own spirit armor. His aura was every bit as ferocious.

Peak Internal Organs—equal realm!

Gasps erupted from the stands.

The gap was obvious.

Zhao Zixu was already a young man; Lu Jiulian was still a boy.

Same realm, but the difference in age made Zhao Zixu look mediocre by comparison.

Of course, talent debates meant nothing.

Victory did.

Zhao Zixu felt no mercy just because his opponent was younger.

One miss—he didn't panic. His battle experience was forged in blood long before the cultivation era arrived.

He closed the distance in a flash, spear spinning, black light hidden and deadly.

Boom!

Lu Jiulian floated away again, light as a feather.

Zhao Zixu pressed relentlessly, another thrust—this kid was getting bullied and loving it.

Xu Chu laughed from the sidelines, pounding his thigh.

Done. This fight was in the bag.

On the Academy side, every student held their breath for Lu Jiulian.

Even Jiang Li's fists were clenched—Lu Jiulian was young, his combat experience lacking...

"It's over."

Nie Changqing shook his head from the spectator seats, eyes sharp with veteran insight.

Not just him—Overlord and every Nascent Soul present had already seen the outcome.

Internal Organs battles lacked the spectacle of Heavenly Lock or Golden Core, but the danger was no less.

“Plenty of aggression, but his control over power is crude,” Overlord commented, shaking his head.

And as the words left his mouth—

The tide turned in an instant.

Lu Jiulian drew his sword.

Calm, almost indifferent.

The blade tapped the spear shaft.

An explosive force surged through the weapon—Zhao Zixu’s tiger’s mouth split open, blood spraying.

Shock flashed across Zhao Zixu's face.

He roared, spinning mid-air, drawing the longsword at his waist.

Clang clang clang!

A furious flurry—over a dozen exchanges in the blink of an eye.

Lu Jiulian's sword qi bloomed like lotus petals in all directions.

Zhao Zixu's face flushed crimson. His spirit armor was pierced in several places, blood blooming like flowers.

His body was hurled backward, smashing into the ground and carving a long furrow.

Lu Jiulian landed softly, expression calm beyond his years.

First duel—decided.

Dead silence.

Only ragged breathing echoed above the field.

Xu Chu stared dumbly at Zhao Zixu lying in the dirt.

His fists clenched so hard they creaked.

Behind him, the Xiang Family soldiers were in disbelief.

How... did they lose?!

Zhao Zixu was their strongest!

Lu Jiulian looked at the fallen warrior without joy.

In the distance, Academy students cheered wildly.

Jiang Li remained calm.

What was there to celebrate? They had won one round. The next two were basically hopeless.

Enjoy it while it lasts.

Lu Jiulian himself sighed—he already knew how this would end.

He was just one person, after all.

Zhao Zixu was carried off the field. His physical wounds were light.

The real injury was to his pride—he had planned to crush Lu Jiulian in three moves, only to be crushed himself.

Same realm, yet utterly dominated.

That kind of mental devastation was hard to recover from.

“He’s... too perfect.”

“His control over strength, the precision of his spiritual energy output... he’s inhuman.”

Zhao Zixu nearly sobbed the words.

“Commander... I failed you. I’m sorry!”

Xu Chu patted his shoulder.

The Academy wasn’t as simple as they thought.

That first loss nearly crushed Xiang Family morale.

But the commander was Xu Chu—the madman who once charged the Peacock Kingdom’s capital swinging spiked iron balls.

“Snap out of it!”

“Two more fights—give me everything!”

“You are soldiers! Show me your blood!”

His roar reignited the fire in their veins.

The second Xiang Family fighter dragged his blade across the ground, screeching metal on stone.

The pressure on him was immense—if he lost, the entire individual round was gone.

Jiang Li hesitated, then sent out his second student.

The boy was beaming—Lu Jiulian had made it look easy. In sparring, he had always traded evenly with the friendly Lu Jiulian.

So in his mind, the Xiang Family army was nothing special.

He stepped onto the field full of confidence.

The fight began—and ended fast.

Jiang Li pursed his lips and exhaled.

The Academy side fell silent.

The overconfident student was brutally dismantled by a Xiang Family soldier who fought like a starving wolf.

The individual round was dragged to a third duel.

Unexpectedly, the third fight was fierce.

The Academy sent a student who majored in hidden weapons—all self-forged.

He dragged the battle out for half an hour.

In the end, he ran out of projectiles and was closed in on—chest caved in by a blood-soaked Xiang Family warrior.

Individual round: Xiang Family victory.

Xu Chu finally relaxed.

If they had lost the first round, he wouldn't have had the face to see Overlord again.

Zhao Zixu's defeat had been a shock.

The Academy had its own monster.

"Second round—team battle... this won't be easy."

Xu Chu frowned as the individual round ended.

Zhao Zixu's wounds were already healed—common healing pills were plentiful now, thanks to pill formulas from the Nine Prisons and Tianyuan refugees.

"Zhao Zixu, in the team battle the Academy will center everything around that Lu Jiulian. Your only job—pin him down."

"As soon as it starts, split their formation and drag Lu Jiulian away. Everyone else—handle his teammates. Aside from him, the rest are average. Execute properly and we win easy."

Xu Chu laid out the plan.

On the other side, Jiang Li was arranging formations on a sand table, arms crossed, a sly smirk forming.

Little Qingniao, hugging her phoenix chick, watched curiously.

Whenever Uncle Jiang got that look, someone was about to have a very bad day.

People who played tactics... had dirty hearts.

Western Liang was in for a rough time.

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Spectator stands.

The Empress lounged lazily beside Ni Yu, actually enjoying the children's fights for once.

A rare moment of leisure in the tense cultivation world.

Suddenly—

Her lazy expression vanished.

She shot to her feet, spiritual sense screaming danger.

“Something’s wrong!”

Without a word to Ni Yu, she vanished in a streak of red.

---

Vast Sea, solitary island.

Du Longyang stood tall, black robes whipping in the wind.

Above, thunderclouds boiled, releasing terrifying pressure.

“Yin Spirit Realm...”

A bitter smile tugged at his lips.

He had finally broken past Infant Transformation.

Once he thought shattering the void meant ascension.

A lie.

But now—he had truly transcended.

His soul felt freed from chains, embracing heaven and earth.

His comprehension of the Origin and his Dao Intent had risen to new heights.

“Young Lord Lu... thank you.”

In the distance,

Ye Shoudao and Prince Tianxu hovered in the air, watching the man radiating oppressive might with complicated expressions.

Jealous? A little.

Happy? Much more.

The four of them—Du Longyang, the Empress, Prince Tianxu, Ye Shoudao—had suffered the greatest scam in history.

They once thought they would never break the Infant Transformation cage.

Now Du Longyang had.

If he could, so could they.

**BOOM!**

The Origin surged.

A thunder pool formed in the sky, unleashing bolt after bolt.

Du Longyang's spiritual sense had multiplied; his spiritual energy was explosive.

With a thought, he calmed the raging sea.

This was the power of a true mighty expert.

He reveled in it.

At the same time, curiosity gnawed at him—what realm had Young Lord Lu reached?

Without Lu's guidance, he would still be lost.

“Young Lord Lu... perhaps he has already reached the Unity of Primordial Spirit?”

Unfathomably deep.

BOOM!

Tribulation thunder was nothing new to him.

With Valiant Spear Intent, he shattered the lightning.

Origin feedback descended; Du Longyang grew ethereal, almost immortal.

Of course—just the usual post-breakthrough ego inflation.

Suddenly,

Du Longyang, eyes closed on the island, felt an utterly terrifying presence.

His eyes snapped open, light exploding within.

Unbelievably, he looked up.

His Yin Spirit sitting atop the Dao Lotus blazed with ultimate radiance.

A heavenly eye seemed to open at his brow.

He gazed into the ninth heaven.

Clouds became transparent.

And he saw—

Beyond the sky, three colossal continents hung like judgment over Wuhuang.

Each radiated invincible might.

Du Longyang's face changed drastically.

Three continents reflected in his eyes like mirrors of the heavens.

“What... are those?!”

His body trembled.

He had glimpsed something beyond comprehension.

Three worlds—each stronger than the old Tianyuan!

One seemed to bleed crimson.

One blazed with golden Buddha light, radiant and serene.

One was etched with massive runes across the sky.

Three worlds that made his soul quake.

And all three radiated pure malice toward Wuhuang.

The joy of entering Yin Spirit vanished.

Now he understood—“the stronger you are, the greater your responsibility.”

“Is it that High Martial Buddha Realm sovereign behind the ascetic?”

Du Longyang clenched his fists, eyes ice-cold with killing intent.

Young Lord Lu had saved Tianyuan.

The one who tried to destroy it was that same sovereign.

And now they had chased the hunt to Wuhuang.

“Why will you not let us go?!”

---

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

Wine rippled in Lu Ping'an's cup.

Above his palm hovered the white Sky-Covering Sword.

He had activated the grand formation, blocking the hulking brute and the monk.

But he had deliberately let the compass-wielding youth through.

Through the formation's vision, he watched the youth resist the World Protection Force.

Runes appeared all over the youth's body, clashing with the barrier.

The sky burned white-hot.

BOOM!

Finally, the youth broke through, smoking but laughing maniacally.

"I made it!"

He was first!

He would claim the lion's share!

After laughing, he closed his eyes, checking his suppressed strength.

“About twenty percent sealed. Acceptable.”

Twenty percent suppression was excellent against a Mid Martial world.

A true High Martial sovereign would be reduced by ninety.

Of course—even one percent of a sovereign’s power would crush him.

“Hm? Why haven’t the brute and the bald donkey arrived?”

He frowned, then shrugged.

“Whatever. First, subdue this world’s master, then slowly devour the Origin.”

He had destroyed plenty of worlds before.

As one of the strongest Mid Martial worlds under that High Martial Buddha sovereign, he had lost count.

Worlds devoured worlds. Eternal law.

He loved watching a world's inhabitants fall into despair.

“After this job, I'll have enough to assault the Soul Emergence realm. Once I reach Emergence, I can ascend to the Venerable One's High Martial Buddha Realm and listen to true High Martial Dao Intent!”

Excitement surged.

He took a deep breath to calm himself.

But he couldn't hide his grin.

He stepped forward, aura exploding without restraint.

Like a demon king descending, a world-ending sovereign.

He wanted the entire world to tremble beneath his pressure.

He loved the feeling of annihilation.

---

Lu Ping'an raised a brow.

"This guy's pretty full of himself."

Watching the youth unleash his aura unchecked, Lu Ping'an tapped the armrest.

The Spiritual Pressure Chessboard appeared.

A piece fell.

Clack.

Crisp and clear.

The aura that should have terrified the world dissipated like smoke before it even touched the continent.

The world remained blissfully unaware.

“This one still has uses. Let Du Longyang test his new strength. And let Ye Shoudao and the others feel the might of a Yin Spirit—might motivate them.”

If Ye Shoudao and company broke through from the pressure, Lu would profit massively.

In his eyes, the youth was decent.

But nothing to fear.

Just a simple, pure—almost adorably excellent—tool.

---

The youth, of course, knew nothing of Lu Ping’an’s plans.

**BOOM!**

With a triumphant laugh that shook the heavens, the youth shot forward, compass in hand, aura blazing.

He streaked toward Du Longyang's island.

In his mind, the newly ascended Spirit Severing expert was undoubtedly this world's master.

Capture Du Longyang, and the world was his.

At this moment, the youth's heart soared.

I came.

I saw.

I conquered!