

Starlit Path 341

Chapter 341: The Methods of the Hundred Schools Era

Vast Sea, solitary island.

Du Longyang stood motionless like an ancient statue, aura restrained and cryptic.

His brows were tightly knitted—shock, fury, worry, and helpless bitterness all swirled in his eyes.

From high above, Prince Tianxu and Ye Shoudao, who had been watching his tribulation, exchanged puzzled glances.

“What the hell... is this dog trying to show off?”

Prince Tianxu pinched a tiny flying sword between two fingers and asked Ye Shoudao, frowning.

They had dreamed of reaching the Three Divine Realms their whole lives. Why was Du Longyang acting like the world was ending the moment he broke through?

Who was he performing for?

Ye Shoudao shook his head. Something felt off.

“With City Lord Du’s personality, he wouldn’t fake it... Breaking through to the Three Divine Realms must have let him see something we can’t.”

“Something terrifying.”

Ye Shoudao’s mind worked fast.

Du Longyang had looked up at the sky earlier, eyes filled with shock and rage.

There had to be a secret hidden beyond the clouds.

“No way,” Prince Tianxu insisted, swinging his little sword seriously. “He’s just flexing in front of me to look cool!”

Ye Shoudao ignored him.

Suddenly—

His empty sleeve fluttered as if caught by a terrifying gale.

His expression changed—pure shock.

He whipped his head toward the heavens.

RUMBLE!

A second sun seemed to ignite in the sky.

“What is that?!”

Ye Shoudao’s voice trembled.

“Another sun?” Prince Tianxu blinked, confused.

Then his face drained of color.

“No... there’s already one sun!”

BOOM!

An overwhelming aura detonated high above.

Laughter rolled like endless thunder, shaking heaven and earth.

The pressure warped space itself.

“Who goes there?!”

Ye Shoudao and Prince Tianxu unleashed their auras in unison, staring upward.

The golden light faded, revealing a figure beneath the blazing false sun.

A youth in fitted robes, cradling a compass etched with strange, unreadable runes.

“Who are you?!” Prince Tianxu shouted, heart pounding at the suffocating pressure.

“Me?”

The youth's smile was carved perfection.

He looked down at Prince Tianxu like a hunter who had already won.

“Fu Tianluo, Lord of Tianluo Continent. Just passing by—thought I'd pay a friendly visit.”

His spiritual sense pulsed; in an instant, his words synced with their language.

“Tianluo Continent?!”

Ye Shoudao and Prince Tianxu's minds reeled.

An invader from another world?!

Fu Tianluo's smile widened as his gaze slid past them to the black-robed spearman on the island below.

“Well, well... speak of the devil.”

His smile vanished.

He turned into a streak of golden light and dove straight for Du Longyang.

“STOP!”

Ye Shoudao roared.

Du Longyang was still basking in Origin feedback—any interruption could have disastrous consequences.

He drew his blade—mind, body, and spirit fused into one colossal slash that threatened to split the heavens.

But Fu Tianluo paused mid-dive.

Golden runes crawled across his finger as he pointed casually.

Crack...

Ye Shoudao's blade shattered like glass.

“A little weak.”

Fu Tianluo glanced at him.

“Mere Infant Transformation...”

Golden runes spiraled around his feet.

BOOM!

Afterimages blurred.

He reappeared right in front of Ye Shoudao.

That golden finger thrust downward.

Ye Shoudao’s instincts screamed death.

He raised his black blade across his chest.

Pfft!

The blade was pierced clean through.

A beam of golden energy exploded out his back.

Ye Shoudao froze—then plummeted into the sea, sending up a towering wave.

Shwick shwick shwick!

Sword qi screamed in.

Fu Tianluo tilted his head—just half a beat too slow.

A single strand of hair was sliced off.

He caught it, watching the glossy strand sparkle.

His smile disappeared entirely.

He looked up at Prince Tianxu far away.

Prince Tianxu sat cross-legged in the air.

A wooden box lay open before him—rows of tiny swords neatly arranged.

He flicked a finger.

Sword after sword shot out like plucked strings, growing massive mid-flight.

“Cut!”

Prince Tianxu roared.

Enormous blades slashed down.

Golden runes spun rapidly in Fu Tianluo’s pupils, forming a spherical golden shield.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Every sword struck the barrier and shattered harmlessly.

Fu Tianluo's face turned ice-cold.

"You dared cut a single hair?!"

He slammed his palm onto the compass.

Click click click...

Gears turned inside.

Countless runes crawled up his arm.

He struck toward Prince Tianxu.

BOOM!

A colossal golden palm, bathed in Buddhist chants, expanded in the sky.

Prince Tianxu hurled every remaining sword.

All exploded on contact.

The golden palm tore forward unstoppable.

Air itself screamed and shattered.

Prince Tianxu smelled death.

This youth was far beyond Infant Transformation!

Suddenly—

His trembling body stilled.

The terrifying pressure was blocked.

Du Longyang in black robes now hovered before him.

One-handed, spear raised, holding back the golden palm.

The shaft bent dangerously under the force.

Yet Du Longyang's face remained calm.

“Sent by that Buddha from the High Martial Buddha Realm, I presume?”

His voice was flat.

“Oh? You even know about the Venerable One.”

Fu Tianluo laughed.

“So the one who destroyed the Buddha seed really was you.”

“You’re the lord of this plane who dared defy him.”

He had no doubt.

Only the plane lord could be the strongest.

If the lord wasn’t the strongest, what was the point?

So—subdue him, and the world was his.

Though both were Spirit Severing...

Fu Tianluo’s smile returned.

He would show Du Longyang the gap between Spirit Severing cultivators.

The Empress shot through the Yinglong Dragon Gate, emerging from the Red Dragon Gate.

The Nascent Soul guarding it paled at the sight of her.

He opened his mouth to greet her—

She ignored him completely and blasted toward the Vast Sea.

The guard blinked in confusion.

Buzhou Peak.

Zhulong sat on a bluestone slab, breathing in what seemed like primordial chaos energy.

Her long lashes fluttered.

She turned her flawless face eastward—toward the Vast Sea.

An extremely powerful and terrifying aura had erupted there.

“Invader?”

Her brows furrowed.

She stood gracefully, bamboo flute tucked at her waist.

After a moment’s thought, black hair dancing in the wind, she stepped into the Dragon Gate.

She emerged from the Red Dragon Gate.

The guarding Nascent Soul froze.

He stared at the blindfolded girl.

The Demoness of Buzhou Peak!

Why was she back in Dongyang?!

Zhulong paid him no mind and walked straight out.

Far away, the Red Dragon—who had just failed another evolution attempt and was licking its wounds—felt Big Sis’s aura and spiraled over instantly.

Zhulong turned her closed eyes toward it.

“If only you were as slick as Little Qing.”

The Red Dragon let out a low, wronged roar.

Zhulong said nothing more.

She mounted the dragon and shot toward the Vast Sea.

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

“Zhulong’s coming too.”

Lu Ping'an smiled. "Good. Perfect sparring partner."

"A real Spirit Severing expert doesn't come along every day."

In his eyes, the youth was nothing but a tool—a very useful one.

A whetstone for Zhulong, Du Longyang, and the others.

"Let's hope he doesn't disappoint me."

Lu Ping'an leaned back in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, chin on his hand, voice soft.

Outside Wuhuang Continent.

The hulking brute and the white-robed monk had returned to their continents, frowning deeply.

That formation was clearly set by a High Martial sovereign.

They had stumbled into a clash between two High Martial powers.

What now?

In a game between sovereigns, pawns like them could be discarded at any moment.

But they couldn't just leave.

They had seen the Buddha lotus light from the destroyed seed.

Ignoring the Venerable One's command meant courting death.

"This is too damn hard..."

Both sighed.

Yet neither turned away.

“That formation was placed by a High Martial sovereign, but our probes showed no one beyond early Spirit Severing inside.”

“The sovereign isn’t here—just left the formation.”

“Maybe this world has some incredible treasure?”

Their eyes met across the void.

Their theory made sense.

Why else would two High Martial Buddha Realm sovereigns fight over it?

The moment they thought of treasure, they remembered Fu Tianluo—who had already slipped inside.

Only one newborn Spirit Severing expert in there.

Fu Tianluo would crush him.

If Fu Tianluo claimed whatever treasure the sovereigns were after...

He would surpass them.

Unacceptable.

Both grew restless—they had to break through the formation.

Beiluo City Martial Field.

After the individual round, the crowd grew noisy again.

Soon—the team battle began.

Ten versus ten.

The field was vast, plenty of room for formations.

Zhao Zixu stepped back onto the stage, spear in hand, emotions turbulent.

He looked across.

Lu Jiulian was surrounded by layers of Academy students.

As expected—their entire plan revolved around him.

The mere thought of Lu Jiulian made Zhao Zixu's chest tighten.

A perfect human being—no flaws in cultivation.

How could such a person exist?!

But his mission was simple: keep Lu Jiulian occupied.

Ni Yu announced the start.

The atmosphere sharpened instantly.

Ten Xiang Family soldiers in clanging armor marched forward.

“KILL!”

They charged!

Zhao Zixu shot forward like the wind, spear on his back.

He would wash away his earlier shame!

ROAR!

Flames burned in his eyes.

His spear thrust forward, unstoppable, straight for Lu Jiulian.

The Academy students moved to block.

“Brothers, cover me!”

Several Xiang soldiers overtook him, shielding his advance.

Zhao Zixu saw only Lu Jiulian.

Outside the field, Xu Chu clenched his fists, grinning as Zhao Zixu broke through.

“Done.”

“Pin Lu Jiulian, and this round is ours.”

Perfect execution.

He glanced at Jiang Li—sure enough, the man looked grim.

Overlord smiled too.

Zhao Zixu charged straight for the heart, unshaken by his earlier loss.

Good seed.

The worst outcome would have been a mental scar.

Dantai Xuan buried his face in his hands.

It's over...

Once Lu Jiulian was tied down, the others would be picked apart.

This team battle was lost.

"One year of effort... gone."

Mo Ju gently waved his feather fan.

"Your Majesty, it's not over yet. General Jiang is a master of military tactics. Whatever Xu Chu can see, Jiang Li saw three moves ago."

Everyone believed the Academy was finished.

Lu Jiulian was pinned.

The remaining Xiang Family soldiers closed in like butchers raising cleavers.

A one-sided slaughter seemed imminent.

Victory tilted heavily toward Western Liang.

These rules were simply too unfair.

But then—

“Ha ha ha... Jiang Li, you sly bastard. To think he dug up such an ancient trick!”

“I’d nearly forgotten this technique existed. Never thought I’d see it shine again.”

“Old Mo brought all our Hundred Schools legacies into the Academy. Magnificent.”

“Though not long has passed, the cultivation world has forgotten the era of the Hundred Schools... and that there once existed a school called the Yin-Yang School.”

Mo Beike, Lü Dongxuan, Xie Yunling, and the other ancients of the Hundred Schools stroked their beards and laughed.

Only they saw clearly.

On the field—

Zhao Zixu finally reached “Lu Jiulian.”

He didn’t fight head-on—he knew how terrifying true perfection was.

His job was just to stall.

But if he didn’t attack, Lu Jiulian would.

Because Lu Jiulian was the Academy's only hope.

BOOM!

Spear met sword.

Hm?

Zhao Zixu frowned.

Something was wrong.

This sword... lacked the terrifying pressure from before.

He tested a counterattack.

"Lu Jiulian" blocked everything.

But—

Zhao Zixu's expression changed.

"You're not Lu Jiulian!"

He roared, spear lashing out—three blinding thrusts.

"Lu Jiulian" gave a strange smile, then spat blood, sent flying several meters.

Zhao Zixu stepped forward three times, spear at the throat, and ripped.

A human-skin mask came off in his hand.

Beneath—pale, terrified youth.

"Yin-Yang School's disguise art?!"

Zhao Zixu's mind exploded.

And in the distance—

Yes, it was a one-sided slaughter.

But the ones being slaughtered were the Xiang Family soldiers.

The real Lu Jiulian carved through them like a god of war.

One step, one sword, one defeat.

Nine strokes.

Nine Xiang Family soldiers collapsed, combat capability gone.

Lu Jiulian turned, removed his own mask.

Eight Academy students stood behind him.

All ten stared calmly at Zhao Zixu.

Chapter 342: Some People Just Vanish Mid-Fight

Hundred Schools of Thought — Yin-Yang School!

Many spectators were stunned; others felt a wave of nostalgia.

A school nearly forgotten by time had just flashed its fangs once more.

Great Xuan Academy truly embodied the strengths of all Hundred Schools, gathering every known path of cultivation into one place.

It had to be admired.

Mo Beike had walked the world alone, collecting ancient classics, compiling countless cultivation methods from the jianghu.

Those methods might not be the strongest individually,

but each carried unique potential.

Perhaps that was the Academy's true purpose.

The army raised cultivators for war—simple, brutal, efficient.

The Academy sought to forge a brilliant, diverse cultivation civilization,

to let future generations walk myriad colorful paths.

Maybe... that was Young Lord Lu's vision all along:

a richer, more vibrant cultivation world.

Inside the Academy, students studied pill refinement, artifact forging, talisman crafting—every branch had its devotees.

Dantai Xuan had poured immense resources into making it flourish.

Overlord fell silent.

Outside the field, Xu Chu was speechless.

They had seen it clearly.

Lu Jiulian—one step, one defeat. Nine steps, nine Xiang Family soldiers down.

But it wasn't just Lu Jiulian's terrifying dominance.

The other eight Academy students had perfectly supported him.

Arrays, talismans, poisons, hidden weapons—every auxiliary art amplified Lu Jiulian's strength to its absolute peak.

That was why he could steamroll a nine-man military formation.

On the field,

only Zhao Zixu remained.

The Yin-Yang student he had pinned smiled faintly.

Zhao Zixu's body tensed like ice.

Team battle—only him left.

Lu Jiulian and eight Academy students gazed at him calmly.

Zhao Zixu slowly rose, spear point scraping the ground, eyes burning with unyielding resolve.

The commander's plan had failed.

But Zhao Zixu had not.

“Fight!”

He roared.

Xiang Family spirit: even if only one man remained, never retreat.

His spear shot forth like a dragon—sharp, terrifying, making the Academy students' scalps tingle.

He really was strong—the best of Xiang Family's new blood.

Lu Jiulian's face grew solemn.

He drew his sword and stepped forward.

Seven steps—clashing furiously with Zhao Zixu.

The other Academy students didn't just watch.

One uncorked a gourd; with an incantation, a swarm of venomous spirit insects poured out.

The hidden-weapons student dashed in circles, projectiles erupting from every sleeve and pocket.

Pfft!

Zhao Zixu, locked in desperate combat with Lu Jiulian, began bleeding from dozens of wounds.

Yet he still stood.

Still fought.

“Surrender,” Lu Jiulian said.

Blood dripped from Zhao Zixu’s mouth. He grinned and shook his head.

“I can still fight.”

Lu Jiulian fell silent, but respect flickered in his eyes.

This was the difference.

Soldiers carried a spirit no academy could teach—something eternal.

Lu Jiulian nodded slightly.

So he granted Zhao Zixu a clean end.

Sword became lotus—nine petals bloomed.

Sword qi screamed forth.

BOOM!

Xu Chu charged into the arena, iron balls dragging behind, blocking the sword qi.

“We concede.”

He looked at Lu Jiulian.

Jiang Li stepped in too, solemn.

“All’s fair in war. You lost—you lost.”

“Save it for the third round.”

Xu Chu said.

Jiang Li’s stern face cracked into a smile.

“Deal.”

He turned and led Lu Jiulian and the others off the field.

Team battle: Great Xuan Academy victory.

Gasps and frantic breathing rippled through the stands.

Best of three—now tied 1-1.

Everything came down to the final round.

Kill count.

Young Lord Lu’s rule: kill enemies.

But whose enemies?

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

Lu Ping'an sipped plum wine, fingers resting on the Sky-Covering Sword—core of the grand formation.

The Beiluo contest had ended in a draw.

Originally, his plan for the third round was to throw both sides into the Trial Tower, create a battlefield, and let them rack up kills.

But now...

He looked up, gaze piercing endless clouds to the three oppressive continents looming beyond.

A new idea curved his lips.

Real combat forged people fastest.

The Trial Tower was artificial.

But fighting soldiers from those three continents?

That would temper these kids like nothing else.

With a thought,

the milky-white Sky-Covering Sword pulsed.

Strange ripples spread.

The curtain of cloud and mist around Wuhuang began to churn.

Originally, the formation was absolute—no Spirit Severing, Infant Transformation, Nascent Soul, or Golden Core could enter.

But Lu deliberately created an opening.

Anyone below Golden Core... could now pass through.

Outside Wuhuang,

the grand formation looked like endless misty rain—impenetrable, unfathomable.

The muscle-bound sovereign of Golden Body Continent and the monk of Prajna Continent couldn't read it.

But that didn't stop them from probing.

"Defensive formation only. Rush in blindly and we get counterattacked."

The giant squinted—he had taken the formation's retaliation head-on and bled for it.

That proved it was a High Martial artifact.

With a thought, he bellowed toward his continent.

An Infant Transformation expert shot out, hurtling toward Wuhuang under the giant's guidance.

BOOM!

The formation roared like a storm.

The expert screamed, hurled backward, blood pouring from every pore, golden body cracking.

As expected.

Next—a Nascent Soul.

Even worse.

Directly pulped, only a terrified Nascent Soul fleeing back.

“Even Nascent Soul can't enter...”

The giant's breathing grew heavy.

He kept sending cultivators.

Golden Cores—still blocked.

Then, to his shock, a Foundation Establishment cultivator he tossed in...

vanished into the mist without resistance.

The giant's eyes blazed.

A flaw in the formation!

He had found it!

On Prajna Continent, the monk came to the same realization.

“Below Golden Core unrestricted...”

“We can send those beneath Golden Core to scout.”

But unease gnawed at him.

Such a powerful formation—why leave this obvious hole?

After a moment, the monk smiled.

Perhaps the one who set the formation simply believed anyone below Golden Core was harmless.

Well—any hole was an opportunity!

He looked toward the distant Golden Body Continent.

The giant looked back.

Sparks seemed to fly between their gazes.

The monk formed a lotus mudra and split off a wisp of spiritual sense.

He summoned hundreds of cultivators below Golden Core, picked an utterly ordinary one, and shot the wisp into the disciple's brow.

The disciple's own consciousness was instantly erased; the monk took the body.

He flung out his kasaya robe.

It wrapped the hundred disciples and drifted lazily into the formation.

They vanished inside.

The giant did the same—split a wisp, seized a body, hid it among a hundred weaklings, and sent them in.

If they couldn't break in from outside,

they would blow the formation apart from within.

Du Longyang stared at Fu Tianluo.

Pressure crushed him—he had just entered Yin Spirit and already faced such a monster.

Where was Young Lord Lu?

Someone this strong had appeared—Young Lord Lu couldn't possibly be unaware.

With Lu's power, crushing this youth should be trivial.

Yet Lu did nothing.

What did that mean?

Du Longyang's eyes flashed. Thoughts raced.

Soon, understanding dawned.

He looked across the Vast Sea in every direction.

Fu Tianluo was unleashing his aura freely—yet the world below remained calm.

That meant Lu had known the whole time.

And had suppressed the panic deliberately.

Lu had let this invader in on purpose.

Du Longyang's lips curved into a grin, eyes burning.

“Young Lord Lu... you released him to be our whetstone?!”

Realization ignited his battle intent like wildfire.

How rare was a live Yin Spirit opponent to spar with?

A once-in-a-lifetime chance!

He would not waste Young Lord Lu's kindness!

Fu Tianluo cradled his compass, staring oddly at Du Longyang.

Is this guy insane?

A newborn Spirit Severing daring to look excited facing him?

“Fight!”

Du Longyang roared, battle intent exploding.

Yin Spirit power was ten times Infant Transformation, but the true leap was spiritual sense and control.

BOOM!

One thrust—air itself detonated.

His spear became a roaring black dragon.

The ultimate technique of old Martial Emperor City bloomed in radiant glory.

Pfft!

The sky tore like paper.

Carrying sonic booms, the spear closed in on Fu Tianluo.

“Ha ha ha...”

“Spirit Severing has tiers too, rookie. I’m late-stage. What makes you think you can fight me?”

Fu Tianluo laughed arrogantly.

Indeed—who in this world could challenge him?

“Early, middle, late. I am late-stage Spirit Severing—what do you have?”

He pressed a finger to the compass.

Clang!

Golden runes surged up his arm, blazing.

BOOM!

A colossal golden fist appeared in the sky, smashing into Du Longyang's spear.

Terrifying explosion.

Shockwaves churned the sea.

From the water below, Ye Shoudao—chest pierced, blood pouring—watched wide-eyed.

“So strong... is this Yin Spirit?”

He dragged himself onto a reef, wound slowly closing.

With a groan, he stood on his single arm, blade in hand.

Prince Tianxu floated nearby, swords orbiting him like a storm.

Far away—

Sea exploded.

A red silhouette streaked in.

The Empress had arrived.

The ripples of battle turned her pale.

Above,

Du Longyang fought like a war god.

Fu Tianluo conjured golden rune palms, each strike world-shaking.

After several exchanges, Du Longyang was repeatedly smashed into the sea, sending up towering waves.

Fu Tianluo remained relaxed.

Victory was certain.

The strongest in this world was right in front of him, and he was toying with him.

“Oh, all the Infant Transformations are gathering.”

He spotted the Empress and smiled.

Golden runes spun around him like a tornado of blades, cutting and striking relentlessly.

Du Longyang’s spear became black lightning; Fu Tianluo’s runes became golden thunder.

Du Longyang struggled.

Fu Tianluo toyed with him effortlessly.

He smiled—once he suppressed all the Infant Transformations, the world was his.

Suddenly he looked into the distance.

A crimson tide approached.

The Red Dragon roared, evaporating seawater.

Atop its back stood a graceful blindfolded girl.

Her long lashes trembled as she faced the battlefield—and Fu Tianluo.

“Oh? What a serene, beautiful girl.”

Fu Tianluo’s eyes lit up.

Zhulong’s unique aura captivated him.

Du Longyang burst from the sea, face cold.

Seeing Fu Tianlu ogling Zhulong with obvious lust, his mouth twitched.

Can't hold back anymore.

This guy's death flag is maxed.

If he didn't go all out, his perfect sparring partner might just... disappear mid-fight.

Young Lord Lu was famously protective.

Some people just vanish when they flirt with the wrong person.

Du Longyang roared.

His spear trembled.

Long-suppressed Dao Intent erupted.

One thrust tore the heavens.

Straight at Fu Tianluo.

Fu Tianluo had been staring lustfully at Zhulong.

Suddenly—danger!

His compass spun wildly.

Golden runes condensed into a golden shield before him.

Du Longyang's spear slammed into it.

BOOM!

The air was blasted into a vacuum.

A crack spiderwebbed across the golden shield...

Fu Tianluo stared in disbelief.

He sucked in a cold breath.

“You... comprehended Dao Intent?!”

Chapter 343: Quasi-Saint Artifact

Fu Tianluo’s heart shook as he clutched the compass.

Crack... crack...

Sanskrit runes surfaced on the golden disk, automatically shifting into full defense mode.

Du Longyang’s strike had nearly shattered his inscription shield!

But that wasn’t what shocked him most.

What truly stunned him was the Dao Intent contained in that attack!

“How could you possibly comprehend Dao Intent?!”

“Impossible!”

Fu Tianluo’s pupils contracted. For the first time, he lost his composure.

Dao Intent...

That was a higher-tier power.

High Martial power.

In a Mid Martial world, unless someone was an absolute heaven-defying genius, comprehending Dao Intent was impossible.

Yet soon, his racing heart calmed.

He was, after all, the lord of a supreme Mid Martial world—he quickly regained his cool.

“One-in-ten-thousand chance... and you grabbed it. No wonder this world hasn’t reached supreme Mid Martial yet you’ve already stepped into Spirit Severing.”

“That’s talent for you...”

Fu Tianluo sighed.

He had destroyed countless worlds and met countless monstrous geniuses.

Some had even touched the edges of Dao Intent at Nascent Soul.

In the end, they all died by his hand.

Today, he would kill another Dao Intent possessor.

“So what if you have Dao Intent? It’s ranked by nine grades. In a world of this level, eighth or ninth at best—the boost is negligible!”

Fu Tianluo rolled his neck, killing intent rising.

He could no longer hold back.

Du Longyang's face was grave.

He stared calmly at Fu Tianluo, who had blocked his strongest strike.

He had never expected one spear thrust to finish the fight.

Rumble!

Fifth-Grade Sequence Dao Intent — Valor!

Under its augmentation,

Du Longyang's aura blazed like fire.

His spear swept through the air, rippling space itself.

Boom!

Boom boom!

Dozens of thrusts in succession—all slamming into the same point on Fu Tianluo’s compass shield.

BOOM!

Terrifying force detonated from that single spot.

“Eighth or ninth grade?”

Du Longyang smirked.

Bang!

The spear excelled at penetration.

All that power focused on one point erupted outward.

BOOM!

The air caved inward.

Fu Tianluo's body was hurled into the Vast Sea, the entire ocean surface depressed like a giant bowl.

"My bad—my Dao Intent is Fifth-Grade Sequence."

Du Longyang's black robes whipped in the wind. He turned his head slightly, spear in one hand.

From the sea,

Fu Tianluo shot skyward.

Shock intensified!

Fifth-Grade?!

How could it be Fifth-Grade?!

A Mid Martial world producing Dao Intent was already absurd—Fifth-Grade?!

What kind of heaven-defying genius was this?!

He began to sense something deeply wrong with this world.

“He must die!”

Jealousy burned in Fu Tianluo’s heart.

He had been Spirit Severing for years and only barely touched the edge of Dao Intent—and that was thanks to the Venerable One’s gift.

Yet this guy comprehended it the moment he broke through?!

BOOM!

“Die!”

Fu Tianluo’s eyes turned ice-cold.

The metal compass rang like a bell.

It melted into liquid, flowing over his body and hardening into golden armor.

The once-refined youth transformed into a war general forged for slaughter.

He flung his hand.

Runes lashed the void, forming cold chains.

Du Longyang shifted sideways. Dao Intent rippled outward as he thrust without hesitation.

BOOM!

The clash detonated.

Their battle raged across the Vast Sea.

This time, Fu Tianluo fought with full killing intent.

Every move was lethal.

Ye Shoudao's wounds had healed; the hole in his chest closed completely.

Infant Transformation regeneration was terrifying.

"A wild Yin Spirit..."

"With Young Lord Lu's power, he must have known. He let him in... as a sparring partner?"

Ye Shoudao had the same realization as Du Longyang.

Normal, gradual breakthrough took far too long.

Young Lord Lu had chosen this brutal method to force their growth.

Ye Shoudao raised his blade.

He glanced at the finger-sized hole still piercing it and grinned savagely.

BOOM!

Fifth-Grade Sequence — Heartless Blade Intent!

Slash!

His blade intent threatened to cleave the sea in two.

Kill!

With one arm, robes flapping, he leapt skyward and charged Fu Tianluo without fear.

So what if he was outmatched?!

Only between life and death lay great fortune!

To seek life through death—that was the true heart of a blade master!

Rip!

Du Longyang was sent flying.

Ye Shoudao's blade descended like a cliff.

Fu Tianluo, clad in golden splendor, raised his arm.

Runes stacked into a shield.

Ye Shoudao's full-power strike slammed into it—explosion shaking the heavens.

He hacked like a madman, again and again.

Fu Tianluo's scalp tingled.

With a flick, overwhelming force sent Ye Shoudao flying.

“Dao Intent again?! How is there more Dao Intent? Is it cabbage?!”

“A mere Infant Transformation comprehending Dao Intent?!”

Fu Tianluo trembled.

Bang!

Ye Shoudao crashed into the sea, sending up a wave hundreds of meters high.

Du Longyang roared, spear like a dragon, attacking once more!

He couldn't spare attention for Ye Shoudao's injuries.

But he knew—Ye Shoudao understood this Fu Tianluo was Young Lord Lu's gift.

A wild tool to help them shatter their shackles!

BOOM!

Ye Shoudao burst from the water, soaked, single arm gripping his blade, charging again like a lunatic.

His blade intent fused perfectly with his will.

Even when Fu Tianluo caved in his chest, he kept coming.

“Again!”

He roared.

Drew his blade—water severed, a cliff of ocean!

He closed in—BOOM!

Golden shockwaves.

Ye Shoudao coughed blood.

Du Longyang shouted, thrusting spear after spear to cover him!

Jealousy in Fu Tianluo’s eyes turned tangible.

Du Longyang having Dao Intent was one thing—he could accept that from a Spirit Severing.

But this one-armed swordsman too?!

A measly Infant Transformation?!

Far away,

Prince Tianxu and the Empress watched Ye Shoudao fight like a mad dog.

Their eyes flickered.

They understood.

He fought for breakthrough!

They had been stuck at Infant Transformation too long.

Normal cultivation might never free them.

Now a real Yin Spirit stood before them—a living whetstone.

Even if they died, the fortune between life and death was limitless!

Prince Tianxu couldn't sit still.

He flicked sword after sword.

They grew massive mid-flight.

The Empress roared, red robes billowing.

Silver needles erupted from her back like a pear-blossom storm.

Both unleashed their own Dao Intent!

With Dao Intent amplification, their attacks actually made Fu Tianluo wary.

His face twisted.

“Dao Intent... again...”

“Has Dao Intent become this common?!”

His mind nearly exploded.

Ye Shoudao having it was shocking enough.

Now this half-dead swordsman in the sky too?!

Was this not a normal Mid Martial world but a High Martial one?!

Things only seen in High Martial were casual here?!

“Opportunity! Massive opportunity!”

A flash of inspiration.

He realized why Ye Shoudao, Prince Tianxu, and the others all had Dao Intent.

This world must have an easy way to comprehend it!

His heart raced uncontrollably.

His attacks grew fiercer.

Ye Shoudao was drenched in blood, his remaining arm shaking.

Yin Spirit was too strong—an entirely different tier.

But he refused to give up.

Immense pressure tasted like the edge of death.

He would transform in the abyss—ascend to the extreme!

Du Longyang kept attacking, covering the three while steadily mastering his new power.

“You court death!”

When Fu Tianluo sensed Du Longyang growing more proficient—actually beginning to match him—

He realized they were using him as a sparring dummy!

“You dare?!”

These natives dared treat him like training equipment?!

So what if they had Dao Intent?

He was late-stage Spirit Severing!

Even suppressed by twenty percent, late-stage was late-stage!

His compass spun wildly and shot into the sky.

It expanded—becoming a massive blazing sun.

Buzz...

As it spun,

Du Longyang's expression changed drastically.

A small compass projection appeared above his head, dropping inscription chains.

It sealed and drained his power!

Ye Shoudao, Prince Tianxu, and the Empress were instantly suppressed—their strength falling into deathly stillness.

Fu Tianluo laughed.

The giant compass hovered above him.

“This compass was personally bestowed by the Venerable One of the High Martial Buddha Realm—a quasi-saint artifact! You have Dao Intent? I have a treasure!”

He sneered.

The compass sealed them, siphoning their strength to empower him.

He would only grow stronger.

They would only weaken.

On the sea,

a gentle breeze blew.

Zhulong stood atop the Red Dragon, face tilted toward the sky.

The Red Dragon trembled.

It was only Nascent Soul level—now caught in this tier of battle, it quaked in fear.

Du Longyang roared in fury.

The compass projection above him threatened to lock away all his power.

Quasi-saint artifact?

Du Longyang knew—from the ascetic's words—that above first-grade spirit tools came saint-tier.

Quasi-saint was the terrifying realm between top first-grade and true saint-tier.

Perhaps only Young Lord Lu's combined Phoenix Feather Swords could compare!

Du Longyang couldn't break free.

He was furious.

Powerless.

Dao Intent was strong, but without sufficient force behind it, it was meaningless.

Ye Shoudao's face flushed red as he tried to draw his blade.

Even sealed, he drew anyway.

Pfft!

The backlash exploded inside him.

His body began to crack!

Fu Tianluo sneered, unconcerned.

Playtime over.

So what if they had Dao Intent?

Countless geniuses with Dao Intent had died by his hand!

Suddenly he sensed something and looked down at the sea.

The four sealed by his quasi-saint artifact were no threat.

Yet a faint feeling of danger prickled him.

On the mirror-like sea, the girl stood, robes fluttering.

Her slender, snow-white neck arched upward.

Fu Tianluo, wrapped in golden armor, smiled at Zhulong.

“Pretty girl, behave. After I destroy this world, I’ll take you home.”

He had destroyed many worlds and abducted many stunning women.

Zhulong stood quietly, long lashes trembling.

His words made her frown.

“Now it’s just you. Why struggle?”

Fu Tianluo walked through the air.

Giant compass above, golden armor clanging.

Buzz...

He vanished—teleporting.

Reappearing only three meters from Zhulong.

ROAR!

The Red Dragon bellowed!

Scales bristled as it spewed scorching flame.

Fu Tianluo tilted his head, flicked a finger.

Immense force blasted the dragon away, white waves towering.

“Now it’s quiet.”

“No one left to disturb our little romance.”

He smiled elegantly at Zhulong.

But a low dragon roar sounded again.

The Red Dragon—stubborn as ever—came charging back.

Fu Tianluo’s smile froze.

Face-slapped too fast.

He flicked again, harder.

Scales exploded off the Red Dragon as it was sent flying once more.

Yet moments later—

Red flames burning, it crawled back again.

Like an unkillable cockroach!

“This cursed world—even a worm dares defy me...”

Fu Tianluo’s face twisted.

He raised his hand.

Golden runes formed a disk before his palm.

Energy swelled.

BOOM!

A beam of pure destruction shot toward the Red Dragon.

Where it passed, seawater evaporated instantly.

Fu Tianluo's eyes were cold.

This strike would kill it.

No matter how tenacious—no life could survive absolute suppression!

Hm?

His pupils shrank.

The serene girl had somehow stepped directly into the beam's path.

Wind from the attack whipped her hair wildly.

She raised a delicate fist.

And punched the beam.

“This woman seeks death?”

BANG!

Her tiny fist struck the beam and swung downward.

The energy blast slammed into the seabed.

The entire ocean floor detonated.

Seawater boiled; shockwaves thundered endlessly.

A ring of water pillars shot hundreds of meters into the sky like a cataclysmic storm.

Zhulong stood calmly on the surface.

Wisps of smoke rose from her tender fist.

Fu Tianluo was slightly surprised.

She had blocked his attack.

This girl... was no ordinary person.

Zhulong raised her head, long lashes trembling as she “looked” at him.

Silence.

Only rain-like droplets falling back into the sea.

Fu Tianluo’s brow arched playfully.

Then—

Zhulong moved.

She pointed at the battered but defiant Red Dragon.

Her voice rang clear as pearls on jade:

“This dragon is my little brother.”

...Huh?

Fu Tianluo blinked.

Her eyelids lifted.

The moment Zhulong opened her eyes—

Fu Tianluo felt a bone-deep chill.

An instinctive reaction to mortal danger.

His mind reeled at the absurdity.

This girl... posed a threat to him?!

But then he understood.

Left eye pitch black, right eye blinding white.

Black and white—like yin and yang grinding against each other.

This... was a divine ability!

Fu Tianluo nearly cursed.

With a thought,

his quasi-saint compass unleashed endless runes, wrapping him into a golden sphere of absolute defense.

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

Lu Ping'an leaned back in his Thousand-Bladed Chair.

Lines danced in his eyes as he watched the battle over the Vast Sea.

The instant Zhulong opened her eyes,

he chuckled.

“Using a spirit artifact against a girl? What kind of man are you?”

He murmured.

Then reached toward the Spiritual Pressure Chessboard.

On the sea,

Fu Tianluo exhaled inside his rune sphere.

Zhulong's divine ability had startled him—he had instinctively triggered the compass's ultimate defense.

Against an unknown ability, he took no chances.

Suddenly—

A massive spiritual energy palm appeared out of nowhere in the sky.

It seized the compass.

Crack... crack...

Under overwhelming brute force, the runes shattered.

The entire compass was ripped away, vanishing across the horizon in a flash...

The protective runes collapsed.

Fu Tianluo, now exposed, found himself staring straight into Zhulong's open black-and-white eyes.

He stood there, stunned.

...Where the hell was his compass?!

Chapter 344: Zhulong's Breakthrough — Yin-Yang Millstone

Beiluo City Martial Field

Silence hung heavy.

The rivalry between Western Liang and Great Xuan had not eased; it had only grown sharper.

Both sides had won one round each.

The third and final round would decide the year-long wager.

Kill count.

No one dared question Young Lord Lu's rules, but no one could guess exactly how this "kill enemies" round would work.

Both teams sat in quiet recovery, healing wounds and restoring energy.

No one spoke.

They simply waited.

Overlord sat high on the platform, brows furrowed.

He had never expected the Academy students to perform so brilliantly.

Of course, in raw bloodlust, they still fell short of Xiang Family soldiers.

But Overlord fell into thought.

Lack of bloodlust wasn't a fatal flaw.

Bloodlust could be forged—throw them into enough battles, and survivors would develop that veteran killing aura.

But the diverse cultivation paths the Academy students displayed?

Those were not so easily learned.

Many required innate talent. Choose the wrong path, and you might die without ever achieving anything.

So Overlord quietly acknowledged the Academy's value.

It truly had its merits.

Dantai Xuan had calmed down too.

Winning one round was already far beyond his expectations.

He was content—he had always been a man who knew when to be satisfied.

Immortal fate had slipped through his fingers time and again, yet he had never fallen into despair.

If he weren't content, he would have gone mad long ago.

Dantai Xuan grinned wide, even nodding smugly at Overlord in the distance.

Time passed.

Beiluo remained orderly.

Ni Yu pulled out sugar-coated Body Tempering Pills from her pouch and crunched them like candy.

Little Yinglong on her head gave her a sideways glare of betrayal.

As time wore on,

the third round—kill count—began.

BOOM BOOM BOOM!

War drums thundered.

Every conversation stopped. All eyes turned to the field.

Overlord and Dantai Xuan straightened.

Academy students meditating opened their eyes.

It was time.

Ni Yu, still munching pills, leapt from her chair and landed in the center under countless gazes.

“Third round: kill count...”

Little Yinglong perched on her head as she swept her gaze across the crowd.

She pulled out the brocade pouch Young Lord Lu had given her.

With a tug, jade talismans floated out.

Buzz...

She patted Little Yinglong's tail.

The baby dragon snorted, spiritual sense spreading, activating the talismans.

Light burst forth, weaving into a profound formation.

Misty rain enveloped the entire martial field.

Gasps rose from the stands.

"A formation?!"

"The third round will take place inside this array?"

"Young Lord Lu set this formation himself?"

Many were shocked.

Xie Yunling's eyes blazed.

"Old Xie, can you read it?"

Sword Saint Hua Dongliu knew Xie Yunling's obsession with formations.

Xie Yunling shook his head. "Young Lord Lu's formations are divine—beyond my comprehension."

He sighed in awe.

This misty rain formation was utterly inscrutable.

Formation complete.

Smoke swirled into a vortex around Ni Yu.

She announced:

“Third round: kill count. Simple—the side that kills more enemies wins.”

“These are the Young Master’s rules. Anyone with objections can take it up with him.”

The crowd exchanged speechless glances.

Complain to Young Lord Lu?

That wasn’t complaining—that was suicide!

“Now—both sides send ten people into the formation.”

Her words fell.

The atmosphere sharpened like a blade.

Western Liang side: iron-clad Xiang Family soldiers stood tall, eyes burning with intent.

Killing enemies?

They were born for it!

This round—they had to win!

Academy side: students' emotions soared.

They had mastered the Hundred Schools—they would shine in real combat!

“Perform well. We don't know if the formation is dangerous—stay safe.”

Jiang Li warned solemnly, gaze lingering on Lu Jiulian.

“Protect yourself. You must survive.”

“Your talent is monstrous. Only the living matter.”

Lu Jiulian nodded, stunned.

On the other side, Xu Chu said nothing.

He simply walked past each soldier, patting their shoulders.

When he reached Zhao Zixu, his eyes conveyed encouragement.

“Don’t let one or two losses define you. Trust your spear. Trust your brothers.”

Xu Chu still saw Zhao Zixu as his successor.

Zhao Zixu’s face flushed with resolve.

The earlier defeats had shaken him.

“Go.”

Ten Xiang Family soldiers marched into the misty rain.

Academy students followed.

The fog swallowed both teams.

The formation activated.

Ni Yu shot out with Little Yinglong, landing outside.

RUMBLE...

Above the formation, smoke coalesced into a massive mirror.

Inside, faint images of the third round appeared.

Everyone's hearts clenched.

Overlord, Dantai Xuan, and the others stared in shock.

"Who... are those people?!"

Vast Sea

Fu Tianluo stood dumbfounded.

Where was his compass?!

His quasi-saint artifact compass?!

He had no time to wonder.

Zhulong's attack had already descended.

The moment she opened her eyes, the entire Vast Sea churned.

Black and white intertwined across heaven and earth.

Divine ability!

Fu Tianluo was certain—this was a divine ability!

As lord of a supreme Mid Martial world, he had once listened to a High Martial Buddha sovereign's sermon.

Divine abilities and Dao Intent belonged to High Martial.

Rare enough in Mid Martial.

Some legendary constitutions in High Martial were born with innate divine abilities—capable of slaying above their realm.

Even more terrifying than Dao Intent.

Fu Tianluo never imagined he would encounter one.

BOOM!

His compass was gone—stolen by who-knows-what.

But without it, he was still late-stage Spirit Severing.

He wasn't helpless.

Clack clack clack!

Black and white light exploded.

Runes covered his body.

Fu Tianluo hovered above the sea, smoke curling around him.

The sea boiled.

Zhulong closed her eyes again.

“A divine ability...”

The runes on Fu Tianluo's body fell away like dead leaves.

Cold sweat soaked his back.

Fortunately, the girl wasn't too strong—her divine ability wasn't as terrifying as it could have been.

Still—scared the hell out of him.

“My compass...?”

Only now did he have time to panic about that.

Why had it suddenly vanished?

Was her divine ability “Disarmament”?!

Far away,

the compass disappeared.

Du Longyang instantly broke free, power surging so violently he grunted.

Shockwaves sent water pillars hundreds of meters high.

“Fight!”

Fifth-Grade Valor Dao Intent erupted.

Ye Shoudao, the Empress, Prince Tianxu—all broke free and charged like meteors.

Ye Shoudao fought like a madman.

Heartless Blade Intent slashed again and again.

Fu Tianluo’s face darkened.

Without the compass sealing them, facing Dao Intent wielders—especially Du Longyang—was troublesome.

“My compass!!”

He roared in fury.

He ignored the incoming attacks and shot toward Zhulong.

Zhulong's lashes trembled.

She raised a fist and swung.

Runes stacked on Fu Tianluo's fist.

"Give me back my compass, bitch!"

He howled, face twisted.

BOOM!

Fist met fist.

The impact split the sea in half.

Zhulong was hurled backward, crashing into the waves.

The Red Dragon tried to cushion her—also sent flying.

Late-stage Spirit Severing dominance was overwhelming.

Zhulong's combat power was only Infant Transformation level—still too weak against Fu Tianluo.

“You all... die!”

Fu Tianluo raged.

Runes spread beneath his feet—Tianluo Continent's inscription path was his true strength.

Origin Lake, Heart Island.

A streak of light shot in.

Lu Ping'an, white robes fluttering, pointed a finger.

The spiritual palm dissipated.

The now-dull golden compass floated before him.

“Quasi-earth tier.”

He tapped it lightly—clear ringing sound.

“Definitely from the High Martial Buddha Realm.”

“That Fu Tianluo's continent must be under that sovereign's command.”

Lu Ping'an mused.

Lines danced in his eyes.

He gripped the Sky-Covering Sword—forged from chaos energy.

True earth-tier spirit tool.

“New refining method... but crude.”

He tapped the compass lightly with the sword.

Crack...

A fracture appeared.

The Sky-Covering Sword’s chaos-enhanced edge was too much.

The compass split like tofu.

BOOM!

Buddhist light exploded.

A massive golden swastika shot skyward.

Sanskrit chants and Buddha names thundered.

Under the radiant light,

a colossal, blurry Buddha apparition sat in the void, chanting at Lu Ping'an.

Lu Ping'an curled his lip.

This compass was a defective quasi-earth tier—trash discarded by High Martial standards.

Only Fu Tianluo treated it like treasure.

With a flick,

Phoenix Feather Swords whistled out.

They pierced the Buddha apparition.

The massive figure shattered into fragments.

Vast Sea

Fu Tianluo, fighting five at once, suddenly clutched his chest.

Something important had been destroyed.

His spiritual sense link to the compass was severed.

His eyes turned bloodshot.

His compass!

He came to conquer a world—lost his compass instead!

“You all... DIE!”

In his fury,

his combat power exploded.

Du Longyang took a direct hit—rune whips drawing blood.

The Empress and Prince Tianxu were sent flying.

But the moment they hit the water, they shot back into the fight!

Ye Shoudao, drenched in blood, felt his shackles loosening.

His attacks grew sharper!

His blade trembled, barely containing the power!

Fu Tianluo was livid.

They really were using him as a whetstone!

He was here to conquer—not to be training equipment!

He formed seals.

Metal spheres formed of stacked runes shot from his palms.

Thousands rained down like a storm.

BOOM!

Countless spheres detonated, rune whips lashing across heaven and earth.

His ultimate technique!

Pfft!

The Empress and Prince Tianxu paled.

Rune whips pierced their bodies, locking them in the sky.

Zhulong opened her eyes—black and white clashing against the whips, barely holding.

Ye Shoudao was pierced too, blood spraying.

Only Du Longyang could still fight.

Through this life-or-death battle, Du Longyang fully mastered his new Yin Spirit power.

Suddenly his eyes widened.

He looked toward Ye Shoudao.

Ye Shoudao was a wreck—blood everywhere, one sleeve empty.

But his eyes blazed like daylight.

BOOM!

Terrifying energy erupted from his body.

Rune whips shattered.

His spirit, energy, and mind reached ultimate unity.

Seawater surged into a massive flower bud.

The bud bloomed.

Ye Shoudao's spiritual sense skyrocketed!

"Breakthrough?!"

Du Longyang's face lit with joy!

Under life-or-death pressure, Ye Shoudao had broken into Yin Spirit Realm!

“You court death!”

Fu Tianluo roared.

Someone dared break through right under his nose?!

He charged Ye Shoudao like a blazing sun, rune whips trailing.

Du Longyang bellowed.

His spear blocked Fu Tianluo’s path.

“Get lost!”

Fu Tianluo smashed down with a golden fist.

Du Longyang coughed blood, spear bending.

He used his body to buy Ye Shoudao time!

Far away,

the Red Dragon was shredded—scales cracked, blood flowing.

Yet its aura also broke through.

With a low roar, flames erupted, evaporating seawater.

Zhulong sat atop its head.

She had taken a beating.

Rare for her.

Perhaps this was what Dad wanted her to experience.

Her bloodline surged!

Fu Tianluo sensed it too.

Fury boiled.

One after another—using him as a damn whetstone!

He was here to destroy the world—not help natives evolve!

This was the most troublesome world he had ever tried to conquer.

But in his eyes, they were just struggling insects.

Who to kill first?

He hesitated.

Then chose Zhulong.

Her divine ability was more threatening than Ye Shoudao's breakthrough.

BOOM!

Du Longyang coughed blood again.

Fu Tianluo streaked across the sky.

Runes whipped the void.

A strike that seemed to tear space itself—black cracks flickering.

Killing blow—straight at Zhulong atop the Red Dragon.

“No!”

Du Longyang clutched his bleeding mouth.

Zhulong remained calm.

Her lashes trembled.

She opened her eyes.

Raised her hand.

Black and white swirled in her pupils.

A massive Yin-Yang Millstone appeared around her.

It instantly engulfed Fu Tianluo.

The millstone spun—grinding flesh and blood.

BOOM!

The sea surface evaporated a full layer.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and the others stared.

Smoke cleared.

Half of Fu Tianluo's clothes were shredded.

Half his body—flesh vaporized, only white bone remained.

The other half was barely protected by runes.

Zhulong sat pale atop the Red Dragon.

That Yin-Yang Millstone had drained nearly all her energy...

But it was the second stage of her divine ability after her breakthrough.

She had never been able to use it before.

Now she could.

One strike—

nearly erased a late-stage Spirit Severing expert.

Zhulong had broken through.

Ye Shoudao had broken through.

Fu Tianluo had come to destroy a world.

Instead, he helped two natives evolve.

He stared at Zhulong, rotting flesh sloughing off.

Killing intent boiled.

“You bitch... die.”

He hissed through clenched teeth.

His remaining intact arm rose.

Countless rune chains poured down like ten thousand serpents.

“Got the guts... to break through again?!”

He sneered.

He refused to believe she could evolve twice in minutes!

Zhulong’s lashes trembled, beautiful face turned toward him.

Suddenly—

Fu Tianluo froze.

Every rune chain—before it even reached her face—melted into nothing.

White robes fluttered.

Silver light flashed.

One after another, silver gleams descended from the sky.

They stacked before Zhulong into a silver wheelchair.

A white-robed youth appeared out of thin air.

He sat leisurely in the wheelchair, one hand propping his chin, the other spinning a ring.

He looked calmly at Fu Tianluo.

“Hm.”

“Only two breakthroughs? You’re a pretty subpar tool.”

The misty formation shrouded everything like Jiangnan rain in March—ethereal, dreamlike.

Zhao Zixu felt his heart jolt, as if he had crossed vast distances through space and time.

When he opened his eyes, he stood on a vast blood-soaked plain.

His nine Xiang Family brothers opened their eyes around him.

“Where... are we?”

Someone asked.

“This soil... it’s soaked in blood. An ancient battlefield?”

Zhao Zixu crouched, grabbing a handful of dirt. Blood seemed to drip from it.

Everyone’s hearts clenched.

An ancient battlefield?

Were their enemies... heavenly demons from beyond?!

With cultivation now widespread, more and more people knew of heavenly demons.

In the ancient era, there had been a glorious cultivation civilization—far more brilliant than today.

It was destroyed by heavenly demons.

Otherwise, this era would have been even more radiant.

“If it really is an ancient battlefield, stay sharp. Heavenly demons are no joke.”

Zhao Zixu said gravely.

RUMBLE!

The sky changed.

Zhao Zixu’s gaze sharpened.

The ten Xiang Family soldiers stood ready, looking up.

A massive vortex of smoke swirled in the heavens.

Roars echoed from beyond—like ancient demonic gods howling at the firmament.

Immense pressure crushed down on Zhao Zixu.

They were here!

The roaring faded.

Something emerged from the vortex.

A bronze warship floated in the void.

Upon it stood bare-chested, towering men etched with strange, ferocious runes.

The ship's presence seemed to collapse space itself.

“Form up!”

Zhao Zixu roared, spear raised toward the sky.

His nine brothers fell into battle formation.

At that moment, they forgot they were competing against the Academy.

This felt too real.

These demons seemed truly intent on invading their world.

The cultivators on the bronze ship had eyes full of aggression—eyes Zhao Zixu recognized.

Just like the barbarian tribes beyond Great Zhou’s borders.

When they attacked Tiger’s Pass, their gazes had been exactly this hungry, this greedy.

“Huh?”

“Natives below!”

“So the adults couldn’t enter because these natives are too weak?”

“Kill them all! Plunder this world!”

The giants on the bronze ship roared with excitement.

Then—they leapt down.

“Internal Organs realm...”

Zhao Zixu swept his spear, eyes narrowing.

His tense heart eased slightly.

All enemies were Internal Organs realm.

They still had a chance!

“Kill count... Young Lord Lu meant heavenly demons!”

“KILL!”

Zhao Zixu roared, charging with spear dragging behind.

BOOM BOOM BOOM!

The Foundation Establishment cultivators from Golden Body Continent rained down.

Their bodies were monstrously tough—they clearly cultivated pure physical strength!

BOOM!

The leader—two meters tall, fists like battering rams—smashed into Zhao Zixu.

Zhao Zixu blocked with his spear shaft.

The spear bent; his legs skidded backward two steps!

“Such raw power!”

They specialized in body refinement?!

Ever since Young Lord Lu spread cultivation methods, old martial artists had abandoned blood-and-qi paths for spiritual qi.

Pure body refinement was too slow.

Yet these heavenly demons... were body refinement experts!

Zhao Zixu and his nine brothers plunged into battle.

Ten versus ten.

It was brutal.

In moments, Xiang Family soldiers were nearly routed.

But Zhao Zixu gritted his teeth, re-formed the array, and turned the tide.

He charged the enemy commander with everything he had.

Meanwhile,

Lu Jiulian and the Academy students faced their own foes.

A crimson kasaya carried ten young monks down from the vortex.

No compassion in their eyes—only eager aggression.

But compared to Zhao Zixu's bloodbath,

the Academy side had it easier.

They supported each other perfectly.

Outside the formation,

even through the barrier, everyone felt the slaughter within.

Overlord stood, staring as if trying to pierce the mist.

But he couldn't.

This was Young Lord Lu's formation—even Tianyuan Nascent Souls couldn't see through it.

Yet the oppressive, bloody aura was unmistakable.

What was happening inside?

Suddenly—

the formation rippled.

With a boom,

a blood-drenched head rolled out.

The crowd erupted.

Luo Cheng and the Dragon Blood Army rushed forward, picking it up.

Luo Cheng frowned.

“This isn’t any of the contestants!”

Gasps.

What?!

There were others inside the formation?!

Jiang Li’s fists clenched—did the third round truly risk lives?!

And what did the head mean?

Who were the students fighting?

Jiang Li was tormented—he had no idea what was happening inside.

Xu Chu was the same.

His soldiers—his best soldiers—were in there.

If they died meaninglessly in some formation, he would never accept it.

Ni Yu, standing outside, felt the pouch Young Lord Lu gave her tremble.

Twenty jade talismans floated out.

Ten on the left engraved with “Western Liang.”

Ten on the right engraved with “Academy.”

Suddenly—

one Western Liang talisman turned crimson.

BANG!

It exploded!

Everyone jumped.

A muffled groan.

From the mist,

a figure was hurled out—armor clanging, covered in wounds, barely breathing.

A Xiang Family soldier!

Xu Chu's face changed.

He flashed to the soldier's side, forcing a healing pill into his mouth.

The soldier opened confused eyes, touching his neck.

"I... I'm not dead?"

Xu Chu: "What happened inside?!"

"I didn't die? I was sure those invaders snapped my neck..."

His eyes turned red.

"No—my brothers are still fighting! I have to go back!"

He staggered up, charged into the mist—

and was ejected from the other side.

Eliminated. Couldn't re-enter.

"Inside... we were on a blood-red plain, fighting heavenly demons!"

"They were full of aggression, full of killing intent..."

The soldier's voice was low.

The crowd froze.

Heavenly demons?!

The third round was killing heavenly demons?!

Many turned to the misty formation.

Faint shouts of battle and soaring bloodlust leaked through.

Was this... just a formation?

Or real?!

Overlord stood at the edge, tried to enter—

but couldn't.

He heard the killing cries, but they felt separated by two worlds.

His face darkened as he returned to his seat.

On Ni Yu's side, only nine Western Liang talismans remained.

Each shattered talisman meant one Xiang Family soldier had died in that battlefield.

BANG!

An Academy talisman exploded.

A blood-soaked Academy student rolled out.

Jiang Li flashed over, saving him with a pill.

“One talisman = one life...”

“But the wounds are real.”

“This isn’t illusion. They’ve been sent somewhere to fight for real.”

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Xie Yunling’s eyes gleamed.

Space-related formations were beyond him, but that didn’t mean they didn’t exist.

Dragon Gates, for example—he believed used spatial arrays.

The atmosphere turned grave.

Bloody heads kept rolling out.

Eliminated contestants, eyes red, would grab the heads and roar:

“This is what we killed!”

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Both sides lost men.

Elimination meant death on that battlefield.

Overlord sat like a war god, chest heaving.

Dantai Xuan clenched his fists, eyes lost.

Everyone fell silent.

This was supposed to be Great Xuan vs Western Liang.

Instead, the formation had connected to a brutal slaughterhouse.

Some thought deeper.

What was Young Lord Lu trying to say?

Or was such a battle... actually happening somewhere in the world right now?

Everyone pondered.

What kind of battlefield was that...?

When countless silver blades converged into a wheelchair,

all light in heaven and earth seemed to dim.

A handsome youth in white, gentle as jade, sat elegantly—one hand propping his chin, the other spinning his ring, like a carefree noble son.

Zhulong sat atop the Red Dragon, long lashes trembling.

Sensing the familiar aura of “Dad,” her lips curved into dimples.

It was over.

Go ahead, be arrogant.

Try being arrogant in front of Dad.

The Red Dragon’s shattered scales and bleeding body relaxed slightly, letting out a low rumble.

Far away,

Du Longyang, clutching his bleeding mouth, froze—then laughed wildly, spear sweeping the sea.

Ye Shoudao's worried heart settled.

He focused everything on his breakthrough.

He had crossed Infant Transformation into Yin Spirit.

He had to seize this chance!

The Empress and Prince Tianxu were in worse shape.

Near death, yet still couldn't grasp the opportunity.

Breakthrough wasn't guaranteed even in mortal danger.

But now they understood—

they had been right.

Fu Tianluo really was Young Lord Lu's gift.

A wild tool to help them shatter their shackles.

Sadly, they lacked Ye Shoudao's madness at death's door.

They flinched.

So they failed to break through.

Hence Young Lord Lu's disappointment.

The countless rune chains hanging in the air began to dissolve.

Fu Tianluo hovered, staring at Lu Ping'an in disbelief.

Where did this white-robed youth come from?!

Why had he never sensed him?!

This world had someone this strong?!

Impossible...

His spiritual sense swept over Lu Ping'an.

Then his expression turned strange.

“Qi Condensation?”

“No... Qi Condensation can't fly!”

“And Qi Condensation wouldn't dare speak of using me as a whetstone...”

Fu Tianluo's eyes grew cold.

“My quasi-saint compass scanned this world—no second Spirit Severing!”

He declared.

The sea breeze blew.

But the surface remained mirror-still, as if oppressed by overwhelming presence.

Lu Ping'an smiled at his words.

“Quasi-saint compass?”

“You mean... this?”

He raised his hand.

Fu Tianluo's eyes shrank!

Two broken halves of dull metal.

Put together—it was his compass!

“My compass!”

Fu Tianluo’s aura exploded with ultimate fury.

He was enraged!

Insane!

That was his most precious treasure! The Venerable One’s personal gift! His lifeblood!

Now split in two!

Fu Tianluo clutched his head and shrieked.

“You broke my compass!”

“You’re dead!”

He didn’t know how this wheelchair-bound weakling did it.

He only knew boundless rage.

Countless frozen runes surged into motion.

Forming a roaring face that charged Lu Ping'an.

He didn't care what realm Lu was.

Only the weak hid their strength!

RUMBLE!

The roaring face became thousands of chains—coiling into a massive rune serpent!

It smashed down, space twisting and cracking!

Late-stage Spirit Severing—his strongest strike!

Fueled by the compass's destruction, he even shook off some of the world's suppression!

"You used me as a whetstone? You'll regret it!"

"DIE!"

Thousands of rune chains exploded outward like ten thousand serpents!

BOOM!

The Vast Sea detonated.

Shockwaves radiated like a nuclear blast.

Seawater rippled in perfect circles.

Fu Tianluo panted in the void, face twisted with vicious satisfaction.

That guy... had to be ash now.

But his pupils shrank to pinpricks.

He sensed... residual rune energy.

Faint.

He looked.

Through the dispersing waves—

the white-robed youth sat untouched.

Still propping his chin, still spinning his ring.

Before him—

a shield made of stacked runes.

Runes?

This guy knew inscription arts too?!

Fu Tianluo stood stunned.

Then Lu Ping'an's gentle laughter rang across heaven and earth.

"Don't worry. You still have a chance to become a qualified, excellent tool..."

"For example, help me perfect the inscription path I just learned."

As his words fell,

terrifying spiritual sense surged.

The rune shield before Lu transformed.

Becoming thousands of rune chains—like ten thousand serpents shooting forth!

Exactly Fu Tianluo's own technique!

Facing his own move, feeling the casual, terrifying spiritual sense behind it,

Fu Tianluo's face turned deathly pale.

This youth wasn't Spirit Severing.

He was...

Soul... Emergence Realm?!

Chapter 345: Soul... Emergence Realm?!

The mist was soft and hazy, like Jiangnan in the third month, dreamlike and veiled.

Zhao Zixu felt his heart jolt. The formation's smoke enveloped him, and in that instant, it was as if he had traversed endless space and time.

When he opened his eyes, he stood on a vast, blood-soaked plain. His nine Xiang Family brothers regained consciousness around him.

“Where... are we?” one asked.

“This soil is drenched in blood. An ancient battlefield?” Zhao Zixu crouched, scooping a handful of dirt. It seemed to drip crimson.

Everyone’s hearts tightened.

An ancient battlefield?

Were their enemies heavenly demons?

With cultivation now widespread, more and more people knew of heavenly demons.

In the primordial era, a glorious cultivation civilization had flourished, far more brilliant than today.

It was destroyed by heavenly demons.

Otherwise, this era would have been even more radiant.

“If it truly is an ancient battlefield, stay sharp. Heavenly demons are no joke,” Zhao Zixu said gravely.

RUMBLE!

The sky shifted.

Zhao Zixu's gaze sharpened. The ten Xiang Family soldiers stood ready, looking up.

A massive vortex of smoke swirled in the heavens.

Roars echoed from beyond, like primordial demon gods howling at the firmament.

Immense pressure crushed down on Zhao Zixu.

They were here!

The roaring faded.

Something emerged from the vortex.

A bronze warship floated in the void.

Upon it stood bare-chested giants etched with strange, ferocious runes.

The ship's presence seemed to collapse space itself.

“Form up!”

Zhao Zixu roared, spear raised toward the sky.

His nine brothers fell into battle formation.

At that moment, they forgot they were competing against the Academy.

This felt too real.

These demons seemed truly intent on invading their world.

The cultivators on the bronze ship had eyes full of aggression, eyes Zhao Zixu recognized.

Just like the barbarian tribes beyond Great Zhou's borders.

When they attacked Tiger's Pass, their gazes had been exactly this hungry, this greedy.

"Huh?"

"Natives below!"

"So the lords couldn't enter because these ants are too weak?"

"Kill them all! Plunder this world!"

The giants roared with excitement.

Then, they leapt down.

"Internal Organs realm..."

Zhao Zixu swept his spear, eyes narrowing.

His tense heart eased slightly.

All enemies were Internal Organs realm.

They still had a chance!

“Kill count... Young Lord Lu meant heavenly demons!”

“KILL!”

Zhao Zixu roared, charging with spear dragging behind.

BOOM BOOM BOOM!

The Foundation Establishment cultivators from Golden Body Continent rained down.

Their bodies were monstrously tough, they clearly cultivated pure physical strength!

BOOM!

The leader, two meters tall, fists like battering rams, smashed into Zhao Zixu.

Zhao Zixu blocked with his spear shaft.

The spear bent; his legs skidded backward two steps!

“Such raw power!”

They specialized in body refinement?!

Ever since Young Lord Lu spread cultivation methods, old martial artists had abandoned blood-and-qi paths for spiritual qi.

Pure body refinement was too slow.

Yet these heavenly demons... were body refinement experts!

Zhao Zixu and his nine brothers plunged into battle.

Ten versus ten.

It was brutal.

In moments, Xiang Family soldiers were nearly routed.

But Zhao Zixu gritted his teeth, re-formed the array, and turned the tide.

He charged the enemy commander with everything he had.

Meanwhile,

Lu Jiulian and the Academy students faced their own foes.

A crimson kasaya carried ten young monks down from the vortex.

No compassion in their eyes, only eager aggression.

But compared to Zhao Zixu's bloodbath,

the Academy side had it easier.

They supported each other perfectly.

Outside the formation,

even through the barrier, everyone felt the slaughter within.

Overlord stood, staring as if trying to pierce the mist.

But he couldn't.

This was Young Lord Lu's formation, even Tianyuan Nascent Souls couldn't see through it.

Yet the oppressive, bloody aura was unmistakable.

What was happening inside?

Suddenly,

the formation rippled.

With a boom,

a blood-drenched head rolled out.

The crowd erupted.

Luo Cheng and the Dragon Blood Army rushed forward, picking it up.

Luo Cheng frowned.

“This isn’t any of the contestants!”

Gasps.

What?!

There were others inside the formation?!

Jiang Li's fists clenched, did the third round truly risk lives?!

And what did the head mean?

Who were the students fighting?

Jiang Li was tormented, he had no idea what was happening inside.

Xu Chu was the same.

His soldiers, his best soldiers, were in there.

If they died meaninglessly in some formation, he would never accept it.

Ni Yu, standing outside, felt the pouch Young Lord Lu gave her tremble.

Twenty jade talismans floated out.

Ten on the left engraved with “Western Liang.”

Ten on the right with “Academy.”

Suddenly,

one Western Liang talisman turned crimson.

BANG!

It exploded!

Everyone jumped.

A muffled groan.

From the mist,

a figure was hurled out, armor clanging, covered in wounds, barely breathing.

A Xiang Family soldier!

Xu Chu's face changed.

He flashed to the soldier's side, forcing a healing pill into his mouth.

The soldier opened confused eyes, touching his neck.

"I... I'm not dead?"

Xu Chu: "What happened inside?!"

"I didn't die? I was sure those invaders snapped my neck..."

His eyes turned red.

“No, my brothers are still fighting! I have to go back!”

He staggered up, charged into the mist,

and was ejected from the other side.

Eliminated. Couldn't re-enter.

“Inside... we were on a blood-red plain, fighting heavenly demons!”

“They were full of aggression, full of killing intent...”

The soldier's voice was low.

The crowd froze.

Heavenly demons?!

The third round was killing heavenly demons?!

Many turned to the misty formation.

Faint shouts of battle and soaring bloodlust leaked through.

Was this... just a formation?

Or real?!

Overlord stood at the edge, tried to enter,

but couldn't.

He heard the killing cries, but they felt separated by two worlds.

His face darkened as he returned to his seat.

On Ni Yu's side, only nine Western Liang talismans remained.

Each shattered talisman meant one Xiang Family soldier had died in that battlefield.

BANG!

An Academy talisman exploded.

A blood-soaked Academy student rolled out.

Jiang Li flashed over, saving him with a pill.

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Soul... Emergence Realm?!

Chapter 346: Know Your Place as a Tool

Fu Tianluo's heart seized in terror.

The divine sense that had just flared into existence was like a fleeting sword-light—sharp, overwhelming, and chilling enough to make one’s blood run cold.

In that instant, he understood: the young man sitting calmly in the silver-bladed wheelchair was an old monster of the Soul Projection realm!

Soul Projection... a realm that far surpassed the limits of a Mid-Tier Martial world.

Fu Tianluo had always been arrogant because he believed himself invincible. As the supreme master of a Mid-Tier Martial plane, what did he have to fear in a world that had only just stepped into the top tier?

His power stood at the apex here. He could look down on every living soul.

So he acted without restraint—arrogant, unrestrained, fearless.

He could suppress anyone in this world.

Because his strength was the ceiling.

No one could be stronger than him.

Yet Lu's appearance shattered that certainty.

Soul Projection?!

"Impossible... You can't be Soul Projection! How could a world like this birth someone of that realm?!"

Fu Tianluo roared, his voice cracking.

"You're clearly only at Qi Condensation!"

He swept his divine sense across Lu again. Yes—only Qi Condensation, not even perfected.

So why did this pressure feel like a mountain crushing his soul?

Lu smiled faintly.

Runes birthed from his simulated Inscription Dao surged forth like ten thousand venomous serpents, lunging at Fu Tianluo.

Shaken as he was, Fu Tianluo hadn't lost his wits.

His hands flew through seals, drawing upon his divine sense. In an instant, golden runes formed into identical serpents that crashed head-on against Lu's.

The collision warped the void itself, space rippling like disturbed water.

Lu lounged in his Thousand Blades Chair, one hand propping his chin, an eyebrow raised.

"So that's how it is."

He adjusted his understanding of the Inscription Dao on the spot.

"Soul Projection, huh?"

Hearing Fu Tianluo's shocked exclamation, a glint flashed through Lu's eyes.

"Spirit Severing, Soul Projection... so those are the stages after Infant Transformation?"

He murmured, fingers idly stroking the dark ring on his thumb as a gentle breeze lifted strands of his hair.

“Yin Spirit Dao Lotus corresponds to Spirit Severing, and the Nine Yang Spirit Steps should correspond to Soul Projection...”

“From this man’s words, the Yin Spirit realm is the limit of Mid-Tier Martial worlds.”

A thoughtful look crossed Lu’s face.

His strength came primarily from Qi Refining.

Yet strictly speaking, his power existed beyond the Three Realms and outside the Five Elements—untouched by the laws of heaven and earth.

Thus, even in the current Mid-Tier Five Phoenixes, his strength could surpass the Yin Spirit realm.

“Senior, from which High-Tier Martial world have you descended?”

Fu Tianluo suddenly asked, voice tight.

His eyes locked onto the serene Lu, every muscle coiled.

Dao Intent, divine abilities, Soul Projection...

What kind of monstrous world did this boy come from?

He just wanted to go home.

At this moment, Fu Tianluo finally understood why the burly man and the bald monk hadn't appeared alongside him.

They must have known something was wrong with this world.

He hated them.

Those two had screwed him over.

"High-Tier Martial world?"

Lu blinked, then chuckled and shook his head.

“I’m no great power from a High-Tier world.”

“Just a humble Qi Refiner.”

The words fell.

Lu struck again with fresh inscriptions.

Fu Tianluo’s gaze turned icy. The technique Lu used was the exact one he himself had just displayed.

This boy was stealing his Dao—right in front of him.

Worse, he was using him as a live training dummy.

Treating him like a proper tool.

Utter humiliation!

Madness flickered in Fu Tianluo’s eyes.

His hands—flesh and bone—blurred through ancient seals. Inscriptions poured out, coalescing behind him into a pair of radiant golden wings.

With one beat of those wings—

His body turned into a streak of light, shooting toward the heavens like lightning.

He chose to flee.

Fight? Against a Soul Projection monster?

That realm belonged to High-Tier Martial worlds.

Staying meant death.

BOOM!

The wings unleashed shockwaves, carving a thick white trail across the sky.

“Young Master Lu!”

From afar, Du Longyang’s expression shifted.

They couldn’t let this man escape. If he fled and brought back High-Tier Buddhist experts, Five Phoenixes would be finished.

Yet Lu remained perfectly calm.

He hadn’t expected Fu Tianluo to run, but... did the man really think he could?

This was Lu’s home turf. Did Fu Tianluo think he could come and go as he pleased without costing Lu face?

Lu’s pale fingers closed around the snow-white Sword of Heaven Covering—the core of the Heaven Covering Formation.

With the array eye in hand, Fu Tianluo had no hope of breaking a ground-tier formation.

Sure enough.

The man shot into the misty sky... only to burst out again moments later like a bolt of lightning.

He hovered in the air, golden wings flapping, face ashen.

“Why... why am I back?!”

He stared down at Lu, whose faint smile sent chills through his entire body.

Once more he beat his wings and plunged into the mist.

He had to break through this damned fog and return to Tianluo Continent—away from this cursed place.

Yet it was like hitting an endless ghost wall. He flew until his energy faltered, only to emerge from the mist once more—still trapped.

Despair swallowed him whole.

“A formation...”

“This entire world is sealed by a formation!”

Silver light bloomed.

Thousand Blades stacked into a chair. Lu reappeared before him.

Countless inscriptions shot skyward, slamming into Fu Tianluo.

“Senior... mercy!”

Fu Tianluo roared, voice cracking.

He didn't want to die. Even though Lu had yet to truly attack, the mere pressure of his divine sense crushed any will to resist.

At his core, Fu Tianluo was nothing but a bully who feared the strong.

Lu regarded him coolly, brows faintly furrowed.

A moment later, the crease smoothed.

“There’s always a way to live.”

The moment those words left Lu’s mouth, hope flared in Fu Tianluo’s eyes.

Living was always better.

Who would choose death when they could live?

He had clawed his way through countless near-death experiences to reach this point. His life was precious.

“I’m actually pretty easygoing,” Lu continued lightly. “So just keep that proper tool mindset, and you won’t die.”

The hope on Fu Tianluo’s face froze solid.

Keep the tool mindset?

He wanted him to stay a training dummy?

Struggle twisted across Fu Tianluo's face.

BOOM!

His wings beat again—he'd rather risk escape!

But the instant they moved—

Thousands of silver blades erupted, weaving a dazzling galaxy of light before him.

Fu Tianluo stared, stunned.

BOOM!

The blades condensed into a single gigantic palm.

It slapped down.

Fu Tianluo desperately layered his inscription wings in front of him, but the palm shattered them like glass.

His body shot downward like a meteor, smashing into the Vast Sea.

BOOM!

A colossal crater formed in the ocean, swirling like an abyssal vortex.

Silver blades reassembled into the wheelchair. Lu sat calmly atop it.

“Didn’t you hear what I said?”

His tone was serene, yet carried unshakable authority.

He raised both hands and began forming seals—slow, deliberate movements that seemed to resonate with the world’s very origin.

Rumble...

Countless inscriptions surged from the heavens and earth.

Crack... crack...

The sea froze solid.

A towering crystal ice pagoda slowly rose from the depths.

Inscriptions birthed from Lu's origin resonance cascaded down, etching themselves across its surface.

Inside the pagoda, Fu Tianluo let out a despairing howl.

He slammed against the walls, but the inscribed ice was unbreakable—a perfect prison.

His once-elegant hair hung in wild strands; all traces of his former grace were gone.

“Venerable One! Save me!”

He pounded the ice with fists of flesh and bone, roaring into the void.

No answer came.

Regret flooded him.

Why had he followed that Buddhist lotus light to this world?

He who had destroyed countless worlds... had finally capsized in a gutter.

Walk by the river long enough, and your shoes will get wet.

BOOM!

The ice pagoda crashed onto the sea's surface, soaring into the clouds, refracting sunlight into a myriad of radiant colors.

Far away, Ye Shoudao began his tribulation.

The Yin Spirit Tribulation was perilous, yet like Du Longyang before him, Ye Shoudao had long accumulated enough foundation—he only lacked the final spark.

He passed through the lightning with danger but no disaster, then bathed in the feedback of the world's origin.

The countless wounds covering his body slowly healed.

Whoosh—

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, the Empress, and Young Master Tianxu sped over, gathering beside Lu.

They stared up at the towering ice pagoda, exchanging stunned glances.

Zhu Long rode the red dragon quietly behind Lu, obedient as ever.

“Young Master Lu... this is...?”

Du Longyang swallowed hard, gazing at the despairing Fu Tianluo trapped within.

The invincible Fu Tianluo had been suppressed as easily as an ant.

Just how strong was Lu?

And what exactly was this “Soul Projection” realm Fu Tianluo had mentioned?

“I was just testing their Inscription Dao,” Lu said mildly.

For someone aiming to forge an ultra-fantastical world, no lineage or tradition could be overlooked—each might offer unique inspiration.

Though Five Phoenixes already had many paths of cultivation, adding the Inscription Dao would only make it richer and more vibrant.

“Who is he?” Du Longyang asked.

“Probably a scout sent by that High-Tier Buddhist powerhouse. I did ruin his Bitter Disciple’s plans and slaughter his followers, after all.”

Lu’s tone remained casual.

With a thought, he raised a hand.

Ice crystals condensed into five inscribed tokens, which he tossed to Du Longyang and the others.

Even Zhu Long received one.

“These are passes to enter and exit the ice pagoda. With a token, you can open the tower and spar with him whenever you like.”

Everyone who caught a token froze.

Then they sucked in sharp breaths, looking at Fu Tianluo—who was still frantically hammering the walls—with faces full of sympathy.

This was just too miserable.

Lu hadn't bothered lowering his voice. Inside the pagoda, Fu Tianluo heard every word.

He roared in fury and grief.

But it was useless.

This time... he could not escape his fate as a tool.

A wretched, broken laugh tore from his throat.

This world was hell.

And that boy in the wheelchair?

A devil.

Lu turned to Zhu Long.

Her eyes were closed, long lashes trembling slightly.

“Your divine ability has just entered the second stage. Train hard—aim for the third.”

Zhu Long’s lips curved, dimples appearing as she nodded.

Then Lu’s figure vanished like a passing breeze.

Only Du Longyang and the others remained hovering above the Vast Sea.

They rubbed the tokens in their hands, eyes gleaming.

They glanced at the ice pagoda.

Then—

Ye Shoudao, who had only just broken through and needed to stabilize his realm, couldn't wait. He activated his token and shot inside.

From within the pagoda came Fu Tianluo's furious roar.

A fierce battle erupted.

A long while later, the pagoda doors opened.

Ye Shoudao drifted out, covered in blood and aura weakened, yet his face was filled with deep satisfaction.

He sat cross-legged on the sea, consolidating his cultivation and savoring the fight.

Du Longyang rubbed his fists, eager to follow.

But Zhu Long was faster—she activated her token, red dragon in tow, and slipped inside.

Soon black-and-white light exploded within, terrifying shockwaves rocking the sea into towering waves.

Fu Tianluo's roars carried helpless, resigned sorrow.

...

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

Lu returned like a gust of wind.

Green grass swayed, purple bamboo rustled.

Before the Dao Stele, Ning Zhao's aura surged violently before a profound conceptual intent began to spread.

She had comprehended it.

A Sequence Dao Intent—at last.

The stele floating within Lu's soul vortex glowed, words appearing upon it.

“Ning Zhao, Fourth Sequence Dao Intent—Ice Frost Dao Intent.”

Lu tapped the armrest of his wheelchair, eyebrow raised in mild surprise.

Fourth Sequence?

He hadn't expected Ning Zhao's talent in Dao Intent to reach this level.

Though her overall aptitude wasn't exceptional, she had revealed remarkable gift in this particular path.

Fourth Sequence was excellent.

After merging it with his own, there was no dramatic change—only a subtle strengthening.

Only another Third or Second Sequence Dao Intent would trigger a true qualitative leap.

Withdrawing his focus, Lu sent a mental message telling Ning Zhao to stabilize her new intent.

Then he turned his attention to the battles within the Heaven Covering Formation.

He had opened a small breach, allowing Foundation Establishment cultivators from other worlds to descend.

The third round of the Great Xuan Academy and Western Liang's competition—the killing field—now clashed directly with these invaders.

He had his reasons.

Five Phoenixes' cultivators still needed tempering.

With Tianyuan and Five Phoenixes merging, internal conflicts remained, but Zhu Long's presence deterred large-scale wars.

Originally, Lu had been thinking of ways to train his people.

Who would have thought worlds would come knocking, ready to siege Five Phoenixes?

Perfect—he would use them as whetstones.

Battle was the fastest path to growth.

Leaning back in his Thousand Blades Chair, intricate patterns danced in Lu's eyes.

...

Northern Luo City.

Martial Practice Grounds.

The entire arena was deathly silent; you could hear a pin drop.

Only the occasional thud of severed heads rolling out from the misty grand array echoed in everyone's ears.

Everyone was dying to know what kind of battlefield lay inside that fog.

The oppressive, suffocating brutality made many tremble.

The eliminated contestants stood red-eyed outside the mist, fists clenched.

Only they knew how savage the fighting truly was.

Even Ni Yu was curious now.

What exactly had the Young Master prepared for the third round?

Bang!

Jade talismans shattered one after another.

Each explosion meant another elimination.

...

Blood-soaked earth, corpses piled like mountains.

Zhao Zixu's eyes were crimson from killing. He panted heavily, blood seeping through the gaps in his armor.

Around him lay the bodies of nine Western Liang soldiers.

He didn't know they would revive.

He only knew his brothers had died.

Died in this battle.

He had watched those monstrous outsiders twist his brothers' heads off with mocking grins.

"Kill!"

With a roar, Zhao Zixu leaped, trading wound for wound. His spear pierced straight through a burly man's forehead, pinning the corpse to the ground.

The last of the ten men from the second bronze warship.

Twenty enemies slain.

Far away, another warship descended from the sky, landing on the bloodstained earth.

More towering warriors stepped out.

Zhao Zixu yanked his spear free and charged like a dragon—his aura trembling on the verge of breakthrough.

Yet among this ship's crew was a frown-browed man whose fist, though only Foundation Establishment, carried profound mystery.

BOOM!

Zhao Zixu's spear shattered. His body was blasted into nothingness.

This man was a divine-sense avatar from the Indestructible Golden Body Continent.

On the blood-colored plain, Zhao Zixu and the others' corpses vanished.

The warrior frowned.

"Illusion?"

...

Martial Practice Grounds.

Ni Yu turned to look at the jade talismans beside her.

Bang!

The very last talisman of the Western Liang side exploded.

Overlord rose from his seat and flashed to the edge of the array.

Zhao Zixu tumbled out, a horrific sight—spear broken, chest caved in.

Xu Chu shot over, eyes bloodshot at the sight. He forced pills down Zhao Zixu's throat.

Slowly, Zhao Zixu opened his eyes, confused.

He saw Overlord, Xu Chu, and the comrades who had died.

He blinked.

Then realization hit.

“No... it wasn't a dream! It was too real!”

His breathing came fast and ragged.

“Calm your mind. Gather your qi. Feel the origin of the world.”

Overlord suddenly placed a heavy hand on his shoulder.

Zhao Zixu startled.

Overlord's gaze was solemn.

"You're about to break through."

...

Blood-colored battlefield.

Corpses of Great Xuan students and young monks littered the ground.

Lu Jiulian stood with sword in hand, robes soaked in blood, breathing lightly.

Across from him, a dust-free-robed young monk stared in wonder.

To think a Foundation Establishment cultivator could be this strong.

This monk was a divine-sense avatar from the Prajna Continent—yet he and Lu Jiulian were evenly matched.

Wind swept across the bloody earth, carrying the stench of iron.

Lu Jiulian leaned on his sword, spine roaring like a dragon breaking free of its chains.

On this blood-drenched field—

Lu Jiulian shattered the Heavenly Lock in a single battle.

Chapter 347: So Young Master Lu Has Been Carrying This Much Weight

Lu Jiulian was about to break through!

On that blood-soaked battlefield, he had perfected his Body Storage realm. Every ounce of potential had been honed to its limit. Now he would shatter the shackles of mortality and charge into the Heavenly Lock realm!

All the students from the Great Xuan Academy had fallen.

Even someone as strong as Lu Jiulian could barely hold on. Among the second wave of scarlet-robed monks, one in particular gave him crushing pressure—like facing not a Foundation Establishment cultivator, but a Golden Core, or something even higher.

He wasn't completely confident he could win.

So Lu Jiulian chose to breakthrough right there and then.

The wind moaned across the crimson plain.

He stood motionless, his green-lotus-embroidered robes soaked in blood, the lotus pattern now looking strangely demonic.

Gravel rolled across the ground. All around lay the corpses of monks and academy disciples.

Silence blanketed the world.

Lu Jiulian stared at the young monk opposite him. His aura kept climbing, his spine roaring like a dragon.

"Amitabha."

The monk gazed at him with odd, almost pitying eyes.

“Almsgiver, give up.”

“Why should I?” Lu Jiulian asked calmly.

“This poor monk entered the mortal world to ferry all beings across the sea of suffering. The sea of suffering has no shore—only I can provide the boat.”

The monk spoke with absolute certainty.

Lu Jiulian’s robes still fluttered in the wind.

He slowly raised the plain refined-iron sword in his hand—no spirit tool, just ordinary steel.

He swept the tip in a slow circle, pointing at every fallen academy student.

His eyes were deep and tranquil, yet something burned beneath.

“This is the boat you offered?”

“Amitabha. For the greater harmony of all under heaven, sacrifices are necessary.”

The monk pressed his palms together.

Lu Jiulian let out a soft laugh.

“These are my brothers from the academy. They may not be the strongest, but they are the ones I trust most. They gave their lives to buy me this chance. They sacrificed themselves so I could live.”

“And you want me to climb into your boat?”

“Ridiculous.”

His voice grew colder.

“The sea of suffering has no shore? Then I’ll cut it in half with one stroke.”

The moment the words left his mouth, his cultivation finally reached its peak.

Rumble!

Thunder rolled in the distance.

The monk's gaze grew stranger.

“What a peculiar world, to birth such a heaven-defying genius... What a pity. This world is doomed to perish, and a prodigy like you will only watch helplessly as all life falls.”

“Amitabha. The heavens are unjust. What a pity...”

BOOM!

Lu Jiulian moved.

Spine like a dragon, blood like molten mercury—he charged with terrifying momentum.

His sword flashed, becoming countless lotus-shaped sword shadows, nine petals unfurling.

“Nine-Petal Sword Lotus!”

A low shout.

A single sword-lotus bloomed silently, then shot forward.

The monk’s eyes narrowed. He opened his mouth and chanted.

Though only Golden Core level, he was the divine-sense avatar of a supreme Mid-Tier Martial world lord. Why would he fear this?

Golden scriptures formed a circular shield around him.

The sword-lotus drifted forward like a leaf on the wind and crashed into the shield.

BOOM!

Invisible shockwaves exploded.

On the blood-colored plain, a colossal green lotus suddenly appeared, cracking the earth.

Dust and smoke billowed.

Lu Jiulian gripped his sword. His body began to blur at the edges.

Yet he remained perfectly calm.

He looked toward the monk who had taken the full brunt of his strike.

When the smoke cleared—

The monk still stood, robes shredded, a lotus-shaped wound blooming across his chest, blood pouring out.

He looked wretched, yet his expression remained serene.

“Amitabha. Almsgiver, this poor monk will find you one day and ferry you across the sea of suffering.”

A breeze blew.

Gravel rolled.

The corpses of the academy students vanished.

Lu Jiulian turned into green smoke and scattered.

The monk glanced down at the bleeding lotus on his chest.

He took one step forward. A scarlet kasaya flew toward him, landing at his feet.

But the moment his foot touched the cloth, blood gushed from the wound. His body went limp and collapsed onto the robe.

...

CRACK!

Beside Ni Yu, the very last jade talisman shattered.

The fragments rose into the air and formed glowing numbers.

Western Liang Xiang Family Army: 20 enemies slain.

Great Xuan Academy: 20 enemies slain.

A stunned hush fell over the entire martial arena.

A tie?

How were they supposed to judge a winner?

Even Ni Yu was dumbfounded. Young Master had never told her what to do in case of a draw.

Even Zhao Zixu, who had been gathering energy for his own breakthrough, couldn't help glancing at the numbers.

Whoosh.

A figure slowly walked out of the misty array.

Bloodstained green-lotus robes fluttered around him like a demon.

“It’s Lu Jiulian!”

The academy students who had been waiting anxiously finally exhaled in relief.

Lu Jiulian himself paused—he hadn’t expected everyone to still be alive.

“Illusion?” he murmured, frowning.

“No... it was too real.”

Suddenly he looked up.

His aura surged like a dragon uncoiling from his spine, roaring through his body.

Heavenly Lock Tribulation!

Gasps rose around the arena.

Another one—just like Zhao Zixu—stepping into Heavenly Lock!

“So it wasn’t an illusion. I was ejected because I broke through?”

Lu Jiulian pondered.

This array must truly connect to some corner of the world.

And the legendary Young Master Lu had used these jade talismans to give them an extra life.

Perhaps his original intent was to let them taste death.

But since this was only a competition, he had granted them a chance to live again.

Lu Jiulian’s gaze swept across his surviving classmates, complicated emotions flickering in his eyes.

Being alive felt pretty good.

BOOM!

Black thunderclouds crashed down from the sky.

Lu Jiulian drew his sword. A sword-lotus bloomed.

Three swings—three bolts of lightning shattered.

He stepped into Heavenly Lock with effortless grace.

Even Overlord was stunned by how casually he treated the tribulation.

The geniuses from the Tianyuan foreign domain were equally shocked.

Another monster from Five Phoenixes.

The future Human List would definitely have his name.

Zhao Zixu's heart trembled. Lu Jiulian had crossed the tribulation like it was nothing.

Was this guy even human?

Overlord and Tantai Xuan exchanged glances, minds returning to the issue of victory.

Both sides had killed twenty. Both sides had won one of the first two rounds.

So how would this round be judged?

Their gazes fell on Ni Yu.

She was the host, and more importantly, Young Master Lu's personal attendant. Her word carried his authority.

It was only fair for her to decide.

Under thousands of stares, Ni Yu's chubby cheeks scrunched up in distress.

This was too hard!

They were exactly even—how was she supposed to choose?

Suddenly, the embroidered pouch at her waist trembled.

Her eyes lit up—Young Master!

She reached in and pulled out a jade talisman, crushing it without hesitation.

Crack.

White light shot into the sky.

Everyone's pupils shrank.

The light condensed into a young man in white, calmly seated in a wheelchair.

“Young Master Lu!”

“It's an incarnation of Young Master Lu!”

“To think we’d be blessed to see the Lord of the White Jade Capital in our lifetime!”

Excited whispers erupted.

Tantai Xuan and Overlord rose and cupped their fists toward the illusion.

Luo Cheng and Luo Yue led the Dragon Blood Army to one knee.

“We greet the Young Master!”

Five Phoenixes cultivators followed suit, shouting in unison.

Even the Tianyuan cultivators bowed respectfully, including the Nascent Soul experts from the holy lands.

The illusionary Lu inclined his head slightly.

Then he flicked a finger.

White light formed a screen in midair, projecting scenes from the blood-colored battlefield.

Finally, everyone could see what had happened inside the array.

First came the Xiang Family Army against the bronze warships—brutal, bloody, soldiers trading their lives without hesitation.

Xu Chu's eyes turned red. No wonder the eliminated soldiers had seemed so shaken.

Zhao Zixu had been the last man standing, facing the third warship alone.

He fell in a single move to an overwhelmingly strong opponent.

Overlord watched, entranced, and slapped his armrest so hard the chair exploded into splinters.

Zhao Zixu clenched his fists in frustration. That foe had only been Foundation Establishment, yet impossibly strong.

Gasps and exclamations filled the arena.

What was that blood-colored battlefield?

Who were those warriors?

Lu offered no explanation. He flicked his finger again.

The screen changed—now the academy students against the scarlet-robed monks.

Equally brutal.

The final scene: Lu Jiulian breaking through and carving a bloody lotus into the chest of the monk who had crushed Zhao Zixu.

Many spectators cheered aloud.

The screen vanished.

Lu's incarnation swept his calm gaze across the crowd.

“From my perspective, Western Liang won this round. But by the numbers... call it a draw.”

Another wave of shocked discussion.

What did that mean?

Same kill count—why did Young Master Lu think Western Liang deserved the win?

And the academy’s final opponent had clearly been stronger.

If anyone should be favored, it was the academy side.

Lu did not explain. He never needed to explain himself to the world.

Down below, Lu Jiulian stared at the illusion, dazed. It seemed his performance had swayed the Young Master’s judgment.

“You must be wondering where that blood-colored battlefield is.”

“You don’t need to wonder. Look up—it’s right above your heads.”

Overlord and Tantai Xuan froze, then whipped their heads skyward.

The clear sky had turned a vast, ominous crimson.

Lu raised a hand and flicked.

A beam of light pierced the heavens.

Mist parted. Stars appeared.

And then—

Everyone's blood ran cold.

Three colossal continents hung in the void.

One dripped with fresh blood.

One gleamed white, inscription chains writhing like serpents.

One blazed golden, as though a Buddha peered down.

The oppressive weight crushed every heart.

Five Phoenixes cultivators stood dumbstruck.

Tianyuan cultivators went mad with recognition—the same aura of world-ending invasion their ancestors had fled from!

Enemies from beyond the world!

Lu waved his hand again. Stars and continents vanished.

The terror lifted, yet everyone knew: swords hung over their heads. An unimaginable crisis loomed.

Lu said nothing more.

His incarnation sat alone in the wheelchair, gazing at the sky—shoulders seemingly bowed under invisible weight, loneliness and helplessness radiating from him.

“Cultivate diligently.”

After a long silence, he sighed.

That one sentence carried the weight of endless hardship.

Many felt that Young Master Lu’s back had truly bent beneath his burden.

The incarnation faded with a final sigh.

A heavy silence fell over the arena.

They finally understood the pressure on Young Master Lu’s shoulders.

So the White Jade Capital was not the carefree paradise they had imagined.

Enemies were coming.

Ni Yu's eyes turned red. She covered her mouth.

"So Young Master has been carrying all this alone..."

"Little Huang, we have to hurry back! Young Master needs us right now!"

The little wyrm on her head nodded solemnly.

Ni Yu pulled out three purple spirit crystals and—after a moment's thought—a bottle of her personally refined Body Tempering Pills, tossing them to Overlord.

"Rewards. Plus an extra bottle from me—split them fairly."

She bid farewell to Nie Shuang, Jing Yue, and the others.

The little wyrm roared, expanding into his true draconic form.

Ni Yu leaped onto his back. With a flap of fleshy wings, they shot through the Dragon Gate and vanished.

They were going back to share Young Master's burden!

Overlord and Tantai Xuan looked at each other, eyes heavy with newfound duty.

Young Master Lu had revealed the secret of the world.

It was time they shouldered some responsibility too.

...

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

Having successfully fooled the entire world, Lu lounged lazily in his Thousand Blades Chair, sipping sour-sweet plum wine, utterly relaxed.

Where was the lonely, helpless figure from moments ago?

"People only grow quickly under real pressure..."

He smiled, swirling the wine in his cup.

He wanted Five Phoenixes to fuse with these three supreme Mid-Tier Martial continents and ascend to High-Tier Martial.

The cultivators of Five Phoenixes had to keep up with him.

...

Outside Five Phoenixes Continent.

On Prajna Continent, the monk opened his eyes.

His divine-sense avatar had been destroyed—unexpected.

“Such a heaven-defying genius...”

He sighed softly.

Then he stepped into the void, turning into white light, appearing outside Tianluo Continent.

In the distance, the burly man floated as well.

Their eyes met. Same purpose: to check on Fu Tianluo.

This Five Phoenixes world felt wrong.

“The plane origin hasn’t collapsed. Fu Tianluo isn’t dead,” the burly man rumbled.

“But the array hasn’t fallen either,” the monk replied.

Silence.

Meaning: someone in that world was at least Fu Tianluo’s equal, preventing him from breaking the formation and guiding them in.

“Or... Fu Tianluo plans to swallow the world’s resources alone.”

They spoke in unison.

Neither said another word.

Either way, it wasn't good for them.

Without discussion, they turned into streaks of light and returned to their respective continents.

Against that array, they were helpless.

But the Venerable One of the High-Tier Buddhist Realm... might have a solution.

Chapter 348: Contacting the High-Tier Buddhist Realm—The Array-Breaker Descends

Prajna Continent.

Upon returning, the monk did not go back to his mountain temple.

Instead he entered the most magnificent city on the continent, walking into a temple worshipped by countless nobles and tycoons.

The entire structure was gilded, every brick cast from gold. Spirit stones formed the pillars that held the temple aloft.

A fifty-meter golden Buddha statue loomed inside, radiating solemn majesty.

Nobles and merchants streamed through constantly.

In Prajna Continent, Buddhism was everything.

The moment the monk arrived, the abbot hurried out with a procession of senior monks and novices, bowing deeply.

The monk returned the gesture kindly.

“Amitabha. This poor monk intends to contact the Venerable One and set up the array.”

Word spread quickly.

Soon the abbot led robed elders to prepare.

In the center of the golden temple, priceless spirit-stone treasures were arranged with exquisite precision.

The monk sat cross-legged at the heart of the altar, golden alms bowl in hand.

Around him, the elders took their places, wooden fish in hand, striking in perfect rhythm. Their powerful divine sense turned each knock into rippling sound waves that filled the temple.

Strange fluctuations spread.

Hum...

The monk formed seals and placed the golden bowl onto the altar.

A beam of light shot from the bowl into the heavens.

Rumble!

Buddha-light bathed the temple. Seven-colored auspicious clouds bloomed across the sky.

Outside, everyone—nobles, merchants, commoners—fell to their knees in ecstasy, kowtowing toward the light.

The Buddha had manifested!

Within the temple, clouds of gold condensed into a towering golden Buddha.

Terrifying pressure flooded the air.

“Wuxing pays respects to the Venerable One.”

The monk prostrated fully.

The golden Buddha regarded him silently, waiting.

Time was precious; contacting a High-Tier Buddhist Realm consumed astronomical energy.

Wuxing quickly recounted everything about Five Phoenixes.

“That world which bloomed with Buddha-lotus light is protected by a mysterious grand array. This disciple cannot break it to enter and ferry its people across the sea of suffering.”

Compassion filled his voice.

Buddhist chants thundered.

The golden Buddha spoke, voice resounding through the nine heavens.

“I will send an array-breaker. The dignity of the Buddhist Realm must not be defied.”

Every monk in the temple burned with fervent faith.

Wuxing remained prostrated, palms pressed to his forehead.

Soon the golden light faded.

Every top-grade spirit stone in the array had been drained dry.

Wuxing rose, expression serene.

He bid the abbot farewell and left the temple.

The Venerable One was sending an array-breaker.

That formation wouldn't hold them much longer.

...

Northern Luo City, Martial Arena.

Young Master Lu's incarnation had vanished.

Everyone held their breath.

No one had expected a simple competition between Great Xuan and Western Liang to unveil such a terrifying secret.

Young Master Lu had been bearing this alone.

Overlord and Tantai Xuan stared at the sky, hearts pounding.

Beyond the clouds—two more continents loomed.

Enemies.

They had always been right above their heads.

Were the Tianyuan foreigners the enemy?

Both kings knew the answer.

Tianyuan cultivators might disdain Five Phoenixes natives and clash often, but they shared the same sky.

The real enemies were those invaders from other continents.

“Anyone who invades our homeland is the true unforgivable enemy!”

Tantai Xuan clenched his fists, eyes blazing.

The competition was over.

Yet tension only grew thicker.

The martial arena remained shrouded in mist.

Xie Yunling arrived, daoist robes fluttering. Though aged, he commanded deep respect.

Not just because he represented the era of the Hundred Schools—but because of his strength.

Mo Beike, Xie Yunling, and Sword Saint Hua Dongliu—three elders—approached the floating jade talismans inscribed with strange arrays.

“These eight talismans likely connect to the blood-colored battlefield,” Xie Yunling said.

“This old daoist can try replicating the array and open a path there.”

The entire city seemed to fall silent.

Hua Dongliu turned sharply. “Old Xie, seriously?”

Overlord and Tantai Xuan's attention snapped to him.

Xie Yunling nodded solemnly.

But complexity soon clouded his eyes.

"Yet... should we really open that gate?"

"We have no idea how strong the enemies on the other side are."

He sighed.

He could copy the array.

But the consequences? He dared not bear them.

They wanted to share Young Master Lu's burden—but did they even have the right?

"This array has restrictions," a calm voice suddenly said.

Everyone looked—Lu Jiulian, the newly advanced Heavenly Lock genius.

“It only allows those below Heavenly Lock to enter. Anyone above is ejected. And the enemies inside seem limited to below Golden Core.”

He shared his observations.

Young Master Lu had given no hints; the world had to figure it out themselves.

Zhao Zixu nodded and recounted everything he had experienced.

Xie Yunling stroked his beard, eyes brightening.

“If that’s true, then opening the path is feasible... It could even become a trial ground for Body Storage cultivators.”

“Battles on the edge of life and death awaken true potential faster than anything else.”

But he frowned again.

“However, this old daoist cannot replicate Young Master Lu’s life-saving talismans.”

“Death inside would be real death.”

Overlord spoke gravely.

“Lord Xie need not worry. If Young Master Lu cannot hold, and invaders come anyway, soldiers will still have to fight and die on the front lines. That is their fate—they cannot escape it.”

“Agreed,” Tantai Xuan rumbled.

Jiang Li, who had been silent, finally spoke with weight.

“This could be an opportunity—a chance to temper our troops.”

“The array restricts enemies to below Golden Core. We have plenty of cultivators below that level, and they are born quickly.”

“This is a rare chance for them to grow stronger through real combat.”

His words sent a shiver through everyone.

Battlefield growth far outstripped peaceful cultivation.

“Very well. This old daoist will return and study the array.”

Xie Yunling gathered the eight talismans and left Northern Luo City, heading back to the Dao Pavilion on Tian Dang Mountain.

For Lu, it was a simple rune array.

For Xie Yunling, it required meticulous care.

...

Northern Luo Lake had lost its divine luster without White Jade Capital.

Fishermen poled their boats across the water, sky and lake blending into one color.

On the shore, Overlord stood like an iron tower, hands clasped behind his back, gazing at the surging waves.

Xue Tao escorted Tantai Xuan to the shore.

“My king...”

Seeing Tantai Xuan intend to meet Overlord privately, Xue Tao hesitated.

Tantai Xuan raised a hand.

“It’s fine.”

He smiled and walked toward the towering figure.

The kings of Western Liang and Great Xuan spoke long into the cool night by the lake.

Xue Tao’s heart pounded the entire time.

Overlord was number one on the Human List—if he harbored ill intent, the Northern Xuan King might not survive.

No one ever learned what they discussed.

When dawn painted the sky pale gold, Tantai Xuan turned and left.

...

Nie Changqing, Jing Yue, and the others returned to the Nine Prisons Secret Realm.

They had to grow stronger.

Only then could they stand in front of Young Master and share the pressure.

The Nascent Soul ancestors from Tianyuan's four holy lands also left Northern Luo, returning to Dongyang Commandery to report everything.

But when they arrived, Du Longyang and the others were nowhere to be found.

Meanwhile, Great Xuan and Western Liang began mobilizing armies, gathering cultivators below Golden Core, drilling in the yellow sands, preparing for the coming war.

Time slipped by.

A sword seemed to hang over every heart.

The pressure from those three foreign continents was immense.

As cultivation spread, tales of “demons from beyond the heavens” circulated.

It was said that in ancient times, a glorious cultivation civilization had been destroyed by such invaders.

Now history might repeat itself.

No one dared slack. Everyone pushed themselves harder than ever.

Within the Nine Prisons Secret Realm, the geniuses on the Human List trained like mad.

They turned pressure into motivation.

They could feel it—terrifying battles were coming.

The Great Xuan Academy expanded rapidly.

After the tie in Northern Luo, news spread and shocked the world.

Soon after, Tantai Xuan issued imperial edicts establishing Great Xuan Academy branches in every major city, recruiting talented youths and pouring resources into foundational training.

All factions were stunned.

Many waited for Western Liang's reaction.

But Overlord and Western Liang remained silent—as if in tacit approval.

The world erupted.

Had Overlord yielded?

Or had the two kings reached some secret agreement?

...

Southern Commandery, Tian Dang Mountain, Dao Pavilion.

Wind rustled the bamboo outside the tower.

After a long time, white-haired Xie Yunling emerged, weary but eyes shining.

Outside stood Ximen Xianzhi with his sword case, and Sword Saint Hua Dongliu perked up.

“Well, Old Xie?”

Hua Dongliu asked.

Xie Yunling’s pale face was serious.

“Young Master’s array dao is simply too profound. A single casual rune would take a lifetime to study.”

“But... I managed to replicate two complete sets.”

He coughed, clearly drained.

Yet excitement blazed in his eyes.

Studying this array had been a blessing.

There was no time for idle talk.

They all knew what duplicated arrays meant.

Ximen Xianzhi and Hua Dongliu escorted Xie Yunling down the mountain.

Through the Dragon Gates, one set was sent to Western Liang, the other to Great Xuan.

...

Above the Boundless Sea.

The ice pagoda towered.

A streak of light shot out of the tower and crashed into the ocean.

From within came a furious, icy roar.

“Keep running if you dare! One day I’ll kill everyake my chance!”

Inside the pagoda, Fu Tianluo’s cold eyes shot divine light through the entrance.

Ye Shoudao floated on the sea, chest caved in, on the verge of death.

But origin energy surged through him, rapidly healing his wounds.

A Yin Spirit realm expert sealed as a sparring partner—perfect.

Du Longyang and Ye Shoudao, fresh Yin Spirit cultivators, improved by leaps and bounds fighting him together.

The Empress and Young Master Tianxu activated their tokens next.

The tokens suppressed Fu Tianluo to early Yin Spirit level.

Even then, killing them was easy for him.

One mistake and they died.

Tianxu once nearly had his body sliced in half.

Dangerous, yes—but the benefits were undeniable.

They could already feel the barrier to mid-Yin Spirit.

Finally came Zhu Long.

She used Fu Tianluo to test her divine abilities without restraint.

Black-and-white millstones descended, grinding the void itself.

Every session brought massive gains. Her mastery grew by leaps, and so did her strength.

Inside the pagoda, Fu Tianluo's mood was darker than the abyss.

A mighty plane lord reduced to a tool.

Now he understood—Du Longyang was no plane lord.

The real master was that white-clothed youth in the wheelchair who had sealed him here.

Soul Projection?

Impossible.

No Mid-Tier Martial world could birth a Soul Projection expert.

The rules of heaven and earth weren't that easy to break.

So Fu Tianluo concluded Lu must be using some secret treasure or forbidden art passed down from a High-Tier world.

To dare offend the Venerable One, he must have a High-Tier backer.

Fu Tianluo stared coldly through the ice.

He refused to die.

He would endure, bide his time.

Sooner or later, the Venerable One from the High-Tier Buddhist Realm would come and free him.

...

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

Xie Yunling had taken longer than Lu expected to copy the array.

Within the Heaven Covering Formation, Lu had already opened breaches for early Golden Core cultivators.

Countless Foundation Establishment invaders from Prajna, Golden Body, and Tianluo Continents now wandered lost inside the blood-colored battlefield, running in endless circles under Lu's control.

Now that Xie Yunling had succeeded, Lu could finally stop toying with them.

It was time to let them serve as proper whetstones for Five Phoenixes' Body Storage cultivators.

Later, he would gradually raise the limit—Golden Core, then Nascent Soul.

Increasing difficulty step by step.

In short, Lu had turned the cultivators of all three continents into tools, just like Fu Tianluo.

Once that was done, he could begin planning how to infiltrate and fuse their continental origins.

Suddenly—

A gentle breeze swept across Lake Heart Island.

Lu raised an eyebrow and looked into the boundless starry sky.

Beyond Five Phoenixes Continent,

A withered, deathly silent land slowly drifted closer.

Cold, deadly array runes coiled around it like chains.

From Prajna and Golden Body Continents, the monk and the burly man sensed it and shot into the void.

Their eyes gleamed as they watched.

Atop the dead continent sat a mountain-like figure, motionless.

When the monk and burly man saw him, they exchanged a glance and smiled.

The array-breaker sent by the Venerable One had arrived.

Chapter 349: Little Yinglong's Spring Has Come

Northern Commandery.

Tai Ridge, outside the Azure Dragon Gate.

Ximen Xianzhi stepped out of the Dragon Gate, sword case on his back.

The Xuanwu Guards on duty instantly recognized him and sent word to Tantai Xuan.

Moments later, Tantai Xuan arrived with Mo Ju and Mo Beike in tow.

Northern Xuan Palace.

The new imperial palace of Great Xuan, built at the foot of Tai Ridge around the newly established Great Xuan Academy—the first academy of the land. Tantai Xuan had moved the capital here. The old Imperial Capital, though no longer the seat of power, remained prosperous thanks to its proximity to Northern Luo City and the presence of the Black Dragon Gate.

Ximen Xianzhi had come bearing the jade talisman array.

Xie Yunling and Sword Saint Hua Dongliu had gone to Western Liang with the other set.

“Lord Xie has successfully replicated Young Master Lu’s talisman array. He asked me to deliver this one to Great Xuan,” Ximen Xianzhi said, hands still clasped behind his back.

If not for this errand, he would still be charging toward greater heights in the Nine Prisons Secret Realm.

Worth mentioning—he had now stepped into the Heavenly Lock realm. With the Rebirth Pool’s energy and the Body-Tempering Pills forged from Spirit Opening Crystals, the threshold had become far easier to cross lately, likely due to the shifting origin of the world.

Tantai Xuan stared at the eight jade talismans on the table, expression grave.

Mo Beike studied them with heavy-lidded eyes.

Mo Ju gently waved his feather fan, mood somber. Though it was just a simple array, the implications were anything but.

It was a gate to the blood-colored battlefield.

Without life-saving talismans, entering was suicide.

“Young Master Ximen, set it up,” Tantai Xuan said without hesitation.

He looked up at the sky.

His stance on invaders had never changed.

Different tribe, different heart.

Anyone who invades us—fuck them up!

That was why he insisted on activating the array.

Ximen Xianzhi stepped forward, exuding the transcendent air of a swordsman.

At the center of the martial arena, he arranged the eight talismans exactly as Xie Yunling had instructed.

Then he stood at the heart of the formation, formed a seal, and released a strand of divine sense.

Hum...

The talismans spun. Mist billowed forth.

Tantai Xuan had already donned full armor, blade resting across his saddle.

War drums thundered.

“King of Northern Xuan,” Ximen Xianzhi reminded, “the array can only send ten people at a time, once every half hour. Exceed that and it collapses.”

Tantai Xuan nodded.

From the distance came the thunder of hooves.

Jiang Li rode forward in silver armor, cold and sharp.

Behind him marched row upon row of Xuanwu Guards.

“My king, let us open the path—let us carve the way into that blood-colored battlefield!”

Tantai Xuan’s face darkened, but he clenched his fist.

“Get your ass back here alive!”

Jiang Li laughed.

He had yet to reach Heavenly Lock—he still qualified.

Spear in hand, silver cloak snapping in the wind, he led nine Xuanwu Guards and charged fearlessly into the swirling mist.

His blood sang. This—this was the life he had always craved.

The sound of hooves vanished instantly.

Dead silence fell over the arena.

Great Xuan Academy students watched from afar.

They knew Jiang Li and his men were risking their lives to forge a safe road for everyone else.

That was a soldier's duty.

Lu Jiulian stood at the edge of the arena. The solemn atmosphere stirred something deep in his calm heart.

Meanwhile, in Western Liang's martial arena, Overlord sent ten Xiang Family Army soldiers into the mist.

...

Lake Heart Island.

Ni Yu returned with tears in her eyes, ready to share Young Master's burden.

Lu rejected her mercilessly.

"Cultivate well and refine pills well—that's the greatest help you can give me."

Leaning back in his Thousand Blades Chair, sipping plum wine, he looked utterly relaxed.

Where was the pressure?

Ni Yu wiped her tears, suddenly feeling cheated.

She knew Young Master too well.

He had definitely been fooling everyone again.

Lu paid no mind to her thoughts. After sending her off to cultivate, he looked up.

He sensed a dead, withered continent drifting closer outside the heavens.

The plane lords of Prajna and Golden Body continents had appeared as well.

“Called for reinforcements?” Lu murmured, chin propped on one hand, fingers idly spinning the Dark Profound Ring.

He hadn’t expected that.

Reinforcements—for what?

It didn't take long to figure out.

They wanted help breaking his array.

The only thing stopping the full invasion of Golden Body and Prajna forces was the Heaven Covering Formation.

“An array-breaker?”

The corner of Lu's mouth curved.

His array dao had been built upon the Preaching Platform and his own research.

He was always happy to learn new array techniques from other worlds.

Lu Ping'an was, after all, a studious man.

Besides—a ground-tier array wouldn't be that easy to crack, even for a High-Tier Martial expert... right?

He was actually looking forward to it.

...

Outside Five Phoenixes Continent.

A barren, lifeless land drifted through the void.

Not a single blade of grass grew. Deathly stillness and cold runes coiled everywhere.

Yet at its center sat a colossal figure, mountain-like beneath a black robe.

He looked nothing like an array master.

Two streaks of light shot over.

Monk Wuxing in plain white robes landed softly on the dead earth.

He looked up at the towering giant.

The burly man from Golden Body Continent was already huge—but beside this titan, he barely reached the ankle.

“This is the array-breaker the Venerable One sent?” the burly man asked, squinting.

“His aura isn’t particularly strong—just mid-stage Spirit Severing,” Monk Wuxing observed, palms pressed together, eyes gleaming oddly.

“This one is a wanderer of the void. The Venerable One sending him reminds me of a certain array sect that survives among the void wanderers...”

“What sect?” the burly man asked.

He truly had no idea.

“The void is vast beyond measure. The Venerable One once said that within it lie countless worlds—some destroyed, some wandering. Even High-Tier Martial worlds can collapse and become wanderers.”

“This array sect comes from the remnants of a High-Tier Martial world... one they destroyed themselves.”

Wuxing smiled faintly.

The burly man scratched his head, speechless.

“Just say the name.”

“Lijia Array Sect.”

The burly man’s eyes narrowed.

He had heard of them.

“The Venerable One actually called in the Lijia Array Sect... This world really pissed him off.”

He stomped the ground and shot upward like a golden meteor, stopping before the giant’s face.

The seated giant slowly opened his eyes and glanced at the golden-bodied man radiating overwhelming vitality.

Then he spoke in an ancient tongue.

Array runes wove together. A massive palm descended, forming a giant array that slammed down over the burly man.

The burly man's expression changed—he had only wanted to talk!

Chills ran down his spine.

Golden light exploded from his body, indestructible.

He had heard of the Liujia Array Sect's reputation and dared not be careless.

BOOM!

The array crushed him into the ground. He couldn't move.

Even at late-stage Spirit Severing, he was completely trapped.

“Amitabha.”

Monk Wuxing pressed his palms together and bowed slightly to the giant.

“Friend of the Liujia Array Sect, the Venerable One must have guided you here. We are allies, not enemies.”

The giant glanced at him.

“A fair trade of benefits, nothing more.”

“The Venerable One first contacted my master, but he could not descend—the energy here is too weak. So he sent me instead.”

“Ninth Disciple of the Liujia Array Sect.”

His booming voice carried calm wisdom as his gaze met Wuxing’s.

A snap of his fingers.

The array pinning the burly man dissolved.

The burly man gasped, drenched in cold sweat.

Rumbled.

The giant stood, towering into the void.

His eyes shone with intelligence.

He saw Golden Body Continent, Tianluo Continent, Prajna Continent.

Finally, his gaze settled on Five Phoenixes, shrouded in mist.

“This is a game between High-Tier Martial powers.”

“The reason the Venerable One contacted our sect is to discover which High-Tier Martial world stands behind our opponent.”

Wuxing and the burly man were startled—they hadn’t expected that motive.

“Our Liujia Array Sect does not interfere in clashes between High-Tier powers. But since we accepted payment, breaking the array is no issue.”

He stepped off the dead continent into the void.

BOOM!

With every step, array runes bloomed beneath his feet.

Five Phoenixes loomed close.

Mist swirled, veiling its beauty like a veiled maiden.

“How like a beauty draped in gossamer...”

The giant sighed.

“The beauty of array dao is pure indeed.”

The burly man and monk were speechless.

They couldn't appreciate that kind of beauty.

"Please, sir," Wuxing bowed.

"No problem. Let me first probe this array."

The giant floated forward, stopping just outside the misty veil.

His long green hair drifted.

He raised a hand, index and middle fingers pressed together, array runes writhing across them.

He pressed them to his eyes and slowly drew them apart.

Hum...

Purple light burst from his pupils, sweeping across Five Phoenixes like a laser scan.

“Hm?”

The light faded. Surprise flickered in his eyes.

“Our Liujia Array Sect’s records contain no trace of this formation’s origin.”

Excitement spread across his face.

“A brand-new branch of array dao!”

He grinned.

“But worry not—I’ll break it swiftly!”

A jade talisman appeared in his hand.

He crushed it.

A streak of array runes shot forth.

As if lecturing, he explained to the two behind him:

“This is the Liujia Array Sect’s Array-Breaking Talisman. It can shatter ten thousand formations.”

“Array dao is mysterious and complex, yet all variations stem from the same source. Grasp the root, and even the most intricate array becomes simple. This talisman strikes straight to the core and destroys the array eye.”

The rune dragon vanished into the mist.

“That’s it?” the burly man asked, eyes wide.

The giant chuckled confidently.

“Once the Array-Breaking Talisman is deployed, the formation will fall within half a day at the soonest, three days at the latest.”

Wuxing smiled.

“As expected of the Liujia Array Sect.”

Flattered, the giant threw his head back and laughed.

He loved the look of country bumpkins who had never seen the world.

...

Rumble!

The sky above Five Phoenixes changed.

Some looked up and vaguely saw a dragon soaring.

But no one thought much of it.

After all, dragons were hardly rare in Five Phoenixes.

Each of the eight Dragon Gates had its own Heavenly Dragon.

People assumed it was just one of the gate dragons playing in the clouds.

Lake Heart Island.

Lu knew better.

He was the father of every dragon here—how could he not recognize his own child?

That dragon shadow was no dragon.

It was a strand of array runes.

“Array runes?”

Lu smiled from his Thousand Blades Chair.

With a thought—

Little Yinglong, happily swimming in Origin Lake, suddenly floated upward.

When he came to his senses, he was hovering in front of Lu.

Lu pointed at the sky, smiling.

“Go pull that thing down for me.”

Little Yinglong’s eyes lit up.

Dad was finally sending him into battle!

Dad had finally recognized his worth!

His spring had come!

ROAR!

With a mighty cry, his fleshy wings unfurled, blotting out the sun.

He became a streak of golden light and shot into the heavens.

He spotted the rune dragon racing across the sky.

Some random cat or dog daring to impersonate a Heavenly Dragon?

Little Yinglong pounced.

The illusory rune dragon was solid enough to grab.

One claw—he yanked it straight out of the sky.

He dove like a meteor and crashed into Origin Lake, splashing happily.

Finding the rune snake inedible, he carried it in his mouth and trotted proudly to Lu.

Lu lounged in his chair, rubbing Little Yinglong's head fondly.

He took the rune snake and sealed it into a jade talisman.

“Interesting. It can crack most formations.”

“An Array-Breaking Talisman?”

To Lu, it was like a universal password cracker—effective, but rigid and predictable.

Using this to break his hardest formation yet?

Underestimating him a bit, weren't they?

“Confiscated.”

Lu pocketed the talisman.

He glanced toward the void outside Five Phoenixes and faintly saw the mountain-like giant sitting there.

“I hope this array-breaker has some fresh tricks.”

...

Outside Five Phoenixes.

The giant was utterly confident in his talisman.

In the Mid-Tier Martial world, Liujia Array Sect's Array-Breaking Talisman was nearly unbeatable.

There was no array it couldn't crack.

Yet—

One day passed.

The Heaven Covering Formation didn't budge.

The burly man began looking at the giant strangely.

Wuxing still trusted him.

Two days.

Three days.

On the third day, the giant's face was iron-blue.

Where was his talisman?!

"Friend..." the burly man said awkwardly, "the Venerable One paid good money for Liujia Array Sect's help. Don't ruin your sect's reputation."

The giant ignored him.

He formed seals frantically, trying to recall the talisman.

No response.

Like a stone dropped into the sea.

"The basic talisman can't carry divine sense. It must have failed. This array has some depth."

The giant laughed, now genuinely intrigued.

He took out another talisman, poured his divine sense inside, severed a strand, and tossed it in.

The talisman exploded within the formation.

Countless runes wove together, condensing into an eyeball—his divine-sense eye—observing the world inside.

Suddenly, the strand froze.

He saw a small dragon panting excitedly, wings flapping, charging straight at him.

It snapped the rune strand in its jaws.

Hmm?

Little Yinglong sensed the slimy, disgusting eyeball watching him.

He snorted in disgust.

Pfft!

A jet of water shot from his mouth and struck the eye dead-center.

Pop!

The eyeball exploded.

Satisfied, Little Yinglong hummed proudly, carried the rune strand back to Lake Heart Island, and sat before Lu—who was sipping plum wine and playing Spirit Pressure Chess—like a dog waiting for praise.

Lu chuckled, took the runes, and compressed them into another talisman.

“Still an Array-Breaking Talisman. No creativity.”

“Can’t you give me something challenging?”

He glanced once, lost interest, and tossed the talisman into his Dark Profound Ring.

Chapter 350: The Nine Array Words—The Way to Break the Formation

The sky kept changing color.

Within the Nine Prisons Secret Realm, a figure in flowing daoist robes stepped out, exuding quiet elegance.

Li Sansui raised her head, long lashes trembling, gem-like eyes staring at the heavens.

“There’s an array fluctuation up there,” she murmured, red lips barely moving.

Li Sansi, cloaked in black, emerged behind her.

“A great crisis seems to be descending...”

The three foreign continents hovering beyond the world had long become common knowledge among cultivators. Young Master Lu from Northern Luo had shouldered unimaginable pressure to shield the world beneath a peaceful sky.

Everyone admired and revered him for it.

“Are the experts from those three continents finally making their move? They’re trying to break the formation?”

Worry surfaced in Li Sansui’s eyes.

The only reason Five Phoenixes remained untouched was Young Master Lu’s grand array. If an array-breaker succeeded, once it fell, how could Young Master Lu alone fend off three entire worlds?

Li Sansi glanced upward from beneath his black hood.

After a long pause, he spoke softly, “No need to worry. Young Master Lu’s methods are boundless. His formation will not fall so easily. What we must do is cultivate harder...”

His words silenced Li Sansui.

After a while, she looked straight at him.

“Li Sansi, I’m going to the blood-colored battlefield.”

His body stiffened.

“You can cultivate just as well in the secret realm.”

“Sooner or later you’ll reach Heavenly Lock Golden Core.”

He was clearly refusing her.

Li Sansui shook her head.

“I can’t wait any longer. Only the pressure between life and death can force the fastest breakthrough... Besides, I’m skilled in formations. On the blood-colored battlefield, I can save many lives.”

She had always been stubborn. No one could change her mind once it was made.

The next day, she left the prison gate and headed for Tai Ridge.

She wasn’t the only one.

Outside the Nine Prisons Secret Realm, Meng Haoran bowed deeply to Kong Nanfei, shouldered his pack, and set off north toward Great Xuan.

Kong Nanfei, disheveled in his scholar's robes, took a long swig from his gourd.

He watched Meng Haoran's figure disappear over the hills and sighed.

That path led to the blood-colored battlefield—life or death unknown.

He hadn't wanted Meng Haoran to go, but the man had chosen to break through between life and death. All Kong Nanfei could do was watch him walk the path he'd chosen.

...

Beneath the swirling mist lay a vast blood-colored plain.

Crimson earth had been piled into a defensive wall five li across. Behind it swirled the vortex exit of the jade talisman array—anyone who stepped through the formation in the mortal world emerged here.

In front of the wall was a true slaughterhouse.

Muscle-bound cultivators with terrifying physical strength.

Monks with serene faces yet ruthless hands.

These were the enemies Five Phoenixes cultivators faced upon entering—exactly like those Zhao Zixu and Lu Jiulian had once fought.

But Jiang Li commanded the defense. The moment the battlefield opened, he ordered walls raised. Cultivators built fast; within hours a five-li fortress ringed the exit. Military formations held the line, stalling the enemy advance.

Casualties were inevitable.

Yet as more and more Body Storage cultivators from Five Phoenixes poured in, the tide slowly turned.

The blood-colored earth grew ever more drenched in gore and littered with corpses.

Wave after wave of battle.

Behind the walls, Five Phoenixes' Body Storage cultivators refused to yield an inch. Their spirit sharpened with every clash, on the verge of transformation.

...

Outside Five Phoenixes Continent.

A transmission rang out from Golden Body Continent.

The burly man and Monk Wuxing exchanged glances, shock in their eyes.

“They found a flaw in the formation?”

“The Foundation Establishment cultivators who entered met natives desperately guarding an array—that must be the passage into the world!”

Excitement spread across the burly man’s face.

“Even the toughest fortress has cracks...”

“This turtle shell finally revealed a weakness!”

A gleam appeared in Wuxing’s eyes—excitement he rarely showed.

They immediately ordered more Foundation Establishment cultivators to storm the breach and seize the passage.

Golden Cores and above couldn't enter, but Foundation Establishment? They had endless numbers.

Meanwhile, the giant sat cross-legged in the void, face dark as iron.

His second Array-Breaking Talisman—with divine sense attached—had vanished too.

His cheeks burned with humiliation.

As the Ninth Disciple of the Liujia Array Sect, heir to its true teachings, the sect's name alone struck fear across the void wanderers.

He had come expecting an easy job, even boasting in front of Wuxing and the burly man.

Yet he had failed—twice. Both talismans swallowed without a trace.

“This formation...”

Cold light flashed in the giant's eyes.

Whoever set it was challenging the Liujia Array Sect.

Fine. No more holding back.

Even if a High-Tier Martial expert stood behind it, provoking the Liujia Array Sect meant face no longer mattered.

BOOM!

The giant rose.

The burly man and monk looked over, puzzled by his sudden aura.

In pure combat strength, the giant was weaker—mid-stage Spirit Severing, focused on arrays, while they were late-stage.

Yet now, an aura that made even them wary rolled off him.

He formed dozens of seals in a single breath, each one releasing profound ripples.

“ROAR!”

He bellowed.

A vertical eye opened on his forehead.

Within its spinning pupil blazed the massive character “臨” (Lin), radiating terrifying pressure into the void.

“What is that?!”

Even the burly man, protected by his indestructible golden body, paled in shock.

“That is the ‘Lin’ Array Word. If I’m not mistaken, it is one of the legendary Nine Array Words of the Liujia Array Sect...”

“This giant is no ordinary disciple—he wields one of the sect’s supreme treasures. He must be a direct successor!”

Monk Wuxing exclaimed.

The giant glanced over—he had heard.

This monk knew quite a lot.

The Nine Array Words were the sect's highest secret. Only the nine true disciples could wield even one.

“Nine Array Words?” The burly man's eyes narrowed.

“Lin, Bing, Dou, Zhe, Jie, Shu, Zu, Qian, Xing... Those are the Nine Array Words.”

“When all nine are combined, they can form an array capable of annihilating a High-Tier Martial world!”

“That is why even High-Tier powers fear the Liujia Array Sect.”

Wuxing sighed in awe.

The burly man sucked in a cold breath. He had never heard these secrets.

Nine words that could destroy a High-Tier Martial world?

The Liujia Array Sect was that terrifying?!

Instantly, his gaze toward the giant filled with wariness and respect.

“With the Nine Array Words, victory is certain. The previous failures were from underestimating the formation. Now it will fall easily.”

Wuxing smiled.

“Indeed. You know your stuff, monk.”

The giant laughed.

Then he focused entirely.

The massive “臨” character burned in the void.

His belt glowed. Eighteen colossal stone slabs forged from the dead continent rose around him, covered in dense array runes.

With the “Lin” word as the array eye, he activated the grand formation.

BOOM!

A magnificent array unfolded in the void.

The giant raised both hands as if lifting the sky itself.

He drove the formation crashing against the Heaven Covering Formation.

CLANG!

The two arrays collided—countless runes tangled and clashed!

Array duel!

The giant stood tall in the void, utterly confident.

Once a Nine Array Word of the Liujia Array Sect was deployed, all formations in the world bowed!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Explosions rocked the void.

The giant's third eye blazed.

He was serious now.

And when he got serious—he never lost.

That was the pride of the Liujia Array Sect's Ninth Disciple.

...

On the blood-colored battlefield, the sky churned.

Amid the stench of blood and mountains of corpses, every head turned upward.

Even the crimson earth seemed to tremble.

Atop the blood-colored wall sat a blood-soaked daoist robe figure, head raised, black hair dancing in the wind.

“Array runes...”

“Someone is forcibly trying to break the formation!”

Li Sansui’s delicate brows furrowed with worry.

But the next moment, she stared transfixed at the intertwining runes in the sky.

They reflected light in her eyes like a revelation.

“What an incredible path of arrays... So this is how powerful formations can be!”

Her breathing quickened. She fell into deep contemplation—almost enlightenment.

Jiang Li noticed first. His brow tightened, and he immediately ordered guards to protect her.

Enlightenment was a priceless opportunity.

To interrupt it would be a lifelong regret.

Li Sansui's formations had already saved countless lives in this war. Without them, casualties would have been two or three times higher.

Now she was gaining enlightenment—how could Jiang Li not be overjoyed?

He stood atop the wall, gazing into the distance.

The first enemy wave had been repelled, their forces annihilated, though a few had escaped.

More would come soon.

They could not let their guard down.

Immense pressure weighed on Jiang Li's shoulders.

The blood of the former Great Zhou War God, dormant for so long, boiled once more on this battlefield.

...

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

A giant whale breached the surface.

Little Yinglong swam freely.

Lu, arranging a game of Yin-Yang Spirit Pressure Chess, suddenly paused.

Countless lines danced in his eyes—he saw the scene beyond the heavens.

“An array duel?”

He narrowed his eyes.

They still wouldn't give up. They even wanted to fight array against array.

“This is a ground-tier defensive formation. Did they really think it would fear a duel?”

Lu shook his head and returned to his chessboard.

But then—he saw something.

His hand froze mid-move.

He looked up again.

His gaze pierced all barriers and landed on the ferocious array the giant had deployed.

It passed the eighteen stone slabs and fixed directly on the mysterious “臨” character blazing in the giant's third eye.

“What is that?”

Curiosity and wonder filled Lu's eyes.

The word looked ordinary, yet upon closer inspection, it radiated profound mystery.

It felt... familiar.

“Right... it's similar to the array words on the Preaching Platform!”

Lines flashed faster in his eyes.

The Preaching Platform's Eight Trigrams Array had words: Qian, Dui, Li, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Gen, Kun, Zhong...

Different from this one, yet the principle was the same.

The previous two Array-Breaking Talismans had disappointed him.

Now, Lu was genuinely interested.

This array-breaker actually had some skill.

Lu smiled.

His eyes sparkled as he stared at the “臨” Array Word.

...

Outside Five Phoenixes.

The giant roared.

He formed seal after seal, controlling his array.

With the “Lin” word’s power, his formation became a world-crushing millstone, slowly descending.

BOOM!

The mist shrouding Five Phoenixes began to collapse!

“It’s working! The formation is breaking!”

The burly man’s blood surged, late-stage Spirit Severing aura exploding with excitement.

Monk Wuxing pressed his palms together, a smile on his serene face.

Once the formation fell, nothing could stop them.

A newly ascended top-tier Mid-Tier Martial world?

Even if a High-Tier power backed it—so what?

They had the Venerable One.

BOOM!

The mist parted.

Wuxing and the burly man saw the blood-colored plain.

“That’s the blood-colored battlefield—the natives’ final defense line.”

The burly man sneered.

On the battlefield, Jiang Li looked up in disbelief as the mist cleared.

He clearly saw the three continents.

And the terrifying giant looming above.

So these were the enemies?!

Overwhelming pressure made his silver armor tremble.

Li Sansui remained in enlightenment, comprehending her own path of arrays.

BOOM!

A sonic boom.

The blood-vitality burly man moved.

He raised a hand. Endless bloody mist poured out, forming a gigantic crimson palm that slammed down toward the battlefield.

“Hahaha! Mere ants! Why resist?!”

His laughter boomed.

Yet the moment his palm descended—

Mysterious array runes surged.

PFFT!

His entire arm exploded.

He roared in fury, golden body blazing with metallic clangs.

Only then did he save his arm.

“What the hell?! The formation isn’t broken yet?!”

He glared at the giant, enraged.

The giant frowned.

“What’s the rush?”

“This is very likely a ground-tier formation—something impossible for a Mid-Tier Martial world. Breaking it naturally takes time.”

The burly man’s face darkened.

He had nearly lost his arm twice to this damned array.

“The lord of this plane is nothing but a coward hiding behind his shell!”

“He definitely knows we’re here, but he’s too scared to come out and fight like a man!”

“The formation will fall eventually. They’re all going to die anyway. Why not come out and show some backbone?!”

“What a pathetic turtle!”

His curses rang loud and clear, no attempt to hide them.

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

A gentle breeze lifted Lu’s white robes.

Leaning back in his Thousand Blades Chair, Lu narrowed his eyes.

His fingers tapped the armrest.

“Is this guy... cursing me?”

“I have such a good temper, and he still curses me?”

“Heh.”

...

On the blood-colored battlefield.

Just when despair seemed certain, they realized even that monster couldn't descend.

Everyone exhaled in relief.

Li Sansui snapped out of enlightenment—the burly man's commotion was too loud.

She felt her understanding of formations had leaped forward.

The giant's array dao had been like divine revelation.

The giant naturally paid no attention to the ants below.

The mist rolled back in, once more veiling the battlefield.

Monk Wuxing looked over, puzzled.

“This formation won’t break easily. We must find the array eye.”

The giant spoke calmly.

“The array eye?”

Wuxing’s eyes sharpened.

“Yes. Every formation has an eye. Find and destroy it, and the formation collapses.”

“This one’s eye is inside the world itself.”

The burly man paled.

“Then how the hell do we break it?!”

The giant formed a seal.

The “Lin” Array Word compressed into his palm.

“I cannot destroy the formation yet, but the ‘Lin’ word can send one person inside to shatter the eye.”

“Its power is domineering. Only a sufficiently strong body can withstand it.”

The giant finished.

The burly man fell silent.

Because the giant was staring straight at him.

Needed a strong body?

Who else but him?