

## Starlit Path 391

Chapter 391: The Holy Lord-Level Punching Bag

Five Phoenix Continent.

The world's protective barrier was crumbling at an accelerating pace.

Qi Liujia's expression was grave, as if facing an existential threat. He found Li Sansui and, without holding anything back, poured every ounce of his lifetime's knowledge into the younger man.

Afterward, he left the ocean domain and entered the Immortal Legacy Ruins. Seated beneath the sundial where time flowed faster, he began deducing formations, desperate to weave a world-shaking grand array that could shield Five Phoenix.

Even if he himself couldn't hold the line, the array had to last until Lu's return.

Out at sea, without Qi Liujia's deterrence, the Holy Sons and Holy Maidens were once again locked inside the ice towers.

Yet strangely, they no longer seemed anxious. Cold, expectant smirks played on their lips.

They quietly awaited the calamity that would soon befall this world.

Especially the Golden Boy and Jade Girl of the Black-White Holy Land—their faces twisted with pure venom.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, the Empress, and the others had also sensed something ominous.

Their expressions heavy, they retreated to their primordial spirit platforms and entered secluded cultivation, racing to achieve unity of the primordial spirit and step into the Mighty Being realm.

Overlord, Nie Changqing, Ning Zhao, and the rest likewise poured themselves into training within the Immortal Legacy Ruins.

The entire Five Phoenix Continent was like a machine running at full throttle.

As Five Phoenix officially entered the High Martial stage, heaven and earth underwent another metamorphosis. Countless heavenly treasures and spirit herbs emerged across the land.

Cultivators set out across mountains and rivers, chasing destiny.

In the early days of this transformation, the spiritual fruits and treasures that appeared sparked a bloody storm throughout the cultivation world.

Sect after sect dispatched disciples into famous mountains, great rivers, and blessed lands to hunt for opportunities.

When foreign enemies appeared, everyone united against them.

But when treasures were on the line, the knives came out immediately.

This, after all, was the true face of the cultivation world—everyone scrambling for power, groping their way toward immortality.

During this period, explorers began encountering a new kind of spiritual being: the Demon Race.

These demons were anything but weak.

They clashed with human cultivators over spirit medicines and fruits.

The old saying held true—different tribes, inevitable conflict.

War erupted between demons and humans over these heavenly treasures.

Casualties were heavy, but for now, the demons were outnumbered and outgunned; humanity held the upper hand.

Then Demon Kings emerged.

The Demon Monkey King swung a frigid black-iron staff and smashed a Golden Core cultivator who had been massacring demons into paste with a single blow, igniting the powder keg.

The Silver Wolf King, the Black Tiger King, and other Demon King-level powerhouses appeared, taking command of their kind.

What began as skirmishes slowly escalated into something far more dangerous.

...

Northern County, Tai Ridge, Asking Heaven Peak.

Great Xuan Imperial Palace.

Ministers filed into the throne room and took their places.

Emperor Tantai Xuan sat high upon his dragon throne in resplendent robes. At his side, an attendant read aloud the memorials submitted by the officials.

Most concerned the livelihood of the common people—ever since Tantai Xuan took the throne, the people’s welfare had been his top priority, and his ministers followed suit.

Tantai Xuan nodded slightly, clearly pleased.

Thanks to Five Phoenix’s latest heavenly transformation, the bodies of ordinary citizens had grown stronger and healthier. Crop yields soared, labor efficiency skyrocketed, and even the grain ripened earlier than ever—yet the quality only improved.

Tantai Xuan smiled, thoroughly satisfied.

His mind was clear, and even his imperial dragon qi grew a fraction denser.

As lord of Great Xuan, the people’s happiness was the foundation of his throne—and the source of his imperial dragon qi’s stability and growth.

Once the reports on civilian matters concluded, Mo Ju stepped forward, his face grave, and began briefing the emperor on the cultivation world.

“My liege, demon clans have appeared in most blessed lands within Great Xuan’s borders. Conflicts between humans and demons have already caused significant casualties.”

“Furthermore... beyond the Endless Desert, west of the Demon Continent, foreign tribes from the Western Regions are growing restless.”

“Does Your Majesty remember Liu Yuanhao?”

“That man infiltrated those western tribes, founded a demonic cult, and has been slaughtering demons en masse to harvest their crystals for cultivation. He’s deliberately framing Great Xuan’s righteous cultivators for the killings. The demons are simple-minded; they cannot distinguish the cult from our legitimate sects... I fear they will take the bait.”

Mo Ju spoke with worry.

As the newly appointed head of Great Xuan Academy, he now bore primary responsibility for cultivation affairs. Mo Beike had grown old and retired, leaving the burden on Mo Ju’s shoulders.

“A cult?” Tantai Xuan snorted. “So the former Black Dragon Cult leader is still skulking about? A gutless rat who couldn’t even scratch this king’s defenses.”

“As for the demons—they can’t make big waves. How many true powerhouses do they really have? If push comes to shove, we assemble Great Xuan’s cultivator legions and flatten the entire Demon Continent.”

“Still, unless it’s absolutely necessary, we won’t mobilize the cultivation armies.”

Mo Ju frowned.

The emperor wasn’t wrong—demon powerhouses were indeed few.

Yet demons reproduced quickly, and their cultivation through demon crystals gave them a terrifying advantage under the current transformed heavens. New powerhouses were popping up like weeds.

Mo Ju tried to caution him further, but Tantai Xuan waved it off.

“No matter how fierce the demons become, they are still creatures of Five Phoenix. Our real enemy lies beyond the skies!”

Tantai Xuan stood with hands clasped behind his back, gazing upward.

Mo Ju opened his mouth, then closed it again, letting out a helpless sigh.

The emperor was right, yet...

In Mo Ju's view, that cult was the true ticking time bomb.

...

**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**

On a vast, barren continent long stripped of life, terrifying energies clashed without restraint.

This was a corner of the Void Heaven—an ancient, lifeless land.

Yet today, it played host to a gathering of horrifyingly powerful experts, any one of whom could shake the entire Void Heaven.

Now they fought one another before a majestic palace.

Energy spilled everywhere, cracking the earth and snapping mountain ranges like twigs.

But every stray blast that struck the palace itself vanished without leaving a scratch.

The towering gates remained tightly shut, devoid of any glow, yet they withstood the pressure of these titans without so much as a crack.

Clearly, profound and terrifying formation runes protected the palace, keeping it eternal and inviolable.

Lu Ping'an sat in his Thousand Blades Chair, momentarily speechless.

He watched the battle raging overhead and genuinely didn't know what to say.

These experts were fighting over the token in his hand.

Dazzling divine light and tyrannical auras wove together, nearly tearing the void apart.

Under normal circumstances, such clashes should have shaken the entire Void Heaven, yet the swirling laws of the void absorbed every ripple.

Lu's gaze sharpened; lines danced in his pupils as he looked past the combatants into the emptiness beyond.

This region... was far from ordinary.

He took a deep breath.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord roared in fury, radiant light exploding from his body as he unleashed world-shaking fist strikes.

Alone, he held off several black-robed figures.

Each exhale from those black-robed experts collapsed the void—they were all Mighty Being-level existences!

Lu was completely ignored.

Or rather, no one had ever truly noticed him. To these giants, a mere Qi Condensation teenager with a bone age of just over ten years was nothing but meat on the chopping block.

The token in his hand was already considered theirs.

Lu was happy to stay out of the spotlight.

Leaning back in his chair, he watched the show.

He had to admit—they were strong.

Even he felt a flicker of awe.

Holy Lord-level experts.

Whether it was the Northern Palace Holy Lord or those mysterious black-robed figures, every one of them far surpassed the eighteen Mighty Beings he had encountered before.

Of course, Lu could tell none of them were fighting to the death.

This was mostly probing; they just wanted the others to back off.

The Emperor's Tomb hadn't opened yet—there was no reason to risk mutual destruction.

After watching a while and seeing no real killing moves, Lu lost interest.

The Spiritual Pressure Chessboard materialized before him.

Reclining in the Thousand Blades Chair, he smiled faintly and began placing pieces.

A white stone fell.

Plink.

The crisp sound echoed in front of the palace gates.

Hm?

Far away, the black-robed expert perched on the back of a ferocious bird narrowed his eyes.

He sensed something unusual.

Looking past the Northern Palace Holy Lord's battle, he spotted the white-robed youth leisurely playing Go.

"Surrounded by clashing Holy Lords, yet completely unfazed by their pressure?"

A glint flashed through the man's eyes; wariness stirred in his heart.

Such composure either meant the boy had an ace up his sleeve... or he had already given up on life.

Logically, a Qi Condensation kid would fall into the latter category.

Yet for some reason, the expert on the bird felt the former was more likely.

“I must be insane... to think a Qi Condensation brat could have a trump card against multiple Holy Lords...”

He shook his head with a bitter laugh.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The battle grew fiercer.

A dazzling golden fist swept forward like a tidal wave, the impact deafening.

Aboard his warship, the Northern Palace Holy Lord threw his head back and laughed.

He truly possessed peerless elegance and overwhelming battle prowess.

“You lot think you’re worthy to challenge me?!”

His eyes blazed as he threw punch after punch.

A golden phantom seemed to appear behind him, mirroring his fist technique.

Several black-robed Mighty Beings were suppressed; muffled grunts escaped them before they retreated, unwilling to press the fight.

The Emperor’s Tomb hadn’t opened yet—getting injured now would only benefit the others.

Hair flying wildly, the Northern Palace Holy Lord laughed in exhilaration.

Then his gaze shifted, landing on the white-robed Qi Condensation youth.

Time to claim that token.

One extra token might grant him another opportunity inside the tomb.

He was surprised.

He had assumed the terrifying pressure would have killed the boy outright—or at least scared him witless.

Yet there the youth sat, calmly playing Go, looking almost dashing.

White robes fluttering, he seemed like an immortal descended to the mortal world.

Perhaps sensing the gaze, Lu Ping'an smiled faintly at the Northern Palace Holy Lord.

He rolled up his sleeve, pinched a black stone from the floating Go ke, and held it aloft.

At that moment, every expert present finally noticed him—the very first person to arrive before the Emperor's Tomb.

“This boy... there's something unusual about him. We actually failed to see through him?”

“Utterly calm amid Holy Lord-level combat—could he be a heaven-defying genius from a Derivation Five or higher High Martial world?”

The floating experts exchanged glances.

They gave up contending for the boy's token.

To them, one token was enough to enter the tomb.

And the Northern Palace Holy Lord was simply too strong—there was no need to offend him for an extra token they didn't strictly need.

“Good guts.”

The Northern Palace Holy Lord actually revealed a trace of appreciation.

“Hand over the token and wait outside. When I return, I'll take you as my disciple.”

His voice boomed like thunder before the palace gates.

The smile on Lu Ping'an's face gradually faded.

He shook his head.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's expression darkened.

"You have no right to refuse."

He took a step forward—gods and demons seemed to march with him. His foot descended like the beating of war drums.

**BOOM!**

Each step thundered, stirring the blood and qi of everyone present.

This was the application of momentum.

**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**

Every stride of a Holy Lord resounded like thunder!

He expected to see pain and submission on the boy's face.

But soon, disappointment set in.

The youth showed neither pain nor submission—in fact, he looked perfectly at ease, the corners of his mouth curling... into a mocking smirk.

Mocking?!

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's gaze sharpened.

The surrounding experts were stunned.

A Qi Condensation ant daring to sneer at a Holy Land's Holy Lord?

Where did this confidence come from?

Only the black-robed expert atop the ferocious bird felt a sudden chill crawl up his spine.

The youth rolled up his sleeve and dropped the piece.

Plink.

The crisp sound cut straight through the thunder of the Holy Lord's footsteps.

The very next instant—

The chessboard trembled.

Unseen until now, countless formation runes cascaded from the void like a curtain of light.

“Formation runes?!”

Someone cried out in shock.

The instant the runes appeared, the expert on the bird fled without hesitation.

Whoosh!

The formation runes fell like rain, radiant light blotting out the sky.

Inside the runes, crisscrossing lines formed a massive Go board.

Some tried to retreat beyond the formation's reach.

Too late.

While everyone had been focused on the Northern Palace Holy Lord's battle, the area had already been silently enveloped by an invisible grand array.

Aside from the hyper-vigilant expert who had fled early and those still on their way—everyone else was trapped inside.

“What is the meaning of this?”

The Northern Palace Holy Lord remained relatively calm.

**BOOM!**

He threw a horizontal punch—overbearing, unstoppable—trying to shatter the formation and leap off the board.

Yet the fist that could suppress Venerables sank into the void like a stone into the sea.

This grand array was unimaginably profound!

The youth in the Thousand Blades Chair slowly moved forward.

White robes fluttering, he glided into the formation.

“I, Lu Ping’an, am not a petty man. You want my token? Fine, I won’t hold a grudge. My demands are modest...”

“Just let me borrow yours for a bit.”

Then, as if remembering something, Lu Ping’an glanced sideways at the Northern Palace Holy Lord, a smirk tugging at his lips.

“You have no right to refuse.”

“Insolence!”

The Northern Palace Holy Lord flew into a rage.

The trapped experts wore expressions of utter disbelief.

This kid was insane!

He was throwing the Holy Lord’s own words back in his face!

One black-robed expert tried to move, only to be blocked by emerging formation lines.

Many paled.

The formation... had completely isolated them?!

The Northern Palace Holy Lord laughed in fury—he had coveted the boy’s token, never imagining the boy coveted his in return.

He lashed out with a palm strike.

The void quaked; the air howled with ferocious tremors.

A mere Qi Condensation ant would die with one slap.

Yet—

The youth casually drew the small jade sword pinning his hair.

With a light flick, he slashed downward.

Pfft!

The palm strike was cleaved in two; the energy dispersed harmlessly to either side.

The youth tossed the jade sword into the air, where it hovered.

Placing both hands on the armrests of his wheelchair, he twisted his neck, then slowly rose to his feet.

...?

For some reason, the Northern Palace Holy Lord felt a sudden chill.

As the youth stood, his warm, jade-like aura vanished. His white robes gradually turned pitch black—black so deep it devoured light itself.

Demonic qi... erupted like a tsunami!

“A special physique?!”

With his extraordinary vision, the Northern Palace Holy Lord sensed the overwhelming demonic pressure and cried out in shock.

The transformed Demon Lord Lu Ping’an smiled.

He wasn’t entirely sure just how strong the upgraded Indestructible Demon Body had become.

He was also still unfamiliar with properly wielding primordial spirit power and chaos energy.

Perfect timing...

A rare Holy Lord-level sparring partner—no, opponent—had delivered himself right to his doorstep.

Just what he needed to test his limits.

Ink-black hair danced wildly; black robes flapped like war banners amid rolling demonic qi.

The Demon Lord's eyes turned cold and indifferent as eternal ice.

He slowly clenched his fist.

BOOM!

Ninety-nine strands of primordial spirit power surged.

With a thought—

Twenty-nine hertz of chaos energy coursed through him.

Even Lu himself was curious.

Just how strong... would a full-power strike be?

The next instant.

He vanished into an afterimage.

A trail of demonic qi streaked sideways, reappearing directly in front of the Northern Palace Holy Lord.

Simple and direct.

One punch—thrown down.

Chapter 392: One-Punch Explosion, Immortal Artifact, Nine Phoenixes Hauling the Tomb

**BOOM!**

Demonic qi surged like a black tsunami, the sheer pressure threatening to flip mountains and reverse rivers.

Black robes flapped wildly; ink-dark hair whipped across razor-sharp eyes.

One punch—slammed down!

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's heart turned to ice in an instant!

This kid... has a special physique?!

That was his first thought.

Special physiques weren't exactly rare in the Nine Heavens. Among countless worlds and High Martial realms, heaven-defying monsters were occasionally born with freakish constitutions.

For example, the Azure Spirit Holy Son from another Derivation Seven High Martial sacred ground possessed a physique that could casually seize and dismantle formation runes.

But that was only third-rate.

The aura exploding from the youth in front of him made every string in the Holy Lord's body go taut.

BOOM!

Terrifying pressure rampaged outward like an ancient ferocious beast bearing down on the land.

The earth cracked; mountains crumbled!

One punch!

The fist radiance flashed like exploding stars!

A full-force strike!

The Northern Palace Holy Lord roared.

At this moment, he finally understood—this white-robed youth was absolutely not some ordinary Qi Condensation cultivator. Even if he truly was Qi Condensation, he had to be a monstrous genius from a top-tier High Martial world!

Otherwise, which Qi Condensation cultivator, upon encountering a Holy Lord, would choose to throw a heavy punch instead of running for his life?

Hum...

The Northern Palace Holy Lord was no weakling.

He was a Holy Lord of a sacred ground, above the Unity realm, second only to the highest tier of Mighty Beings—a Tribulation Realm expert!

How could he cower?

Since Lu dared to strike with everything he had, the Holy Lord dared to meet him head-on!

He had stood aboard his bronze warship and fought three Venerables without losing ground. Retreat was never an option.

Lu's full-powered punch fused ninety-nine strands of primordial spirit force and twenty-nine hertz of chaos energy.

This was, to date, the strongest outburst Lu had ever unleashed.

Dark light surged across his fist, looking ready to collapse the void itself.

Demon Lord Lu's expression was ice-cold, his eyes utterly emotionless.

"Qi Condensation realm..."

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's gaze turned frigid.

To possess the strength to clash with a Tribulation Realm Holy Lord while still in Qi Condensation...

This kid's talent was monstrous beyond belief!

What level of High Martial world did he come from?

Derivation Four? Derivation Three?

As for Derivation Two or One... the Holy Lord didn't even dare imagine. Facing a monster from those ranks, he wouldn't even qualify to look up.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord grew solemn. Brilliant light exploded from his armor.

Before him materialized a towering phantom of that same armor—like an impenetrable city wall forming a unique defensive barrier.

He crossed his arms for another layer of protection.

Combined with a Tribulation Realm body tempered specifically to withstand heavenly tribulations, the Holy Lord no longer feared the strike.

Even if this youth truly was a heaven's chosen from a peak High Martial world...

There was no way a single punch could kill a Derivation Seven sacred ground Holy Lord, right?

BAM!

The fist landed.

A small, unassuming fist.

It first smashed into the armor phantom.

Pfft!

A muffled thud rang out.

The Holy Lord's relaxed heart instantly clenched.

Because his top-grade sacred-tier armor defense... shattered like paper!

After the armor broke, the fist only accelerated, carrying some profound mystery that left the Holy Lord unable to dodge.

He could only watch as the punch slammed into his crossed arms.

Then he saw his arm bones explode, flesh and blood disintegrating...

His physical body instantly turned into a cloud of blood mist—he couldn't control it at all!

An overwhelming, majestic, unstoppable force surged from the fist, transforming into a cataclysmic storm capable of shredding continents and detonating stars!

Pfft!

Another muffled impact, this time accompanied by the crisp crack of bones shattering.

White bone fragments mixed with blood sprayed in all directions.

BOOM!

Lu's punch carried unstoppable momentum. After obliterating the Holy Lord's body, it hammered the ground with inertial force.

BANG BANG BANG!

The earth rippled like a beaten carpet.

The surface beneath the Starfall Chessboard formation began to fracture, spiderweb cracks racing outward.

Every expert trapped inside the formation stared in stunned horror.

This destructive power... this terrifying force...

This kid was horrifying!

Far away, the experts who had either escaped the chessboard early or barely made it out sucked in sharp breaths.

The scene before them was simply too shocking.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord... had been blown apart.

He got fucking one-punched!

With a single blow, a Tribulation Realm expert—the Holy Lord of the Northern Palace Sacred Ground—had his body exploded!

His flesh turned into a cloud of blood mist; white bone shards flew everywhere.

Cold sweat instantly soaked the feet of every onlooker.

What the hell was going on?!

A Qi Condensation cultivator had instantly transformed into a terrifying great demon!

“To explode a Tribulation Realm Holy Lord’s body with raw physical strength... is this a first-class special physique?! Comparable to Saint King Body or Immortal Ascension Body?!”

“Overflowing demonic qi... could it be the Ancient Demon Physique? Throughout history, the only demonic physique this strong has been the Ancient Demon!”

“Insane! Can a special physique alone achieve this?!”

The experts felt their blood run cold.

At this moment, every thought was seized by the youth’s single punch.

Even the allure of the Ancient Emperor’s tomb paled in comparison.

Blood surged.

Black demonic qi formed a vortex around the youth.

He stood expressionless, casually shaking out his fist.

In the distance, the silver Thousand Blades Chair disintegrated into countless silver blades, then rapidly reassembled behind him into a pair of silver wings—wings forged entirely from stacked blades.

Demonic qi coiled around him; silver sword-wings unfurled at his back.

He was breathtakingly magnificent, almost dazzling.

Like a young Demon Emperor standing proud.

A wretched scream echoed through the area.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's primordial spirit barely reformed, flickering and translucent.

His face was filled with nothing but terror and despair.

Fuck...

He, a grand Holy Lord, had been blown apart by one punch?!

How could this youth be this terrifying?

Remembering how he had mocked the boy earlier, even offering to take him as a disciple, the Holy Lord felt his cheeks burn as if slapped repeatedly.

This youth was absolutely a monster from a Derivation Four or Derivation Three High Martial world—a heaven-defying genius qualified to contend for the peak of the Great Path!

Qi Condensation realm?

Fuck your Qi Condensation realm!

It was all fake!

“Hm?”

Demon Lord Lu’s wild black hair danced as he glanced at the Holy Lord.

He actually didn't die. Even his primordial spirit survived.

Demon Lord Lu frowned, somewhat dissatisfied. He shook his head and sighed.

As expected, the power was still too weak.

Ninety-nine strands of primordial spirit force plus twenty-nine hertz of chaos energy...

Barely acceptable.

And that was only because the Northern Palace Holy Lord had been restricted by the formation.

It merely shattered his body; it couldn't even erase his primordial spirit.

So his full-power strike...

Was only this strong.

Meanwhile, the Northern Palace Holy Lord was trembling with lingering fear.

He had nearly been killed outright—primordial spirit annihilated.

If not for the life-saving treasure that protected his spirit, he would already be dust.

The monsters from those top-tier High Martial worlds were simply too terrifying.

“M-mercy... please spare me!”

The Holy Lord’s face was filled with panic.

He no longer dared fight. Winning or losing was secondary—if he offended the overlord sacred ground behind this monster, a lineage that had endured since ancient times, his entire Northern Palace small world might be exterminated.

Clang!

The silver wings folded back into the Thousand Blades Chair.

The black-robed youth slowly sat down.

His black robes turned white once more.

Whoosh.

The moment Lu Ping'an regained his gentle, jade-like appearance, the Northern Palace Holy Lord frantically flung out his token.

Lu raised a hand, caught it, and smiled warmly.

He didn't strike again.

Since the Holy Lord knew when to yield, Lu would spare him.

Mainly, Lu was worried about angering the surrounding experts.

Taking their treasures and then killing them...

The other trapped experts would go berserk.

So he took the treasure and released the man—it lowered their guard.

Of course, it was also because Lu felt his full-power punch was a bit lacking.

He couldn't instantly kill with one blow; if they all swarmed him later, it might get troublesome.

After surrendering the token, Lu opened a gap in the formation with a thought.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord panicked and tried to sweep away his shattered body's spatial storage artifact floating in the air.

But...

Seeing the harmless-looking youth sitting calmly in his chair, the Holy Lord's spirit shuddered.

Beneath that innocent exterior hid the heart of a devil!

He feared that if he tried to retrieve his storage ring, the youth would use it as an excuse to kill him.

After a moment of painful hesitation, he gave up.

His primordial spirit fled the formation.

Lu blinked.

The guy had abandoned even his possessions. Lu was momentarily speechless.

“You’re the one who didn’t want them. This young master never forced you.”

Lu shrugged.

Then with a beckoning gesture, he claimed the ring-shaped spatial artifact, storing it inside his own  
Profound Ring.

The wheelchair turned leisurely as he moved toward the other experts still isolated within the  
chessboard formation.

He needed more than ten tokens to relocate the entire tomb.

There was still work to do.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's spirit shot out, his face ashen.

Moments ago he had been a domineering god-demon; now he looked like a beaten stray dog. Utterly pathetic.

The onlookers didn't mock him—most felt sympathy.

Running into a genius from an ancient overlord sacred ground...

He had no choice but to swallow the loss.

Seeing the Holy Lord's miserable state, the black-robed experts turned deathly pale beneath their hoods.

In strength, they were on par with the Northern Palace Holy Lord—or even weaker.

They didn't have spirit-protecting treasures.

One punch and they would be erased.

Facing such an overbearing monster...

Should they fight?

The tokens concerned the opportunities inside the Ancient Emperor's tomb—could they really give them up?

Many hearts twisted in agony.

In the end, one after another, they dejectedly tossed out their tokens.

Compared to their lives, opportunities were worthless.

Opportunities you couldn't survive to enjoy were just a cruel joke!

Of course, with so many of them present, they might not necessarily lose—but they feared the overlord sacred ground behind this first-class physique genius far more.

Thus...

Within the formation, the white-robed youth strolled leisurely. Wherever he passed, every black-robed expert flung out their token without hesitation.

The scene was strangely harmonious.

If they resisted, they'd end up like the Northern Palace Holy Lord—body exploded.

Some hesitated for a second... then threw out their spatial storage artifacts too.

Scatter wealth to preserve life!

Lu caught them all, a little dumbfounded.

These people... were oddly enthusiastic.

He almost felt embarrassed accepting so much.

Ten tokens were collected in no time—actually more than needed.

Lu dismissed the formation. The interwoven runes faded back into the void.

The experts fled, standing far away and watching him warily, hearts still racing.

Having lost their tokens, they didn't leave.

The Ancient Emperor's tomb was right there—who knew what treasures lay inside? Walking away now would leave them regretful for life.

So they watched from afar, waiting for the ancient gates to open.

If entry was possible without a token, they could at least take some small comfort.

That was their collective thought.

No one dared provoke the seemingly Qi Condensation youth anymore.

Qi Condensation was indeed weak—like a firefly in the night.

But...

A Qi Condensation cultivator with a first-class special physique and grandmaster-level formation skills was no firefly—he was a blazing sun!

The experts remained extremely vigilant, not daring to approach.

Lu was happy to keep the distance. He was thin-skinned; after taking their tokens and receiving so many generous “gifts” of spatial artifacts filled with riches, he felt awkward facing them.

What if they asked for their stuff back?

Would he have to kill them all?

Buzz...

[Congratulations, Host. You have collected more than ten nameless tokens. Relocation authority granted.]

The system prompt appeared in his vision.

Lu glanced at the distant experts, then fixed his gaze on the grand, weathered tomb radiating the heavy aura of ages.

Though the lack of spiritual qi made it appear dim, an irresistible pull still tugged at the soul.

There were definitely immense opportunities inside.

Lu tapped the armrest of his Thousand Blades Chair, brow slightly furrowed.

Then the frown slowly eased.

Five Phoenix was now a High Martial world too, but only just entering that stage...

He had been puzzling over how to create cultivation ruins to help Five Phoenix cultivators grow stronger.

Now this ready-made ancient tomb had solved his problem perfectly.

Of course, relocating a grave didn't mean digging it up—that might not even work.

Legend said some supreme experts' tombs drifted randomly through the void; some were even pulled by nine divine dragons in their coffins, wandering the heavens after death.

So Lu planned to cut away the entire region and move the tomb wholesale.

Far away, the expert perched on the ferocious bird hesitated.

He considered approaching to greet Lu and discuss opening the tomb together.

But just as he prepared to move, his expression changed.

The youth was taking action.

White robes fluttering, the youth sat calmly in his wheelchair, eyes deep as starry skies. Powerful primordial spirit force swept out, scanning the ancient tomb wave after wave.

Then he placed his fingers on the armrest and gently pushed forward.

Clang!

A crisp ring exploded outward.

The next instant—a phoenix cry pierced the heavens, flames scorching the sky.

Dazzling treasure light shot into the firmament, shaking the world!

“That... that’s... an Immortal-tier artifact?!”

The watching experts’ pupils contracted; their bodies trembled.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord’s primordial spirit turned even uglier, then infinitely relieved.

As expected—no more doubts about this youth’s identity.

Only someone who could produce an Immortal-tier artifact could possess such terrifying status.

He had to be a heaven’s chosen from a Derivation Three or even Derivation Two High Martial world.

The Holy Lord broke into cold sweat thinking about it.

Looking at that crimson treasure sword...

Its sword light was so sharp it seemed to slice the mind itself, burning away souls.

If the youth had used a sword instead of a fist earlier...

One stab would have ended him completely!

So...

Surviving had already been a stroke of luck.

Gasps of shock rose endlessly.

Seeing the Immortal-tier artifact, greed and envy flashed in many eyes.

But remembering the youth's identity and the punch that exploded the Northern Palace Holy Lord...

They forcibly suppressed their greed.

The stronger one was, the better one had to control desire—otherwise a moment's greed could doom their entire world.

Still, many were puzzled.

“What is this Holy Son planning?”

“Is he not going to use the tokens to open the tomb and instead plans to cut open the Ancient Emperor's tomb with an Immortal-tier artifact?”

“So arrogant! Is he showing contempt for the Ancient Emperor?”

“Rumor has it that during the ancient war, many overlord sacred ground supremes were slain by the Ancient Emperor. Looks like that grudge... has carried over to the present day.”

Whispers spread among the crowd.

**BOOM!**

Lu brought two fingers together, controlling the Phoenix Feather Sword.

The sword spirit crowed proudly, radiating peerless splendor.

A clear phoenix cry seemed to tear the sky apart.

Lu rose into the air.

Then his fingers slowly traced a line toward the Ancient Emperor's tomb.

Slash!

Terrifying sword light streaked across the barren continent, flames roaring, fire waves surging.

It blinded the experts' eyes.

But gradually...

Many realized something was wrong.

Because as the sword light swept out...

Most of it fell outside the tomb itself, piercing straight through the ground without damaging the interior.

Like cutting a slice of cake.

Lu raised his hand, two fingers together, and drew gently through the air.

“Phoenix Feather Sword... disperse.”

Clang!

Nine Phoenix Feather Swords instantly split apart.

They transformed into nine blazing phoenixes—like nine golden crows burning the heavens.

Sword qi turned into chains, wrapping around the entire tomb.

Then, under Lu's primordial spirit control and the sword spirit's command—

Nine Phoenixes hauled the tomb.

BOOM!

The ancient tomb was directly severed from the continent and lifted whole!

Hiss...

Endless gasps of shock rang out.

The experts stared, utterly entranced.

They had never seen such an elegant, transcendent way to “open” an Ancient Emperor's tomb!

Suddenly—

A beam of white light descended from the sky.

More than ten tokens floated around Lu.

Then gale-force winds erupted; white light converged into a massive pillar that enveloped Lu's body.

**BOOM!**

Terrifying pressure spread outward.

The experts' black robes flapped wildly.

Many raised hands to shield their eyes, the blinding light painful.

After a long time...

The white light faded.

The experts looked again.

On the deathly silent continent... only silence remained.

The expert on the ferocious bird stood dumbfounded.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's spirit flickered, nearly dissipating from shock.

Every black-robed expert wore the same stunned expression.

Before them...

Lu had vanished.

Where the magnificent palace gates once stood, where the towering wordless tombstone had pierced the clouds...

Only a perfectly smooth, bottomless black pit remained.

That colossal Ancient Emperor's tomb in front of them...

Where the hell did it go?!

Chapter 393: The World's Protective Barrier Vanishes

The Ancient Emperor's tomb... was gone!

On the barren, shattered continent, the gathered experts stood frozen, staring dumbly at the empty abyss.

Some still clutched their tokens; beneath their black robes, their lips trembled.

The tomb had vanished. What good were tokens now?

A bizarre cocktail of emotions churned inside them—shock, bitterness, absurdity.

What exactly had that young Holy Son done to the tomb?

This might have been the real Ancient Emperor's burial ground, brimming with supreme opportunities and secrets—how could it just disappear like that?

Silence stretched on, thick and eerie.

Everyone stood lost, unsure what to do.

They had come for the tomb, for the fortunes within.

Now everything had been whisked away.

What else was there?

Some laughed without humor, some forced bitter smiles, some covered their faces and sighed.

“A Holy Son from a top-tier High Martial world... truly too overbearing.”

“He straight-up relocated the Ancient Emperor’s tomb and didn’t even leave us scraps.”

“I hate it! But what can we do? The strong prey on the weak. That’s what you get when the other side is a Holy Son from a supreme sacred ground.”

The experts sighed endlessly, helpless and dejected.

They had schemed and fought for so long—only for this ending.

“Where did he take the tomb?”

“Probably used some secret method to haul it back to his top-tier High Martial world.”

“After all, even if it’s only suspected to be the Ancient Emperor’s tomb, it would still attract the attention of supreme experts.”

“The Void Heaven is no simple place. In the primordial era, an Emperor sat here. Trillions of worlds stretched across its vast, magnificent expanse—no less glorious than any realm of the Nine Heavens.”

They exchanged theories, then could only exhale long, mournful sighs.

The tomb was gone. Staying served no purpose.

Rumble...

As the tomb disappeared, the profound laws that had bound this region began to unravel.

It felt as though the heavens themselves were collapsing.

Many experts broke into cold sweat.

“Leave!”

Without hesitation, they erupted with terrifying auras, stomped the ground, and shot skyward as streaks of light, fleeing into the void.

Rules descended—blade-like law threads slashing at their primordial spirits, crushing their bodies.

Sacred-tier artifacts radiated brilliant light, barely holding back the horrifying suppression.

BOOM!

A deafening explosion.

In the void, a mushroom cloud bloomed like a black hole devouring everything.

The experts' faces grew colder.

The continent that had once borne the great tomb shattered into fragments.

The rules of the Void Heaven annihilated it completely, as if an invisible hand had wiped it from existence.

“Seems the tomb was the anchor...”

“What secret did that continent hold? Why did the rules erase it entirely?”

The expert perched on the ferocious bird looked grave.

“Perhaps, in the primordial era, that continent was once a remarkable world.”

He sighed, glanced at the now-dull token in his hand, and gave a wry smile.

All that effort—for nothing.

Still, he glanced at the Northern Palace Holy Lord.

The man’s primordial spirit flickered under the corrosive rules, looking as if it might burn away at any moment. His expression was utterly wretched.

Compared to him, the bird-riding expert counted himself lucky.

He laughed heartily, then urged his mount onward.

A streak of light pierced the Void Heaven and vanished.

The rules pressed relentlessly; lingering would only cause severe damage.

Even sacred artifacts could only delay the harm to their spirits.

The experts wasted no time and fled one after another.

The entire region collapsed completely. Terrifying rule-blades swept through again and again.

Pfft!

In the darkness of the void, a corner was suddenly sliced open.

If anyone had been there, they would have seen a spine-chilling sight through that rift.

Beyond it lay silent, lifeless continents—magnificent yet dead.

Like the hidden underside of the Void Heaven.

Still. Cold. A mournful song seemed to drift from that crevice.

...

Five Phoenix Continent.

A beam of white light tore through space-time and crashed down from the heavens.

**BOOM!**

The ocean exploded outward, waves parting as if cleaved by an invisible blade.

On the sea surface, the white light dispersed.

Then, a majestic scene emerged.

A colossal palace city, vast as an immortal citadel, surrounded by towering walls and sealed gates. At the front stood a mysterious wordless stele.

Countless sea creatures trembled in terror and fled into the depths or far away.

Nine phoenixes cried triumphantly, wings beating.

Lu Ping'an sat calmly in his Thousand Blades Chair, white robes fluttering.

Looking at the tomb he had truly hauled back, his expression turned odd.

Rumble!

Suddenly!

The nine phoenixes transformed from the Phoenix Feather Sword could no longer bear the weight.

The moment the tomb entered Five Phoenix, it grew unimaginably heavy.

Mysterious runes surfaced across the once-dead tomb—runes so profound that even Lu couldn't decipher them.

Just glancing at them made his mind feel as if it might be devoured.

Terrifying!

Lu quickly looked away.

The next instant, the entire tomb plummeted, threatening to sink into the ocean depths.

Lu frowned slightly.

He summoned the Spiritual Pressure Chessboard. Lines danced in his eyes.

A piece fell—plink.

A white stone slid across the board from one node to another.

Ripples spread across the sea.

A colossal wave erupted.

An entire island was forcibly dragged over by Lu and wedged beneath the tomb.

**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**

The tomb smashed down, crushing the island. Mountains collapsed; the land cracked.

Yet the tomb's descent halted, as if it had taken root, clamping firmly onto the island.

However, Lu's frown deepened.

Above the tomb, a vortex suddenly formed...

Spiritual qi was being sucked in from every direction!

Rumble!

Spiritual qi answered the call, spiraling in from all corners of the world at terrifying speed.

BOOM!

The gathering qi thundered like the roar of heaven and earth.

Countless experts felt it.

Many paled.

The instant the tomb appeared above the vast sea, cultivators meditating on the surface looked up in horror.

“What is happening?! This oppressive aura...”

“It’s suffocating... all the spiritual qi is being drained!”

The Origin Waterfall trembled.

Beneath the sundial, Qi Liujia—who had been deducing formations—shuddered.

His withered face twitched. He slowly opened his eyes.

“Hm?!”

He clutched his chest.

“The world’s spiritual qi is being pulled by some terrifying force... the pressure is overwhelming.”

Qi Liujia murmured.

He turned, gaze piercing through the waterfall, trying to see the sky beyond.

The world’s protective barrier had not yet fallen...

What was this sudden oppression?

He emerged from the Immortal Legacy Ruins and hovered in the air.

His coarse robes flapped as he closed his eyes again, sensing.

The next moment, his expression changed drastically.

“The collapse of the world’s protective barrier... is accelerating?!”

“No— I sense Young Master Lu’s aura...”

“Young Master Lu has returned, yet the barrier’s collapse is speeding up instead?”

“This makes no sense...”

Qi Liuji’s face twisted.

He looked toward the distant sea, then shot forward, parting the waters as an immense force propelled him.

He was not alone.

Ni Chunqiu, Du Longyang, and the others cultivating on their primordial spirit platforms also felt the strange pull.

They could no longer meditate.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Streaks of light flashed across the sea.

Cultivators from all over the vast ocean raced toward the vortex of spiritual qi.

...

Lu ignored the approaching figures.

His brow stayed furrowed.

“As expected, that dead world lacked spiritual qi. The tomb slumbered, unable to awaken...”

“But the moment it arrived in Five Phoenix, it became a parched sponge frantically absorbing water.”

Lu tapped the armrest of his chair.

“But I can’t let you drain Five Phoenix dry.”

Lines danced in his eyes. His primordial spirit surged like a storm, severing the tomb’s connection to the continent’s spiritual qi completely.

Then his eyes shifted.

He activated his authority—Spiritual Qi Delivery.

He began pumping amplified spiritual qi directly into the tomb.

Rumble!

The restless Five Phoenix instantly calmed. The suffocating sensation vanished for many experts.

Yet those rushing over still witnessed it.

They saw the palace city above the sea.

Clouds and mist scattered.

A wordless stele towered ten thousand zhang high, piercing straight from the ocean into the clouds.

“What is that?!”

“A tombstone?! Heavens... why is there a wordless stele?!”

“Is this an ancient tomb? Who is buried inside?”

Every cultivator who saw it from afar lost all composure.

This was too magnificent, too bizarre!

Seven-colored radiance burst forth from the palace city, dazzling and intoxicating.

Faint immortal music drifted through the air; flowing light and color painted a celestial realm.

**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**

Countless people accelerated, streaking toward the tomb.

Before the tomb, Lu's figure flashed and vanished.

On the island carried by the giant whale, in the center of the lake—

Lu returned.

He leaned back in his Thousand Blades Chair, gentle breeze brushing his hair.

His face was slightly pale...

This trip had drained an enormous amount of spiritual qi.

But hauling back an entire ancient tomb made it worthwhile.

The spiritual qi delivery continued; he could feel it pouring out of him far faster than the tokens had ever absorbed.

While playing Go to recover, he maintained the flow into the tomb.

He had no idea how long this process would last.

...

Qi Liujia arrived first.

As a Mighty Being, his speed was unmatched.

He hovered before the tomb, old face filled with shock and awe. The radiant light shooting skyward shook him to his core.

“What... is this?”

There was no doubt—this was no ordinary palace city.

As a descendant of the Ancient Emperor and heir to the Liujia Array Sect, he had read records of many things.

He flew along the massive walls covered in profound array runes.

Reaching out, he touched the stone and felt the weight of countless ages.

“These are... array runes from the era of the Ancient Emperor ‘Ha’!”

Qi Liujia’s lips trembled.

He stared at the wordless stele. It bore no inscription.

Yet an overwhelming majesty pressed down on him, making it hard to breathe.

“Could this truly be... the tomb of the Ancient Emperor?!”

The thought terrified even him.

It distracted him completely from the accelerating collapse of the world's protective barrier.

Whooshing sounds filled the air.

Cultivators from across Five Phoenix poured in.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and Ni Chunqiu—the three half-step Mighty Beings—arrived fastest.

Everyone was stunned by the breathtaking sight.

An ancient tomb had appeared out of nowhere.

“Senior... whose tomb is this?”

Du Longyang asked.

Qi Liujia did not hide his guess.

When the others heard “Ancient Emperor's tomb,” chills ran from their feet to their crowns.

The tomb of the Ancient Emperor?!

On Five Phoenix Continent... the Ancient Emperor's tomb had appeared?!

"It's only a possibility. We can't confirm it's truly his."

Qi Liujia clarified.

Even if it wasn't, it had to belong to an unparalleled supreme expert.

Yet Du Longyang and the others did not doubt it for a second.

"Wolong Ridge Secret Realm, Nine Prisons Secret Realm, Immortal Legacy Ruins... and now the Ancient Emperor's tomb. Is Five Phoenix truly returning to the primordial age of cultivation?!"

Ye Shoudao's single sleeve flapped wildly as his heavy yet excited voice echoed.

Qi Liujia froze.

“The primordial age of cultivation?”

He asked Ye Shoudao what that meant.

They explained everything they had learned from Five Phoenix’s transformations.

Qi Liuji’s brow furrowed deeply.

“Could it be... that none of this was arranged by Young Master Lu?”

“Is it really the return of some primordial cultivation era?”

“Was Five Phoenix a mighty world back in the Ancient Emperor’s time?”

Qi Liuji’s thoughts grew chaotic.

The Void Heaven hid great secrets.

It was said no High Martial world could be born there.

His own past failure proved it.

Yet against all odds, Five Phoenix had shattered the rules and risen.

Was it truly because that ancient era was returning?

Outside the tomb, more and more cultivators gathered.

Li Sansui, the Li siblings, and others arrived.

“Master.”

Li Sansui bowed slightly to Qi Liujia.

Overlord, Nie Changqing, Ning Zhao, and the rest stared at the tomb in awe.

The terrifying aura radiating from it made their hearts pound.

...

On the lake island.

Lines filled Lu's eyes as he watched Qi Liujia fall into self-doubt. The corner of his mouth twitched.

Another one completely fooled.

Five Phoenix had only ever been a Low Martial world. What "condensed glory of the primordial age"?

Lu knew best—everything was fake.

This tomb was merely relocated from elsewhere.

Fake was fake, no matter how real it looked.

Still, the tomb would serve as a new ruin, undoubtedly filled with immense opportunities.

"It doesn't really look like the Ancient Emperor's tomb..."

Lu shook his head.

He had once seen the real Ancient Emperor in the river of time.

That domineering presence, that aura that lorded over all heaven and earth—it was utterly world-suppressing.

Even in death, such a being's tomb would radiate pressure capable of crushing realms.

As he continued pumping spiritual qi into the tomb, Lu grew more certain—this was probably not the Ancient Emperor's.

But even if it wasn't, the owner had to be an unparalleled genius of their era.

Lu didn't particularly care whose it was.

He never worried too much about the dangers of ruins he created—people died in those too.

This tomb would be no different.

Danger always came with opportunity.

He hoped Five Phoenix's cultivators would seize great fortunes here and grow faster.

Once the tomb finished absorbing spiritual qi and reached saturation, he would open it.

With the eleven tokens now in his possession (including his own), he wondered why the system required more than ten.

Probably because ten were needed to open it.

Leaning back in his Thousand Blades Chair, Lu frowned slightly.

He looked up, gaze piercing the void.

Beyond Five Phoenix, the protective barrier continued to flake away...

"Bringing the tomb back seems to have triggered some rule, accelerating the barrier's collapse... At this rate, it will be completely gone in three days."

Lu murmured.

“Fine...”

“It’s better this way. Five Phoenix is now High Martial. The protective barrier had to fall eventually. Some hidden crises need to be dealt with early so the continent can focus on ascending to the next level.”

Lu smiled faintly, eyes glinting.

He closed them and drifted into a light nap.

Meanwhile, the entire Five Phoenix Continent surged like a storm because of the tomb’s arrival.

...

Three days passed in a flash.

**BOOM!**

As the sun rose over the sea on the third day,

A crisp shattering sound rang through every corner of Five Phoenix.

Everyone felt it—a piece of their heart seemed to vanish, leaving an empty ache.

Before the tomb,

Qi Liuji, who had been sitting cross-legged on the sea and had finally calmed from the shock of the Ancient Emperor's tomb, lifted his head.

He let out a long, mournful sigh.

At last...

The protective barrier that had shrouded Five Phoenix for so long...

Had completely dissipated.

Chapter 394: Lu Changkong's Lifelong Pursuit

Pingyang Heaven.

In the boundless darkness, continents drifted like majestic, radiant stars, each glowing with dazzling light, flowing silently like a river of constellations.

Pingyang Heaven, like the Void Heaven, was one of the Nine Heavens.

Yet compared to the declining Void Heaven, Pingyang Heaven brimmed with vigor and ambition, constantly striving to climb higher.

At this moment, a streak of light tore across the void.

The light faded, revealing an ancient Buddhist temple. Solemn and sacred, it radiated golden Buddha-light while endless chants of sutras echoed from within.

Above the temple floated Buddhist sarira, spilling brilliant radiance.

Rumble!

The temple soon descended upon a region, its pressure nearly crushing the area beneath it.

Below lay a vast, magnificent continent. Streams of qi soared into the sky, blazing like suns in the darkness.

To shine so brightly in the void's gloom was something only a High Martial world could achieve.

Sensing the temple's arrival, a bronze warship burst upward from the continent, crushing the void inch by inch.

Terrifying pressure spread outward.

A figure in resplendent robes stood atop the warship: the Northern Palace Holy Lord.

"Amitabha."

A Buddha slowly walked out from the temple, smiling warmly at the Holy Lord.

"I heard the Northern Palace Holy Son perished tragically in the Void Heaven—his primordial spirit extinguished, reduced to ashes. A mere newborn High Martial world dares to show such contempt for the Northern Palace Sacred Ground..."

"This monk wishes to visit that world and settle the karma. Would the Northern Palace Holy Lord care to join me and avenge your Holy Son?"

The Buddha's smile was gentle and soothing, like a spring breeze.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord narrowed his eyes slightly.

He had already learned of his Holy Son's death. A new High Martial world had emerged in the Void Heaven, and Holy Sons and Maidens from many Pingyang Heaven sacred grounds had gone there to plunder its origin for their own benefit.

His Holy Son's demise naturally enraged him, but having just returned from the Void Heaven with a shattered body, he hesitated.

"Rest assured, Holy Lord. We will not travel alone. The Holy Lords of Black-White Sacred Ground, Tuoba Sacred Ground, and Azure Spirit Sacred Ground will also accompany us..."

The Buddha listed them calmly.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord inhaled sharply.

What was this bald donkey planning?

It was just a newborn Derivation Nine High Martial world—why gather four Derivation Seven Holy Lords?

Was it necessary?

“This...” He was momentarily stunned.

“Amitabha. That world is no ordinary place. Though newly born, any High Martial that rises in the Void Heaven harbors supreme secrets. This monk must proceed with utmost caution.”

“Now that its protective barrier has crumbled, the time to strike has come.”

The Buddha smiled.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord found no reason to doubt him.

“As for the others—besides accepting my invitation—they also wish to retrieve their own Holy Sons and Maidens. Rumor has it that all the sacred ground heirs have been captured by thieves from that world.”

The Buddha’s explanation made the Holy Lord nod slowly.

This monk hailed from Pingyang Heaven's strongest world—the only Derivation Six High Martial, the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm.

He deserved some face.

“In that case, I shall accompany the Venerable.”

Laughter echoed through the void.

The monk's expression remained serene as he pressed his palms together in greeting.

Then—

The ancient temple erupted with divine light and instantly vanished toward the Void Heaven.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord stood aboard his bronze warship and followed leisurely behind.

...

“The world's protective barrier was somewhat akin to the power of rules...”

Lu Ping'an murmured, feeling the vanished force outside Five Phoenix.

The power of rules was immensely strong. The entire Void Heaven was shrouded beneath them.

Even Lu dared not clash with them head-on.

If the rules ever acted in earnest, they could overturn the Void Heaven in an instant.

“With the protective barrier gone, Five Phoenix is no longer sheltered in a greenhouse. It must now face dangers from all sides. Yet this too is a form of tempering and trial. A world, like a person, needs hardship to grow.”

Lu smiled faintly.

He felt no great worry about the barrier's disappearance.

He continued placing pieces on the board. The Asking-Heaven Game shifted unpredictably, stirring wind and clouds.

As he played, his spiritual qi rapidly recovered and was immediately fed into the ancient tomb.

...

Above the vast sea.

Still. Oppressive.

Qi Liujia stood upon the water in coarse robes.

Beside him, Li Sansui stood respectfully; Li Sansi, cloaked in black, also looked up in puzzlement.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and the others frowned, a tense unease settling over them.

According to Qi Liujia, once the protective barrier fell, terrifying experts would descend. That might be the true beginning of Five Phoenix's calamity.

A gentle breeze finally blew, rippling the sea.

Time trickled by.

The first day after the barrier vanished passed quietly.

Nothing happened across all of Five Phoenix.

Those who had been anxious were now bewildered.

Even Qi Liujia was taken aback.

“Could I have been wrong...? The protective barrier is gone. How can the Holy Lords of Pingyang Heaven’s many sacred grounds remain silent?”

“Perhaps they’re brewing something big.”

“We cannot let our guard down.”

Qi Liujia stayed vigilant.

He soared into the sky and began laying down a grand formation outside Five Phoenix, inspired by the ancient runes on the tomb’s walls.

Formation lines wove through the void like swimming fish in the darkness.

One day, two days, three days...

Time continued to pass.

The terrifying experts Qi Liujia spoke of never came.

The reincarnated Buddha had once vowed that when Five Phoenix's protective barrier fell, he would descend.

Yet now—nothing.

The ancient tomb sat resplendent above the sea, overflowing with flowing light. Countless cultivators gathered, hoping to explore it and claim supreme opportunities.

But days passed, and the tomb showed no signs of opening.

Five Phoenix, on the verge of turmoil, instead fell into an eerie calm.

...

Within the Immortal Legacy Ruins.

Lu Changkong carried a wooden bucket, scooping fertilizer mixed with spirit stone powder with a gourd ladle and sprinkling it over the medicinal fields.

“Picking chrysanthemums beneath the eastern fence, leisurely gazing at the southern mountains...”

That described him perfectly.

Inside the time-accelerated ruins, he lived a carefree life.

He had thoroughly studied every spirit herb here. He understood their properties completely and recorded everything in his Herb Compendium.

He had personally tasted every single plant.

Some were poisonous, some caused strange feverish reactions, some accelerated spiritual qi absorption, some healed wounds, some neutralized hundreds of toxins...

Each herb was like a unique soul. Lu Changkong had become utterly obsessed with researching them.

Through years of planting and studying, his cultivation had advanced steadily without deliberate effort. Swallowing various spirit herbs daily, their medicinal effects accumulated within his body.

Once he finished researching every herb in the ruins, an emptiness settled in his heart.

That emptiness panicked him. On the first day without new herbs to study, he felt like mold was growing on his body.

Hands behind his back, hoe over his shoulder, he stood beside the fields lost in thought.

Staring at the radiant spirit herbs swaying in the breeze, he inhaled deeply.

What would happen if he crossbred different herbs?

Would their properties neutralize each other?

Would the quality improve continuously?

If one herb combined the effects of a hundred others, could it become a divine medicine capable of reviving the dead and regrowing flesh on bones?

The idea seized him and refused to let go.

He began experimenting with crossbreeding.

Fortunately, the ruins offered many treasures for his research.

He used Origin Water from the waterfall as fertilizer—plants grew astonishingly well.

He even utilized the gray River of Time that most experts feared.

He discovered that the accelerated flow of time greatly sped up plant growth—a delightful surprise for his crossbreeding project.

While experts outside trained bitterly or meditated before dao steles, he was crossbreeding herbs.

The ancient Farmer School of the Hundred Schools of Philosophy had records on plant hybridization. Following those methods and adding his own practical innovations, he began cultivating.

Once he successfully produced hybrid seeds, he prepared wooden basins linked by chains. The upper layer held soil and the seeds; the lower layer was filled with specially mixed Origin Water fertilizer.

Carrying the basins, he waited by the River of Time.

When the gray current surged past, he shouted “Heave-ho!” like an old fisherman casting his line and flung the chained basins into the river.

The river swept by.

After a long while, he pulled them back.

The chains were nearly rotted, covered in rust. Lu Changkong sucked in a cold breath.

He really was dancing on the edge of death.

One careless moment and the River of Time would reduce him to dry bones.

But the result was excellent—the seeds had grown into lush spirit herbs, even flowering.

He had saved an enormous amount of time.

Carrying the new herb back to his wooden hut, he carefully plucked the tiny flowers.

He unrolled a bamboo scroll, prepared ink and brush, and lit an oil lamp.

Ritual was important.

He wrote first:

“New spirit herb bred from Spirit Pivot Grass and Niu Mang Grass, named Spirit Mang Grass. Vibrant color, no scent, taste...”

Pausing, he set down the brush, crushed a flower, rolled up his sleeve, and placed a pinch in his mouth.

A sour, astringent flavor exploded across his tongue.

His brows instantly knitted into a deep crease.

The sourness spread, and his tongue felt electrified.

Then the sensation raced through his body, making him numb all over.

Trembling, he picked up the brush again.

“Taste sour and astringent, like being struck by lightning. Properties: extremely poisonous.”

He tried to circulate spiritual qi to suppress the poison, but to his shock, his qi couldn't touch it.

This Spirit Mang Grass was truly lethal!

He stood, intending to fetch an antidote.

But his body convulsed.

His face turned blue-green.

Thud!

He collapsed face-first onto the floor.

Lu Changkong's vision blurred, yet his heart was strangely calm.

To die for the pursuit of his Dao—he had no regrets.

His only lingering attachment was Lu Ping'an.

"Ping'an... your father really wasn't a very responsible parent."

He sighed softly, then his head lolled to the side.

...

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

Lu, mid-game, suddenly felt his eyelid twitch.

Hm?

Lines danced in his eyes. The next instant, he saw the scene inside the Immortal Legacy Ruins.

He saw Lu Changkong lying stiff on the floor, face blue.

Lu blinked in disbelief.

What on earth had the old man done?

In all of Five Phoenix, who would dare kill Lu Changkong?

Wasn't his father everyone's father?

He abandoned the chessboard.

With a flick of his sleeve, he stored the Spiritual Pressure Chessboard and vanished in a flash of lightning.

When he reappeared, he was inside the Immortal Legacy Ruins.

White robes fluttering, a thousand blades reflecting the light.

The little thatched hut was peaceful.

With a wave, Lu Changkong's body floated up.

"He's been poisoned... such potent toxin. It blocks spiritual qi circulation and even paralyzes the divine sense, causing it to collapse."

Lu inhaled sharply.

All the spirit herb seeds in the ruins had been left by him.

If he remembered correctly, none were this deadly.

How had his father ingested something so toxic?

Then he spotted the open bamboo scroll on the desk—new entries in the Herb Compendium.

"Crossbreeding? And personally tasting the results—testing poison on himself?"

Lu didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

He placed a finger on Lu Changkong's forehead.

All the poison in his father's body flowed into Lu's finger, turning it pitch black.

With the toxin removed, color returned to Lu Changkong's face. He let out a soft snore, regaining consciousness.

Lu gently laid him on the bed.

"Crossbreeding spirit herbs..."

"What a wild idea. Truly, the only one who can defeat Dad is Dad himself..."

Lu smiled, glancing at his blackened finger. Even he found the poison shocking.

At this level, it could probably kill a Yin Spirit realm expert.

“Well... compiling a compendium like the Divine Farmer tasting all herbs—this is a good thing. This is Dad’s lifelong pursuit.”

Lu sat in his Thousand Blades Chair and strolled around the hut. He looked out at the swaying spirit herbs in the fields.

He had neglected his father for quite some time. If not for this incident, he might never have noticed how low-profile the old man had become.

“Since he wants to taste every herb, let’s improve his constitution a little... at least so he doesn’t accidentally poison himself to death.”

After thinking for a moment, Lu made his decision.

He returned to the bedside and raised his hand.

Lines crisscrossed as the Origin trembled. He had once obtained a divine medicine and analyzed its properties.

Now he replicated that internal structure and overlaid it onto Lu Changkong’s body.

Buzz...

After a long while, faint radiance emanated from Lu Changkong's flesh.

"Modification complete... I suppose this counts as a special physique. What should I call it? Divine Medicine Constitution?"

"It has incredible compatibility. Ingesting poison won't kill him; instead, the properties will remain in his body, allowing him to release deadly toxins... If he consumes a hundred poisons, a thousand, ten thousand... the resulting toxicity could make even immortals and gods retreat."

Lu chuckled.

"Let's call it the 'Myriad Poisons Body.'"

Now Dad could taste every herb without fear of accidents.

Buzz...

Without waiting for Lu Changkong to wake, Lu vanished.

A little while later...

Lu Changkong opened his eyes, confusion flickering within.

“Hm... I’m not dead?”

He even felt unusually healthy.

How had he ended up in bed?

Perhaps he had crawled there in his final moments, wanting to die with dignity.

But he hadn’t died.

Returning to his desk, the oil lamp still burned quietly; the ink had not yet dried.

After a moment’s thought, he dipped the brush and crossed out “extremely poisonous.”

“Spirit Mang Grass: sour and astringent taste, like being struck by lightning. Properties: mildly toxic.”

Chapter 395: The Ancient Tomb Opens

Lu Ping'an returned to the island at the center of the lake.

Seated atop the White Jade Capital Pavilion, he raised a hand and lightly swept it. The Spiritual Pressure Chessboard materialized, hovering before him.

Leaning back in the Thousand Blades Chair, he warmed a pot of plum wine and began playing Go while sipping leisurely.

A gentle breeze brushed the lakeside reeds.

He had just crafted a special physique for Lu Changkong. Though artificially created, Lu believed it would rival even those naturally born alongside the Great Path.

A loud boom echoed across the island, followed by a foul stench.

Lu paused mid-move and looked into the distance.

There, Ni Yu trudged out of a cloud of black smoke, face darkened, dragging her soot-covered cauldron behind her.

The scene was all too familiar—another failed pill refinement.

Little Yinglong floated on his back in the Origin Lake like a salted fish, seemingly contemplating the meaning of dragon life and whether he should remain a salted fish forever.

Seeing Ni Yu's soot-streaked, aggrieved face, Lu suddenly had an idea.

He wheeled the Thousand Blades Chair down from the pavilion.

"Young Master?"

Ni Yu hurriedly wiped the ash from her cheeks when she saw him.

"What pill have you been working on lately?"

Lu asked with a smile, swirling a bronze cup of wine.

Far off, Little Yinglong's eyes rolled at the sound of Lu's voice, but he quickly resumed his salted-fish posture, motionless.

Ni Yu grinned, her white teeth dazzling against her blackened face.

“I’m refining a fifth-grade pill—the Origin Fusion Pill!”

Lu blinked in mild surprise.

Fifth-grade?

Ni Yu could already refine fifth-grade pills? The girl was progressing frighteningly fast.

In the nine-tier classification, fifth-grade pills were true spirit pills, enough to make even Yang God realm experts drool.

The Origin Fusion Pill recipe was the highest-grade formula Lu had ever given her—and the hardest to refine.

It seemed this girl’s talent for “eat-and-cultivate” was growing stronger by the day.

“Not bad.”

Lu praised.

Joy instantly bloomed across Ni Yu's soot-covered face.

Young Master... had praised her!

So rare!

"Hm. A mysterious ancient tomb has drifted in above the vast sea. If you hit a bottleneck in pill refining, you could explore it. You're only an alchemist—you don't need to fight and kill—but there might be rare herbs or precious pill recipes inside..."

"Go adventure a bit. It'll help you grow."

"Pill refining is a discipline. Talent is one thing, but shutting yourself away is another."

Ni Yu's eyes sparkled with delight.

Young Master was letting her go out again?

Far away, Little Yinglong snapped out of his existential crisis. Adventure meant playtime!

With a flap of his wings, he shot over and perched triumphantly atop Ni Yu's head.

Lu glanced at the dragon expressionlessly. This little guy... was thoroughly spoiled.

He'd have to toss him to Zhulong soon for some proper discipline.

"Go on. Both of you."

Lu waved them off.

Ni Yu cheered and ran off to pack.

Lu smiled and strolled around the island.

The 碧落 peach trees swayed, petals drifting like a beautiful pink snowfall.

...

Northern County.

Great Xuan Imperial Palace.

Tantai Xuan massaged his temples, brows furrowed.

The current state of the realm gave him a headache. Memorial after memorial piled up—he was mentally exhausted.

Ruling the world meant caring about everything, leaving no detail unattended. It was truly taxing.

Especially after the latest heavenly transformation.

Humanity flourished, cultivation boomed, and new sects sprouted like bamboo after rain.

More sects were good for the cultivation world's growth.

But from another angle, they threatened Great Xuan's authority.

These sects acted as if they were above the law, completely ignoring imperial decrees.

Some even treated commoners like ants, “bestowing immortal fate” while conscripting masses as labor, seizing land, and becoming local tyrants.

The people suffered greatly.

This bred conflict between the sect world and Great Xuan.

Outside the palace hall, carriage wheels crushed the dust.

Mo Beike, wrapped in thick robes, walked slowly forward, a faint smile on his aged face.

“My liege.”

He bowed.

He had half-retired, but Tantai Xuan had summoned him specially this time. Clearly, the emperor was in trouble.

Tantai Xuan quickly set down the memorials, barefoot, and hurried over to support the old man.

“Perfect timing, Old Mo.”

Smiling, Tantai Xuan explained his troubles.

Silence fell over the hall.

After a long while and a sip of tea, Mo Beike coughed and spoke slowly.

“My liege... you’re overthinking.”

“You must distinguish between the true cultivation world and the sect world.”

“One Academy, Two Nations, Three Sects, Four Pavilions—that is the real cultivation world.”

“Great Xuan itself is a major power within the cultivation world.”

“Those newly founded little sects and clans? They are merely the sect world. How can a great power let itself be led by the nose by them?”

“My liege, you only need to care about the people’s peace and prosperity. Those sects—aside from Nine Phoenix Institute, Body Storage Sect, Painting Sect, and the like—you need neither fear nor heed them.”

“They exist within Great Xuan’s borders, so they fall under Great Xuan’s jurisdiction. Issue decrees and set rules. Those who obey live. Those who don’t...”

“Send the Xuanwu Guards to flatten them.”

Mo Beike spoke plainly.

Tantai Xuan was stunned.

That... simple and brutal?

“Compared to the common folk, the real problem has never been the people. Make their lives good and comfortable, and no citizen will ever rebel against you.”

“But these small sects and clans—with power comes ambition. Add the infiltration of cults, and storms will brew. Your Majesty need only crush them with force.”

“All land under heaven belongs to the king... except, of course, White Jade Capital.”

Mo Beike continued.

Tantai Xuan couldn't help but click his tongue.

“As for the conflict between humans and demons, cults are the root cause. But now the two sides are irreconcilable—demon crystals benefit human cultivation. Peace is nearly impossible.”

“Resolving small sects and clans, however, is simple.”

“My liege should not be troubled by these matters.”

“An ancient tomb has appeared above the Eastern Sea. The cultivation world is already in an uproar. What Your Majesty should do is dispatch experts. Great opportunities surely lie within. How could Great Xuan let them pass?”

“Secure those fortunes, nurture experts beyond Yang God realm, and Great Xuan will prosper for a thousand—no, ten thousand years.”

Mo Beike spoke slowly.

In an era of cultivation, nations faced countless difficulties.

But once they overcame them, they could become divine dynasties—eternal and immortal.

Mo Beike naturally hoped Great Xuan would become such a divine dynasty, not a fleeting mortal kingdom.

“My liege... this old minister has a proposal.”

Mo Beike suddenly performed a deep bow.

Tantai Xuan started. “Speak, Old Mo.”

“This is an era of cultivation. A divine dynasty must be established. This old minister is willing to devote his life to it...”

“Your Majesty may create the Mysterious Strategies Pavilion and invite capable individuals to assist in governance.”

Tantai Xuan inhaled deeply.

“Create the Mysterious Strategies Pavilion... and whom should I invite?”

He frowned and asked.

“Tang Xiansheng of South County, Luo Mingsang of Xiliang, Xie Yunling of the Dao Pavilion...”

Mo Beike named three people.

Tantai Xuan stood barefoot in the palace corridor, gazing at the bowing elder, eyes narrowing.

After a long moment, he waved his hand and issued orders.

He decreed that Xue Tao lead troops to suppress the rebellious sects and establish rules.

All new sects and clans must submit to Great Xuan’s rule and pay annual tribute.

Every year, they were required to send outstanding disciples to study at Great Xuan Academy.

Defiance meant annihilation.

The moment the decree was announced, Xuanwu Guards clattered in formation. Under the now-Nascent Soul realm Xue Tao, they marched on numerous sects.

Great Xuan instantly erupted into turmoil. Many sect masters were stunned.

They had founded their sects for freedom—yet this decree turned their faces pale.

But they had no power to refuse.

A few resisted and had their gates crushed.

Xue Tao did not massacre them—he imprisoned them all and sent them to Tianhan Pass to fight the invading western demons.

Tantai Xuan then proclaimed the creation of the Mysterious Strategies Pavilion to jointly govern the nation.

Invitations flew out swiftly.

He also dispatched several thousand troops under Jiang Li aboard great ships to the Eastern Sea to explore the ancient tomb.

...

South County.

Tang Xiansheng read the letter in his hand.

A servant stood respectfully nearby.

“The Mysterious Strategies Pavilion...”

“Great Xuan intends to found a divine dynasty.”

Tang Xiansheng smiled.

Different eras demanded different ambitions.

In the Hundred Schools era, overthrowing Great Zhou and founding a new dynasty would have been impressive enough.

But now, with cultivators everywhere, a dynasty without the power and resolve to suppress them would collapse.

The rise of the sect world was both a test and a fuse.

What was a divine dynasty? One whose court overawed the cultivation powers, bringing peace and prosperity to the people—that was a divine dynasty.

“To witness the birth of a divine dynasty in my lifetime is an honor.”

Tang Xiansheng laughed heartily, clearly delighted.

When Tang Yimo arrived, he gave a few instructions, then set off cheerfully with Tang Guo for Northern County.

...

Xiliang.

Overlord had already left for the Eastern Sea to explore the tomb—the news had shaken the entire cultivation world.

Luo Mingsang stayed behind to govern Xiliang, keeping everything in perfect order.

“Young Mistress, could this be a trap?”

A maidservant, a Golden Core cultivator personally assigned by Overlord to protect her, asked worriedly.

Luo Mingsang smiled.

“The Mysterious Strategies Pavilion?”

Her eyes gleamed as she looked skyward.

A divine dynasty must rise...

This world was vast.

And Great Xuan’s future might not be confined to Five Phoenix alone.

...

The situation across the land shifted constantly.

Lu Ping'an paid it little mind.

He rarely interfered in worldly affairs now. Unless cultivators faced mass extinction-level stupidity, he generally stayed out.

His focus was creating secret realms, helping the world's cultivators grow stronger—thereby growing stronger himself.

He also pondered how to elevate Five Phoenix beyond its new High Martial status.

Its previous rise from Low to High Martial had been straightforward: domineeringly fusing other worlds' origins.

That method was unreplicable for others but perfect for Five Phoenix.

Now Lu wondered whether to continue that path.

Yet advancing a High Martial world required more than just devouring origins—it demanded merging with the Great Path...

Leaning back in his Thousand Blades Chair, basking in the breeze, Lu played Go and pondered.

“If only I had another High Martial world’s origin to experiment with.”

He licked his lips.

“Integrating a High Martial origin would be far more complicated and dangerous—because it also involves stripping away its Great Path...”

Lu smiled and placed another piece.

For now, it was only a rough idea.

After all, Five Phoenix had only just become High Martial. There was no rush.

Chess was played one move at a time; meals eaten one bite at a time.

Hm?

Suddenly, as Lu placed a stone—

His brows raised.

His spiritual qi had stopped draining. The ancient tomb was no longer absorbing it...

What did this mean?

It meant the tomb's hunger was finally sated.

Lu couldn't help but sigh in relief.

Compared to the tokens, this tomb's appetite was monstrous—dozens of times greater.

He had barely kept up by playing Go all day to recover qi.

Anyone else would have been drained dry long ago.

No one else could have opened this tomb.

He stopped playing, sipped his bronze cup of wine, and swept his sleeve.

Buzz...

Eleven tokens floated up, gleaming brilliantly.

The once-dormant tokens now blazed with light.

“Go.”

Lu flicked his finger.

The eleven tokens shot forth like missiles, roaring with terrifying auras that split the sea into raging canyons.

White waves parted on either side of the streaks.

...

Rumble!

Above the vast sea.

Cultivators jolted awake.

Everyone heard the deep, mournful roar—like the heavens themselves weeping.

What was happening?

Confusion spread.

Before the ancient tomb, countless experts had gathered, packing the walls shoulder-to-shoulder.

Overlord, Xu Chu, Zhao Zixu, and the rest from Xiliang.

Jiang Li, Lu Jiulian, and others from Northern County.

Tang Yimo, Sima Qingshan from South County.

Nearly every major power in the cultivation world was present, along with Heavenly Origin sacred ground cultivators, Nie Changqing, Ning Zhao, and more—representing the full might of Five Phoenix’s cultivation era.

Rumble!

The deafening roar echoed from all directions.

Eyes shone as everyone stared.

White streaks flashed like shooting stars.

“What are those?!”

Someone cried out.

Half-step Mighty Beings like Du Longyang and Ye Shoudao shot upward.

“Ha!”

Du Longyang roared, reaching for one of the tokens.

BOOM!

To his horror, the token carried an unstoppable force.

Blood sprayed—his arm was wounded.

He fell back to the sea as the eleven tokens converged from every direction and hovered before the ancient, weathered gates.

Every breath grew rapid.

How could they not understand?

The mysterious ancient tomb... was opening!

Qi Lijia trembled, his cloudy eyes filled with disbelief.

The tomb... could actually be opened?

This was a relic from the Ancient Emperor's era...

What was buried inside?

Ice Towers.

The imprisoned Holy Sons and Maidens pressed their faces against the frozen walls, staring at the radiant tomb.

Their hearts pounded.

A great opportunity had appeared in this newborn High Martial world!

That ancient aura—combined with the sealed history of the Void Heaven...

This tomb surely held fortunes from the Ancient Emperor's age.

None of them could sit still any longer.

Even the usually composed Tuoba Holy Son perched on his ferocious bird grew restless.

He was confident that now the protective barrier had fallen, someone would come to rescue them—perhaps even Holy Lords in person.

It would just take time.

But this opportunity shattered his calm.

He found the Azure Spirit Holy Son.

Placing a heavy hand on the thinner man's shoulder, he whispered,

“The moment the tomb opens, get me out of this ice tower...”

Azure Spirit Holy Son narrowed his eyes, glanced back, and smiled.

They understood each other perfectly.

...

As the tomb erupted with myriad radiant lights, movements stirred everywhere.

Buzhou Peak.

Zhulong set out. She stepped through a Dragon Gate—the red dragon lying atop it brightened at her aura and carried her swiftly toward the tomb.

Giant Whale Island.

Ni Yu rode her cauldron with Little Yinglong in tow. The misty island vanished behind them like an immortal realm hidden away.

Immortal Legacy Ruins.

Behind the Origin waterfall, Lu Changkong emerged in coarse robes, hair and beard fluttering, eyes deep.

“I’ve exhausted every spirit herb in the fields... To find new ones, I must enter this tomb. I hope it holds rare miraculous herbs.”

He sighed.

For this journey, he had prepared extensively—grinding many “mildly toxic” herbs from his Compendium into powder and mixing them into various tools.

“Though only mildly toxic, it should be enough for this old man to protect himself.”

Lu Changkong nodded in satisfaction.

Then he set off toward the tomb.

He had only ever wanted a simple life picking chrysanthemums beneath the eastern fence.

But to complete his Herb Compendium, he had to leave the mountain.

...

Void Heaven.

The ancient Buddhist temple streaked across the darkness, shattering dead continents and floating rubble.

Terrifying auras provoked the Void Heaven's rules into descending suppression.

Yet the temple's Buddha-light illuminated everything—a supreme artifact that ignored the rules entirely, crossing the heavens at blinding speed.

Behind it followed bronze warships, giant birds with wings spanning thousands of li, chariots, and black-and-white immortal cranes...

Together they formed a murderous pressure that nearly collapsed the Void Heaven.

Soon, they arrived outside Five Phoenix.

**BOOM!**

Their terrifying auras made the lingering wanderers who spied on Five Phoenix tremble in fear.

Buddha-light swept past.

Wanderers too slow to flee were purified into ash.

A powerful wanderer clad in flaming armor screamed in terror.

“Holy Venerable of the High Martial Buddha Realm!”

“And the Holy Lords of every sacred ground!”

They had all come!

“Five Phoenix is finished!”

“This newborn High Martial world... is done for!”

The man shrieked like a madman, trying to flee.

But a giant Buddha hand reached out from the temple and crushed him to paste—like swatting a pesky insect.

A snake-tongued beauty shrieked in regret. Why had she lingered to watch the show?

“Mercy, Venerable! Mercy, Holy Lords!”

She knelt in the void, trembling and kowtowing.

But—

From atop the black-and-white immortal crane came a furious, icy snort.

A stream of black-and-white qi swept past.

The woman was sliced in half with a wretched scream, her divine sense extinguished.

Atop the crane stood a figure in black-and-white daoist robes, hands clasped behind his back, aura piercing the heavens.

He gazed coldly at the hazy outline of Five Phoenix.

“You killed my wife and imprisoned my children.”

“For these crimes—you will be exterminated!”

Chapter 396: Bald Donkey, It's Time We Settled Our Karma

The ancient tomb was opening!

This tomb that had appeared out of nowhere had set all of Five Phoenix ablaze. Nearly every powerful cultivator on the continent had gathered outside its gates.

Above the vast sea, waves surged violently.

Figures stood upon the water, letting the waves crash against them, rising and falling with the tide.

Once one reached Nascent Soul, flight became possible, and many present had already stepped into that realm.

Yet none flew. The closer the tomb came to opening, the stronger the oppressive fluctuations it released. The air grew so heavy it pinned them in place, making even breathing difficult.

Qi Liujia stood with hands clasped behind his back, spine hunched, face etched with deep gullies.

He stared at the tomb, excitement flickering across his features.

As the master of the Liujia Array Sect, he bore the crushing weight of restoring the glory of Emperor Ha's era.

For most of his life, he had found nothing related to Emperor Ha except the Nine-Word Array Proverbs.

He had wandered destitute, barely surviving.

Now, at the end of his days, he had discovered a tomb from Emperor Ha's era.

It might even be Emperor Ha's own tomb.

How could he not be excited?

Yet soon, Qi Liujia looked up.

Beyond the firmament, terrifying rumbles echoed.

The grand formation he had laid outside Five Phoenix had activated and was trembling.

Qi Liujia's expression shifted.

"They've come, as expected."

He sighed.

"Master, what has come?"

Li Sansui asked in puzzlement, his daoist robes flapping in the wind.

Qi Liujia did not answer.

Some burdens, some pressures, should not be placed on the young.

Rumble!

The vast sea quaked. A dreadful aura spread.

The towering wordless stele atop the sea radiated mysterious fluctuations.

The palace city's radiant lights grew ever more brilliant, dyeing the clouds in the sky.

The ancient gates trembled, dust falling away—each speck heavy with the weight of history, striking the water with dull thuds.

Creak... creak...

The long-drawn sound made the sea quiver irregularly.

The ancient gates opened.

When the first crack appeared—

Powerful winds gusted out, parting the sea.

Everyone's robes whipped high in the gale.

They raised arms to shield their faces, expressions turning grim.

The wind was bone-chillingly cold, as if it could freeze the soul.

“This opportunity belongs to the Void Heaven... You are the first High Martial world born here. Seize these fortunes with both hands. That this tomb appeared in Five Phoenix must be fate.”

Qi Liuji's white-streaked hair danced in the wind.

He swept his gaze across every cultivator present.

Taking a deep breath, he declared, “As cultivators of Five Phoenix, grasp this chance firmly. There may be supreme inheritances within. Remember—never let them fall into the hands of beings from the other heavens!”

His words carried the weight of an elder's final instruction.

Every cultivator's face tightened.

They all revered this old man.

Overlord and the others knew he had risked his life weaving formations to hold back countless Mighty Beings.

“We understand.”

They answered solemnly.

Qi Liujia smiled.

Then, step by step, coarse robes fluttering, he began walking upward as though ascending the heavens themselves.

With each step, a formidable aura radiated from him—the aura of a Mighty Being.

Though his injuries had not fully healed, he still possessed the strength of one.

And with the grand formation he had laid outside Five Phoenix, he might just be able to buy some time.

Above the sea, watching Qi Liujia defy the tomb’s pressure and soar skyward,

Everyone's expressions grew heavy.

Li Sansui especially panicked—was his master truly leaving like this?

Though they had not spent much time together, Li Sansui deeply respected this gentle teacher.

BOOM!

Qi Liuji's figure vanished.

Yet no one's attention lingered on him.

All eyes fixed on the tomb.

Behind the wordless stele, the palace gates had fully opened...

Seven-colored radiance flashed within like another Immortal Legacy Ruins, radiating irresistible temptation.

But the passage beyond the gates was pitch black.

Everyone stood motionless, none daring to act rashly.

The lessons from the Immortal Legacy Ruins were still fresh—many had been swept away by the River of Time and aged to death in misery.

Secret realms like this always hid supreme dangers.

Every person was on high alert.

Fortunes were wonderful, but great fortunes came with great peril.

From the outer sea, someone approached on foot and stood at a distance.

A middle-aged man, plump and jade-like, dressed in coarse farmer's clothes, yet carrying an extraordinary aura.

It was Lu Changkong.

He had reached Nascent Soul realm, but he had not come to fight—he only wanted to see what rare spirit herbs the tomb might hold.

So he did not compete, content to watch from afar and slip in later to browse.

After all, at Nascent Soul, he could not contend with the stronger cultivators anyway.

Ripples spread across the water.

Bu Nanxing sat cross-legged on the sea and glanced at the farmer-dressed cultivator beside him.

He smiled out of habit. “Here for treasures too, fellow daoist?”

Lu Changkong shook his head. “My strength is meager. I’m only here to watch the excitement. I enjoy planting spirit herbs and plants. If the tomb contains rare specimens, I’d like to record them in my Herb Compendium.”

He was mild-mannered and polite.

Moreover, Bu Nanxing’s cultivation far surpassed his—he had no desire to offend.

Bu Nanxing nodded deeply. "This world is too dangerous. If not for how shocking this tomb is, I wouldn't even bother coming. Unknown things are the most deadly."

"In this world, staying alive... that's what makes one strong."

The two chatted idly from afar.

Bu Nanxing displayed Infant Transformation realm strength, yet he conversed happily with the mere Nascent Soul Lu Changkong.

Ice Towers.

Sunlight glinted off the frozen walls, radiating cold air, yet the towers never melted.

No guards stood outside.

After all, these towers were crafted by Young Master Lu. Five Phoenix cultivators revered him almost fanatically.

No one believed the Holy Sons and Maidens could escape.

Thus, everyone had run off to chase the tomb's fortunes.

Inside, the imprisoned heirs wore expressions of bitter unwillingness.

Many pounded the walls in frustration, to no avail.

Watching the soaring radiance, they could only sigh in regret.

Hadn't they come to Five Phoenix for opportunities?

Now a great one lay before them, yet they had no chance to claim it.

Tuoba Holy Son, still perched on his ferocious bird, kept his palm on Azure Spirit Holy Son's shoulder.

"Now."

He transmitted.

Azure Spirit Holy Son, clad in cyan armor and seated on his spirit boat, smiled.

He did not refuse.

Buzz...

He raised a jade-like arm and pressed it against the ice.

His arm seemed to melt into the wall.

Then, bringing Tuoba Holy Son with him, he slowly passed through.

The flowing formation runes on the tower's surface completely ignored his arm.

“What are you doing?!”

A sharp-eyed Holy Son shouted.

Seeing Tuoba and Azure Spirit walking through the ice, the others instantly panicked.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Terrifying auras erupted within the towers.

The Holy Sons attacked without hesitation, unleashing devastating strikes at the pair.

“You can leave the towers?!”

Black-White Holy Son and Holy Maiden especially descended into madness.

“Hmph!”

Tuoba Holy Son snorted.

His blood and qi exploded outward.

A single horizontal punch forced every attacker back.

His Distraction realm aura utterly dominated them.

With savage, barbaric power, he crushed all resistance, leaving the others in despair.

Soon, Tuoba and Azure Spirit stepped out of the ice towers.

“Let’s go!”

They did not linger or spare a glance for the furious prisoners pounding the walls.

The two shot toward the tomb.

Their callousness plunged the remaining heirs into despair.

...

The palace gates stood wide open.

Dark, deep, with cold winds gusting out incessantly.

Faint weeping seemed to echo within—some said it was just the wind, others swore ghostly creatures wailed inside.

The atmosphere was oppressive for a long while.

Finally, someone moved.

The sea exploded as cultivators shot forward like streaks of light into the palace.

Once the first moved, no one could stay still. They all followed.

Of course, some waited to see what happened to the vanguard.

But when no response came from those who entered...

Even the patient lost their composure.

Overlord, Nie Changqing, and the others charged in.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, Ni Chunqiu, Young Master Tianxu, and the rest crossed the dark threshold.

Ni Yu, black cauldron on her back and Little Yinglong in tow, slipped inside.

Zhulong arrived atop the red dragon and stepped through.

Wuuu... wuuu...

The weeping grew louder within the passage.

Yet the cultivators' hearts burned hotter than ever.

From the distant sea,

Bu Nanxing smiled at Lu Changkong and cupped his fists. "After you, fellow daoist?"

"Together."

Lu Changkong returned the smile.

The two walked side by side, leisurely trailing at the rear.

Just as they were about to enter the palace—

Whoosh!

A spirit boat streaked in.

Tuoba Holy Son and Azure Spirit Holy Son had finally arrived.

“You...”

Tuoba Holy Son’s eyes flashed as he stared at Bu Nanxing.

He remembered him—the cowardly Holy Son who had fled.

He hadn’t expected the man to survive and reach the tomb.

“Oh? You know each other?”

Lu Changkong asked, surprised.

Bu Nanxing gave a wry smile and nodded.

“Then... shall we go together?”

Lu Changkong offered.

He did not recognize these Holy Sons, so his expression remained unchanged.

Tuoba and Azure Spirit narrowed their eyes. They had escaped the ice towers in secret; their only goal was the tomb's fortunes.

They had no desire for unnecessary trouble.

Thus, the four proceeded together into the tomb.

“This might be the tomb of the Ancient Emperor...”

“The oppressive aura makes one tremble, yet also excited.”

Tuoba Holy Son remarked.

His voice echoed in the dark passage.

Yet no one responded.

Azure Spirit Holy Son stayed silent.

Bu Nanxing followed the principle: speak less, live longer.

As for Lu Changkong—he simply had no idea what an “Ancient Emperor” was, so he had nothing to add.

Suddenly!

A bone-chilling gust swept through the passage.

The next instant, it transformed into deafening war cries.

All four paled.

They sensed living creatures attacking.

In the darkness, something cold crawled up the back of Tuoba Holy Son's neck.

BOOM!

Tuoba Holy Son unleashed his aura without restraint.

The creature behind him instantly exploded.

Crimson blood sprayed.

His Distraction realm presence was terrifying, making the passage feel suffocating.

Azure Spirit Holy Son remained calm, but even he grew wary.

They were both Holy Sons of Derivation Seven sacred grounds, yet Tuoba's control was overwhelming.

Tuoba Holy Son's gaze swept the darkness, gleaming brightly.

He saw the creatures lunging at Bu Nanxing.

Maidservant yin spirits—tattered clothes, rotting faces...

Tuoba Holy Son's aura pulsed.

The yin spirits burst into bloody mist.

“Yin spirits producing blood... these are no ordinary ghosts. A terrifying Yin Spirit Ghost King could be born among them.”

Azure Spirit Holy Son observed.

“They're weak—probably just awakened. Once fully revived, even these maidservants would be fearsome. For now, they only have Golden Core-level strength. Nothing to fear.”

Tuoba Holy Son glanced at Lu Changkong and Bu Nanxing—both remained unfazed.

They continued deeper.

The moment they emerged from the passage, blinding light assaulted them.

It felt as though they had stepped into a small world.

Looking up, they saw an enormous sun hanging low, almost close enough to touch.

It blazed fiercely, yet its light was deathly cold.

“Hiss!”

Azure Spirit Holy Son sucked in a breath.

“Is this the legendary immortal-tier mineral ‘Lunar Stone’?”

“Even a fingernail-sized piece is priceless and can forge immortal artifacts. Yet there’s one this massive in this tomb! If word spreads, all of Pingyang Heaven will go mad!”

Tuoba Holy Son's eyes were already red with greed, but he dared not touch it.

"Lunar Stone may radiate cold, but its surface burns hotter than fire. Even a Mighty Being would be incinerated on contact!"

A stone that size was beyond their ability to harvest.

Lu Changkong, however, showed no interest in the mineral overhead.

He had come for rare spirit herbs.

Only now did they have time to survey their surroundings.

Splash.

Their feet landed in blood.

They stood at the base of stone steps leading up to another palace city.

Cold blood covered the ground, forming pools filled with fresh corpses—cultivators who had entered earlier and died.

The blood on the ground came from shattered yin spirits.

Farther ahead, maidservant yin spirits gnawing on corpses raised their heads and charged.

“Hmph!”

Tuoba Holy Son’s blood and qi surged.

The yin spirits exploded into blood that flowed into the pools.

More yin spirits crawled from the pools, merging and reforming into maidservants.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Armored yin spirits with powerful auras charged out.

“Too many—and they won’t stay dead!”

“We need to reach the inner palace quickly!”

Tuoba Holy Son barked.

He no longer cared about the others and rushed toward the palace city alone.

Lu Changkong frowned. Just as he prepared to act, a yin spirit leapt onto him.

It let out a wretched scream and melted into black blood.

Lu Changkong blinked.

Bu Nanxing glanced at him curiously but saw nothing unusual.

The four entered the palace city.

Yet the moment they stepped inside, their bodies froze.

Within the palace, countless figures sat cross-legged.

They were the cultivators who had entered earlier.

Ye Shoudao, Du Longyang, Overlord... even Zhulong sat quietly with eyes closed.

Little Yinglong and the red dragon were unusually calm and serene.

Whether powerful Yang God realm experts or Golden Core cultivators, all were immersed in some strange state of enlightenment.

Atop the palace tower,

A rocking chair swayed.

Upon it lay a skeletal figure in a tattered pink dress, thin as a corpse.

Creak... creak...

The chair rocked rhythmically.

...

Rumble!

The Black-White Holy Lord rode his immortal crane—an Out-of-Body realm spirit beast.

Only a Holy Lord would dare use such a creature as a mount.

Staring at the formation enveloping Five Phoenix, his face grew colder.

His wife had died here, his children were imprisoned, and even Zuo Xu, the array master he had invested so much in, had perished.

He was furious.

“Amitabha.”

“This formation was laid by Qi Liujia of the Liujia Array Sect...”

The Venerable within the ancient temple spoke.

“Qi Liujia and this monk share old karma. Today, I shall break his array.”

“With the world’s protective barrier gone, once the formation falls, we may descend freely.”

The Venerable smiled.

Long ago, he had declared that when Five Phoenix became High Martial, he would come to “save” every soul here—including the white-robed youth who kept opposing him.

The other Holy Lords remained silent.

Buzz...

The Venerable in the temple smiled gently.

He flung out a golden alms bowl engraved with Buddhist script, radiant with golden light, smashing toward the formation.

Wherever the Buddha-light touched, formation runes collapsed.

Suddenly—

The golden bowl froze.

All the Holy Lords' eyes narrowed, fixing on Qi Liujia stepping out from roiling clouds.

Old and seemingly on death's door,

Yet he gazed fearlessly at the terrifying lineup beyond the void.

Four Derivation Seven Holy Lords and one Venerable!

This lineup was absurd.

How could Five Phoenix survive such overwhelming might?

Qi Liujia's cheeks trembled with rage.

A High Martial world had finally emerged in the Void Heaven after so long.

Yet these people wanted to eradicate it completely!

They truly intended to leave no path to survival.

Five Phoenix had already fallen so low. The Void Heaven had already declined so far...

Why still press them like this?

“You are Holy Lords of sacred grounds—why must you relentlessly hunt a newborn High Martial world?”

“Why?!”

Qi Liujia demanded, voice old and furious.

“Donor Qi, long ago this monk warned you: do not obsess, do not try to forge a High Martial in the Void Heaven. It is a cursed land. You would only doom yourself and your Liujia Array Sect. Look at you now...”

The Venerable spoke slowly from the temple.

“The beings of this world have offended this monk and repeatedly slain my reincarnations. This is karma that must be resolved. This monk wishes only to save them all.”

Qi Liuji shook his head.

There would be no negotiation.

He knew full well what the Buddha Realm Venerable meant by “salvation”—the slaughter of every living soul.

He had seen it countless times when he was in the High Martial Buddha Realm.

“Donor Qi, this monk invited you to break the formation together, yet you side with this world. Truly disappointing.”

The Venerable’s voice grew colder.

“Enough talk.”

“Break the array and slaughter our way in!”

The Black-White Holy Lord said indifferently.

A mere Unity realm cultivator meant nothing to him—especially one whose primordial spirit was crippled.

The formation was the only nuisance.

Far away, the Northern Palace Holy Lord aboard his bronze warship said nothing, eyes closed.

The expert atop the ferocious bird remained expressionless.

A newborn High Martial—at most Derivation Nine.

Their purpose was simply to retrieve their captured heirs and investigate the secret of a High Martial born in the Void Heaven.

“Amitabha.”

A long, mournful Buddhist chant rang from the ancient temple.

The next instant—

The ancient Buddha struck.

A palm shot out from the temple, radiant with golden light, slamming into the golden bowl.

**BOOM!**

Qi Liujia suddenly felt terrifying pressure crush him from all sides.

The formation he had woven shattered under the strike.

His body trembled violently.

The overwhelming might of a Venerable left him unable to breathe.

Qi Liujia slowly closed his eyes.

So this was death.

What a pity—he would never see this world grow and restore Emperor Ha’s glory.

If he could start over...

Would he regret everything he had done?

No. Qi Liujia had no regrets.

If the Void Heaven never birthed a High Martial, never grew strong—all its worlds and beings would remain nothing but cultivation resources or playthings to be slaughtered at will by the strong of Pingyang Heaven.

He had seen too much of that cruelty.

Sadly, he lacked the power to change it.

Buzz...

Countless fragments of the shattered formation swirled around him.

Suddenly,

Qi Liujia opened his eyes, a trace of bewilderment within.

The terrifying Venerable pressure... had vanished.

Unbeknownst to him,

A wheelchair had appeared before him.

A white-robed youth sat calmly within, holding a bronze cup of wine.

Eyes like a painting.

He glanced at the Venerable in the ancient temple.

The youth smiled lightly, took a sip, and spoke with a warm, gentle voice that echoed through the void.

“Bald donkey... it’s time you and I settled our karma.”

The moment the words left his mouth—

Terrifying, uncontrollable auras erupted across the Void Heaven.

The Buddha in the temple, whose face had been serene, suddenly contorted with rage, instantly becoming a wrathful Buddha.

Yet what shocked the Venerable most—

Why had the previously silent Northern Palace Holy Lord and Tuoba Holy Lord suddenly exploded with such powerful auras?

As though the insult had been directed at them.

For a moment, the Buddha Realm Venerable was stunned.

Who exactly... was this “bald donkey” cursing?

Chapter 397: Demon Lord, Three Swords to Slay a Buddha

Three terrifying auras erupted at once, threatening to pierce the very fabric of the Void Heaven.

One came from the Buddha Realm Venerable inside the ancient temple, golden Buddha-light shining everywhere, as if trying to melt away the darkness and cold of the void.

The other two belonged to the Northern Palace Holy Lord and the Tuoba Holy Lord.

The combined pressure of Holy Lords and a Venerable seemed capable of annihilating every continent in the Void Heaven.

Countless living beings trembled beneath the horrifying auras.

Far away, the hidden wanderers who had been watching were now paralyzed with fear.

The Black-White Holy Lord and Azure Spirit Holy Lord glanced over in confusion. Why were the Northern Palace and Tuoba Holy Lords—who had come merely to observe—so suddenly agitated?

The Northern Palace Holy Lord had only just regrown his body and was far from peak condition. His aura flickered unstably.

He stared at the white-robed youth seated calmly in the Thousand Blades Chair, lips trembling as terrible memories resurfaced.

Without hesitation—

He moved.

The nightmare of being obliterated by a single punch still haunted him.

Why the hell was he running into this monster again?!

His face turned ice-cold.

Last time, he had been unprepared...

This time, he would run fast enough!

His primordial spirit seized control of the warship and fled into the distance.

He had never expected to encounter Lu Ping'an here.

Something was wrong...

Hadn't this youth uprooted the Ancient Emperor's tomb and taken it back to his top-tier High Martial world?

Why was he here?

BOOM!

The warship roared, crushing frozen continents beneath it. Deeming even that too slow, the Northern Palace Holy Lord abandoned the ship entirely, shouldering it as he fled at full speed.

Truly, once bitten by a snake, ten years afraid of ropes.

The ferocious bird spread its wings, blotting out the sky.

Tuoba Holy Lord, seated atop it, let his aura rise and fall.

Shock gave way to calm.

He had considered fleeing too, but then realized—he had never offended this white-robed youth. Why run?

So he stayed.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's headlong flight left the others momentarily stunned.

Especially the Buddha Realm Venerable inside the temple.

"Amitabha..."

The Venerable's expression darkened slightly.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord had agreed to join the expedition—yet before the fight even began, he had fled carrying his warship.

The Venerable looked toward Tuoba Holy Lord, about to speak.

But Tuoba said nothing, only giving Lu a deep, meaningful glance.

Qi Liujia, standing behind Lu, wore a bitter expression.

Looking at the lonely figure seated in the wheelchair, he sighed.

That back looked so isolated—as though the weight of the entire world rested on this youth's shoulders.

One lonely young man facing a Venerable and multiple Holy Lords.

How tragic.

Was the Void Heaven truly forbidden from birthing a High Martial world?

After endless ages of silence, could it not be granted even a sliver of hope to rise?

The calamity that felled the Ancient Emperor so long ago—why must the descendants still bear its consequences?

Unwillingness surged in Qi Liujia's old heart.

Could Young Master Lu withstand this lineup?

Qi Liujia had little confidence—only deep pessimism.

One Buddha Realm Venerable might be manageable.

But four Holy Lords? No hope at all.

Even though the Northern Palace Holy Lord had fled, did losing one really matter?

Three Holy Lords remained—an infernal difficulty.

If Young Master Lu fell, the newly ascended Five Phoenix would collapse completely.

Yet Qi Liujia was powerless.

With the world's protective barrier gone, Lu could no longer hide inside Five Phoenix. If the barrier still stood, these experts would never dare descend—the backlash would weaken them drastically, and Lu could slay them easily.

“Young Master Lu, run.”

“While the green hills remain, there will always be firewood to burn. Preserve your life, and one day you can return as a king.”

Qi Liuji spoke with resolve.

Yet even as he said it, despair crept in—he could not hold these Venerables and Holy Lords for long.

And where could Lu even flee to?

Lu leaned back in his chair and waved dismissively with a smile.

“No need to worry.”

His tone was relaxed.

He spotted a few familiar faces.

The fleeing Northern Palace Holy Lord, and Tuoba Holy Lord seated atop his bird.

Lu's deep gaze settled on Tuoba.

Tuoba Holy Lord sat cross-legged on the bird's back, towering and powerful. Meeting Lu's eyes, he smiled and cupped his fists.

"We meet again."

He glanced at Five Phoenix, a guess forming.

Perhaps Lu was not a Holy Son from a top-tier High Martial world after all.

Maybe he was this newborn world's... plane lord?

But how could he possess such terrifying power?

Tuoba's eyes flickered.

Such heaven-defying talent...

Could the Ancient Emperor of the Void Heaven stand behind this youth?

Or... was this youth the Emperor's inheritor?!

No ordinary backgroundless boy could punch a Holy Lord's body to pieces.

This youth definitely had a colossal backer.

Lu returned the smile with a gentle nod.

Hm?

The atmosphere in the void suddenly grew strange.

Inside the ancient temple, the Venerable stared at Tuoba Holy Lord.

"Tuoba Holy Lord, what is the meaning of this?"

“Too much talk!”

The Black-White Holy Lord said coldly.

The main target had appeared—why waste words?

A mere newborn Derivation Nine High Martial world. Crush it and be done.

One less Holy Lord made no difference.

BOOM!

The Black-White Holy Lord attacked Lu.

His immortal crane transformed into a razor-sharp sword beam, slicing through the void like lightning toward Lu.

Killing intent caused the void to collapse continuously.

He struck without warning!

The Black-White Holy Lord hated Lu to the bone.

His wife had died here, his children were imprisoned, and even Zuo Xu—the array master he had pinned his hopes on—had perished.

“Die!”

His sword slashed through the emptiness toward Lu.

BOOM!

Sword qi rampaged everywhere.

Yet to everyone’s shock—

The ferocious bird cried out.

A colossal claw descended like a peng soaring across the heavens.

The immortal crane wailed. Sword light shattered with a metallic clang. Blood sprayed as the crane was sent tumbling through the void.

The Black-White Holy Lord's eyes exploded with fury.

"Tuoba?! What are you doing?!"

BOOM!

His black-and-white robes whipped wildly, hair standing on end, face twisted with rage.

Tuoba Holy Lord merely smiled, standing calmly in the void.

Azure Spirit Holy Lord was dumbfounded. The situation had turned too quickly.

What was going on?

Why had Tuoba Holy Lord attacked the Black-White Holy Lord?

Weren't they here to suppress this world together?

One look from the white-robed youth and he switched sides?

Azure Spirit Holy Lord was no fool. After a moment's thought, he quietly retreated, signaling he wanted no part in this chaos.

Inside the ancient temple, Buddhist chants rang out.

The Buddha Realm Venerable, now in wrathful form, roared in fury.

His tongue bloomed with golden lotuses as he bellowed,

"Tuoba Holy Lord, what is the meaning of this?! Betraying us mid-battle—you would be scorned by all of Pingyang Heaven!"

Tuoba Holy Lord shook his head and flicked his wrist.

A heavy, dark halberd appeared in his hand. Though dark, it radiated boundless energy, as though it could crush the void itself.

The distant wanderers were stunned.

This reversal left them utterly bewildered.

Even Qi Liujia stood frozen.

“This...”

Tuoba Holy Lord—one of the strongest Holy Lords in Pingyang Heaven, from a Derivation Seven High Martial world—was turning against his allies to help Lu?

Did Tuoba and Lu have some secret connection?

Lu himself was slightly surprised—he hadn’t expected Tuoba to intervene.

He gave Tuoba a meaningful look.

Interesting fellow.

At least some people in this world still knew right from wrong.

“You all bully Five Phoenix for being a newborn High Martial...”

“But has Five Phoenix ever bullied any of you?”

Lu asked calmly.

“You killed my wife, imprisoned my children, murdered my loyal subordinate—and you claim you never bullied me?!”

The Black-White Holy Lord snarled.

The smile faded from Lu’s face.

He looked coldly at the Black-White Holy Lord.

“The killer is always killed in turn. Your wife tried to slaughter every soul in Five Phoenix. Your children tried to steal our world’s origin. And your subordinate—even tried to murder his own master...”

“Scum like that—I was merely cleaning house for you.”

Lu said.

The Black-White Holy Lord nearly exploded with rage.

He was supposed to thank him?!

“Tuoba, step aside... or I will no longer hold back!”

Yet Tuoba only smiled wider.

He had made up his mind.

Setting aside the possibility that the Ancient Emperor stood behind Lu, just the youth’s terrifying potential—the special physique that had obliterated the Northern Palace Holy Lord’s body with one punch—was rare even among top-tier High Martial worlds.

Worth investing in.

Offending the powers of Pingyang Heaven? So be it.

The Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm might be Derivation Six, but Tuoba Holy Lord feared them not.

Most importantly—the outcome of this battle was far from certain.

This white-robed youth had blown apart a Holy Lord's body with a single punch. His true strength was unfathomable.

And he possessed an immortal-tier artifact.

The Venerable's karma with him was deep. Victory was not guaranteed.

BOOM!

Tuoba Holy Lord swept his dark halberd, unleashing mountain-shaking force that suppressed countless sword beams from the Black-White Holy Lord.

“Azure Spirit! Help me!”

The Black-White Holy Lord shattered the halberd's pressure with a sword strike and roared toward Azure Spirit Holy Lord.

To his fury, Azure Spirit merely lay on his spirit boat with a look that said, "What did you say?"

He had clearly decided to sit this one out!

"Very well..."

Inside the ancient temple, the Venerable laughed.

He had invited these Holy Lords to assist—only to be betrayed.

He gave Tuoba Holy Lord a cold stare.

"From this day forward, the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm and the Tuoba small world... are irreconcilable enemies."

"This monk is not to be trifled with."

The Venerable declared.

The next instant, Buddhist chants exploded from the temple.

A golden lotus bloomed into a lotus platform.

The Venerable sat atop it. The ancient temple shot forth as a golden beam straight toward Lu.

**BOOM!**

He struck with a palm. A colossal Buddha palm blotted out the sky, countless rays of Buddha-light raining down.

Terrifying pressure spread.

Wherever the light touched, worlds withered.

A heavenly Buddha palm descended, aiming to reduce Lu to ash.

Qi Liujia's body trembled.

Blood sprayed from his mouth as he formed seals to weave a formation against the enemy.

But Lu stopped him.

“No need.”

Lu said calmly.

With a light tap on the armrest—

Silver light blazed.

Countless silver beams formed a sword formation in the void.

The Buddha palm slammed into the sword array. Shockwaves exploded, shaking the void.

Hm?

The Venerable atop the lotus platform frowned.

This child... had grown stronger again.

The sword formation stood unscathed, radiating brilliant silver light.

Lu smiled.

He tapped the armrest again.

Every silver beam shot forth.

The Venerable struck several more palms—each met with ringing clashes.

Yet he could not break the formation.

“Bald donkey, you disappoint me.”

Lu shook his head.

Beneath him, crimson sword light coalesced into a throne-like shape.

He raised a hand and pointed forward.

The crimson sword light moved.

A phoenix cry pierced the heavens.

The Venerable's face darkened with anger.

“This child already possesses Venerable-level strength?”

“A mere newborn High Martial...”

He flung out his golden alms bowl. His kasaya robe spun rapidly overhead.

The bowl released pillars of golden light, attempting to shatter the sword formation.

A top-grade sacred-tier artifact—immensely powerful.

The kasaya descended, its interior forming a separate space to capture Lu.

Lu chuckled softly.

He slowly rose to his feet.

“The little ones are still exploring the tomb. I need to watch over them... I have no time to play with you.”

“You said the day Five Phoenix became High Martial would be the day you destroyed it. This young master remembers those words well.”

“I usually don’t hold grudges... Unfortunately, you crossed my bottom line.”

Lu spoke calmly.

His hair whipped wildly.

Specks of demonic qi began to spread.

Then, like a dam bursting, demonic qi flooded forth.

His presence became utterly terrifying—like a god or demon standing in place.

His white robes turned pitch black.

Seated, he was an immortal.

Standing, he became a demon.

Demonic qi rolled like a tide—an apocalyptic great demon.

The pressure was suffocating.

Even Qi Liujia trembled uncontrollably.

He stared at the black-robed figure who had risen, utterly stunned.

“This... is Young Master Lu?”

He had always thought Lu used the wheelchair because of some strange illness.

Only now did he realize—Lu sat to suppress his own aura.

When Young Master Lu stood...

He was this terrifying!

“Demon?”

The Venerable atop the lotus laughed.

“Buddha subduing demons is the natural order.”

He declared.

A golden monk’s staff appeared in his hand, ringing like bells.

Far away, Tuoba—who was suppressing the Black-White Holy Lord—narrowed his eyes at the sight of Lu's towering demonic qi.

A terrifying special physique had appeared!

Demon Lord Lu.

He took a step forward.

Each step in the void caused tremors.

Thousands of silver beams wrapped in black demonic qi formed silver wings at his back.

The wings flapped—sword qi erupted.

The Venerable focused.

He formed a flower-pinching gesture. Buddha-light condensed into a shield, blocking countless sword beams.

He remained calm. Lu's growth had exceeded expectations. His reincarnations had once suppressed this youth, yet now the boy possessed Venerable-level combat power.

Such terrifying speed.

"The secret of the Void Heaven?"

The Venerable's gaze flickered.

His eyes passed Lu and fell on Five Phoenix Continent.

Perhaps...

The Void Heaven's sole High Martial world held secrets.

His karma with Lu ran too deep—from the Tianyuan domain onward, it could not be severed.

But now, with his true body here, all karma would end.

Five Phoenix would fall under his control. Its secrets would become his fortune...

The Phoenix Feather Swords merged.

Nine swords became one—a gorgeous crimson blade like a true phoenix tail feather, blazing with fire that seemed to burn the void itself.

Demonic qi stained the flames black.

Lu looked like a demon lord striding out of the abyss.

“Seal the demon!”

The Venerable pressed his palms together, forming Buddhist seals.

He flung his staff. It followed the seals, descending to suppress Lu.

Terrifying pressure cracked the void.

Traces of rule power seemed to emerge, ready to annihilate everything.

The distant watching wanderers were already frozen with fear.

Demon Lord Lu gripped the Phoenix Feather Sword.

His expression was cold as he regarded the Venerable's techniques.

He did nothing fancy—just raised the demon-stained Phoenix Feather Sword.

One slash pointed forward.

Then the silver wings beat.

Sword qi formed shockwaves, propelling him forward like a streak of light.

The Phoenix Feather Sword grew enormous—large enough to blot out the heavens.

He held the massive blade and slashed at the Venerable.

“Come! Today this monk shall subdue you, great demon!”

“And deliver this corrupted world from suffering!”

The Venerable declared.

The lotus platform blazed with light.

Golden bowl, staff, and kasaya spun rapidly.

Pfft!

Yet—

Demon Lord Lu’s face remained cold.

One slash.

The golden bowl shattered.

The kasaya tore apart.

Cracks spiderwebbed across the staff...

In a single strike, all three sacred artifacts exploded!

Hm?

The Venerable felt his hair stand on end.

Without hesitation, he shot upward.

The sword beam sliced past—the lotus platform was cleaved in half, leaving a deep scar across the void.

“Immortal-tier artifact?!”

The Venerable stared in horror at the Phoenix Feather Sword in Lu’s hand.

He fled into the ancient temple.

Sitting cross-legged, he chanted Buddhist scriptures.

A colossal golden Buddha body manifested outside the temple.

Demon Lord Lu, however, kept it simple.

One more slash.

Sword qi streaked across the sky, descending upon the temple from above.

Crack...

The golden Buddha shattered.

Tiles exploded outward. Walls collapsed.

With unstoppable momentum, the slash cleaved the ancient temple in two.

“How is this possible?!”

The Venerable was horrified beyond belief.

The temple exploded.

He shot out like a golden beam streaking across the sky.

As a Venerable, he should have remained calm—but at this moment, he could not.

He had imagined countless scenarios for his arrival in Five Phoenix.

He had believed he could destroy the continent with one palm.

He had pictured all its beings kneeling and converting at his chants.

He had even fantasized about taking Lu as a little monk under his wing.

Yet every fantasy shattered against reality.

Demon Lord Lu walked through the void, dark lightning coiling around him. Thunder Movement Body Technique combined with the silver wings formed from Thousand Blades granted him near-instantaneous speed.

He easily caught up to the fleeing Venerable.

Turning sideways, he brought the sword down.

In the Venerable's pupils, there was only the black-and-crimson flaming blade.

The Venerable pressed his palms together, trying to catch the strike.

Yet his palms grasped nothing.

They were sliced in half...

Even his golden Buddha body could not withstand the devastating slash.

Demon Lord Lu's expression remained cold.

First sword shattered the artifacts.

Second sword cleaved the temple.

Third sword slew the Buddha.

With a flick of the wrist, the Venerable's body cracked.

Blood poured like a collapsing dam.

Demon Lord Lu's silver wings gleamed.

He spoke slowly, using the Venerable's own words against him.

"Demons slaying Buddhas... is also the natural order."

Chapter 398: I See Hatred in Your Eyes

The Void Heaven fell into a deathly silence.

Three swords had slain a Venerable from the High Martial Buddha Realm.

Everyone stood frozen.

Blood turned into a crimson rain, sprinkling through the void.

The Venerable's blood contained boundless energy. As it scattered, thunderous booms rang out like a mournful dirge.

Qi Liujia stared blankly, forgetting to react.

The metallic tang of blood filled the air; droplets stung his cheeks like needles. For a moment, he couldn't process it.

A Venerable from the High Martial Buddha Realm...

A Tribulation Realm Mighty Being—dead?!

When realization hit, horror flooded him.

He looked at the black-robed Lu standing in the void, silver blades forming dazzling sword-wings behind him, and felt as though lightning had struck his body.

No wonder Lu had always been so calm.

Everything... had been under Young Master Lu's control from the start.

Qi Liujia felt as though he were dreaming.

He recalled every encounter in this region.

The first time he saw Lu—struggling to fuse origins in the Origin Space, merging a weaker origin into a stronger one. It had shocked him.

The second—Lu silently shattering his earth clone with mere presence, revealing strength no weaker than a Mighty Being. Another shock.

Then the shocking things Lu did only snowballed.

From beginning to end... Qi Liujia had never truly understood Lu.

He had thought the descending Buddha Realm Venerable would be a terrifying enemy.

Yet in the end... three swords had shattered the Venerable's golden body.

At that moment, Qi Lijia suddenly felt an immense weight lift from his shoulders.

The pressure that had clogged every pore was released.

So Young Master Lu's own strength... had always been his trump card.

Rumble!

Far away—

The Black-White Holy Lord, locked in combat with Tuoba Holy Lord, froze.

He stared in disbelief at the Venerable whose body had been cleaved apart by a single slash.

A mighty Venerable... defeated?

“This... how is this possible?”

Cold dread crawled up his spine.

He wasn't stupid.

Connecting the Northern Palace Holy Lord's strange behavior and Tuoba's betrayal, he understood.

Both had witnessed this youth's terror firsthand.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's exploded body... had likely been this youth's doing!

“Damn it...”

The Black-White Holy Lord's gaze sharpened. He shot Tuoba a venomous look.

The next instant, he turned and landed on his immortal crane's back.

“Run!”

The moment the Venerable's body shattered, ice flooded his veins—he smelled death.

“As expected...”

Tuoba Holy Lord watched the shocking scene.

A Venerable Buddha's golden body destroyed—this was indeed impactful.

Demons slaying Buddhas was only natural?

Tuoba gave a wry smile.

Buddha arts did counter demons, but before such an overwhelmingly powerful special physique, that suppression meant nothing.

Even Tuoba knew he would fare poorly against Lu.

With an immortal-tier artifact in hand, cross-realm combat was trivial—and Lu hadn't even used his full strength.

He had not yet unleashed the mysterious power that obliterated the Northern Palace Holy Lord with one punch.

The Black-White Holy Lord wanted to flee.

Tuoba did not stop him.

But...

A calm voice drifted over, freezing Tuoba's expression.

"Trying to run?"

"Do you think Five Phoenix is a place you can come and go as you please?"

The black-robed youth's wild hair danced. His eyes gleamed like stars.

His words rang like struck iron.

Tuoba inhaled deeply.

He... wasn't letting him leave either?

Why?

Then Tuoba remembered—because the Black-White Holy Lord had argued with Lu earlier.

Was he holding a grudge over something so small?

What a petty heart...

Tuoba's mouth twitched.

But to kill a Venerable and then pursue a Holy Lord...

Too domineering!

Boom!

In the void—

The Buddha Realm Venerable roared in fury. His golden body exploded, countless rays of Buddha-light forming an energy storm.

A wisp of golden primordial spirit fled.

Within it, a lamp protected him.

The moment it emerged, it shot away.

Demon Lord Lu's hair whipped wildly. His silver wings flapped.

Like lightning, he pursued.

He reached out, palm closing around the Venerable's spirit.

Buzz...

The lamp trembled, releasing a terrifying rebound force.

“That is a Buddha Realm protective measure... Be careful—it may backlash against your own spirit.”

Tuoba warned.

Demon Lord Lu glanced at him coldly.

In Demon Lord form, Lu was ice-cold.

He heard the warning but ignored it.

As for the fleeing Black-White Holy Lord—Tuoba acted.

A shrill whistle.

His ferocious bird spread its wings like a great peng and shot forth.

Pfft!

Sharp talons tore through the immortal crane, drawing a mournful cry.

“Tuoba! You would hunt me to the death?!”

The Black-White Holy Lord roared.

Wuuu—!

A phoenix cry resounded.

The Phoenix Feather Sword streaked across the sky, a crimson beam stained with black demonic qi.

The Black-White Holy Lord’s heart shook.

He commanded his crane to transform into sword light and meet the Phoenix Feather Sword.

Pfft!

Blood sprayed endlessly. The crane-sword was cleaved in two.

The Black-White Holy Lord's heart bled—this was his sacred ground's guardian beast, a rare Distraction realm spirit beast, the face of Black-White Sacred Ground!

Yet now it was dead!

But greater terror gripped him.

An immortal-tier artifact—too powerful!

He could not block it.

If he stayed, he would end up like that bald donkey.

He wanted to flee, but Tuoba refused to let him.

The two clashed fiercely in the void, true killing intent ignited.

As for Lu—

His palm closed around the Buddha Realm Venerable's primordial spirit.

The lamp released strange fluctuations—a primordial spirit attack aimed to shatter Lu's own spirit.

Demon Lord Lu remained cold.

Ninety-nine strands of primordial spirit force erupted.

An even more terrifying storm countered.

A wretched scream tore through the void—the Venerable's spirit suffered devastating damage.

Lu's palm contained chaos energy.

The lamp was forcibly extinguished.

The wisp of spirit was seized.

“Buddha speaks of karma. Your retribution... is me.”

Demon Lord Lu said coolly.

The next instant—

Two fingers pinched down.

Pfft!

A Venerable's primordial spirit shattered!

It turned into surging soul energy that scattered.

Lu did not waste it. With a sweep of his sleeve, he directed it toward Five Phoenix—a great nourishment for its cultivators' souls.

Thus—

The Buddha Realm Venerable whose karma had entangled Lu since the Tianyuan domain...

Was no more.

It fulfilled his own prophecy: the day Five Phoenix became High Martial would be the day of annihilation.

Only the one annihilated was the Venerable himself.

Demon Lord Lu acted as though he had done something trivial.

And indeed, it was.

From the beginning, Lu had been waiting for this Venerable to descend, waiting to resolve the trouble.

Now the trouble was gone.

His gaze shifted. Silver wings unfurled like a great peng.

Holding the Phoenix Feather Sword, he walked step by step through the void.

Far away—

Azure Spirit Holy Lord, hiding in his spirit boat, held his breath.

This... was a ruthless man.

No wonder Tuoba had switched sides mid-battle. Ruthless and formidable—this youth was someone to be reckoned with.

Azure Spirit Holy Lord's eyes flickered.

The Void Heaven had been in decline for countless ages—a ruined corner of the Nine Heavens.

Yet from such a broken place had emerged this figure.

In sheer presence, he rivaled the heaven's chosen of top-tier High Martial worlds.

There had to be a terrifying backer behind him.

What powerhouses did the Void Heaven hold?

Azure Spirit Holy Lord's pupils contracted.

He recalled ancient records in his sacred ground.

The Void Heaven had once buried an Ancient Emperor. Countless supreme beings had fallen here.

Perhaps...

This youth was backed by the Ancient Emperor—or someone of that level?

The thought sent chills down his spine.

Lu glanced at him.

Azure Spirit Holy Lord immediately offered a polite, elegant smile.

This man... could not be offended.

**BOOM!**

Tuoba Holy Lord's blood and qi soared. His halberd swept with the momentum of ten thousand soldiers.

The Black-White Holy Lord was beaten back step by step.

When Demon Lord Lu's overwhelming demonic aura rolled over like a tidal wave—

The Black-White Holy Lord's heart trembled.

"Tuoba... you will die a horrible death!"

He roared.

He flung out a white sword—the black one had been lost with his wife's death in Five Phoenix.

In desperation, he detonated the white sword.

A top-grade sacred-tier artifact exploded, forming a terrifying storm that threatened to tear the void apart.

The Black-White Holy Lord seized the chance to flee.

Yet—

Countless silver beams swept forth like great peng wings unfurling.

Sword qi blocked the explosion's energy.

A flaming crimson sword descended from the heavens.

Pfft!

The Black-White Holy Lord's body was pierced clean through, nailed into the void.

Pinned to a dead, frozen continent.

He coughed blood endlessly, dyeing the barren land red. Rich vitality spread from his blood into the void.

Despair filled him.

He could not escape.

Tuoba Holy Lord, seated on his bird, sighed but said nothing.

What could he say?

Stop Lu from killing the Black-White Holy Lord?

Given their enmity, he could not play the good guy.

Moreover, he feared speaking up would earn Lu's grudge.

This youth... held grudges the size of dust motes.

The surrounding wanderers were already terrified beyond words.

They had witnessed a horrifying scene.

A Venerable fallen. A Holy Lord pierced and pinned to a dead continent.

What presence!

The Void Heaven had birthed such a monster?!

Lu walked step by step.

He landed on the frozen continent.

The Black-White Holy Lord, impaled by the Phoenix Feather Sword, trembled violently. Staring up at Lu, fear filled his eyes.

He wanted to beg for mercy but found no words.

Demon Lord Lu gazed down at him calmly.

Their eyes met.

The Black-White Holy Lord, nailed to the ground, looked up without blinking.

Tears of humiliation welled in his eyes.

Kill him if you must—why this humiliation?!

Rage and hatred flashed in his gaze!

If he ever got the chance, he would personally behead this youth and slaughter every soul in this newborn High Martial world!

Yet the next moment, a calm voice sounded in his ear.

“I see hatred in your eyes.”

You...

The Black-White Holy Lord spat blood in fury.

Before he could curse—

A silver beam flashed across his brow.

His primordial spirit was pierced and nailed into the void.

In the Void Heaven—

Rules like blades descended.

The Black-White Holy Lord's spirit wailed in agony as the rules flayed and incinerated it.

His body slumped lifeless on the frozen land, eyes still wide with unwillingness.

Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords felt a chill.

This was the terrifying rule power of the Void Heaven—blades that cut primordial spirits.

The Black-White Holy Lord was dead. The Buddha Realm Venerable was dead...

A grand invasion had ended like this.

No one could restrain this High Martial world of the Void Heaven any longer.

The silver blades folded back into the Thousand Blades Chair.

The black-robed Demon Lord slowly sat.

Demonic qi receded, black robes turning white once more.

He tied his hair with a jade crown, securing it with the small jade sword.

Lu leaned back in his chair, face gentle and harmless once again.

“Tuoba Cang of the Tuoba small world, Pingyang Heaven.”

Tuoba Holy Lord cupped his fists from atop his bird.

“Thank you both for your assistance. Lu Ping’an of the Five Phoenix small world, Void Heaven.”

Lu smiled warmly.

The refined young master—where was the ferocity that had slain a Venerable and a Holy Lord?

“Hua Qingyun of the Azure Spirit small world, Pingyang Heaven.”

Azure Spirit Holy Lord smiled amicably from his spirit boat and bowed.

The tense atmosphere instantly dissolved.

Lu held no ill will toward Azure Spirit Holy Lord—he had only watched from the sidelines and never attacked.

Lu nodded slightly.

Then he beckoned.

Qi Liujia flew over quickly, body trembling.

Tears nearly fell from his aged eyes.

He had heard Lu's introduction.

Void Heaven, Five Phoenix small world, Lu Ping'an...

All emotions surged within him.

Finally, one day, the Void Heaven could speak as equals with powerhouses from the other heavens.

"Old Qi, entertain our two Holy Lord guests. I have urgent matters."

Lu said.

"Yes."

Qi Liujia bowed.

Only then did he remember—the ancient tomb from the Ancient Emperor's era had just opened.

Lu's urgent matter was surely dealing with the tomb.

A tomb of that level held both crisis and opportunity.

After giving instructions, Lu nodded to Tuoba and Azure Spirit once more.

Then lightning flashed. White robes fluttered as he vanished into Five Phoenix.

Qi Liujia wiped his tears and turned to the two Holy Lords.

"Holy Lords, I am Qi Liujia. By Young Master's command, I shall receive you."

As Five Phoenix's only Mighty Being, he was its face.

He spoke neither humbly nor arrogantly.

"Sect Master Qi, we are old acquaintances—no need for formality."

Tuoba and Azure Spirit smiled.

Qi Liujia's name was no small thing in Pingyang Heaven.

"Please."

Qi Liujia stepped aside. The grand formation outside Five Phoenix rumbled and opened a staircase of clouds.

Tuoba laughed heartily. His bird shrank into an eagle that perched on his shoulder. Hands behind his back, he strode boldly into Five Phoenix.

He was quite curious about the newborn High Martial world of the Void Heaven.

Azure Spirit Holy Lord stored his spirit boat and followed.

As soon as they entered—

Tuoba's gaze locked.

He stared toward the vast sea—where a towering wordless stele pierced the heavens.

“This... this is...”

Tuoba trembled.

The Ancient Emperor’s tomb... was here?

And judging by the soaring qi and radiant lights—it had opened?!

...

Pingyang Heaven.

Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm.

Countless Buddhist temples stretched for tens of thousands of li—golden and resplendent, divine light blazing.

Suddenly—

One temple exploded. Sarira shot into the sky, cracking.

In the central pagoda—

A colossal Buddha shadow emerged.

With a gesture, the shattered sarira flew to it.

Buzz...

Strange fluctuations emanated from the broken sarira.

An image appeared.

A youth wreathed in demonic qi, silver wings at his back, one slash—and the Venerable Buddha fell.

Then the colossal Buddha shadow seemed to gaze across eternity.

Void Heaven.

Rumble!

The entire Void Heaven trembled.

Beyond the heavens, a sky-blotting Buddha shadow descended, as though to envelop the whole realm.

Yet just as its foot was about to step in—

A corner of the Void Heaven cracked open.

The colossal Buddha shadow looked into that crack.

Its solemn face twisted with terror.

It hastily withdrew its foot, pressed palms together, chanted “Amitabha,” and vanished instantly.

As the shadow disappeared, the crack slowly healed.

A faint song drifted from within.

An ancient, timeless lament.

All of this happened in an instant—even Lu did not notice.

...

Lu returned to the lake island.

His expression instantly grew grave.

Not because he had killed the Buddha Realm Venerable and feared repercussions.

That Venerable's karma had entangled him for too long, but once Five Phoenix became High Martial, he was no longer a threat.

In truth, Lu had never feared him—even without great personal growth.

With the Heaven-Sheltering Array protecting Five Phoenix, the Venerable could not have caused much trouble.

What truly darkened Lu's face...

Was that Lu Changkong... had entered the ancient tomb.

For his father, Lu only wished a peaceful life researching spirit herbs—picking chrysanthemums beneath the eastern fence, gazing leisurely at the southern mountains.

There was no need for him to brave such a tomb...

“I just gave him the Myriad Poisons Body. Has he already mastered it? Why the hell is he in the tomb...”

Lu was speechless. It was his father, after all.

He could not ignore it.

He summoned the Spiritual Pressure Chessboard. Lines instantly danced in his eyes.

The next moment—

The board reflected scenes from within the ancient tomb.

...

Lu Changkong, Tuoba Holy Lord, and the others stared at the bizarre sight before them, chills crawling up their spines.

Cultivators sat cross-legged all over the ground, lost in enlightenment.

Most importantly—the rocking chair atop the palace tower.

The pink-clad skeleton lay upon it.

Somehow, they all felt its hollow sockets watching them.

This pink skeleton was surely a corpse from the tomb.

Yet... was it still alive?

Bu Nanxing took a step back. This tomb was too eerie—unsafe.

He needed to escape.

Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords felt their hair stand on end. Even they, bold as they were, felt fear.

Suddenly—

Bu Nanxing screamed.

The others jumped and looked over.

“What happened?!”

Tuoba barked.

“The way out is gone! The gate sealed!”

Bu Nanxing stared at the closed stone gate, cold sweat pouring down his face.

“It didn’t even hurt you—why scream?!”

Tuoba snapped, annoyed.

Bu Nanxing was filled with regret.

“Kekekeke...”

Suddenly—

The rocking chair stopped.

Deep within the skeleton’s empty sockets, faint blue ghostfire flickered.

Four balls of ghostfire drifted from its eyes toward the four men.

“This is the first palace city beneath the General’s Tomb...”

“The most lenient one. Beings native to the Void Heaven who fail enlightenment may withdraw. Outsiders who fail... soul annihilation.”

The voice came from the ghostfire.

“Can I choose not to participate?”

Bu Nanxing asked, face pale. “Can I leave now?”

But before he finished—

The four ghostfires shot forward.

Tuoba, Azure Spirit, Bu Nanxing, and Lu Changkong could not dodge.

The flames entered their brows.

Their eyes closed. They sat cross-legged, falling into the same enlightenment state as everyone else.

Creak... creak...

The rocking chair began rocking again.

Suddenly—

It stopped abruptly.

Because—

Within the deathly still palace city,

Spiritual qi gathered.

It coalesced into a white-robed youth seated calmly in a Thousand Blades Chair.

Crack... crack...

The pink skeleton's skull turned slowly.

Above and below the tower—

They stared at each other.

Chapter 399: Young Master, the General Requests Your Presence

“This... is an Ancient Emperor’s tomb?”

High above Five Phoenix, amidst drifting clouds, three figures hovered like immortals, robes fluttering.

Azure Spirit Holy Lord, clad in cyan, stared at the tomb above the vast sea—divine radiance piercing the heavens, light spilling in all directions. Shock filled his eyes.

“That is indeed the tomb of an Ancient Emperor...”

Tuoba Holy Lord, a miniature ferocious bird perched on his shoulder, suppressed his excitement and exhaled deeply.

He took out a token. The once-dull, unremarkable piece now blazed with boundless light—clearly reacting to the awakened Ancient Emperor’s tomb.

“I never imagined Young Master Lu would relocate this tomb to his newborn High Martial world... what a bold move.”

Tuoba had witnessed it with his own eyes and was filled with awe.

A tomb suspected to belong to an Ancient Emperor—relocated just like that...

Such methods were unfathomable.

This only strengthened Tuoba's belief that a terrifying supreme being from the Void Heaven stood behind Lu.

Otherwise, how could anyone move a tomb of this magnitude?

"It really is an Emperor's tomb?"

Azure Spirit Holy Lord was stunned.

Greed flashed in his eyes as he stared at the floating tomb, inhaling sharply.

Countless legends surrounded the Void Heaven. Though fallen, it had once been glorious beyond measure.

Qi Liujia watched the two Holy Lords calmly, saying nothing.

He did not warn them against entering.

Lu had not forbidden it.

Since Lu had instructed him to receive the Holy Lords and allowed them into Five Phoenix, there was no reason to bar them from the tomb.

Once inside Five Phoenix, hiding the tomb's existence was impossible anyway.

And since Lu had not concealed it, he clearly had no intention of doing so.

Still, as Holy Lords of Derivation Seven sacred grounds, both managed to suppress their excitement.

They descended, appearing before the ice towers floating on the sea.

Inside, the imprisoned Holy Sons and Maidens looked dejected.

Suddenly, they sensed powerful auras outside and looked up—two figures!

“It’s Tuoba Holy Lord and Azure Spirit Holy Lord!”

Excitement surged within the towers. The Holy Lords had come to save them!

Tuoba Holy Lord stood with hands behind his back, brow furrowed.

His son was not among the prisoners.

Azure Spirit Holy Lord frowned as well.

“Holy Lords, save us!”

“This world is cruel and tyrannical—please destroy it!”

“Holy Lords, deliver us from this suffering!”

The Holy Sons and Maidens could no longer contain themselves. Imprisonment had nearly driven them mad.

Tuoba and Azure Spirit's earlier escape had only deepened their despair.

Thump! Thump!

The Golden Boy and Jade Girl of Black-White Sacred Ground pressed their faces against the ice, crying for help.

Tuoba Holy Lord glanced at them and sighed.

The Black-White Holy Lord's corpse still drifted coldly in the void.

Black-White Sacred Ground was truly pitiable.

But in Pingyang Heaven, competition was fierce. With their Holy Lord dead, the sacred ground would soon descend into chaos.

Tuoba and Azure Spirit ignored the prisoners' pleas.

To them, these heirs were insignificant.

“Tuoba Holy Son and Azure Spirit Holy Son must have escaped the towers and entered the tomb.”

Qi Liujia raised a hand, tracing lingering formation fluctuations. His wrinkled face broke into a smile.

“That makes sense...”

Azure Spirit Holy Lord nodded with a smile.

He knew his son well.

“Let’s go. Since that’s the case, we’ll enter the tomb as well...”

The two Holy Lords turned to Qi Liujia.

They treated him with respect—because now, Qi Liujia represented Lu.

Lu had slain a Venerable from the High Martial Buddha Realm and nailed the Black-White Holy Lord to a dead continent. Such dominance shocked them.

They paid no further attention to the ice towers.

Their purpose had been to rescue their sons.

Since Tuoba and Azure Spirit had already escaped and entered the tomb, there was no need for further conflict.

Only those cautious enough reached the level of Holy Lord.

**BOOM!**

The three moved.

The next instant, waves surged across the sea.

They appeared before the ancient tomb.

The wordless stele towered into the clouds, radiating oppressive might.

Flowing light and rampant spiritual qi.

Ancient formation runes on the palace walls seemed to come alive.

The gates stood open. From the dark passage came faint weeping.

“The tomb of an Ancient Emperor...”

Tuoba Holy Lord stared into the darkness, a chill creeping over him.

An inexplicable sense of crisis gripped him.

The excitement that had drawn them here suddenly cooled.

They stood quietly outside, hesitating—should they step inside?

...

Northern County.

Another east wind last night; bells on the door curtain chimed softly.

Tantai Xuan unfolded the letter, his gaze sharpening.

“The ancient tomb has opened...”

He stood and paced the hall.

He had experienced too many immortal opportunities—from Wolong Ridge Secret Realm to this ancient tomb.

Every emergence of a ruin marked great fortune and the beginning of monumental change.

He paced anxiously.

Great Xuan had sent over a thousand Xuanwu Guards, Jiang Li, Lu Jiulian, and many geniuses from the Academy headquarters.

If they all perished inside...

Great Xuan would suffer a devastating blow.

Thus, he ordered constant monitoring of the tomb.

...

Within the ancient tomb.

First palace city.

Deathly silent, only the rhythmic breathing of cultivators remained.

The pink-clad skeleton sat in her rocking chair, turning her bony head. Empty sockets stared at the spiritual-qi clone of Lu.

Lu met her gaze calmly.

“Kekekeke...”

Suddenly—

The skeleton laughed.

Then she unsteadily stood, bones clacking.

She curtsied gracefully to Lu, like a refined lady.

Lu blinked, then nodded slightly.

As though two old friends had bumped into each other on the street and greeted one another.

The scene was bizarre and eerie.

Even Lu couldn't help but feel it was strange.

Greeting a skeleton... quite the peculiar experience.

After the greeting—

Lu swept his gaze across the meditating cultivators below.

The skeleton seemed to understand. Like a shy maiden, she covered her mouth and giggled softly.

A wisp of ghostfire drifted from her eye socket.

It floated before Lu.

He paused, then let his primordial spirit engulf it.

**BOOM!**

His mind shook violently.

An ancient scripture unfurled in his thoughts like a heavenly scroll. Each golden character seemed alive, wriggling as though to etch itself into his soul.

But soon, Lu snapped out of the profound state. The scripture vanished from his mind.

“This is an ancient scripture? They’re all trying to comprehend it?”

Lu looked up at the skeleton.

She nodded, ghostfire flickering in her sockets. A sweet, girlish voice emerged.

“Young Master, rest assured—the first palace city is quite safe for natives of the Void Heaven...”

“It is also a screening for tomb entrants.”

“Those who comprehend the third layer of the ancient scripture gain the right to proceed deeper. Those who fail—natives of the Void Heaven lose only their memory of the scripture but may try again. Outsiders who fail... soul annihilation.”

The skeleton explained.

Lu leaned back in his Thousand Blades Chair, tapping the armrest lightly.

“However, even natives who choose to go further may die.”

She added.

“Who created this ancient scripture?”

Lu asked.

“The General.”

The ghostfire danced as though smiling.

“So this isn’t an Emperor’s tomb?”

Lu raised a brow, curious.

“An Emperor’s tomb?”

“If an Ancient Emperor’s tomb truly appeared, it would shake all Nine Heavens. Supremes would descend, ancient orthodoxies that have endured since primordial times would empty their vaults.”

“It would not be this quiet—only attracting small fry.”

The skeleton said.

As expected—not an Emperor’s tomb. Lu had suspected as much and was not surprised.

He found this skeleton—who answered every question—rather interesting.

“So this is a General’s tomb?”

Lu asked.

The skeleton curtsied again.

“Who is the General?”

This time, she remained bowed and silent.

After a moment, she straightened atop the palace tower and gestured invitingly.

“Young Master, the General requests your presence.”

Her eye sockets flickered.

Lu’s eyelid twitched.

Why did that sound so wrong?

Creak...

The gates beneath the first palace city rumbled open.

A terrifying aura surged forth—like an ancient battlefield manifesting before him.

Lu narrowed his eyes.

His spiritual-qi clone moved unhurriedly. The wheels of the Thousand Blades Chair rolled over dusty ground, kicking up particles sealed for countless ages.

He passed through the first palace city into the next.

Atop the tower, the pink-clad skeleton curtsied once more.

Then the gates closed, separating her from Lu.

Between the second palace cities lay a gray, desolate ancient battlefield.

Broken halberds, shattered armor, the bones of strange beasts...

Heavy dust rolled across the cold earth...

As though ancient events lay sealed within.

Lu sat in his Thousand Blades Chair, white robes stark against the bleak battlefield.

Suddenly—

Amidst the rolling dust,

Three figures stood.

Closer inspection revealed three more skeletons—though not mere bones. Dry, withered skin clung to them.

Yet within their frames, radiant energy surged.

They wore different attire: one in war armor, one in commoner clothes, one in daoist robes.

They bowed respectfully to Lu.

Then, as though guiding him, they led the way forward.

Dust rolled across the desolate battlefield.

The tracks left by the wheelchair were slowly buried once more.

As they proceeded—

Killing cries gradually filled Lu's ears.

...

Creak... creak...

The sound of the wheelchair suddenly rang in Overlord's ears.

He opened his eyes, light exploding from them, breathing ragged.

Suddenly, the pink skeleton appeared beside him.

Her hollow sockets stared straight at him.

"You have comprehended the third layer of the ancient scripture. You may proceed."

Ghostfire danced in her eyes.

The next instant, the palace gates flew open.

A tremendous suction force erupted, irresistibly pulling Overlord inside.

His treatment was worlds apart from Lu's.

Not just Overlord.

One after another, figures awoke.

Some had reached the third layer; some had not.

Those who had were sucked deeper like Overlord.

Those who failed felt dizzy. When they regained clarity, they found themselves outside the tomb on the sea, all memory of the scripture wiped clean.

The expelled cultivators varied in strength—from Golden Core to Nascent Soul, even some who had entered Yin Spirit realm.

Ordinary cultivators and former Human List prodigies alike.

Zhong Nan stood stunned, unable to believe he had been eliminated.

He clutched his head in pain—what was that ancient scripture again?

He could remember nothing.

The expelled were unwilling.

They erupted with aura, churning the sea, and charged back toward the tomb.

Yet this time—

As soon as they entered the dark passage,

Countless yin spirit soldiers charged forth.

Unable to dodge or resist, the cultivators were trampled into bloody paste.

Outside the tomb—

Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords' expressions darkened.

Qi Liuji's wrinkled face twitched.

As expected—tombs from the primordial era were filled with unknown dangers.

...

Outside the Void Heaven.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord, carrying his bronze warship, had fled far.

He exhaled deeply.

Looking back, his gaze seemed to pierce the void, seeing the thick scent of blood beyond Five Phoenix and the Black-White Holy Lord nailed to a dead continent.

That guy... truly pitiful.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's mouth twitched.

Good thing he had been prepared and ran fast enough.

That white-robed youth was like a demon god—special physique overwhelmingly powerful, obliterating his body with one punch.

He never wanted to meet that monster again.

“The Void Heaven, silent for so long, is about to cause a storm.”

“Pingyang Heaven, bordering it, will surely be shaken.”

Taking a deep breath, the Northern Palace Holy Lord's eyes flickered as he calculated.

The tomb's appearance, the birth of a High Martial world, the mysterious white-robed youth...

Everything carried chilling implications.

“Could it be... the Void Heaven, dormant for eons, is about to make its move?”

His body trembled slightly.

Then, as if remembering something, his expression turned conflicted.

“The white-robed youth appeared in Five Phoenix... does that mean the Ancient Emperor’s tomb is there too?”

His brows furrowed.

The possibility seemed high.

“Should I spread the news? Let some Derivation Nine or Eight Holy Lords from Pingyang Heaven test the waters?”

He sat back on his warship, lost in thought.

After a long while, he shook his head and dismissed the idea.

“No... better not provoke this world for now.”

“The Void Heaven is no kind place. In the primordial era, it was a meat grinder—even Venerables were cannon fodder...”

“Stay back. Observe for now...”

“Besides, that youth slew a Venerable from the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm. A Derivation Six High Martial—they care about face above all. They won’t let this go. Better not get caught in the storm...”

The Northern Palace Holy Lord exhaled.

Though unwilling, survival sometimes required caution at every step.

He turned to leave with his warship.

Yet suddenly—

His body stiffened.

Before him, a golden lotus bloomed.

Buddha-light shone, Buddhist chants resounded.

A powerful aura spread, making him freeze, pupils contracting.

Far away, a golden lotus platform spun.

Atop it sat a plump, smiling ancient Buddha, speeding toward him.

Behind him followed novice monks, each carrying a tray atop their heads filled with treasures and radiating rich vitality.

This...

Experts from the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm—led by a Tribulation Realm Venerable of terrifying might!

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's mouth twitched.

Speak of the devil.

Their efficiency... was frightening.

One Venerable dead, and another already coming for revenge?

No wonder people said: in Pingyang Heaven, you can offend anyone except the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm.

The smiling Buddha seated alone on the lotus saw him.

His smile widened.

“Northern Palace Holy Lord, long time no see.”

The ancient Buddha said.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord hurriedly stood on his warship and bowed slightly.

“Northern Palace Holy Lord, returning from the Void Heaven?”

The smiling Buddha asked, looking innocent and amiable—yet it made the Holy Lord’s heart pound.

He wanted to deny it, but the Buddha’s deep eyes left him smiling bitterly.

“I greet the Venerable. Indeed, I have just returned from the Void Heaven.”

“Oh?”

The smiling Buddha’s grin grew even wider.

“This monk received a Buddhist decree and is heading to the Void Heaven. Since Holy Lord happens to be coming from there, shall we travel together?”

The Northern Palace Holy Lord’s cheek twitched.

Could he say no?

He opened his mouth—

But the smiling Buddha was already aboard his warship.

Helpless, he could only steer toward the Void Heaven.

Inwardly, he wailed—this bald donkey was hijacking him!

“Venerable, may I ask the purpose of this trip to the Void Heaven?”

He asked carefully after a deep breath.

If this Venerable was here for revenge, he would abandon ship and flee without a word.

“I heard a new High Martial world has been born in the Void Heaven.”

“The Great Venerable said a newborn High Martial is a joyous occasion. He issued a decree for this monk to bring gifts and offer congratulations.”

The smiling Buddha chuckled.

The tense Northern Palace Holy Lord froze.

He stared blankly, doubting his ears.

Bring gifts... to congratulate?

After losing a Venerable, they were sending lavish gifts to celebrate?

This was completely unlike the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm's vengeful style!

The Northern Palace Holy Lord grew even more uneasy.

Chapter 400: This... Is This Something a Human Would Do?!

White robes fluttering, Lu Ping'an moved forward slowly.

He felt as though he had stepped onto an ancient battlefield. Terrifying clashes thundered endlessly.

The earth collapsed, mountains and rivers exploded, the sky was torn open like abyssal scars.

Stars shifted, continents overturned.

White bones carpeted the ground; blood formed rivers where corpses and wailing souls drifted in and out of view.

Everything before him resembled a hell on earth, the underworld reborn.

Yet... the more he looked, the more familiar it felt.

Lu raised a brow and suddenly laughed.

Wasn't this exactly the scene he had created on the final floating palace barrier in the Dragon Gate Secret Realm—the one depicting ancient evil demons invading Five Phoenix and destroying the primordial cultivation era?

Though the events and characters differed...

The overall structure and plot were eerily similar.

Seated in the Thousand Blades Chair, Lu couldn't help but clap in amusement.

Was everything before him real... or illusion?

Could the General of this tomb have deliberately arranged this—just as Lu had crafted scenes for others to see?

Who could say? When true is false, false is true.

Lu's smile gradually faded.

He continued across the ancient battlefield.

He saw a familiar figure—Ancient Emperor “Ha,” shrouded in mist high above the Ninth Heaven, like a god or demon.

A palace city appeared on the battlefield.

A heavenly pass towering over the vast field, as though connecting earth and sky, guarding everything within.

The walls were stained with blood, scarred by terrifying claw marks and weapon traces.

They told of endless sieges across countless ages.

Atop the walls stood a white-robed figure—now dyed crimson with blood. Hands behind his back, he watched the Emperor ascend step by step, array runes coiling around him.

He stood unmoving, seeing the Emperor off to battle the Ninth Heaven.

Waiting eagerly for his triumphant return.

But the wait had no end.

The Emperor never came back.

Only devastating slaughter rained down from the heavens.

The heavenly pass fell. Seas of blood flowed.

The land sank and shattered.

Lu reached the end, having witnessed it all—yet his heart remained calm.

He had orchestrated a similar tragedy in the Dragon Gate Secret Realm, so this stirred little emotion.

“A tragedy.”

Lu said.

The vision dispersed.

The three armored skeletons continued leading the way.

The dilapidated third palace city emerged.

One skeleton stopped, its dark eye sockets watching Lu and the remaining two proceed.

Entering the third city, Lu saw mountains of spirit stones, rare ores, sealed beast cubs in stone, and radiant giant eggs.

Treasures that dazzled the eye.

Even dust-covered spirit tools glowed faintly.

Lu paid them no mind. The two skeletons shuffled onward.

A city overflowing with riches.

Past the third city, another skeleton halted, sending Lu and the last one on.

Lu guessed these skeletons had been unparalleled existences in life.

The fourth city held only a massive pool—dozens of plazas wide. Crimson liquid mixed with gold flowed within, radiating oppressive energy and faint traces of dao patterns.

Lu glanced at it, brow raised.

The final skeleton—clad in full armor—stepped aside, gesturing for him to proceed.

The Thousand Blades Chair rolled forward.

At last, the gates opened.

Beyond the fourth city lay a simple palace.

Unadorned, unpretentious.

At its center stood a stone coffin.

At one end, an ancient ever-burning lamp flickered faintly.

White-robed Lu swept his gaze across the palace, finally settling on the coffin.

The master of this tomb—the General the skeleton spoke of—should lie within.

The palace was deathly quiet.

So quiet it made one uneasy.

Suddenly—

A soft laugh rang out.

“You’re younger than I expected.”

An elegant, gentle voice echoed through the palace.

The ever-burning lamp swayed, casting shifting light and shadow.

“After the Emperor fell and the Void Heaven was shattered, supremes set down rules, sealing it away, turning it into a world of ruins where no High Martial could be born...”

“Yet now, you—a young man—have broken those rules.”

The voice continued leisurely.

The lamp’s light seemed to form a faint silhouette.

The figure sat on a meditation mat, like a refined young noble.

Lu looked at the lamp-shadow and smiled.

The General's Tomb—so this silhouette was the blood-clad general who had stood atop the walls for countless years.

“How shall I address you, Young Master?”

The lamp trembled as the figure asked.

“Lu Ping'an.”

Lu propped his chin on one hand, watching the shadow.

“You're not afraid of me? Not worried I invited you here with ill intent?”

“You should know—even if this is only your clone, if I wished to possess you, I could easily follow the thread of your primordial spirit.”

The General said.

Lu laughed, leaning back in his chair and spinning the Profound Ring on his finger.

“Try it.”

Silence fell over the palace.

The ever-burning lamp flickered.

After a long while, it stilled.

“I do not know how you obtained the tomb-relocating token. Perhaps... it is the Emperor’s will in the darkness, sending me to aid you—to protect this frail newborn High Martial world until it grows strong...”

The General said.

“You made this world High Martial and shattered the Void Heaven’s rules. Do you know what that means?”

Lu rubbed the Profound Ring and shook his head.

He truly didn’t.

His goal was simple: make Five Phoenix stronger and stronger.

He merely wanted to create an ultra-fantasy world.

Turning Five Phoenix into High Martial was just one tiny stepping stone in a long journey.

The General seemed surprised.

“Guess...”

“No.”

Lu shook his head.

“By creating a High Martial world, you have officially stepped onto the chessboard—become a piece in the game of supremes.”

“You may fight your way to becoming the most important piece on the board... or you may be eaten and discarded.”

The General said.

“So you appeared to protect me—or this world—and ensure it becomes the most important piece?”

Lu asked.

The General fell silent. The ever-burning lamp burned quietly.

“Funny. I love playing chess too... but I don’t like being a piece.”

Lu said.

“Amusing. Yet sometimes, even if you say so, you have no choice.”

The General replied.

Lu smiled, tapping the armrest lightly.

“But this world is my world.”

“In my world, I make the rules.”

His voice was calm.

The ever-burning lamp swayed.

“I will aid you until this world grows strong enough...”

The General’s tone held a ripple of emotion.

Lu turned his chair, back facing the coffin.

“You’re not dead?”

After a long pause, the General answered, “One breath remains.”

Lu’s gaze sharpened.

Alive from the Ancient Emperor's era to now... how long had this General lived?

What price had he paid?

"Then why lie in a coffin? Isn't it stuffy?"

"Why not come out and play a game of Go?"

Lu continued.

This time, the silence was longer.

Finally, a voice came from the coffin.

"I'm waiting for someone."

Lu raised a brow. The wheelchair rolled slowly forward.

The lamp-shadow seemed to watch his retreating back.

“The tomb holds four great inheritances that can nurture four supreme experts. Do you wish to designate four people?”

The General asked.

Yet Lu, seated in his chair, merely raised a hand and waved.

“Let fate decide.”

Then he left the palace.

His spiritual-qi clone dispersed into the tomb.

The ever-burning lamp continued burning quietly. The stone coffin trembled once, then fell still.

...

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

Lu opened his eyes. Lines flowed within them.

“The blood-clad General who still draws one breath...”

Lu smiled.

He had long guessed that as Five Phoenix grew, it would catch the eyes of this world’s powerhouses.

He just hadn’t expected it to happen so soon.

Whatever the General’s purpose...

Lu didn’t care.

The tomb had opened. Inheritances would emerge...

No matter who in Five Phoenix received them, it would feed back to strengthen Lu. So he was happy to let it be.

Even if the tomb had some scheme, Lu didn't mind—as long as its goal aligned with his: Five Phoenix, the Void Heaven's only High Martial world, could not be destroyed. It could only grow stronger.

When Five Phoenix grew stronger, so did Lu.

Thus, he allowed the tomb to exist—as long as it did not shake his foundation or massacre Five Phoenix cultivators on a large scale.

Besides, the tomb's philosophy seemed... identical to his own.

So Lu could not lose.

Hm?

Suddenly, Lu's brow raised. He looked beyond Five Phoenix.

"This guy... came back?"

...

The bronze warship crushed through the void.

Aboard—

The Joyful Buddha beamed, holding the Northern Palace Holy Lord's hand at the ship's bow, enthusiastically expounding Buddhist principles.

Behind them, novice monks sat cross-legged, treasures balanced atop their heads.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's face grew uglier by the moment.

He desperately wanted to pull his hand free.

But the Joyful Buddha was stronger—he couldn't.

This only deepened his unease.

The more he thought, the more wrong it felt.

Why would the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm—after losing a Venerable—send gifts to a newborn High Martial world?

The Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm, overlord of Pingyang Heaven, Derivation Six—when had they become so humble?

It defied all reason.

He cautiously asked the Joyful Buddha.

The Buddha chuckled merrily.

“The Great Venerable issued a decree. That evil Buddha committed countless killings and brought his fate upon himself. This monk was specially sent to apologize for the trouble he caused this realm.”

As he spoke, he gently stroked the Northern Palace Holy Lord’s hand.

The Holy Lord froze—then chills ran through him.

How ruthless!

The fallen Venerable had been discarded as a scapegoat, branded an “evil Buddha” in the blink of an eye.

Heartless and thorough.

At that moment, the Northern Palace Holy Lord realized—there must be a terrifying power behind this newborn High Martial world.

The Buddha Realm was protecting itself.

Rumble!

The warship tore through the void and soon appeared before Five Phoenix.

Misty arrays shrouded everything.

Outside the tomb—

Qi Lijia’s heart stirred. His wrinkled face changed slightly.

Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords exchanged glances, expressions strange.

“The Northern Palace Holy Lord... came back?”

They clearly sensed his aura. He had fled carrying his warship earlier—none expected his return.

What courage!

“Sirs, excuse me for a moment.”

Qi Liujia said gravely.

He rose step by step into the sky, leaving the sea.

Outside the void—

The bronze warship appeared.

Qi Liujia emerged, face solemn. He saw the Northern Palace Holy Lord aboard—and the beaming Joyful Buddha, along with many novice monks.

Experts from the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm?!

So soon?!

This speed... was terrifying!

Young Master Lu had just slain their Venerable, and now they came for retribution.

Yet soon, Qi Liujia was stunned.

The amiable Joyful Buddha dragged the Northern Palace Holy Lord forward, all smiles, warm as a spring breeze.

Nothing like an army come to punish.

“This monk is the Joyful Venerable of the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm. By the Great Venerable’s decree, I come to atone for the sins committed by the evil Buddha who disturbed this realm.”

The Joyful Venerable chuckled.

He waved a hand.

The novice monks lined up, treasures gleaming atop their heads.

Then he tugged the Northern Palace Holy Lord forward, pointing cheerfully.

“On the way, this monk encountered this man. A quick divination revealed he too was tainted by the evil Buddha’s sins. Thus, I have captured him as a grand gift.”

The Joyful Venerable said.

Qi Liujia stared blankly, disbelief washing over him.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord was dumbfounded at first.

Then his face turned deathly pale. His lips trembled—he nearly cursed aloud.

He glared at the Joyful Venerable, eyes blazing.

This... is this something a human would do?!

That damn bald donkey—screwing him over!

No wonder everything felt off. No wonder the monk had been so warm the whole journey.

He had been the “grand gift” all along!

BOOM!

Furious aura exploded from the Northern Palace Holy Lord.

Yet the Joyful Venerable gently tapped his shoulder with a flower-pinching gesture.

The Holy Lord found his shoulder immobilized.

His furious eyes nearly shot flames.

He had never offended this monk!

Why such vicious betrayal?!

Truly, one can know a man's face but not his heart.

The monk had smiled the entire way—yet his heart was this filthy!

Tuoba and Azure Spirit, watching the drama, were stunned.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord... had been brought back as a prisoner.

No wonder he returned after fleeing.

But the next moment—they nearly laughed.

Yet behind the amusement lay a chill.

The Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm... was actively showing goodwill?

The background of this newborn High Martial world... was truly unfathomable.

As Qi Liujia stood stunned—

Lu's voice transmission reached his ear.

Qi Liujia straightened his robes, glanced at the Northern Palace Holy Lord, then cupped his hands toward the Joyful Venerable.

“Young Master has received the gifts. Venerable... you may return.”

Qi Liujia said.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's body went limp.

He might be the most tragic Holy Lord in history—turned into a gift by a bald donkey.

Yet—

The Joyful Venerable's smile only grew warmer.

“Sect Master Qi, this monk comes by the Great Venerable’s decree with important matters to discuss with Young Master Lu in person. Please inform him—this monk wishes to speak face to face.”