

Starlit Path 401

Chapter 401: The Fate of the Northern Palace Holy Lord

Above the vast sea, the ancient tomb rose and fell, its aged palace walls flowing with radiant light and pulsing with formation runes that carried the weight of countless ages.

Outside the tomb, many wore expressions of unwillingness. They had failed to comprehend the scripture in the first palace city and had been expelled.

Yet how could they accept it? The tomb undoubtedly held immense fortune. Even just the ancient scripture they had briefly touched was extraordinary—they could not forget it.

But now, expelled, every trace of the scripture had been wiped from their minds. How could they tolerate such a thing?

Thus, many cultivators charged madly back toward the tomb.

Yin spirit soldiers trampled forth. Some cultivators resisted desperately; some were crushed into bloody paste, others gravely wounded and coughing blood. The sea outside churned crimson.

Many watched in despair.

When they saw an Infant Transformation expert instantly pulverized by charging yin spirit cavalry, they finally understood...

They had missed their chance. Forcing their way in now meant nine deaths and one life—if even that.

Gradually, some gave up.

They stopped assaulting the dark passage.

Within the tomb—

Those who had been meditating in the first palace city were divided into two groups: the expelled, and those allowed into the second.

Those who entered the second found themselves on a vast ancient battlefield.

Yellow sand stretched endlessly; bloody winds howled.

Skeletons clawed up from the sand and charged.

To reach the third palace city, they had to fight their way through.

Yet these skeletons seemed unkillable.

Even when cut down, they reformed.

Overlord, Nie Changqing, Lu Jiulian, and the others were each entangled by skeletons matching their strength.

They clashed like colliding floods.

The war raged for a long time.

Some died before reaching the third city. Some endured to the end.

Eventually, they realized the skeletons were not truly immortal. By wielding the power cultivated from the ancient scripture, they could be destroyed.

When the fighting ceased, broken bones littered the ground.

The survivors rose from the corpse-strewn battlefield, gazing at the carnage. Many hearts trembled.

Before their eyes, the horrors of primordial war seemed to manifest.

Perhaps one day, Five Phoenix would face such a crisis. If they were not strong enough, they would become just another corpse on the battlefield. In true war, no one was spared.

The survivors sat cross-legged. The next portion of the ancient scripture appeared in their minds. They continued comprehending.

High above the battlefield, in the hazy air—

Four skeletons stood with hands behind their backs.

Ghostfire danced in their empty sockets.

As though... selecting something.

...

The Joyful Venerable stood beaming, unmoving.

An odd silence settled in the void.

Everyone's expressions turned strange.

Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords exchanged glances, shock in their eyes.

The Joyful Venerable wanted a private audience with Lu?

For what purpose?

As a Derivation Six High Martial, the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm dominated its region in Pingyang Heaven through sheer power.

Were they... trying to subjugate this newborn High Martial world?

Both Holy Lords had the same thought.

But they quickly dismissed it.

Unlikely.

Though Five Phoenix was only newly born and merely Derivation Nine overall...

Lu's existence changed everything.

A being who could obliterate the Northern Palace Holy Lord's body with one punch made this newborn world utterly unique.

Derivation Seven peak combat power, yet only Derivation Nine overall strength.

Of course, because of Lu, it was untouchable.

They pondered but could not fathom the Great Venerable's intentions.

Qi Liujia's face stiffened slightly.

Far away, the Northern Palace Holy Lord began cursing furiously.

That bald donkey definitely had ill intent!

As someone who had been through it, he knew betrayal when he saw it. He cursed loudly.

“Venerable, could you briefly explain the matter?”

Qi Liujia asked, his wrinkled face creasing further.

The Joyful Venerable’s chubby cheeks squeezed his eyes into slits.

“It concerns Five Phoenix’s registration in the High Martial Records...”

Qi Liujia’s pupils contracted.

Far away, Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords suddenly understood.

The High Martial Records...

So it was about the Nine Heavens’ High Martial Records.

As Holy Lords, they knew much about it.

When the Joyful Venerable mentioned the Records, pieces fell into place.

Though High Martial worlds were far fewer than Low or Mid Martial ones, their importance far surpassed them. High Martial worlds could inscribe the Great Path—this alone elevated them above all others.

The Joyful Venerable's words left Qi Liujia unable to refuse.

Lu's voice transmission reached his ear.

"Venerable, Young Master invites you."

Qi Liujia said.

The Joyful Venerable's smile widened.

He waved to the novice monks behind him—each at least Distraction realm, yet mere servants before him.

This subtly displayed the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm's might.

The Heaven-Sheltering Array parted. Misty clouds formed a staircase.

The Joyful Venerable and his entourage descended leisurely.

They walked across the sea.

Beaming, he admired Five Phoenix's scenery, clicking his tongue in praise.

He saw the ancient tomb. Though initially startled, he quickly regained composure.

He ordered the novice monks to remain outside.

Qi Liuji led him personally onto the lake heart island.

A gentle breeze blew.

The Origin Lake rippled.

As the Joyful Venerable stepped onto the island, a fresh fragrance filled the air. He inhaled deeply.

“Young Master has refined tastes.”

He pressed his palms together and bowed.

The next instant, the scene shifted—a white-robed youth in a wheelchair moved unhurriedly through the flower groves, plucking a peach blossom.

“Greetings, Holy Lord Lu.”

The Joyful Venerable said.

In his view, every High Martial world had a sacred ground, and Lu was its Holy Lord.

Lu smiled at the title, neither confirming nor denying.

“You wish to see me regarding Five Phoenix’s entry into the High Martial Records?”

Lu asked directly.

The Joyful Venerable's chubby face jiggled as he laughed.

"The Void Heaven has not birthed a High Martial world in nearly a hundred thousand years. It is normal that Holy Lord Lu is unaware."

"The Great Venerable sent me to remind Holy Lord Lu that the Void Heaven is still one of the Nine Heavens. A High Martial born here belongs to the Nine Heavens as well..."

His expression grew solemn.

He pressed his palms together and bowed.

"The High Martial Records were created by the supremes of the Nine Heavens. High Martial origins must inscribe the Great Path, so every High Martial world defies heaven itself and must face tribulation judgment from the Great Path. However, registration in the Records shields one from tribulation—no need to endure calamity."

Lu raised a brow, crushing the peach blossom petals in his hand.

"So that's the High Martial Records?"

“Nothing else?”

The Joyful Venerable froze.

Was there... supposed to be more?

Tribulation from the Great Path was terrifying!

Registration shielded one from it—wasn't that good enough?

There was a vast difference between wild and registered.

The Joyful Venerable thought for a moment, then smiled.

“Holy Lord Lu, without the Records' protection, every ten dao patterns inscribed on Five Phoenix's origin would trigger a tribulation...”

“Each one would be harrowing. A single misstep, and Five Phoenix would be reduced to ash. Is Holy Lord Lu... not afraid?”

Lu fell into thought, tapping the armrest lightly.

Constant lightning strikes did sound troublesome.

“What price for entry into the Records?”

Lu asked.

“No price. Simply pass the assessment, and registration is granted.”

“Hm...”

Lu acknowledged.

As though considering.

Suddenly, he looked toward Qi Liuja standing quietly at the island’s edge.

“Old Qi, what do you think?”

Qi Liujia started. Lu was asking his opinion on the Records.

This was not Qi Liujia’s first time facing this choice.

When his previous High Martial world had been on the verge of success, the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm had casually sent a Distraction realm novice monk to inform him of registration—practically forcing him.

He had no right to refuse.

Unfortunately... the origin later collapsed, his primordial spirit and body were both severed by the rules, and the matter was dropped.

Now, the Buddha Realm had personally sent a Venerable for the same purpose.

The difference in treatment was night and day.

Yet Qi Liujia gave honest advice.

“Young Master, this old man believes... registration is unwise.”

The benefits were many—future ascensions would face far fewer troubles.

Inscribing the Great Path without constant tribulation.

Tribulation was no easy thing—mentally and physically taxing, with one mistake spelling annihilation.

But for Five Phoenix, the downsides were far worse.

The Records were created by the Nine Heavens’ supremes.

Registration meant entering their sight.

The Void Heaven’s situation was unique. If a supreme who bore a grudge against it took offense, Five Phoenix could be erased on a whim.

Even now, when Five Phoenix was beneath their notice.

Qi Liujia’s words caused the Joyful Venerable’s expression to change drastically.

He opened his mouth to speak—

But Lu cut him off.

“Hm. Old Qi makes sense...”

“Very well—let’s register in the High Martial Records.”

Lu leaned back in his chair and smiled.

Qi Lijia froze.

Young Master Lu... never played by the rules.

But he bowed and said nothing more.

The Joyful Venerable’s anxiety vanished, replaced by a beaming grin.

“Since Holy Lord Lu agrees, this monk will immediately report to the Great Venerable...”

“In a few days, the Great Venerable will personally commune with the High Martial and guide the will of the Great Path to assess Five Phoenix’s grade.”

Overjoyed, he left the treasures and departed cheerfully.

The lake heart island fell quiet once more.

Qi Liujia looked at Lu, wanting to speak but hesitating.

“Speak if you have something to say.”

Lu plucked another peach blossom and toyed with it.

Qi Liujia inhaled deeply.

“Young Master... why not refuse?”

Lu smiled.

“You made good points... but I, Lu Ping’an, hate trouble most.”

“I just want to see what medicine this bald donkey is selling in his gourd.”

Qi Liujia gave a wry smile.

“Right—Young Master, the Joyful Venerable saw the Ancient Emperor’s tomb. If he spreads the news, Five Phoenix may become the eye of the storm...”

Lu shook his head.

“It won’t become the storm’s center. Besides, that tomb isn’t an Emperor’s. If it were, the Nine Heavens would not be this calm...”

“Moreover, the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm won’t spread the news... They’ll do their best to hide it.”

Lu said.

Qi Liujia’s wrinkled face was full of confusion.

“Why?”

Lu twirled the peach blossom, lips curving.

“Just a guess.”

...

Waiting outside, Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords watched the joyful departure of the Joyful Venerable and exchanged glances.

It seemed the meeting with Lu Ping’an had gone without conflict.

“If Five Phoenix enters the High Martial Records, the first step will be grading... I wonder what grade Five Phoenix will receive?”

Tuoba mused.

“Probably Derivation Nine. Grading depends mainly on overall world strength and inscribed dao patterns.”

“Though Lu Ping’an is strong, he can only comprehend one dao intent. One person cannot change an entire world.”

Azure Spirit Holy Lord said.

His words made sense.

The Joyful Venerable left.

Taking his novice monks with him, leaving the treasures behind.

Lu accepted them all without hesitation.

And, of course, the Northern Palace Holy Lord drifting in the void.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord knelt on the sea, face ashen.

Being treated as a gift had left him with nothing but sorrow. From this day forward, he and bald donkeys were mortal enemies.

The wheelchair rolled across the sea.

White robes fluttered.

The face from his nightmares appeared, smiling yet not smiling.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord gave a wretched laugh.

He was done for—this time, truly done for.

Far away—

Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords stood speechless.

What could they say?

Only that the Northern Palace Holy Lord was truly pitiful. It was fate.

He had fled so fast—yet still could not escape.

Lu smiled at the Holy Lord—the same one he had once obliterated with a punch.

Though the man had attacked him, Lu Ping'an was not one to hold grudges.

Under the Northern Palace Holy Lord's miserable gaze—

Lu brought him before the ancient tomb.

Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords grew curious.

Lu pointed at the tomb and told the Northern Palace Holy Lord to enter.

Chills ran down the Holy Lord's spine.

He had once dreamed of this tomb. Now, only sorrow remained.

He knew full well—Lu had no good intentions sending him in.

“Go.”

Lu said.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord shook his head silently.

Lu glanced at him, then slowly clenched his fist.

Ninety-nine strands of primordial spirit force and thirty hertz of chaos energy surged. The air cracked.

Immense pressure exploded, sending towering waves across the sea.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord’s face set. Without a word—

He charged into the dark passage.

“Would you two like to try as well?”

Lu turned to Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords.

Their expressions froze.

Qi Liuji, standing quietly, grew extremely curious.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord rushed into the tomb.

The next instant—his world spun.

Endless white bones seemed to swallow him.

Four skeletons blocked his path.

One in a pink skirt, one in armor, one in daoist robes, one in common clothes...

Ghostfire burned in their empty sockets.

Buzz...

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's heart pounded. The four skeletons radiated peak Venerable-level auras.

In an instant—

His newly reformed tender body was obliterated again!

Outside the tomb—

On the vast sea—

A wretched scream sent ripples across the water.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's primordial spirit felt torn apart, ghostfire burning upon it. His face twisted in agony.

At that moment, he held no hatred for Lu.

Only deeper loathing for the Joyful Buddha.

"As expected..."

Lu murmured.

The next moment, he acted.

A massive spiritual-qi hand swept through the void, rescuing the Northern Palace Holy Lord's primordial spirit from the four skeletons.

The skeletons showed no strong reaction, merely nodding at Lu.

Lu smiled.

He flung the primordial spirit toward the Nine Prisons Secret Realm at Wolong Ridge.

"Open the underworld and govern the dead."

"Serve for a hundred years, then you may leave."

Lu said.

The primordial spirit recovered, weak but grateful rather than resentful.

A mere hundred years—to a Holy Lord, the blink of an eye.

Thus, the punishment was nothing.

The spirit shot into the Nine Prisons Secret Realm.

Vaguely, he saw nine cities shrouded in yin qi.

Nine towering figures sat enthroned, chains wrapped around them, cupping fists in greeting.

As though welcoming the Northern Palace Holy Lord.

...

Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords' faces stiffened.

Lu had actually asked if they wanted to try?

If they had, they might be the ones obliterated now.

They felt lingering fear—fortunate they had been cautious and not entered immediately.

So those four skeletons were the tomb guardians?

Both Holy Lords' thoughts raced.

They now understood—Lu had done this deliberately to show them.

To prove this tomb was no Ancient Emperor's tomb.

When they first saw it, they had suspected it might be.

But now they realized—though it held fortune, it did not qualify as an Emperor's tomb.

The two exchanged glances, made their decision, bid Lu farewell, and swiftly left Five Phoenix.

They had to leave quickly. Lu Ping'an's temper was unpredictable—who knew if the Northern Palace Holy Lord's fate awaited them next?

After they departed, Lu did not stop them.

He leaned back in his Thousand Blades Chair.

At that moment, he faintly sensed something.

He looked toward the radiant ancient tomb.

His eyes flickered.

The four great inheritances the General had mentioned...

Seemed to have chosen their recipients.

Chapter 402: You Said It Wasn't Poisonous?!

The ancient tomb contained four great inheritances.

Lu had already guessed that these four would come from the four skeletons.

The first time he saw them, he knew they had been extraordinarily powerful in life—likely beyond the Venerable level.

So aside from the mysterious General, the only possible sources of inheritance were these four skeletons.

Lu glanced at the tomb and smiled.

White robes fluttering, he left a trail of lightning across the sea and vanished.

Returning to the lake heart island.

He was quite curious—who exactly had received the inheritances?

Or rather, which inheritors had the four skeletons chosen?

“Some people... this Young Master isn’t even willing to let inherit them.”

Lu leaned back in the Thousand Blades Chair, tapping the armrest with a half-smile.

The Spiritual Pressure Chessboard appeared. He rolled up his sleeve, pinched a piece, and placed it on the board.

Lines danced in his eyes, revealing figures one after another.

Time to see who the lucky four were.

...

The pink-clad skeleton, skirt swaying lightly.

In life, she must have been a stunning beauty.

Gentle zither music drifted from the ancient city walls. A pink-skirted maiden sat atop the tower, zither before her, slender fingers plucking the strings.

Yet the music was murderous—like high mountains and flowing rivers.

Ripples spread, making the air tremble. Each note was a blade, slicing through the air.

Below, piled-up enemies were shredded by the sound waves.

Crimson blood sprayed across the ground.

The scene made Lu raise a brow.

The Dao of Sound?

He had a guess who this pink skeleton would choose.

Sure enough—

The vision vanished.

The pink-skirted maiden atop the tower became a girl in goose-yellow robes and a veil.

Luo Mingyue—the stubborn girl who had once insisted on staying on the lake heart island.

She was the first chosen.

The pink-clad skeleton hovered behind her.

Luo Mingyue seemed immersed in a strange state.

Golden ancient characters circled her—the scripture’s contents. Under its guidance, the scripture seemed to etch itself into her soul.

It appeared the inheritance required cultivating the scripture alongside it.

When Luo Mingyue’s fingers plucked the first note on the dusty ancient zither—

A crack appeared on the weathered wall.

The mountain of bones below trembled.

Notes leaped, filling heaven and earth—sometimes vast, sometimes sinister, sometimes stirring.

Luo Mingyue played on, sweat beading on her forehead. Blood seeped from her fingertips, staining the zither an eerie crimson.

The blood droplets exploded into mist under the vibrating strings, shrouding the zither in a sinister aura.

Suddenly—

The piece ended.

All the blood mist seeped into the zither.

Luo Mingyue's veil fell, revealing flushed, sweat-glistened skin.

Lu sipped from his bronze cup.

The first skeleton had chosen Luo Mingyue.

The inheritance of the Zither King.

Somewhat unexpected.

If not for this moment, Lu would have nearly forgotten the stubborn girl.

Her talent had always been average—only Nascent Soul realm now.

Yet with the inheritance and the scripture's aid, her cultivation skyrocketed, crossing into Yin Spirit and even stepping into Yang God realm.

Lu took a sip of tea and nodded lightly.

“Acceptable.”

The lines in his eyes shifted to the second scene.

...

A vast, majestic battlefield.

Two armies arrayed, killing intent piercing the heavens. War drums thundered as though to scatter the clouds.

Armored ranks stood ready.

Then—from one army, a winged lion roared.

A lean youth with lightning eyes rode it.

“Form array!”

He bellowed.

The ancient scripture flowed within him.

His soldiers leaped onto winged lions and charged. The earth shook.

Though their numbers were few—

Their presence was overwhelming, like a million troops on the march.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The youth at the front rode like lightning.

One roar drew roars from all behind.

Mighty qi coalesced above them into a demonic god figure, sweeping out a massive halberd.

The halberd smashed the ground.

Mountains shook!

A ten-thousand-zhang chasm split the earth!

Reins snapped. The youth's hair whipped wildly as he roared, as though to tear the heavens!

The magnificent scene stirred anyone's blood.

Lu calmly sipped his plum wine.

His gaze settled.

The youth on the winged lion's face shifted—

It became Jiang Li.

Jiang Li's eyes blazed. Behind him, the armored skeleton rode the same lion.

Jiang Li led the charge.

The army's qi gathered into a sharp spear.

In that moment, the entire army moved as one.

Rip!

The earth seemed pierced through!

The vision ended abruptly.

Another surprise—Lu had never expected Jiang Li to be the second inheritor.

Neither Luo Mingyue nor Jiang Li had exceptional cultivation or talent.

Yet they were the most suitable.

The second inheritance: the Soldier King.

Lu chuckled. “Acceptable.”

The scene shifted again.

...

The third vision was oppressive.

Not on a battlefield or city wall—

But atop a grand palace throne.

An emperor-like figure reviewed memorials.

The hall was heavily guarded.

Powerful auras crisscrossed, nearly lifting the roof beams.

Suddenly—

A breeze passed.

Blood gushed within the palace.

The emperor clutched his throat. Blood soaked the memorials, blurring the words into crimson script.

Chaos erupted.

Terrifying auras exploded.

Yet no one could find the assassin.

Atop the palace roof—

A burly man in coarse clothes stood.

A dagger in hand. With a flick, crimson blood shook off the blade.

Then, under Lu's gaze—

The burly man's face changed.

It became Mo Liuqi.

Lu sighed nostalgically at the familiar figure.

He had not paid attention to Mo Liuqi in a long time. The little assassin who once rode a donkey and attempted to kill him before his eyes had now been chosen by a skeleton. The boy who had stubbornly walked the assassin's path had finally gotten his wish.

Third inheritor: Mo Liuqi.

The Shadow King inheritance.

Lu frowned but said nothing.

So far, all three inheritors had surprised him.

None were the most talented or strongest.

Yet they were the most fitting.

The fourth vision appeared.

This one was a daoist—or rather, a swordsman in daoist robes.

A sword hung at his waist, sheathed, showing no edge.

He stood atop a mountain peak.

Below, endless armies charged. Countless experts soared.

Yet the daoist merely stroked his beard and smiled.

With one hand, he pushed the sword forward.

Slowly, he tossed the sheathed sword into the air.

It spun.

Suddenly—

Snap!

His arm gripped the middle of the scabbard.

Clang!

A resounding ring.

The sword emerged three inches from its sheath.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Explosions rang out endlessly.

The daoist's robes whipped wildly atop the peak.

Below—

Sword qi ravaged the land. Blood flowed like rivers. Distant mountains were severed at the waist.

Like a grandmaster of the sword.

One drawn inch pierced the heavens.

Dazzling.

Under Lu's astonished gaze—

The sword master's face changed.

It became Ximen Xianzhi.

His robes flapped fiercely.

The daoist skeleton hovered behind him.

Fourth inheritance.

Ximen Xianzhi.

The Sword King inheritance.

Lu withdrew his gaze, slowly placing a piece on the board.

His lips curved.

Zither King, Soldier King, Shadow King, Sword King...

Four King inheritances.

Each extraordinary in its own way.

This gave Lu inspiration.

Perhaps strengthening Five Phoenix cultivators didn't require the usual path. Inheritances could be used...

The upgraded Preaching Platform had gone unused.

Perhaps it was time to try.

Luo Mingyue, Jiang Li, Mo Liuqi, and Ximen Xianzhi were not the strongest or most brilliant in Lu's Five Phoenix lineup.

Yet they had been chosen.

Undoubtedly because they were the most suitable.

Their original cultivations were merely decent. With the inheritances, they received the complete ancient scripture.

The full scripture now reflected in Lu's mind as well.

It gave him insight.

Five Phoenix's cultivation world still lacked a world-shaking cultivation method—one tailored for Five Phoenix.

Lu fell into thought.

To create a unique cultivation system for Five Phoenix, such a method might be essential.

After receiving the inheritances, all four broke through dramatically.

Each stepped into Yang God realm.

They did not instantly become Unity realm Mighty Beings—likely because the primordial spirit was tied to the soul and too important.

Even these powerhouses dared not rush it, fearing they would ruin themselves.

Plink.

A piece fell on the board. Lu's lips curved.

“Acceptable.”

Rumble!

As his words fell, heaven and earth trembled slightly.

Within the tomb, a boom resounded.

The four skeletons floated. Ghostfire flickered in their sockets.

As though... responding to Lu's approval.

...

Tuoba and Azure Spirit Holy Lords had left.

Though they wished to witness Five Phoenix's High Martial grading, instinct told them to depart.

The Northern Palace Holy Lord's fate had frightened them.

They kept wondering if they had ever offended Lu Ping'an.

Qi Liujia did not stop them.

If the Holy Lords wished to leave, so be it—he could relax.

As for whether they would spread news of the tomb—Qi Liujia was no longer worried.

If Lu's guess was correct and the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm kept silent, these two sensible Holy Lords would do the same.

Hunched, Qi Liujia's eyes gleamed as he gazed at the tomb.

Radiant light spilled from it. Powerful fluctuations emanated from the palace cities within, filling him with excitement.

The tomb undoubtedly held countless fortunes. With them, Five Phoenix would grow stronger!

He wondered if those who obtained fortunes could comprehend dao intents and inscribe them on the origin—only then could Five Phoenix truly rise!

High Martial grades were clear: based on the number of dao intents inscribed on the origin.

From Derivation Nine to Derivation One—the divisions were distinct.

Of course, Qi Liujia also looked forward to Five Phoenix's upcoming grading and entry into the High Martial Records.

Though he already had an answer in his heart.

Witnessing the grading's birth would satisfy him.

It meant the Void Heaven's only recognized High Martial world had been born!

A milestone.

Gazing at the tomb—

Qi Liujia's eyes grew deep.

The tomb surely held inheritances from powerhouses of the Ancient Emperor's era.

This made him think of his disciple, Li Sansui.

He felt guilty toward him—he had left him nothing. Even the Nine-Word Array Proverbs had been divided among other disciples.

Yet light gradually flickered in Qi Liujia's aged eyes.

Young Master Lu had dao patterns...

But soon, he grew conflicted.

With Young Master Lu's temper—if he asked for array patterns, he might be beaten to death.

“No matter. For my only disciple, this old face is worth risking.”

Qi Liuji's wrinkled face creased into a smile.

...

Within the tomb.

Bu Nanxing's face was full of lingering fear.

He had survived.

He had endured to the end!

City after city—he had no idea how he made it.

Azure Spirit Holy Son had died miserably on the battlefield, torn apart by countless skeletons for failing to comprehend the scripture.

Even with his special physique, his death had been anything but peaceful.

Tuoba Holy Son had survived too—but barely.

Bu Nanxing dared not take another step, terrified that some deadly mechanism would suddenly activate and erase him without warning.

He looked into the distance—where the cheap “big brother” he had met outside the tomb was happily examining a radiant spirit herb.

A herb planted within the tomb.

“Another never-before-seen herb... one more entry for the Herb Compendium.”

Lu Changkong smiled broadly.

Bu Nanxing's mouth twitched.

The whole way, he had traveled with Lu Changkong. He was now convinced—this guy was cheating!

Every trial they faced, Lu Changkong had acted carefree—yet nothing ever touched him.

On the battlefield stage—

Lu Changkong had walked straight through while skeletons dropped dead at the sight of him.

Bu Nanxing, who had fought desperately to kill skeletons, had been dumbfounded.

Some people really made others want to die from envy.

Especially when Lu Changkong, confused, had chased after the skeletons rising from the sand.

“Why aren't you attacking me?!”

Bu Nanxing had never seen someone so infuriatingly lucky.

This unique way of staying alive left him green with envy.

“You two, let us part ways here.”

“My life’s joy is researching herbs. This place has vast medicinal fields—countless herbs worth studying. You seek greater fortunes, so let us go our separate ways. I wish you both swift success.”

Lu Changkong cupped his fists toward Bu Nanxing and Tuoba Holy Son.

Tuoba glanced at the fields.

Though filled with spirit herbs, his sacred ground had its own. He had no need to waste time here—and herbs were not his goal.

So he chose to part ways.

Yet he had noticed Lu Changkong’s strangeness and solemnly cupped his fists before leaving.

Bu Nanxing, however, stayed put.

“This place is safe. I’m not going anywhere.”

“When the exit opens, I’ll be the first out.”

He found a pit, sat down, and refused to budge.

Lu Changkong smiled.

Then the scene became oddly harmonious.

Bu Nanxing truly did not move—like a statue. He believed staying still kept him free of karma.

Meanwhile, Lu Changkong tirelessly harvested herbs, testing them on himself.

He tasted every kind.

He even planned to conduct crossbreeding experiments right there in the third city’s medicinal fields.

Lu Changkong pulled out a gourd.

Inside was a viscous gray-green liquid.

Quite extraordinary.

After countless attempts, he had crushed a spirit herb and mixed it with strands of the River of Time from the Immortal Legacy Ruins.

It had catalytic effects.

The guarantee of his crossbreeding success.

Bu Nanxing watched Lu Changkong toil facing the soil, back to the sky, and couldn't help but sigh.

Look at this man—so simple, so unpretentious.

Until...

One day, Lu Changkong tossed him a beautiful fruit.

Wary, Bu Nanxing refused to eat.

“It’s fine—no poison.”

Lu Changkong shook his head with a smile.

He bit into one himself right in front of Bu Nanxing. Pale pink juice flowed, the flesh fragrant.

Bu Nanxing swallowed.

Seeing Lu Changkong eat with such delight and no ill effects—

His worries vanished.

He picked up the fruit, wiped it on his clothes, and took a bite.

The next instant—

His pupils contracted. An electric jolt spread through his body.

His divine sense felt pricked by needles.

He lost all feeling.

You said... it wasn't poisonous?!

Watching Lu Changkong's astonished face—

Bu Nanxing's numb tongue painfully spat out the pink flesh.

Tears nearly fell.

Where was basic trust between people?!

This world... was too dangerous!

Chapter 403: Holy Lord of This Realm, Why Do You Not Come Greet This Monk?

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

The giant whale carried the immortal island.

The vast sea rose and fell; the fiery sunset burned along the horizon, making the water shimmer.

The whale drifted quietly, in no hurry at all, displaying a serenity and composure rare among mortals.

He had gradually accepted his fate.

Carrying an immortal island? Fine.

He would just outlive the human on his back and be free.

On the island,

Lu leaned back in the Thousand Blades Chair, fingers idly rubbing the Profound Ring. Before him floated the Spiritual Pressure Chessboard; he held a piece, placing moves in the Asking-Heaven Game at a leisurely pace.

Four King-level inheritances had appeared in the ancient tomb, each choosing its inheritor.

At first, Lu had been quite surprised.

After all, among those who entered the tomb—Nie Changqing, Jing Yue, Overlord Xiang Shaoyun, Ning Zhao, Li Sansi, and others—many far surpassed Luo Mingyue, Jiang Li, and the rest in talent and strength.

Yet the inheritances had not chosen them.

Lu fell into thought. Inheritances chose based on suitability, not raw power.

Strength could be gained later.

With the inheritances, Luo Mingyue and Jiang Li had both reached Yang God realm.

Their foundations, forged by the ancient scripture, were exceptionally solid.

For Lu, it made no difference who received the fortunes—the benefits would ultimately flow back to him.

Still, the Four King inheritances were undoubtedly the tomb's greatest treasures.

Other items—spirit stones, herbs, artifacts—were comparatively ordinary.

Yet overall, every cultivator who entered the tomb had gained significantly.

Thus, Lu's own strength had quietly grown a fair amount.

He smiled.

Pinched another piece and continued the game.

In his mind, he began designing a cultivation method.

One exclusive to Five Phoenix.

...

In the third palace city of the tomb, everyone had reaped rewards.

Of course, the harvests varied.

Some gained immensely—ancient cultivator inheritances like Jiang Li and Luo Mingyue.

Others merely acquired rare spirit stones and ores.

Though valuable, they paled compared to primordial inheritances.

The third city overflowed with treasures, but obtaining them was no simple matter.

Small palaces dotted the city, each radiating light and holding treasures within.

Yet every palace had a guardian—skeletons, strange beasts, yin spirits.

Each guardian was terrifyingly strong.

To claim a palace's treasures, one had to conquer it.

The Empress Ni Chunqiu, Du Longyang, and Ye Shoudao—three half-step Mighty Beings—each targeted a palace and attacked.

Strange dao patterns reinforced the tomb; even intense battles could not destroy anything.

Du Longyang fought bitterly. For the first time, someone as strong as he suffered greatly.

Within the palaces, dao intent was unusable. Even spiritual qi and divine sense were restricted and suppressed.

They could only fight with the most primitive methods.

Across the third city, cultivators assaulted palaces for treasures.

After all, many were unwilling to leave empty-handed while others gained ancient inheritances.

Conquering a palace was no easy feat.

The guardians killed without mercy.

Many who survived the first and second cities died before the palaces of the third.

Zhulong sat with eyes closed.

She had no interest in the palaces' treasures.

What drew her to the tomb was something else.

The red dragon followed her; the azure dragon, now in human form, walked beside.

She crossed the third city into the fourth.

The fourth held a massive blood pool—dozens of plazas wide. Crimson liquid mixed with golden radiance flowed within, radiating strange, oppressive power.

Zhulong felt powerful energy from the pool.

It resonated with her bloodline, making it boil.

This attraction had pulled her all the way here.

She stepped onto the pool's surface and walked to its center, sitting cross-legged.

Threads of energy rose from the pool and poured into her body.

The red and azure dragons dove in joyfully, splashing and swimming.

What energy was this? Why did it feel so intimately connected to their bloodlines?

Lu had studied this pool.

Its liquid was no ordinary water—it was formed from true dragon blood.

For normal cultivators, soaking in it strengthened the body.

But for Zhulong, red dragon, and azure dragon, it awakened deeper bloodline potential, elevating their heavenly dragon nature.

The fourth city's dragon blood pool suddenly became lively.

Overlord, Nie Changqing, and others tempered their bodies in the blood, finding some consolation for their lesser fortunes.

Yet watching the closed-eyed girl at the pool's center, golden energy pouring into her—

They knew the true beneficiary of the dragon blood pool was her.

...

Nearly ten days after the tomb opened,

Cultivators began emerging one after another.

The tomb held many fortunes, but for most, the time-accelerated Immortal Legacy Ruins were more precious.

The third city's palaces contained countless cultivation methods and combat techniques—but obtaining them required conquering the palaces.

Some succeeded, some failed and died miserably.

There were also scattered fortunes across the third city—spirit herbs sealed in strange ores, beast cubs, etc.—sparking frenzied competition.

Scattered pills and yellow- or profound-tier spirit tools drove people mad.

Bottles of spirit pills and spirit tools flowed out of the tomb.

Details of the tomb gradually spread through Five Phoenix's cultivation world.

The tomb overflowed with fortunes... but was equally filled with danger.

For cultivators, it was a gold mine of risk and reward.

For mortals, it remained shrouded in mystery.

The fifth city—even experts like Du Longyang and Ye Shoudao dared not take half a step inside. They sensed instant death awaited.

The fifth city gradually became a forbidden zone.

As time passed,

Many outside the tomb were shocked to see powerful cultivators emerge.

Overlord strode out coldly, axe and shield on his back.

White Jade Capital's Nie Changqing, Painting Sect's Sima Qingshan with his book box, Grand Virtue Sect's Kong Nanfei and Meng Haoran...

The storm the tomb had raised across the world began to calm.

Many cultivators returned to normal training.

Tuoba Holy Son emerged.

He looked back at the ancient tomb, exhaling slowly.

The excitement before entering had turned to calm—and a touch of melancholy—upon leaving.

Azure Spirit Holy Son's death had shaken him deeply.

His greatest gain was not treasures, but growth forged between life and death.

Of course, he also felt regret.

He had thought it an Ancient Emperor's tomb. Now he knew it was not...

Without that status, its allure diminished greatly.

Moreover, the tomb's greatest fortunes—the Four King inheritances—had all been taken.

Tuoba Holy Son no longer lingered.

Cautious by nature, he knew Five Phoenix's terror—the mysterious white-robed youth was chillingly powerful.

So he did not fly out openly. Instead, he slipped into the mortal world of Five Phoenix and hid.

He would leave when the time was right.

Time passed.

The tomb's gifts had noticeably elevated Five Phoenix.

Countless spirit tools and pills flooded the cultivation world, raising overall strength.

Spirit tools were equipment—direct boosts to power.

Though Gongshu Yu was a master refiner and had taken Alu as disciple, the two could barely produce one spirit tool a month.

Spirit tools had always been rare in Five Phoenix.

Now, with the tomb's outflow, the cultivation world erupted in excitement.

But once the major powers divided the spoils, calm returned.

Cultivation remained paramount.

...

Atop White Jade Capital Pavilion,

Lu propped his chin on one hand, bronze wine cup in the other.

Breeze gently lifted his white robes.

He raised a brow.

A month had passed—where was the promised High Martial grading?

He sipped his plum wine.

That bald donkey... wasn't standing him up, was he?

Playing power games?

Beneath a skyward chrysanthemum on the lake heart island,

Qi Liuja cultivated cross-legged. The dense origin qi was perfect for recovery.

He opened his eyes—murky light flashing within.

A month, and still no word from the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm. Anxiety gnawed at him.

“Old Qi, how much do you know about the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm?”

A flash of lightning.

Lu appeared in his Thousand Blades Chair, rolling slowly across the island.

Qi Liujia stood, sleeves gathered, and followed behind.

“The Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm is Pingyang Heaven’s strongest High Martial world—Derivation Six, overlord of the entire heaven.”

Qi Liujia said.

“Derivation Six... very strong?”

Lu rested his chin on one hand, tapping the armrest with the other.

He knew the grading system—Derivation Nine to One—but had no real sense of the gaps.

Holy Lords like the Northern Palace Holy Lord had not seemed as invincible as imagined.

Qi Liujia seemed to guess his thoughts and gave a wry smile.

“Young Master... Derivation Six is terrifying.”

“Without you guarding Five Phoenix, the Buddha Realm could send a single Venerable and erase us.”

Lu gave a soft acknowledgment.

Qi Liujia continued, “Every three Derivations is a major threshold. Between Derivation Nine, Eight, and Seven, the gaps are already enormous—but between Six and Seven, the difference is even more horrifying.”

Lu said nothing, merely rubbing the Profound Ring.

“Grading depends mainly on the number of dao intents inscribed on the origin...”

“Derivation Nine requires ten dao intents—low threshold, relatively easy.”

“Derivation Eight needs fifty.”

“Derivation Seven requires a hundred.”

Qi Liujia explained.

“And Derivation Six?”

Lu asked curiously.

A hundred dao intents meant a hundred cultivators who had comprehended dao intent...

Even with dao steles, that required talent and time.

Qi Liujia inhaled deeply, solemnity in his eyes.

“Derivation Six requires one thousand dao intents inscribed on the origin...”

“And three third-sequence dao intents must be born. There must also be experts surpassing Tribulation realm overseeing it. Only then can it be called Derivation Six.”

Lu’s gaze sharpened.

Derivation Six was indeed far beyond his expectations.

No wonder the gap between Six and Seven was described as vast.

Third-sequence dao intents were a hard requirement.

Lu’s thoughts raced further.

If Derivation Six required third-sequence, then Derivation Five and Four would demand second-sequence?

And Derivation Three, Two, One?

Lu fell into contemplation.

Qi Liujiā was pleased to see Lu shaken by Derivation Six's might.

Lu was strong—he had worried Lu might grow arrogant.

Now, with Five Phoenix as the Void Heaven's only High Martial world, Qi Liujiā believed steady, cautious growth was essential.

They must not draw too much attention. If a supreme who had once suffered in the Void Heaven noticed them, Five Phoenix could be casually erased.

Seeing Lu reflect seriously was good in Qi Liujiā's eyes.

Hm?

As Lu pondered—

Powerful fluctuations rippled above the firmament.

“It’s here.”

Lu said.

Qi Liujiā’s coarse robes flapped. He looked up gravely and nodded.

“Go receive them.”

“I leave the grading to you. This Young Master is tired.”

Lu waved dismissively.

With that, he vanished in a flash of lightning, returning to White Jade Capital Pavilion.

“Yes.”

Qi Liujiā bowed.

Then he stepped off the island.

He became a streak of light, landing on the blood-colored battlefield.

Outside Five Phoenix, the misty array churned.

It parted, revealing figures radiating brilliant Buddha-light, treasures atop their heads shielding them from the Void Heaven's rules.

Among them was the Joyful Venerable who had visited before.

Still beaming, utterly amiable.

Beside him stood another Venerable, seated on a golden lotus, forming a Buddhist seal.

Qi Liujia rose into the sky.

He cupped his hands slightly.

“Sect Master Qi, this monk relayed Young Master Lu’s words to the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm. The Great Venerable was delighted and contacted the upper realms. He specially sent the Judicial Venerable to grade Five Phoenix.”

The Joyful Venerable smiled.

Qi Liujia’s gaze sharpened.

“This is the Judicial Venerable of the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm, who oversees world grading.”
The Joyful Venerable introduced.

“Greetings, Judicial Venerable.” Qi Liujia bowed slightly.

The Judicial Venerable’s face was stern, eyes slanted. He glanced coldly at Qi Liujia.

“Where is this realm’s Holy Lord? Why does he not come to greet this monk?”

“World grading and entry into the High Martial Records—how important is this? Yet the Holy Lord does not appear in person?”

The Judicial Venerable’s voice boomed.

Terrifying Venerable-level pressure erupted, making Qi Liujia's face flush red.

Qi Liujia's expression darkened.

"Young Master is occupied. He entrusted the grading to me."

The Judicial Venerable's eyes grew colder.

He swept his gaze across Five Phoenix—a High Martial born in the Void Heaven...

In his view, this heaven filled with terrifying rules and taboos should never have birthed a High Martial world.

The Great Venerable's talk of equality among sentient beings was nonsense. Such a world should be destroyed.

Any sign of the Void Heaven rising should be crushed.

The Joyful Venerable sensed the tension and hurriedly smoothed things over.

“Judicial Venerable, for the Great Venerable’s sake, let us not quibble over formalities... Young Master Lu surely has his reasons.”

The Judicial Venerable slowly reined in his aura.

“Laughable. Truly thinks itself a hegemon-level power?”

“If not for the Great Venerable contacting the upper realms, would a mere Derivation Nine world deserve this monk’s personal visit for grading?”

The Judicial Venerable said coldly.

He no longer looked at Qi Liuja.

His kasaya swirled as he sat cross-legged on the blood-colored battlefield.

From his spatial artifact, nine jade tablets radiating sacred light and engraved with strange characters flew out.

The moment they appeared, powerful auras surged.

Rumble!

The entire Void Heaven seemed to resonate.

“These are ‘Great Path Decrees’ used to commune with the Great Path...”

The Joyful Venerable appeared beside Qi Liujia, smiling.

“Anyone in Five Phoenix who has comprehended dao intent will be drawn here by the decrees.”

Qi Liujia nodded seriously.

He had never experienced this—his previous High Martial world had collapsed before grading.

The Judicial Venerable sat cross-legged.

As the nine tablets appeared, vast dao intent qi rolled forth. A powerful suction force erupted, sweeping into Five Phoenix.

...

Lake Heart Island.

As Lu placed a piece—

Powerful rumbling qi surged above his head.

The dao stele suppressing his soul trembled slightly.

A strand of dao intent emerged, coiling around him.

A powerful suction tried to forcibly displace him.

Lu smiled.

He raised a hand and pinched the void.

Pfft!

The Great Path's pull on him was mercilessly severed.

Chapter 404: Like a Thief Stealing Peaches

The fluctuations of the Great Path grew violent, rumbling endlessly.

After Lu raised his hand and severed the massive suction force of the Great Path that had tried to drag him away,

Lines danced in his eyes as he traced the origin of this power.

He had sent Qi Liujia to handle Five Phoenix's grading, never expecting something like this.

On the blood-colored battlefield, the scene quickly became clear to him.

He saw the Joyful Venerable and the Judicial Venerable.

The Judicial Venerable sat cross-legged on the battlefield, nine jade tablets floating around him—that was the source of the Great Path suction.

As strange characters on the tablets—manifestations of the Great Path—blazed with light,

Great Path array patterns appeared around the Judicial Venerable.

Figures emerged within them.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, Ni Chunqiu...

Overlord, Nie Changqing, Ning Zhao...

Even a bewildered Liu Yuanhao.

These were all Five Phoenix cultivators who had comprehended dao intent.

Qi Liujia watched them appear—among them was his own disciple, Li Sansui.

Everyone looked around in confusion.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and Ni Chunqiu exchanged glances.

They had been tempering their bodies in the dragon blood pool of the fourth city—how had they suddenly appeared here?

Rumble!

Terrifying auras swirled above the blood-colored battlefield, oppressive and suffocating.

The presence of a Mighty Being!

Du Longyang's pupils contracted. He stood.

“Senior Qi... what is happening?”

Seeing Qi Liujia, he asked.

The atmosphere felt wrong.

The Joyful Venerable merely smiled warmly—he clearly knew the grading process well.

The blood-colored battlefield churned with Great Path intent.

Everyone grew wary.

The array patterns vanished.

The battlefield fell silent once more.

Yet every face remained on high alert.

“Master...”

Li Sansui called.

Qi Liujiā’s expression was grave. He shook his head at her.

Liu Yuanhao, now leader of the evil cult, was terrified.

He saw Overlord, Tang Yimo, Mo Ju—representatives of Xiliang, South County, and Great Xuan.

How could he not panic? As cult leader, he had infiltrated all major powers.

Tantai Xuan had long grown sick of him—he had spent five thousand spirit stones in the Mo Pavilion to put a bounty on his head.

Liu Yuanhao had lived in hiding ever since.

Yet now—he was exposed!

His first thought was the Lord of White Jade Capital.

But the Lord had no reason to drag him out.

Looking at the strange scene on the blood-colored battlefield, he realized things were not as he had imagined.

The Judicial Venerable opened his eyes.

“Thirty people... all present.”

He smiled.

He was somewhat surprised—a newborn High Martial world had produced thirty cultivators with dao intent.

In a Derivation Nine world, comprehending dao intent already marked one as a genius.

The anger he had felt over this realm’s Holy Lord’s discourtesy faded considerably.

Among these geniuses, there had to be some worth recruiting.

In such a harsh world, anyone who could comprehend dao intent had limitless potential.

Still, the Judicial Venerable maintained his stern, imposing demeanor.

“Since everyone is here, we shall begin testing dao intents...”

He announced.

“This is a required step for a newborn High Martial grading. Those who perform excellently will receive special opportunities.”

The moment he spoke—

The blood-colored battlefield erupted in shock.

Many exchanged bewildered glances.

Nie Changqing frowned, hand on Dragon Slayer at his waist.

Ning Zhao narrowed her eyes—did Young Master know what was happening?

These two bald donkeys clearly weren't up to any good!

“You—step forward.”

The Judicial Venerable pointed at Du Longyang.

His aura was the strongest.

Du Longyang's brow furrowed.

He did not move.

You tell me to come, and I come?

The Judicial Venerable's expression chilled.

"Go."

Qi Liujia said, "There is no danger."

Du Longyang trusted Qi Liujia—the man had sacrificed himself to hold back countless terrifying experts for Five Phoenix.

If even he was untrustworthy, who was?

Du Longyang stepped forward to the Judicial Venerable.

The Venerable's face remained impassive.

He controlled the nine "Great Path Decrees," stacking them into a massive plaque.

"Place your palm upon it."

Du Longyang hesitated, then pressed his hand to the plaque.

Buzz...

The plaque trembled. Faint Great Path fluctuations swept past.

Words appeared.

"Du Longyang, Fifth-Sequence, Valor Spear Intent."

The Judicial Venerable froze.

Then surprise and delight flashed across his face as he looked at Du Longyang.

“Not bad.”

Du Longyang was utterly confused—dragged here just to test his dao intent?

The plaque looked cheap—nothing compared to a dao stele’s grandeur.

He shook his head and stepped back, uninterested.

The Judicial Venerable was inwardly shocked.

“A fine seedling. To comprehend Fifth-Sequence intent in a newborn High Martial world—worth recruiting.”

Thus, his gaze toward Du Longyang softened, even carrying a hint of a smile.

Du Longyang ignored him.

The Judicial Venerable was unbothered—geniuses always had their pride.

Fifth-Sequence intent—wasn't that excellent?

He tested a few more at random.

Most were ordinary—Seventh or Eighth-Sequence, quite standard.

His expression remained neutral.

“You.”

He pointed at Tianxu.

Having seen the process, Tianxu stepped forward without fear.

“Fifth-Sequence, Yin Water Sword Intent.”

The plaque displayed.

The Judicial Venerable was stunned, glancing at the frail-looking Tianxu.

He hadn't expected this weak-looking fellow to also have Fifth-Sequence intent.

A newborn High Martial world... had produced two Fifth-Sequence cultivators?

"Excellent, excellent..."

The Judicial Venerable praised.

Even the Joyful Venerable watching from the side was stunned.

His eyes flickered—no wonder the Great Venerable valued this newborn world.

As the saying went, the land shaped its people. Five Phoenix's cultivation environment clearly far surpassed theirs.

"Fifth-Sequence intent and you call it excellent?"

Tianxu glanced at the nodding Judicial Venerable, eyes full of resentment.

He felt mocked.

As cultivation progressed, he had gradually been left behind by Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and others.

Same Fifth-Sequence intent—why was he the weakest?

And this monk kept praising him—was he looking down on him?!

Hearing Tianxu's muttered curses, the Judicial Venerable's face stiffened slightly.

The geniuses of this world had talent... and quite the temper.

Was Fifth-Sequence not good enough?

Still, he remained amiable—to lure these geniuses away after testing.

He didn't care much. Once he offered the chance to cultivate in a Derivation Six High Martial world, they would leap at it.

After all, people climbed upward, water flowed downward.

“Next.”

The Judicial Venerable smiled.

Mo Tianyu stepped forward.

Bare-chested and round-bellied, he squinted at the Judicial Venerable.

“Monk, your face glows with health and fortune. Shall I divine your future?”

Mo Tianyu grinned.

Suddenly dragged here, he had been startled.

But seeing many familiar faces, he relaxed.

“Divination?”

The Judicial Venerable glanced at him.

Only Infant Transformation realm...

Weak. And he dared divine for him?

Divination involved heavenly secrets and the Great Path—one misstep could invite backlash.

“Test first.”

Mo Tianyu laughed.

He rolled up his sleeve and pressed his palm to the plaque.

“Mo Tianyu, Fourth-Sequence, Defiance of Fate Intent.”

BOOM!

The Joyful Venerable far away inhaled sharply.

Fourth... Fourth-Sequence?!

How was this possible?

Fifth-Sequence in a newborn High Martial world was already acceptable—there had been precedents.

But Fourth-Sequence? Many Derivation Seven worlds only produced one after tens of thousands of years!

The Judicial Venerable's mouth twitched.

He suddenly understood Tianxu's earlier curse.

Tianxu had been telling the truth.

His heart burned.

“This one must be taken! Fourth-Sequence intent—within the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm, there's a chance to raise it to Third-Sequence! He could even be sent to the upper realms in the future!”

Delivering a Third-Sequence prodigy to the upper realms—his merit would be immense.

“Amitabha. Benefactor... you have affinity with Buddha.”

The Judicial Venerable rarely smiled.

“Since you have affinity with Buddha, divine a reading for this monk.”

One reading to plant karma.

Worth it.

Mo Tianyu had already turned to leave. Hearing this, his eyes lit up.

“Really?!”

He grinned widely.

He immediately began calculating.

After staring at the Judicial Venerable for a long while...

Joy burst across his face.

“Monk, the signs are tremendously auspicious—beyond excellent!”

“With this reading as a gift, I wish you fortune like the eastern seas and longevity like the southern mountains.”

Mo Tianyu bared his white teeth.

The Judicial Venerable couldn't help but smile.

Not only lacking a genius's arrogance but also humble and pleasant-spoken.

Excellent!

Mo Tianyu eagerly slipped away.

The Judicial Venerable smiled.

The Great Venerable had sent him to grade the Void Heaven's newborn High Martial world. At first, he had been unwilling.

Now...

He was delighted.

Two Fifth-Sequence and one Fourth-Sequence genius—if he could bring them all back...

His achievements would surpass all previous.

Well worth the trip.

In a good mood, he even found Qi Lijia more pleasing to the eye.

“Continue. Next.”

Yet...

The shock...

Had only just begun.

...

Lake Heart Island.

Lu swept a hand across the Spiritual Pressure Chessboard.

An instant later, an image of the “Great Path Decrees” appeared.

“Like a simplified dao stele...”

Lu studied it closely, as though tracing the patterns on a stele.

“Weak. Far inferior to a dao stele.”

He shook his head, slightly disappointed.

“As a combat tool, this Young Master could sit still and let it hit him—it wouldn’t even tickle.”

With a flick—

The decree illusion on the chessboard shattered.

Lu calmly watched the scene within while rubbing the Profound Ring.

He saw the Judicial Venerable’s smile.

And couldn’t help but smile too.

That smile... looked just like a thief stealing peaches.

“This Judicial Venerable clearly doesn’t get along with the Great Venerable of the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm. The Joyful Venerable never told him this Young Master’s combat record—his intentions are not simple...”

“Trying to borrow a knife to kill?”

“Or using the Judicial Venerable to clip this Young Master’s wings?”

Lu’s half-smile deepened as he watched the Judicial Venerable on the chessboard, his gaze growing profound.

“Or perhaps... the power behind this Judicial Venerable is no simple matter either?”

Lu pondered.

The Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm was Pingyang Heaven’s overlord—yet only Derivation Six.

Above Pingyang Heaven were seven more heavens...

World grading and High Martial Records entry must involve other powers.

Lu’s eyes flickered.

As expected—the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm had ill intentions.

Using the Judicial Venerable to suppress Five Phoenix?

Leaning back in the Thousand Blades Chair, he beckoned.

A bronze wine cup floated over.

Lu's gaze deepened.

...

“Ning Zhao, Fourth-Sequence, Ice Frost Intent.”

The Judicial Venerable stared at the words on the plaque—his composure finally cracked.

Thirty cultivators with dao intent—he had assumed most would be Ninth or Eighth-Sequence, with luck yielding Seventh.

Yet...

Fifth-Sequence was no longer impressive.

Ning Zhao glanced at him and walked away.

His gaze gave her a strange feeling.

The Joyful Venerable's smile had long since vanished.

This situation... was beyond his expectations. A mere Derivation Nine world had produced so many geniuses with excellent dao intents.

If the Judicial Venerable recruited them all—even sending some to the upper realms—it would be disastrous for him and the Great Venerable.

Qi Liujia smiled, eyes gleaming with pride yet also worry.

Young Master Lu had kept a low profile.

But these young ones were shining too brightly.

Five Phoenix needed to stay low-key.

Yet strangely, after being looked down upon by the Judicial Venerable, Qi Liujia felt a surge of pride and excitement.

Ignorant bald donkey.

Overlord stepped forward, axe and shield on his back.

Though unsure of the plaque's purpose, it clearly concerned Five Phoenix.

He placed his palm upon it.

Buzz...

"Xiang Shaoyun, Third-Sequence, Unyielding Intent."

BOOM!

The Judicial Venerable's expression changed. He could no longer remain calm.

"How is this possible? Third-Sequence?" The Joyful Venerable cried out in disbelief from afar.

Qi Liujia laughed, eyes dazzling—yet filled with concern.

Young Master Lu had not shown off.

But these kids were doing it for him.

Five Phoenix needed to keep a low profile.

Yet inexplicably, Qi Liujia—who had been looked down upon—felt proud and thrilled.

Ignorant bald donkey.

Overlord withdrew his hand.

His face remained calm and composed.

Third-Sequence was strong?

In truth, Lu Jiulian's dao intent was even stronger. Scanning the crowd, Overlord frowned—he did not see Lu Jiulian.

With Lu Jiulian's level of dao intent, he disdained testing.

He glanced at the excited Judicial Venerable and walked away coolly.

“Excellent, excellent, excellent...”

The Judicial Venerable clapped and laughed.

This trip had been too worthwhile.

A Third-Sequence genius from a Derivation Nine world—like finding gold in endless sand.

The remaining cultivators tested—most were Eighth or Seventh-Sequence.

Impressive in other Derivation Nine worlds, but compared to Third and Fourth-Sequence, they paled.

Suddenly—

The Judicial Venerable's face stiffened.

A serious problem occurred to him.

“With Third-Sequence, Fourth-Sequence, and so many Fifth-Sequence intents...”

“What grade should this newborn High Martial world be?”

He looked at the Joyful Venerable.

“Still Derivation Nine... just a Derivation Nine with limitless potential. With enough accumulation and dao intents inscribed, it can reach Derivation Six.”

The Judicial Venerable finally decided.

After deciding—

His smile grew even wider.

His gaze swept over Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, Ni Chunqiu, and the others.

Finally settling on Overlord.

“This monk said earlier that those who perform excellently after testing would receive special opportunities...”

“Now this monk shall tell you what those opportunities are.”

He believed—no one could resist once he spoke.

“In the world you currently inhabit—a Derivation Nine High Martial world...”

“Given your outstanding talents, this monk can bring you to a Derivation Six High Martial world for supreme resources and cultivation... You may even have the chance to ascend to the upper realms!”

The Judicial Venerable announced.

Far away, the Joyful Venerable's smile had long disappeared.

He could not smile.

If the Judicial Venerable recruited all these geniuses, his merit would be unimaginable.

This went completely against the Great Venerable's intentions.

Qi Liuji's expression changed—deep worry in his eyes.

The Judicial Venerable smiled broadly.

He was certain—no one could refuse this temptation.

From his past experience, cultivators from Derivation Nine worlds would go mad with joy at the chance to enter a Derivation Six world.

Yet—

The expected flood of agreements did not come.

Overlord glanced at him. “Opportunity... that’s it?”

The Judicial Venerable’s smile froze.

“I refuse.”

Overlord said.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, Ni Chunqiu, and Tianxu refused without hesitation.

They knew what it meant.

The gap between Derivation Nine and Derivation Six was greater than between Low Martial and peak Mid Martial.

Yet they still refused.

Even though they had once been mere Tianyuan cultivators.

But ever since Tianyuan merged with Five Phoenix, they had become part of it.

The Judicial Venerable's face gradually darkened.

Far away, the Joyful Venerable smiled again.

...

Lake Heart Island.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The Origin Lake around the island churned, ripples exploding outward.

Ni Yu, just returned, hugged her black cauldron.

Little Yinglong clung to her head.

Both wore faces of terror, feeling the pressure of an approaching storm.

Who?!

Who had crazily provoked Young Master's petty heart again?!

To make him this furious?!

Chapter 405: To Hell with Your High Martial Registry

Lu smiled.

This was the first time someone had tried to poach his people so brazenly, right in front of him.

And the very corner they were trying to steal? The foundation of the Five Phoenixes—the cornerstone that had elevated it to a high martial world.

No wonder the moment he laid eyes on this Judicial Venerable, Lu had taken an instant dislike to the man. He looked exactly like a thief sneaking into an orchard to swipe peaches.

His fingers tapped lightly on the armrest of his wheelchair.

What comforted him was that Overlord, Nie Changqing, Ni Chunqiu, and the others had not wavered. None of them had accepted the Judicial Venerable's offer, even when tempted with entry into a Yan Six high martial Buddhist realm.

Lu's brows drew together slightly as he sank into thought.

"Overlord, Du Longyang... their Dao intents were all comprehended from the Dao stele..."

"Could the quality of their intents be so extraordinary that it shocked even this Judicial Venerable?"

He narrowed his eyes.

His mind delved deep into his soul, where a vortex swirled. At its center stood the Dao stele, silent and majestic, radiating profound Dao resonance.

"This is only a broken stele. It can only grant comprehension of third-sequence intents and below..."

Yet even with a damaged stele, the intents Overlord and the others had grasped were treasures in the Judicial Venerable's eyes. Clearly, in the high martial worlds, comprehending third- or fourth-sequence Dao intents was far rarer and more difficult than he had imagined.

“Looks like I need to start hunting for the remaining pieces of the stele.”

A faint smile curved Lu’s lips.

With a thought, he summoned the system panel.

Host: Lu

Title: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

Qi Refinement Level: 6

Spiritual Energy Reserves: 3,756,000 / 10,000,000 strands

Primordial Spirit Strength: 99 (Yuan)

Chaos Energy: 30 (He)

He had been at the sixth level of Qi Refinement for some time, yet his primordial spirit strength had barely budged. That surprised him.

He could feel it—he was at a bottleneck. Once he broke past 100 Yuan, a qualitative leap would follow.

As for Chaos Energy, growth depended entirely on the Dao intents he comprehended and engraved onto his high martial origin.

His spiritual energy reserves, however, had skyrocketed—thanks to the Five Phoenixes' ascension to high martial status and the opening of that mysterious general's tomb. Many cultivators had reaped benefits there, and Lu, as the world's core, had naturally received the greatest share.

In the coming days, the growth would only accelerate.

Soon, he would have what it took to step into the seventh level.

Lu withdrew his gaze from the panel.

He picked up a chess piece, rolled up his sleeve, and placed it on the board. The Heaven-Asking Game took shape; each falling piece rang like a question hurled at the firmament.

After a few more moves, his figure began to blur.

The wheelchair swayed gently, his white robes fluttering. Atop the tower of White Jade Capital, he gradually faded into nothingness.

...

“Refuse?”

The smile on the Judicial Venerable’s face vanished bit by bit.

He genuinely could not comprehend it. Overlord and the others had actually turned him down.

People climbed upward—anyone with half a brain would know to seize the chance.

A Yan Six high martial world versus a Yan Nine stranded in the void... was there even a choice?

Even a blind man would pick Yan Six!

Especially a Yan Nine floating in the void, liable to be annihilated at any moment by the wrath of a supreme being.

There was no comparison.

“Fools.”

The Judicial Venerable’s kasaya fluttered as he spoke. His words boomed like thunder across the blood-colored battlefield.

“You clearly do not understand what a Yan Six high martial world truly is.”

He swept his gaze over Overlord and the rest.

“Think of a towering mountain and an ant beneath it. A Yan Six is the mountain; a Yan Nine is the ant. The gulf between them is a chasm no bridge can span.”

“In the Pingyang Sky, millions of Yan Nine worlds exist. Countless geniuses spill blood for a single slot in a Yan Six. Yet here you are, handed the opportunity on a silver platter—and you reject it.”

“Fools.”

“Utter fools.”

He fixed his eyes on Overlord.

“This monk will give you one last chance...”

Deep down, the Judicial Venerable burned for Overlord’s talent.

But before he could finish, Overlord shook his head.

“No.”

Nie Changqing, Ni Chunqiu, Du Longyang—each of them refused in turn.

Their resolve was iron.

They had lived through every catastrophe the Five Phoenixes had endured. They had shared its glory and its near-destruction. How could they abandon it now?

Far off, Liu Yuanhao’s eyes flickered with hesitation.

He was different from the others. As the leader of a demonic cult, he had spent his life hiding, always looking over his shoulder.

In the Five Phoenixes, safe havens for someone like him were few.

Perhaps leaving for a Yan Six world really would be the smarter choice...

A sudden chill ran through him. He hurriedly crushed the treacherous thought.

“A bunch of shortsighted fools...”

“Born in a Yan Nine world—naturally narrow-minded!”

The Judicial Venerable pressed his palms together and shook his head in disappointment.

From delight to ecstasy to this crushing letdown, anger now simmered within him.

Beside him, Venerable Joyful beamed like a simpleton.

Good. Refusal was perfect.

Qi Liujia's expression remained cold and stern.

Hearing the Judicial Venerable hurl insult after insult, he finally spoke, voice hoarse. "Sir, your words are a little ugly, aren't they? Each person follows their own heart—whether to stay or go is their choice."

The Judicial Venerable's gaze sliced toward him.

"And who the hell are you to question this monk?"

Boom!

Terrifying aura exploded from him, as though it would tear the entire blood-colored battlefield apart.

"Judicial Venerable, calm yourself, calm yourself..."

Venerable Joyful stepped in front of Qi Liujia at just the right moment. His chubby body swelled, blocking the pressure.

Qi Liujia staggered back several steps, face pale.

Though Venerable Joyful had absorbed most of the oppressive might, Qi Liujia still felt his blood churn.

“Master!”

Li Sansui’s daoist robe flared as his eyes narrowed.

He raised a hand; formation runes rippled outward like waves.

But Qi Liujia lifted a hand to stop him.

The boy’s concern warmed his heart.

In his long life, most disciples had come to him with ulterior motives. To finally have one who genuinely cared... it lifted his spirits.

But he would not let Li Sansui throw his life away.

This Judicial Venerable was a second-realm tribulation-transcending powerhouse. Li Sansui stood no chance.

In the entire Five Phoenixes, only the Young Master could suppress him.

Still, Qi Liujia did not want Lu to intervene. Right now, the Five Phoenixes needed to keep a low profile.

Blocked by Venerable Joyful, the Judicial Venerable gradually calmed.

He gave the beaming monk a long look, then swept his gaze over Overlord and the others, a cold smile spreading across his face.

“Refuse?”

“Do you really think you have the right to refuse? I tried speaking nicely, but since kindness is wasted on you, I’ll stop pretending.”

His voice rang out.

“This world wants a place on the High Martial Registry? That depends entirely on one word from me. Refuse—and the Five Phoenixes will never be registered.”

Qi Liuji's weathered face twitched.

He stared at the Judicial Venerable with undisguised loathing.

He had thought such abuse of power and bullying only happened among mortal officials.

He never imagined a tribulation-transcending venerable would stoop to something so despicable.

Yet it also clarified something for him: even tribulation transcendents were still human.

"How can you act like this, Judicial Venerable?"

Venerable Joyful spoke up, clearly displeased.

"If the Great Venerable learns of this, he will be furious."

The Judicial Venerable glanced at him but said nothing.

Below, fury blazed across Overlord and the others' faces.

Clearly, entry into the High Martial Registry was a matter of enormous consequence.

And this bald donkey was using it to threaten them.

Mo Tianyu stood bare-chested, fingers forming divination seals, grinning widely at the Judicial Venerable.

“Monk, remember the fortune I read for you.”

His words carried deep meaning.

“Will you come with this monk to the Yan Six high martial world?”

The Judicial Venerable looked at Mo Tianyu, a faint smile returning. He had taken a liking to this silver-tongued genius.

“No.”

Mo Tianyu shook his head, refusal crisp and immediate.

Rejected again and again, the Judicial Venerable's expression finally turned ugly.

Venerable Joyful sighed theatrically, clearly enjoying the show.

Boom!

Terrifying aura erupted once more, shaking the blood-colored battlefield.

"I gave you a choice."

"Did you truly think I was negotiating?"

He raised a hand.

Brilliant Buddhist light poured down like golden chains, wrapping around Overlord and the others, sealing their movements.

Overlord roared in rage, struggling to break free—but could not.

Nie Changqing, Ni Chunqiu, Li Sansui—all the same.

Everyone's faces changed.

He planned to abduct them by force?!

Qi Liujia's anger exploded.

He raised a hand; formation runes surged and intertwined.

“Stop!”

His coarse robes flapped wildly.

Seeing the Judicial Venerable bully them like this—even the ever-patient Qi Liujia could no longer hold back.

“Not only will you come with me,” the Judicial Venerable declared, kasaya fluttering as he stood atop a golden lotus, solemn and sacred, “this world will never enter the High Martial Registry.”

One sentence decided the fate of an entire world.

His Buddhist light shone everywhere, yet his words ignited pure fury.

Suddenly—

The void rippled.

“Oh?”

A voice drifted through the emptiness.

“In that case... we don't need your damn registry.”

The Judicial Venerable's expression shifted.

Venerable Joyful's smile deepened.

He adjusted his sleeves and stood motionless atop his lotus platform, watching the void twist and distort.

The next instant, silver light blazed.

A silver wheelchair emerged from nothingness.

Seated upon it was a white-robed youth, one hand propping his chin, the other idly turning a ring.

Before him hovered a chessboard glowing softly, pieces scattered like stars.

“Greetings, Lord Lu.”

Venerable Joyful bowed.

Lu glanced at him, said nothing, and returned his attention to the board.

The Judicial Venerable narrowed his eyes.

“So the lord of this world finally shows himself.”

He smiled, rising on his lotus until he met Lu eye-to-eye.

“So many heavenly geniuses—keeping them in a mere Yan Nine world is a waste. Let them follow this monk to a Yan Six world. In the future, they may even ascend to the upper realm.”

“That would be a supreme opportunity—and it could feed blessings back to your world.”

Sensing Lu’s aura, the Judicial Venerable softened his tone slightly.

He could not see through Lu’s cultivation.

Lu ignored him, studying the game.

His fingers paused their turning of the ring.

He picked up a piece, rolled it between his fingers, and placed it.

“Are you trying to throw your weight around? Bullying the people of my Five Phoenixes?”

He never even looked up.

Being ignored like this, anger flashed in the Judicial Venerable's eyes.

"This monk was merely reasoning with them."

"Reasoning, huh."

Lu laughed.

"I, Lu Ping'an, may have a good temper, but even I won't let you trample over us."

"You sneak into someone's orchard to steal fruit and still expect the farmer to thank you?"

He lifted another piece from the box; it sparkled like crystal.

Plop.

The piece fell.

Boom!

The void seemed to solidify, turning into a vast mountain that crashed down.

Thud!

The earth quaked as though the planet itself were splitting.

The Judicial Venerable's face changed.

With his tribulation-transcending strength, he suddenly felt crushing pressure.

It was as if an ocean of spiritual energy had condensed into a spirit mountain and slammed onto his back.

The lotus beneath his feet exploded.

His body smashed into the blood-colored ground, as though carrying an actual mountain.

Lu hovered in the void and placed another piece.

Plop.

Ripples of spiritual pressure spread outward; endless waves of energy detonated.

The pressure on the Judicial Venerable's back grew unbearable; his knees began to buckle.

Horror flooded his heart.

A mere Yan Nine world—how could its lord be this strong?

What was this overwhelming, invincible sensation?

Venerable Joyful's heart skipped when Lu glanced his way.

“Lord Lu, the Judicial Venerable represents the upper realm. The Great Venerable did not send him here on purpose.”

He knew Lu was terrifying—after all, one Buddhist venerable had already perished, and the Black-and-White Holy Lords had been nailed into the void.

This man's strength was unfathomable.

Still, he was only the lord of a Yan Nine world. Surely he would feel some restraint.

The Great Venerable had sent the Judicial Venerable just to take a beating, to be humbled by Lu's hand.

Yet now, Venerable Joyful's cheek twitched.

Somehow... things seemed to be spiraling beyond even the Great Venerable's control.

As if reading his thoughts, Lu smiled.

He turned to Mo Tianyu below.

"If someone tried to steal something precious from you, what would you do?"

Mo Tianyu laughed heartily, cupping his hands toward Lu. “That kind of thief is the most hateful. Naturally—beat him to death.”

“Hmm.”

Lu nodded, satisfied.

The next instant, he reached out.

Terrifying spiritual energy converged into a colossal palm, every line and crease perfectly formed.

The giant hand descended from the heavens; the blood-colored battlefield groaned beneath its pressure.

A suffocating oppression settled over everyone’s hearts.

The Judicial Venerable roared in fury.

But the moment he opened his mouth, the palm—infused with thirty He of Chaos Energy—slammed him into the ground.

The battlefield caved in, earth splitting, mountains crumbling.

A massive handprint scarred the land.

The Judicial Venerable lay blood-soaked, his monk robes shredded.

The palm closed into a fist, seized him, and hurled him into the Heaven-Covering Formation.

The grand array rumbled, swallowing him whole.

“Lord Lu—no, you mustn’t!”

Venerable Joyful’s perpetual smile vanished.

The Great Venerable only wanted the Judicial Venerable humbled, not killed!

Yet Lu’s figure had already faded away.

Only churning clouds remained above the blood-colored battlefield.

Overlord stared at the array, blood surging in his veins.

Young Master Lu of White Jade Capital... had grown stronger again!

What domineering might!

The monk who had suppressed them for so long was nothing but a dead dog before the Young Master!

This was true power!

Empress Ni Chunqiu's beautiful eyes sparkled.

As expected of Brother Lu!

Still as domineering as ever!

Qi Liujia let out a long breath, exhilaration flooding him, though he knew trouble would follow.

“Sect Leader Qi, quickly劝劝 Lord Lu—the Judicial Venerable cannot die!”

Venerable Joyful urged frantically.

Qi Liujia merely shook his head.

“He brought this upon himself.”

“You do not provoke the Young Master’s temper.”

...

Inside the Heaven-Covering Formation.

As a tribulation-transcending venerable, the Judicial Venerable was powerful, yet every attempt to break the array felt like punching cotton.

The white-robed youth appeared seated in his wheelchair.

The Judicial Venerable understood: there was nothing left but to fight.

He also realized—he had been set up.

The Great Venerable and Venerable Joyful had schemed against him!

They knew how strong Lu was, yet never warned him.

Otherwise, he would have shown more restraint.

He pressed his palms together.

Still, he was not worried Lu would kill him. He represented the upper realm—he decided the High Martial Registry.

No lord of a Yan Nine world would dare slay him.

The Great Venerable and Venerable Joyful only wanted him humiliated.

“What are you staring at?”

Lu frowned.

The next moment, he tapped the armrest.

Crimson light flared.

The Phoenix Plume Sword Soul shrieked with excitement and transformed into a blazing fire phoenix that streaked across the sky.

The Judicial Venerable's body suddenly went rigid.

...

The blood-colored battlefield fell deathly silent.

Smoke drifted above.

Everyone looked up.

Venerable Joyful waited, heart pounding.

Suddenly—

A wretched scream tore through the smoky array, followed by a rain of blood.

Boom!

The smoke parted as if cleaved by a blade.

A figure plummeted, smashing into the ground.

Thud...

It was the Judicial Venerable's corpse.

His primordial spirit extinguished, his golden Buddhist body cracked and bleeding, eyes still wide with terror.

He knelt on the blood-colored earth, all life gone.

As though he had glimpsed something unspeakable in his final moment.

Venerable Joyful felt ice flood his veins.

Staring at the corpse, his mind reeled.

From within the rolling smoke came a faint, indifferent voice.

“Go back and tell the Great Venerable—”

“Even if it brings down every thunder tribulation in existence, so be it.”

“The Five Phoenixes will not join your High Martial Registry.”

Chapter 406: The Five Phoenixes Strengthening Plan

The Five Phoenixes would not join the High Martial Registry.

That calm declaration lingered above the blood-colored battlefield.

Venerable Joyful's face twitched. The words sent chills racing through his flesh.

A deathly chill spread across the battlefield. A tribulation-transcending venerable lay dead—what a horrifying sight.

Most importantly, Venerable Joyful had never imagined the Judicial Venerable would actually die.

Lu's decisiveness far exceeded anything he had anticipated.

He had assumed Lu would fear the Great Venerable, or at least compromise for the sake of the registry. There might be conflict, but never a fight to the death.

Yet reality had shattered his expectations.

Without the slightest hesitation, Lu had dragged the Judicial Venerable into the grand array and killed him outright.

Venerable Joyful's body turned ice-cold as he scanned the battlefield. It felt as though blood were flowing everywhere.

How many powerhouses had fallen in this newborn high martial world drifting in the Void Heaven?

One Holy Lord. Two Venerables.

In the Pingyang Sky, a venerable might not fall for thousands of years. Yet in mere days here in the Void Heaven, so many had perished.

“As expected... the Void Heaven truly is a cursed place.”

Venerable Joyful could no longer smile.

He murmured under his breath.

The Judicial Venerable’s death was no small matter. The power behind him was no ordinary force—it was the upper realm that even the Great Venerable feared.

Venerable Joyful raised his head and stared at the churning, storm-like array.

He took a deep breath.

“Lord... Lord Lu.”

He cupped his hands toward the clouds.

“This poor monk apologizes on behalf of the Judicial Venerable’s rudeness...”

The clouds rolled and roared.

Yet Lu’s figure remained unseen.

Every pore on Venerable Joyful’s body tightened.

Fear crept into his heart. If Lu could kill the Judicial Venerable, he could kill him just as easily.

Thus, he spoke with utmost caution, lowering himself as much as possible.

“However, Lord Lu, entry into the High Martial Registry is of utmost importance. It concerns the future of the Five Phoenixes.”

“Without registration, every attempt to engrave Dao resonance onto the origin will invite heavenly tribulation. One misstep, and the entire world could be reduced to ashes...”

“Transcending tribulation is a great calamity. Lord Lu... do not let a moment of anger doom the Five Phoenixes’ future.”

Venerable Joyful pleaded, hands still cupped.

On the blood-colored battlefield, Overlord and the others were stunned.

Was refusing the registry truly that dangerous? Constant tribulation punishment, the risk of utter annihilation?

Qi Liujia stared at the Judicial Venerable’s corpse, his expression complicated—joy mixed with sorrow.

He cupped his hands toward the Heaven-Covering Array.

“Young Master...”

But before he could continue, a calm voice drifted out from within the array.

“This Young Master has already decided.”

“What’s so great about joining some registry?”

Lu said.

“Go back and report to the Great Venerable. This Young Master will count to three.”

“If you’re still here after that, you can stay and keep him company.”

The words were flat, utterly calm.

Yet Venerable Joyful’s face paled dramatically.

The next instant, he said nothing more.

He did not dare treat Lu’s words as a joke.

A man who would kill a tribulation-transcending venerable without a second thought—he would not test him.

Hum...

The golden lotus beneath his feet spun. Venerable Joyful shot into the sky.

“Lord Lu, this monk takes his leave!”

“Lord Lu truly refuses to let the Five Phoenixes join the registry?”

He hesitated in the void, bowing as he asked.

“Three.”

BOOM!

The word thundered like heavenly wrath, shaking the skies and changing the color of the heavens.

Venerable Joyful’s expression collapsed.

He transformed into a streak of light and fled instantly.

The blood-colored battlefield fell deathly silent.

Qi Liujia didn't know what to say—whether to rejoice or worry.

With this act, Lu had offended not only the Great Venerable but the upper realm the Judicial Venerable had spoken of.

Overlord exhaled slowly.

Lu's strength shook him to his core.

Just the aura the Judicial Venerable had released had been unbearable for him—yet such a powerhouse had been slain effortlessly.

Nie Changqing and Ni Chunqiu's eyes blazed with brilliant light.

As expected of the Young Master.

Still the same Young Master Lu who, back in Beiluo City, would issue killing orders without batting an eye.

With the Judicial Venerable dead, the Dao decree floating beside him began to crumble, scattering into the void.

Every cultivator who had been forcibly summoned felt radiant light envelop them.

The next moment, they were teleported back to where they had come from.

For each of them, the experience had been earth-shattering.

They had witnessed the terrifying might of the mysterious lord of White Jade Capital.

Powerhouses from beyond the Void Heaven were nothing but insects before Young Master Lu.

At the same time, they realized just how fortunate they were to have comprehended Dao intents.

It made the Dao stele in the Nine Prisons Secret Realm all the more precious to them.

The blood-colored battlefield emptied.

Only the Judicial Venerable's corpse remained, kneeling in death.

Qi Liujia stepped forward to the body. Even in death, the terrifying aura radiating from a tribulation-transcending venerable was overwhelming.

He gazed at the sword wound between the corpse's brows.

Young Master Lu was truly unfathomable.

For such a monster to be born in the Void Heaven... could it be connected to the ancient emperors?

Qi Liujia's eyes flickered.

Suddenly, the sound of wheels rolling across the ground rang out.

Lu appeared, seated calmly in his Thousand-Bladed Chair.

"Young Master."

Qi Liujia bowed.

“Dispose of the body. Throw it into the void.”

Lu said.

Qi Liuja bowed in acknowledgment. The void of the Void Heaven contained terrifying regulatory power. Once tossed in, even the flesh and blood of the strongest beings would soon wither and decay under the rules.

The corpses of the Black-and-White Holy Lords from before had already been reduced to nothing, not even bones remaining.

Such regulatory power did not exist in other heavens—that was why the Void Heaven was so feared.

The stronger one was, the more terrifying the rules became.

That was why many top powerhouses refused to set foot here.

In the Pingyang Sky, a venerable’s corpse might remain undecayed for millennia, their bones enduring tens of thousands of years.

But in the Void Heaven, within days, the rules would erase everything.

Qi Liujia stood behind Lu, wanting to speak but hesitating.

“You want to ask why the Five Phoenixes won’t join the registry?”

Lu propped his chin on one hand.

Qi Liujia nodded.

“Joining or not—it doesn’t make much difference.”

“As for the thunder tribulations, there’s no need to worry. This Young Master will bear them all.”

Lu said.

Qi Liujia’s body trembled at the words.

“Besides, are thunder tribulations truly just calamities?”

“To wear the crown, one must bear its weight. Since we choose to engrave Dao resonance into the origin, we must be prepared to withstand the tribulations.”

Lu continued slowly.

“See the tribulations as tempering.”

“So what does it matter whether we join the registry or not?”

“Moreover...”

Lu turned in his chair, gazing calmly at Qi Lijia.

“If joining means we have to swallow humiliation at every turn... then what’s the point of joining at all?”

Qi Lijia was speechless.

The Young Master’s temper... was as straightforward as ever.

“Go.”

Lu waved a hand.

“Yes.”

Qi Lijia stepped back, then lifted the Judicial Venerable’s corpse and strode into the void.

BOOM!

Terrifying energy surged within the void.

The faint presence of regulatory intent flickered.

The corpse was placed on a cold, barren continent fragment.

Under the rules, its flesh began to wither and dry...

The blood-colored battlefield fell silent once more.

Lu glanced at the Heaven-Covering Array.

Of the Four Heaven-Slaying Arrays, this was only one.

Three remained missing.

He wondered when he would obtain them. Once all four were complete and arranged around the Five Phoenixes, perhaps he could finally relax.

For now, he could only reinforce the Heaven-Covering Array.

He opened his palm. The jade-like Heaven-Covering Sword floated above it.

BOOM!

Thirty He of Chaos Energy surged forth, enveloping the array as he engraved upon it.

The Heaven-Covering Sword grew stronger, and the array's defensive power soared accordingly.

Watching from the void, Qi Liujia was stunned as the array became ever more mysterious and radiant.

This Heaven-Covering Array... had likely reached the pinnacle of earth-tier formations!

When Qi Liujia returned to the battlefield, Lu had already vanished.

...

The Five Phoenixes.

Back at the headquarters of his demonic cult, Liu Yuanhao patted his chest, face pale with lingering fear.

“That bald donkey almost got me killed.”

“Thank the heavens I didn’t speak up and say I wanted to leave... I thought he was some big shot, but Young Master Lu killed him with a single move.”

Liu Yuanhao sneered.

Looking around and realizing he was safely back in his cult, he finally relaxed.

Still, thinking of Lu's terror made him shudder.

The cult would have to keep an even lower profile from now on. If they accidentally offended that extremely petty Young Master Lu and got casually wiped out, he'd have nowhere to cry.

It had taken so much effort to build the cult in the endless western desert. If some idiot subordinate provoked Lu Ping'an and got them all slapped to death, it would be too unjust.

Mo Tianyu opened his eyes, a wistful look on his face.

"Sigh..."

"Monk, safe travels. I did warn you... but you just wouldn't listen."

Mo Tianyu felt a strange kinship.

After all, he too had once been slapped into the ground like a carrot by Lu.

Such a familiar experience.

But he, Mo Tianyu, had been luckier—he survived.

As for this Judicial Venerable...

Mo Tianyu sighed again, a touch of sadness in his heart.

Was it his fault?

If he hadn't read the monk's fortune...

Perhaps the Judicial Venerable would still be alive.

All the cultivators forcibly summoned to the battlefield returned home.

Many looked up at the sky, expressions complex.

“Young Master Lu gave up entry into the registry just to stand up for us...”

“The burden he carries... is far too heavy.”

Many sighed in admiration.

It only strengthened their resolve to grow stronger.

They didn't fully understand what the registry meant, but they knew it was monumental.

...

Beyond the Void Heaven.

Holy Lord Tuoba and Holy Lord Qingling watched Venerable Joyful flee back in panic, their faces freezing.

Behind them, servants carried congratulatory treasures, ready to enter the Five Phoenixes once it joined the registry.

Now, judging by Venerable Joyful's state, something had clearly gone wrong.

And where was the Judicial Venerable who had entered alongside him to conduct the evaluation?

His status was no joke. Though not the strongest, he represented the upper realm itself.

Venerable Joyful hurried past, face grim.

Seeing the two Holy Lords, he normally would have stopped for a friendly chat.

But today, he had no mood for small talk.

“Venerable Joyful, why the rush?”

Holy Lord Tuoba asked.

Venerable Joyful glanced at the treasures behind them.

“Put them away...”

He said.

“What?”

Both Holy Lords paled.

“The Judicial Venerable is dead—slain by Lord Lu in the Void Heaven...”

“The Five Phoenixes refuses to join the registry.”

“Big trouble is coming.”

Venerable Joyful shook his head, then stepped onto his lotus and sped toward the Little Thunder Sound Buddhist Realm in the Pingyang Sky.

Holy Lord Tuoba and Holy Lord Qingling exchanged glances, sucking in sharp breaths.

This... couldn't be real?

The Judicial Venerable—dead?

A tribulation-transcending venerable representing the upper realm, treated with utmost courtesy even by the Great Venerable of Little Thunder Sound...

Dead?

In the Five Phoenixes?

Goosebumps rose on their skin as they stared toward the Void Heaven. In their minds emerged the image of that white-robed youth seated calmly in his silver wheelchair, smiling gently like a refined nobleman.

“How can this guy be so ruthless?!”

Holy Lord Qingling exclaimed.

“He’s going to cause a catastrophe. I think Lord Lu has been set up by the Great Venerable of Little Thunder Sound...”

Holy Lord Tuoba narrowed his eyes.

“No... it doesn’t feel like a setup. The Great Venerable probably did want to use Lord Lu to teach the Judicial Venerable a lesson, but he absolutely never intended for the man to die.”

“Because if the Judicial Venerable dies, the Great Venerable suffers the most.”

The two Holy Lords looked at each other and sighed.

They could feel a storm brewing.

Their earlier desire to celebrate the Five Phoenixes’ registration faded completely. Right now, the safest thing was to do nothing at all.

Getting too close to the Five Phoenixes would spell trouble.

Besides, without the registry, the Five Phoenixes would face endless terrifying tribulations. Their future was uncertain.

Getting involved now could drag them down too.

So they waved away their servants and turned to leave.

Little Thunder Sound Buddhist Realm.

Ancient temples glowed softly.

At the central pagoda, Venerable Joyful rushed inside.

Moments later, terrifying aura exploded from the tower, clouds churning like stormy seas.

Venerable Joyful soon emerged again.

But his expression was strange.

He never would have guessed—

Though the Great Venerable raged at the Judicial Venerable's death, he took no action.

Not only did he not dispatch an army to raze the Five Phoenixes and appease the upper realm's anger,

He even specifically ordered Venerable Joyful to stand down.

What... was the Great Venerable thinking?

...

The Five Phoenixes.

Ancient Tomb.

Fifth Gateway.

Within the silent palace, a stone coffin rested quietly, eternal flames flickering.

Suddenly, four skeletons materialized around it.

“General, he refused.”

Said the skeleton in the pink dress.

A soft chuckle emerged from the coffin.

“As expected...”

“General, shall we prepare for war?” asked the armored skeleton.

“He killed an envoy and rejected the registry. He will surely anger terrifying existences. This world faces annihilation.”

Yet a leisurely voice drifted from the coffin.

“No need.”

“They won’t dare come.”

“At least... not until the ‘Emperor Weapon’ appears.”

The voice rang out, then fell silent.

The four skeletons’ ghostly flames flickered as they exchanged glances, then withdrew from the fifth gateway.

...

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

Lu returned amid swirling mist.

He paid little attention to the reactions of the outside world—even if he knew, he wouldn't care.

After killing the Judicial Venerable, he had taken defensive measures.

He reinforced the Heaven-Covering Array.

Within it, he layered countless smaller defensive formations. Even experts surpassing tribulation transcendence would be bogged down and frustrated.

Lu was confident—not just because of the array, but because of the terrifying regulatory power of the Void Heaven.

As long as that power endured, any being capable of breaking the array would not dare descend. The damage from the rules would leave even them gravely wounded.

They weren't stupid. They understood profit and loss.

"Still... the Five Phoenixes must grow stronger, and fast."

"Too weak, and we'll be bullied everywhere."

"And this regulatory veil over the Void Heaven—who knows when it might vanish? When that day comes, the Five Phoenixes must at least be able to protect itself."

Lu tapped lightly on the armrest of his Thousand-Bladed Chair.

"Now that the Five Phoenixes has become a high martial world, the first step to growth is increasing the number of cultivators who comprehend Dao intents, engraving sufficient Dao resonance into the origin."

"Next, it's time to organize the cultivation realms beyond the Three Gods Realm."

"Beyond that, we must comprehensively raise the strength of all cultivators. Cultivation and Qi refinement are the foundation."

"With the higher ceiling of a high martial world, there's far more room to maneuver."

Ideas flashed rapidly through Lu's mind as he laid out the Five Phoenixes' strengthening plan.

"Hmm..."

"With my current strength, could I extend the 'Lin' profound array word—the one that controls time—across the entire Five Phoenixes? Accelerate the world's time flow?"

"If possible, the Five Phoenixes could advance far faster in a short period."

The thought excited him.

Back when he was only at the fifth level of Qi Refinement, he couldn't cover the entire world with the time-accelerating 'Lin' profound.

Now, he could try.

Pressure was motivation.

Though Lu suspected the supreme beings who bore grudges against the Void Heaven would not dare descend,

he could not be one hundred percent certain.

Thus, strengthening the Five Phoenixes was urgent.

“Beyond that, the inheritances I planned earlier should be released...”

“Also, create special physiques like Father’s Myriad Poison Body... and compile cultivation methods tailored for Five Phoenixes cultivators.”

Lu narrowed his eyes.

He organized and summarized the upcoming tasks.

He exhaled.

Then, his mind sank into the long-unused Preaching Platform, now upgraded and waiting.

Chapter 407: Everyone Awakens, Only This King Remains Drunk

Lu’s consciousness sank into the Preaching Platform.

Ever since the system upgrade, he had barely touched it. There had been free time, but he wasn't in a rush—he'd use it naturally when the moment called for it.

Now inside, he glanced around.

The platform had changed.

The foundation was still the same Eight Trigrams array, the runes unchanged. Yet the endless spiritual energy that once flooded the space had vanished entirely.

The array now floated atop a mirror-smooth sea.

The water lay perfectly still, reflecting the heavens like polished glass.

Lu sat cross-legged on the array, suspended above the boundless ocean, feeling strangely connected to the world itself—like a lone fisherman in a tiny boat, one with the cosmos.

He dipped a hand into the sea. The liquid was pure condensed spiritual energy—immeasurably refined.

He slowly closed his eyes.

Hum...

When he opened them again, he seemed to be seated in the void of the universe.

Pitch-black darkness surrounded him, dotted with countless stars glittering like scattered diamonds across the firmament.

Lu inhaled deeply. The Preaching Platform's capabilities had grown terrifyingly powerful.

Whatever he envisioned now manifested far more easily than before.

In the old days, even though he felt godlike inside the platform, conjuring an entire starry cosmos with a single thought had been nearly impossible.

Now? He merely had to blink.

Simply put—the hardware had received a massive upgrade, like jumping several generations of processors.

Lu smiled and began experimenting. The spiritual sea churned as he shaped a realm of earthly paradise around himself.

White robes fluttering, his sleeves fell across the array like blooming pear blossoms.

Black hair dancing in the wind, brows furrowed in thought.

With the Five Phoenixes now a high martial world, the old cultivation system he had designed was no longer sufficient.

The Three Gods Realm, Yin God Dao Lotus, Yang God Nine Turns, Primordial Spirit Unity...

Those three stages corresponded to Spirit Severing, Soul Projection, and Unity—perfectly suited for Five Phoenixes cultivators when he created them.

Reaching Primordial Spirit Unity made one a Great Power.

From what Lu understood, Great Powers were further divided.

Those he had turned into primordial spirit platforms were first-realm Great Powers—Unity stage.

Second-realm Great Powers were Venerables, the Tribulation-Transcending realm that surpassed the Three Gods.

Above that lay a third realm—its name unknown to Lu.

He wasn't sure if the Great Venerable of Little Thunder Sound Buddhist Realm had reached that stage.

He raised a hand and began deducing within the Preaching Platform.

His gaze flickered.

Above the spiritual sea, a figure materialized—Lu Jiulian.

To craft a cultivation system unique to the Five Phoenixes—one that extended beyond Primordial Spirit Unity—Lu needed to understand the differences and transformations of the later realms.

Tribulation-Transcending Venerable—the name itself implied a realm on the verge of transcending tribulation.

Lu's brow arched.

“After transcending tribulation... ascension?”

“And after ascension... immortality?”

“Do immortals truly exist in this world?”

He pondered.

Could the realm above Great Power simply be “Immortal”?

The thought intrigued him, but he quickly dismissed it. No matter what others called it, he would forge the Five Phoenixes’ own path—especially now that they had rejected the High Martial Registry.

First question: what exactly separated a Tribulation-Transcending Venerable from a Unity-stage Great Power?

Lu himself cultivated Qi Refinement, so he wasn’t entirely clear.

Moreover, every Great Power he had fought had been utterly crushed, giving him little chance to study the gap.

With a thought, he flicked his finger.

A droplet exploded from the spiritual sea, coalescing into a figure—Qi Liuja, a Unity-stage Great Power.

Another flick.

Another droplet burst, forming the Black-and-White Holy Lord—the one Lu had slain and nailed to a frozen continent.

Lu's eyes traced glowing lines as he compared the two.

Soon he discovered the difference: Tribulation-Transcending Venerables were not only stronger in primordial spirit but also vastly superior in body.

In the Tribulation realm, bones underwent further refinement—similar to the Heavenly Lock realm's spine forging, but far more arduous. At completion, the bones turned golden: the Venerable Golden Body.

Only with a sufficiently powerful primordial spirit and golden body could one face heavenly tribulation.

Hence the name—Tribulation-Transcending.

Now, what should this realm be called in the Five Phoenixes system?

Lu's hair danced as he spoke softly.

“Let's call it the Fortune realm—Fortune Venerables.”

Thanks to the Dao stele, Five Phoenixes cultivators could more easily comprehend Dao intents.

Thus, Lu added Dao intent amplification to the Fortune realm.

Normal Tribulation Venerables focused solely on primordial spirit and golden body.

Five Phoenixes Fortune Venerables, however, required the fusion of three elements: primordial spirit, golden body, and Dao intent—each blooming into a flower: Primordial Spirit Flower, Golden Body Flower, Dao Intent Flower.

Once the Three Flowers Gather Atop the Head, one would step into the next realm Lu had designed—the Heavenly Human realm.

Within the Preaching Platform, Lu sat like a buddha holding a flower. The spiritual sea surged like a roaring river, pouring into Lu Jiulian seated upon a blooming lotus.

Lu Jiulian's aura evolved rapidly under Lu's gaze, as though centuries of cultivation passed in moments.

Three radiant flowers blossomed above his head.

BOOM!

For an instant, terrifying regulatory power seemed to surge, as if trying to slash into the platform itself.

Lu erased the projection.

"Three Flowers Gather Atop the Head to enter the Fortune Venerable realm—face heavenly tribulation, be baptized by thunder, and achieve unity with heaven and man."

Lu was satisfied. This would be the path for all future Five Phoenixes cultivators.

"Without guidance, groping forward alone would be impossibly difficult."

His eyes gleamed.

He formed seals; runes swirled around him like a vortex.

“It is time to create a cultivation method exclusive to Five Phoenixes cultivators—something akin to the ancient scriptures in the tomb.”

His gaze deepened.

He began deducing the method within the Preaching Platform.

With proper guidance, cultivation speed and efficiency would skyrocket.

Even better—this method would aid Dao intent comprehension. Truly heaven-defying.

Most importantly...

Only those baptized by the Five Phoenixes origin could cultivate it!

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

BOOM!

Aromatic essence exploded from the black cauldron.

Ni Yu beamed with joy.

Tribulation clouds gathered overhead—pill tribulation.

“Fifth-grade Origin Fusion Pills... finally done!”

She was ecstatic.

Inside the cauldron, glassy pellets glimmered with flowing light.

Outside, Ni Yu held a porcelain bowl, rapidly stirring syrup with chopsticks—ready to coat the pills in sugar the moment they emerged.

“Little Yellow! Block the pill tribulation!”

“Two pills for you when we’re done!”

Ni Yu's chubby cheeks glowed with excitement.

The little Yinglong lazing in the lake instantly perked up.

With a triumphant roar, he shot into the sky, expanding to mountain size. Dark-golden dragon scales gleamed coldly.

After soaking in the Ancient Tomb's dragon blood pool, his Heavenly Dragon bloodline had awakened another layer—he was far stronger now.

BOOM!

A thunderbolt crashed down.

Little Yinglong's eyes sharpened. Wings beat once; a claw lashed out.

He shattered the lightning with his bare talons!

“Beautiful!”

Ni Yu whooped, stirring the syrup even faster.

Inside the cauldron, the pills began to jump, slamming against the walls as if trying to break free.

Ni Yu's heart raced—this was the thrill of alchemy!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Fifth-grade pill tribulation was ferocious—far beyond the Body Tempering Pills of old.

But Little Yinglong, whose combat strength now rivaled Yang God realm, feared nothing.

Finally, he crushed the last wisp of tribulation cloud.

The sky cleared.

Little Yinglong spread his wings, blotting out the sun, hovering proudly—job complete, waiting for his two-pill paycheck.

Ni Yu flung the syrup outward. Golden rain of sugar fell under the sunlight, scent intoxicating.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

The leaping Origin Fusion Pills were perfectly coated.

With practiced ease, she flicked a jade bottle and collected them all.

Suddenly, she froze.

She looked up—the sky had turned pitch black again. Her baby-fat cheeks twitched.

“Huh? Why hasn’t the tribulation dispersed?”

She glared at Little Yinglong.

Bad job blocking. Pay docked.

Little Yinglong was utterly baffled.

He had definitely destroyed the tribulation!

Why was there still cloud?!

BOOM!

A colossal thunderbolt—thick as an ancient tree—smashed down.

Every scale on Little Yinglong's body stood on end.

Bone-chilling terror flooded him!

Crack!

The lightning struck true.

Scales shattered; he let out a miserable wail.

What the hell was going on?!

Why had the tribulation suddenly become so terrifying?!

Was Ni Yu refining immortal pills instead of fifth-grade ones?!

Little Yinglong crashed into Origin Lake.

Even the giant whale of Immortal Island looked horrified.

Across the entire Five Phoenixes continent, every cultivator felt suffocating pressure.

What kind of powerhouse was transcending tribulation?!

The whole sea seemed shrouded in black clouds.

Ni Yu's fifth-grade pill tribulation looked like a child's plaything in comparison.

When the second bolt descended, Little Yinglong didn't dare block it.

He flapped desperately and scrambled away.

The tribulation cloud ignored him entirely and slammed straight into White Jade Capital's tower.

A resounding phoenix cry pierced the heavens.

The Phoenix Plume Sword flashed crimson, slicing through the cloud.

Pfft!

The cloud dispersed.

Little Yinglong lay scorched and bleeding, utterly aggrieved.

So...

He had accidentally tanked a tribulation meant for Dad!

One after another, thunderbolts rained down.

Lu, white robes untouched by dust, deflected them effortlessly.

Qi Liujia, freshly returned to the Five Phoenixes, watched in awe.

What was the Young Master up to now?

On the primordial spirit platforms, Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and the others felt their souls tremble.

Empress Ni Chunqiu's pretty face flushed with excitement. "It must be Brother Lu! Only he could trigger tribulation like this!"

Inside the Ancient Tomb.

Four skeletons' ghostly flames danced.

From the dim stone coffin came a surprised murmur.

"This tribulation... wasn't triggered by a breakthrough."

BOOM!

The punishment lasted half a day—eighteen bolts of varying size—before finally dissipating.

When the clouds cleared, the entire Five Phoenixes seemed brighter, purer.

Atop White Jade Capital's tower,

Lu sat in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, smiled faintly, and flicked a finger.

Golden characters blossomed across the sky, hanging like celestial script.

In that instant, the whole world blazed with golden light, as though bathed in radiant sunlight!

“Heavens! This is a cultivation method!”

“Scripture! A scripture that can guide cultivation!”

“Immortals are preaching to the mortal world?!”

Every cultivator stared in stunned reverence.

Anyone with cultivation could clearly see the golden text.

Mortals, however, saw nothing at all.

...

Northern County.

Mount Tai Ridge.

Dantai Xuan paced barefoot through the palace halls.

The Xuanwu Guards around him gazed dumbstruck at the sky, as did Jiang Li—who had received inheritance in the tomb.

Dantai Xuan glanced upward curiously.

Nothing there?

What were they all freaking out about?

He asked repeatedly, but no one answered—everyone was frantically memorizing something, as if possessed.

He suddenly felt abandoned by the world, anxious and scratching his head.

What the hell was in the sky?!

Was Minister Jiang conspiring with the Xuanwu Guards to prank their king?

After a long while...

Jiang Li finally lowered his gaze, sighing deeply.

“Immortals preach to the world... the peerless scripture 《Northern Emperor Scripture》 has descended. A grand era of cultivation is coming.”

The Xuanwu Guards echoed in awe.

“Northern Emperor what-now?”

Dantai Xuan blinked.

“Huh?”

“Your Majesty didn’t see it? Golden scripture appeared in the heavens—titled 《Northern Emperor Scripture》 , an unparalleled cultivation method.”

“A gift of immortal fate bestowed upon the entire world!”

Jiang Li explained.

But the moment the words left his mouth, he understood.

Dantai Xuan’s emotions crashed like waves.

Hands clasped behind his back, he paced the long corridor. A forlorn wind blew, fluttering his robes.

“So... they really weren’t messing with me.”

“The whole world awakens... and only this king remains drunk.”

...

Lu returned to the Preaching Platform.

On a sheet of golden paper, mysterious characters glowed—this was the cultivation method he had deduced: the incomplete 《Northern Emperor Scripture》 .

There were four more volumes: 《Southern Emperor》 , 《Western Emperor》 , 《Eastern Emperor》 , and 《Origin Emperor》 —corresponding to the five directions of the continent.

Together, they formed the Five Emperor Scriptures.

Lu was quite pleased with them.

Their emergence had even provoked the regulatory tribulation of the Void Heaven—proof enough of their extraordinary nature.

For now, he would release only the 《Northern Emperor Scripture》. It was sufficient to carry cultivators all the way to the Three Gods Realm.

Every century, he would release the next volume.

Cultivating all five together would yield even greater results.

Though perhaps not as profound as the legacies of ancient emperors or supreme beings, the Five Emperor Scriptures were perfectly tailored for Five Phoenixes cultivators—created by Lu specifically for them.

Within the Preaching Platform,

the five golden pages dissolved into radiant light.

Lu closed his eyes, calming his mind.

After a long while, he opened them again—gravity in his gaze.

“Now... it is time to deduce whether, with my current strength, I can wield the ‘Lin’ profound word and envelop the entire Five Phoenixes—accelerating our flow of time.”

He was extremely cautious with the Nine Profound Words.

Better to test inside the platform first.

These words were tied to the ancient emperors—he had no absolute confidence.

If covering the whole world failed, at least he would be mentally prepared.

Hum...

Lu formed seals. The scene around him shifted abruptly.

He sat in the void, facing the Five Phoenixes shrouded beneath the Heaven-Covering Array.

The next moment—

vast spiritual energy surged.

The 'Lin' profound word emerged, hovering above his head.

White robes fluttered wildly, black hair whipped like blades, eyes sharp as swords.

As the word appeared,

a gray river of time suddenly roared into existence within the Preaching Platform.

Chapter 408: The Grand Time Array, Third Realm of Great Power

Inside the Preaching Platform, the River of Time roared forth.

The conjured void collapsed under its weight, emitting deep, muffled booms.

Lu's robes whipped violently.

In the next instant, his eyes blazed. A colossal sundial seemed to manifest, descending from the heavens.

The "Lin" profound word faintly overlapped with the sundial.

Waves crashed. Every splash from the River of Time carried the weight of countless ages.

Back when Lu was only at the fifth layer of Qi Refinement, he had already entertained the idea of enveloping the entire Five Phoenixes within the “Lin” word, isolating its time flow from the outside world.

But at that time, he lacked the strength. The terrifying power of the profound word would have drained him dry.

So he had given up.

Now, he tried again—this time deducing it within the safety of the Preaching Platform.

Rumble!

The sundial formed by the “Lin” word hovered above the Five Phoenixes, growing larger and larger until it resembled a blazing sun.

The entire world turned strange. With his naked eye, Lu could almost see the rise and fall of civilizations, the transformation of seas into mulberry fields.

Yet in the next moment, the gray River of Time poured backward into the Five Phoenixes.

Mountains shattered, oceans collapsed.

The power of time was too vast and too treacherous—even Lu could not control it perfectly.

The first attempt failed.

He wasn't discouraged. If he had succeeded on the first try, that would have been the real surprise.

Again and again, he deduced.

He carefully adjusted the flow rate.

His primordial spirit power drained at shocking speed.

Finally—

Success.

The Five Phoenixes and the sundial achieved a delicate balance.

Lu spread his arms, committing the sensation to memory.

The energy consumption was within acceptable limits.

Like floating and sinking in an endless sea, Lu gradually calmed.

He sat cross-legged on the array platform, settling his mind and recovering his spirit.

The repeated deductions had taken a heavy toll.

After a long while, he opened his eyes.

The Grand Time Array was complete. But he had no intention of leaving the platform yet to set it up in the void.

There were still preparations to make.

And one more plan remained unfinished.

“Create special physiques and spread them across the world.”

Lu smiled, eyes gleaming. This had been on his agenda for a long time.

“What exactly is a special physique?”

He murmured.

With a thought, his white robes turned pitch-black. Demonic qi surged, shaking the very void.

“The Indestructible Demonic Body is, in fact, a kind of special physique—just an extremely high-grade one.”

“Top-tier physiques are nearly impossible to fully construct from scratch. I can only forge seeds. In future cultivation, they will grow and evolve. Because the path is unknown, no one can predict how far they will ultimately reach.”

Lu pondered.

Like the Myriad Poison Body he had given Lu Changkong—it was merely a seed with astonishing potential.

In Lu's estimation, if the Myriad Poison Body reached its apex, a single drop of blood could slay immortals or raise the dead.

Different physiques also granted extraordinary cultivation speed.

Lu smiled.

First, he would use his own Indestructible Demonic Body as a template.

Origin qi poured down from the void, joined by Chaos Energy. Like refining a pill, he followed a unique method.

After a long while, a black flower bloomed in the emptiness, demonic qi curling from its petals.

This was a physique flower.

Lu formed a figure with a pinch of his fingers and implanted the flower.

Demonic qi exploded. The figure howled in agony, as though every inch of flesh was being torn apart and replaced.

The process was excruciating.

Soon, it was complete.

The figure revived—towering and majestic, demonic qi rolling off him like a god of the abyss.

One punch flattened a mountain.

“This physique shall be called the Demon King Physique—peerless and domineering.”

Lu created another radiant golden flower.

“This one—the Divine King Physique. Heaven-defying talent, unmatched grace.”

Then a holy, brilliant bloom.

“The Saint King Physique...”

Followed by one that seemed to contain the Dao itself.

“The Innate Dao Physique...”

One after another, flowers blossomed.

Each represented a unique special physique.

Lu built a towering peak within the platform and planted them all upon it, every flower vying in splendor.

As for distribution—he would let the Preaching Platform’s selection function choose those with fate.

Of course, he would not release them yet.

The Grand Time Array came first.

...

Outside the ice tower imprisoning the various holy sons and daughters,

Qi Liujia sat cross-legged.

Li Sansui listened attentively nearby as Qi Liujia lectured on the Dao of formations.

The boy had always loved formations—ever since Xie Yunling’s influence. And after comprehending his own Dao intent, his passion had only grown.

Now receiving Qi Liujia’s full inheritance, he was overjoyed.

Qi Liujia looked at his disciple with kind eyes, teaching without reservation, imparting everything from the Six Armored Formation Sect.

Suddenly, his eyes twitched.

An oppressive aura spread.

A primordial spirit transmission rang in his ears.

“Sansui, continue cultivating on your own. Master must visit White Jade Capital.”

Li Sansui was startled but bowed respectfully.

Qi Liuja did not linger. He rose, treading lightly across the sea toward Lake Heart Island.

There he saw Lu strolling slowly through the peach blossoms.

And Ni Yu.

One glance at her made his eyelids spasm.

She was casually popping a fifth-grade Origin Fusion Pill into her mouth like candy.

Origin Fusion Pills aided primordial spirit birth—she was eating them like sweets!

He nearly had a heart attack.

“You’re here.”

Lu spotted him and smiled.

“Young Master, what do you need?”

Qi Lijia bowed slightly. Truthfully, he dreaded meeting Lu—every time meant something troublesome.

He had only just disposed of one tribulation venerable’s corpse, after all.

But this time, to his shock, Lu wasn’t asking him to clean up a body.

He wanted help setting up a formation.

“S-set up a formation?”

Qi Lijia was dumbfounded.

With Lu’s mastery of arrays, he needed assistance?

Something felt off.

Lu chuckled and drew a line in the air.

Spiritual energy condensed into paper, and upon it appeared the formation diagram.

“This is...”

Qi Liuji only glanced once.

The next instant, crushing pressure slammed into him.

His weathered face twisted in shock; he nearly spat blood.

Trembling with excitement and horror, he stared at Lu.

“Young Master... this formation is no simple matter! One tiny mistake and it’s utter annihilation!”

Not for any other reason—this was a time array!

Any formation involving time was terrifyingly profound.

Even with a complete diagram, failure was likely.

Failure could mean losing lifespan—or worse, having one’s time completely severed, flesh withering, aging to death in an instant.

“It’s fine. Just gather the materials listed.”

Lu said calmly.

Qi Lijia took a deep breath.

He could feel the unshakable confidence in Lu’s tone.

If that was the case, he would not obstruct further.

“Yes.”

He left with the diagram, face grave.

But doubt gnawed at him.

Why was Lu setting up a time array?

He had already suspected the time formation in the immortal ruins was Lu's handiwork.

Yet this one felt far more terrifying.

It took Qi Liuja nearly three days to gather everything.

The materials weren't rare—just troublesome.

When the last item was collected,

Lu appeared beside him in the Thousand-Bladed Chair, out of thin air.

Overwhelming primordial spirit fluctuations enveloped Qi Liuja, and they vanished.

Outside the Five Phoenixes.

In the void.

Qi Lijia handed over the materials.

His task complete, he floated in the emptiness, watching Lu begin.

Lu's expression turned solemn.

Real deployment was different from deduction.

Even he dared not be careless.

He pushed his primordial spirit to its limit.

Materials transformed one by one into array foundations and inscription mediums.

Every profound rune he carved was sent hurtling toward the space around the Five Phoenixes.

This was merely the appetizer.

When all materials were processed, countless array patterns already floated outside the world—protective measures to keep the River of Time from destroying the Five Phoenixes.

Finally,

under Qi Liujia's nervous gaze,

Lu began drawing the River of Time.

The sundial appeared—a colossal dial hanging above the Five Phoenixes.

The gray River of Time surged out from the immortal ruins at terrifying speed.

Overwhelming primordial spirit fluctuations battered it continuously,

slowly setting the Grand Time Array in motion.

...

Little Thunder Sound Buddhist Realm.

Inside the golden pagoda,

a terrifying figure opened his eyes. Countless rays of light swirled within them.

“Refusing the High Martial Registry, yet still daring to erect a time array to accelerate your flow?”

“You push too far.”

The figure murmured.

His soft whisper alone made the entire pagoda tremble, on the verge of cracking.

The next moment, he took out a prayer mat and gently tossed it forward.

A faint “Xing” profound word flashed upon the mat, then silver-gray energy surged.

The figure vanished, mat and all.

At the border between Pingyang Sky and Void Heaven,

space itself shattered.

A figure sat upon the prayer mat, radiating ten thousand zhang of Buddhist light that illuminated all things.

BOOM!

Countless Holy Lords in Pingyang Sky were startled.

Tuoba and Qingling, both from Yan Seven high martial worlds, appeared almost instantly—they had been watching the Void Heaven closely.

But when they saw the figure seated on the prayer mat,

their breathing stopped. They dared not make a sound.

“That’s...”

Qingling’s pupils contracted.

“Shh!”

“Don’t speak.”

Tuoba pulled him away. The two fled silently, as if that seated figure were an apex terror.

Rumble!

Within the Void Heaven,

regulatory power stirred.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Under Lu’s gaze, strands of regulatory power transformed into gleaming, murderous blades!

These were blades of rule—possessing horrifying killing intent!

“Young Master!”

Qi Liujia’s expression changed drastically.

Now he understood Lu’s ambition: to shroud the entire Five Phoenixes in a time array!

If successful, one year inside could equal ten outside. The Five Phoenixes’ growth would explode!

But...

This was insane!

Even the regulatory power of the Void Heaven had manifested as blades, forbidding him from continuing!

“Young Master, careful!”

Qi Liujia shouted.

Lu was prepared.

While his primordial spirit guided the array, he raised a hand and flicked.

Silver blades streaked across the void, forming a perfect silver sphere that encased him completely.

Clang!

Countless regulatory blades slashed down!

The void itself seemed to scream as it was torn apart.

Clang clang clang!

Sparks flew endlessly. The void boiled.

Qi Liujia had long retreated to a frozen continent fragment, watching from afar.

He dared not approach. A single stray blade could sever his primordial spirit and strip his flesh.

Suddenly,

he sensed something and whipped around.

Every pore on his body constricted as though about to explode.

Because he saw it:

an enormous figure looming beyond Pingyang Sky, gazing down coldly upon the Void Heaven.

A time array that defied the heavens naturally drew the attention of countless experts.

Qi Liuja could feel the suffocating despair emanating from that being—one glance could kill him!

Third realm of Great Power?

Beyond Tribulation-Transcending?

The Great Venerable of Little Thunder Sound Buddhist Realm?

Qi Liuja felt his throat seized, unable to breathe.

And what horrified him even more—

that terrifying figure sat calmly upon his prayer mat,

leisurely crossing the world barrier,

stepping from Pingyang Sky into the Void Heaven!

Chapter 409: A Word of Advice for Lord Lu

Endless regulatory power turned into razor-sharp blades that slashed relentlessly through the void, like a meat grinder lined with spinning knives trying to carve Lu apart.

Silver blades stacked into a perfect sphere, sealing him inside.

Even Lu dared not underestimate these regulatory blades. If his guess was correct, they were likely created by ancient emperors—or beings on the level of ancient emperors.

Though dulled by countless eons, their terror remained undiminished.

These blades didn't merely cut flesh; they severed the primordial spirit.

Even sheltered within the silver sphere, Lu felt his soul shudder under the onslaught.

The Thousand Blades that formed his chair had been nourished by his spiritual energy and primordial spirit for ages; their defensive might was extraordinary.

At the very least, they would not break easily.

Thus, this layered silver-blade shield was, to Lu, an absolute defense.

Yet the soul-targeting regulatory assault still managed to affect him slightly.

Truthfully, Lu hadn't expected deploying the Grand Time Array to provoke such a violent reaction from the regulatory power.

"In the Preaching Platform, nothing like this happened during deduction..."

Lu frowned. This was genuinely unexpected.

Of course, he didn't particularly care.

These regulatory forces weren't actively wielded by an ancient emperor—they were passive, somewhat mechanical. Their strength was limited.

Lu knew that once the array was complete, the blades would naturally disperse.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Terrifying explosions rocked the void.

Qi Liuja stared in horror at the figure crossing the heavenly barrier.

It didn't appear particularly tall, yet it pressed down on him like an insurmountable mountain.

This was the supreme existence of Little Thunder Sound Buddhist Realm!

Qi Liujia had a premonition—this being was definitely above the Tribulation-Transcending realm.

For such a powerhouse to cross worlds... how could he not be terrified?!

“Young Master...”

Qi Liujia gritted his teeth. Things had just become dire.

Normally, the moment a being of this level stepped into the Void Heaven, regulatory power would instantly strike, slashing their primordial spirit.

But because Lu was deploying the time array and drawing all regulatory blades to himself, the pressure on this newcomer was greatly reduced.

That was probably the confidence allowing him to cross over.

The unique nature of the Void Heaven made true experts of the Nine Heavens reluctant to enter.

The stronger one was, the deadlier the regulatory backlash.

The regulatory power scattered throughout the Void Heaven worked like a lever: weak beings faced weak resistance; the stronger you were, the stronger the counterforce.

When Qi Lijia was young, he had witnessed it once.

A supreme being from the Nine Heavens had crossed into the Void Heaven, seeking traces of ancient predecessors.

The entire Void Heaven had quaked. Regulatory power coalesced into a hundred-thousand-zhang blade that cleaved the void, leaving the supreme being bloodied and fleeing in panic.

Since then, no supreme being had dared enter.

The figure seated on the prayer mat flashed the “Xing” profound word.

In the next instant, he appeared just outside the Five Phoenixes.

Qi Lijia gnashed his teeth and shot upward, coarse robes flapping wildly.

“Senior! Halt!”

He had to stop this person. If the other interfered, Young Master's array deployment would be ruined.

Drawing close, Qi Lijia still couldn't clearly see the figure's face—only that it was a buddha.

Infinite Buddhist light shrouded the head, eyes serene, profound, ethereal.

The "Xing" profound word?!

Qi Lijia's heart jolted as he stared at the prayer mat.

His eldest disciple had taken the "Xing" word and reportedly brought it to the upper realm. He never expected to see it again.

This person was connected to the upper realm.

Likely the Great Venerable of Little Thunder Sound.

The Great Venerable's face was veiled in boundless Buddhist light, impossible to gaze upon directly.

Qi Liujia opened his mouth to speak, but no sound emerged.

The Great Venerable gently pinched a flower.

Qi Liujia felt his primordial spirit shrink as though compressed into a single petal.

He watched helplessly as the Great Venerable drifted toward Lu, who was still under relentless assault by regulatory blades.

Lu wanted to erect a time array to accelerate the Five Phoenixes' growth.

Yet now he faced twin horrors: regulatory blades and a being beyond Tribulation-Transcending who had crossed worlds.

Despair. Dead end.

For a moment, all hope seemed lost to Qi Liujia.

Lu, of course, sensed the overwhelming aura approaching.

“Heavenly Human realm?”

Lu’s brow arched.

He had just defined the cultivation tiers. He didn’t know what the Nine Heavens called the realm beyond Tribulation-Transcending, but he had named it Heavenly Human.

“Probably the Great Venerable of Little Thunder Sound... What does he want?”

Thoughts raced through Lu’s mind, yet he remained perfectly calm.

With a flick of his finger,

the Phoenix Plume Sword shot forth.

The nine swords did not merge; instead, they orbited the silver sphere in nine streaks of light.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Countless regulatory blades were repelled.

Crack... crack...

The Thousand Blades began to rotate, parting to reveal Lu seated calmly within, expression serene, black hair dancing.

The Grand Time Array gradually stabilized.

After countless deductions in the Preaching Platform, Lu had accounted for nearly every possible failure.

Success was within expectations.

But the regulatory blades and the sudden appearance of a Heavenly Human realm buddha were not.

Lu regarded the Great Venerable calmly.

The Venerable's face was shrouded in endless Buddhist light intertwined with a strange intent.

Lu narrowed his eyes and spotted a blooming Primordial Spirit Flower.

Hmm?

Beneath the Buddhist radiance, the Great Venerable's expression seemed to shift slightly.

He discovered that Lu's primordial spirit was... unnaturally powerful.

Interesting.

The only high martial world in the Void Heaven, rumored to be entangled with ancient emperors.

There was indeed something extraordinary here.

A man who would kill the Judicial Venerable without a word, who slaughtered Holy Lords left and right.

Short-tempered, not overwhelmingly strong.

Yet still so brazen.

It was surely the regulatory power of the Void Heaven giving him courage.

Supreme beings dared not enter, fearing the blades left by ancient emperors.

The weak were heavily suppressed and couldn't unleash their full power.

Thus, with primordial spirit might comparable to the Immortal Transformation realm, this man could dominate the rule-protected Void Heaven.

The Great Venerable's thoughts churned as he locked eyes with Lu.

Then he smiled.

Under normal circumstances, even he would not dare enter the Void Heaven.

But this time... an opening had appeared.

"Lord Lu..."

"Deploying a time array defies the heavens and disrupts the balance of high martial development in Pingyang Sky. Please dismantle it."

His voice rang out leisurely.

Golden lotuses seemed to bloom across the void with every word, carrying an ethereal, authoritative air.

Lu looked at him calmly.

“This is the Void Heaven. How does it affect Pingyang Sky’s high martial worlds?”

The Great Venerable seated on his prayer mat smiled like a buddha holding a flower.

“Because Lord Lu refused the High Martial Registry, according to the rules... the Five Phoenixes small world will be classified under Pingyang Sky’s jurisdiction.”

Far away, Qi Liujia—still suppressed—flushed with indignation and unwillingness.

Why?!

On what grounds should the Five Phoenixes belong to Pingyang Sky?

The Five Phoenixes was clearly a high martial world of the Void Heaven!

Lu raised a brow, genuinely surprised.

“The Five Phoenixes is this Young Master’s world. What business is it of yours?”

The Great Venerable showed no anger.

“Amitabha...”

“Lord Lu, do you know whose will that venerable you slew represented?”

“The will of the upper realm. The upgrade and evaluation of every high martial world in Pingyang Sky is decided by them.”

“By killing him, you severed the upper realm’s will. Great sin will descend upon you.”

Lu shook his head.

“This Young Master never joined the registry, and the Five Phoenixes answers to no one. On what authority do they condemn me?”

He seemed to grow impatient.

He had just finished the time array; he had no time to chat with this Great Venerable.

“Dismantle this array. It contains the ancient emperor’s ‘Lin’ profound word. It will only invite greater calamity upon you.”

The Great Venerable’s voice boomed like an ancient bell.

Lu ignored him.

The Thousand Blades reformed into his wheelchair.

White robes fluttering, Lu sat calmly, gazing at the Venerable.

Buzz...

Crimson light surged.

The nine Phoenix Plume Swords rose into the void and fused into one colossal sword, its feathers gleaming like a true phoenix tail.

Sword qi tore across the emptiness!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

In that instant, every regulatory blade in the void turned—abandoning Lu and aiming straight at the Great Venerable on his prayer mat.

Whoosh!

The phoenix sword light stretched for tens of thousands of zhang, carving an abyss through the void!

Behind it came the endless clash of regulatory blades.

The Great Venerable was bathed in Buddhist light that fell like a resplendent robe.

“This monk offers Lord Lu one piece of advice...”

“Abandon the Five Phoenixes and flee while you still can. The Void Heaven was never meant to birth a high martial world. Now that it has, it may involve ancient emperor secrets—or even the whereabouts of an ‘Emperor Weapon.’ This world will become a target for countless upper-realm experts. You cannot protect it.”

“Nor can the one behind you.”

His words thundered.

Yet Lu’s expression did not change.

The next instant, sword qi slashed down.

The Great Venerable pinched a flower with his fingers.

A buddha palm met the sword qi.

BOOM!

A golden lotus seemed to bloom in the void, unleashing a terrifying energy storm that shattered countless frozen continents.

The prayer mat beneath the ancient buddha flashed silver-gray.

The massive “Xing” profound word swirled.

In a streak of light, he prepared to flee.

But endless regulatory blades rained down.

The ancient buddha let out a muffled groan.

Just as the silver-gray light whisked him away,

a chunk of flesh stained with golden-crimson blood was severed and left floating in the void.

The regulatory blades continued to fall, soon reducing even that powerful flesh to nothing.

The ancient buddha Great Venerable vanished.

His aura completely extinguished within the Void Heaven.

The oppressive pressure that had enveloped the entire void gradually lifted.

Yet the words he left behind echoed like deafening thunder in Lu's mind.

After a long while, Lu calmed.

He narrowed his eyes.

Seated in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, he surveyed the surroundings.

The void was silent.

Filled with darkness, deathly stillness, and cold.

Not a trace of life.

Lu swept his gaze around and smiled faintly.

He felt an enormous vortex trying to drag him in.

“The one behind you...”

Leaning back in his chair, Phoenix Plume Swords returned and embedded themselves as crimson ornaments.

“Interesting.”

Lu chuckled softly.

“Does he mean the ‘General’ in the ancient tomb... or someone else?”

The Great Venerable of Little Thunder Sound had entered the Void Heaven only to leave him with this tantalizing mystery.

People who deliberately whet your appetite and then withhold the answer...

Really deserved to be beaten to death.

“Young Master... what do we do now?”

Qi Liujia flew over, face pale, sweat beading on his forehead.

“No need to fear. We’ll face whatever comes.”

Lu rubbed the dark profound ring on his thumb, smiling.

Seeing Lu still relaxed, Qi Liujia exhaled in relief.

Perhaps Lu truly had some trump card beyond imagination.

After all, to Qi Liujia, Lu was shrouded in mystery.

“By the way, Old Qi—what exactly is the ‘upper realm’ that ancient buddha mentioned?”

Lu suddenly asked, curious.

Qi Liujia was taken aback.

He frowned.

“The upper realm involves many secrets. I don’t know much, but...”

He gave a self-mocking laugh.

“Because of my few ‘excellent’ disciples, I do have some understanding.”

“Young Master should know this world is called the Nine Heavens. Originally, each heaven had an emperor presiding; all were roughly equal.”

“But after that ancient war—immortals bled, emperors fell, myriad worlds wept—the Nine Heavens split into strong and weak.”

Qi Liujia spoke slowly.

Lu listened with interest.

So the ancient war had been that devastating, affecting the entire Nine Heavens...

“The Void Heaven is called the Ninth Heaven and is a forbidden land—the weakest of the Nine. Young Master knows this well.”

Qi Liujia smiled.

“Then come the Eighth Heaven Pingyang, Seventh Heaven Yuan Magnetic, and Sixth Heaven Blood Evil—three heavens of similar tier, though with differences in strength. Above them lies the upper realm...”

Lu tapped the armrest thoughtfully.

“So the upper realm is just a collective term for the remaining heavens?”

“Yes and no...” Qi Liujia shook his head.

“Legend says the First Heaven still has a living emperor, so it is not counted among the upper realm. To this day, no expert has managed to enter the First Heaven.”

“Thus, the upper realm excludes the First Heaven—or rather, the First Heaven is even more noble and mysterious.”

“Pingyang, Yuan Magnetic, and Blood Evil are controlled by the remaining heavens—those are called the upper realm.”

Lu’s brow rose.

So Pingyang Sky was a controlled territory?

The Void Heaven had avoided control probably because of its pervasive, bizarre regulatory power.

Qi Lijia’s weathered face twitched. He took a deep breath.

“Young Master... the upper realm has another name.”

Lu looked at him curiously.

“What name?”

Qi Lijia exhaled slowly, yearning flickering in his eyes.

“The Immortal Realm.”

...

Pingyang Sky.

Silver-gray light rippled through space.

Far away, Holy Lords Tuoba and Qingling—who had been secretly watching—felt their hearts lurch.

The next moment, thick bloody scent filled the heavens.

The ancient buddha Great Venerable returned upon his prayer mat.

Only... he looked miserable. A large chunk of flesh had been carved from his jade-like arm, blood still pouring out.

The two Holy Lords sucked in cold breaths.

That was the Great Venerable of Little Thunder Sound—the master of a Yan Six high martial sacred land!

A terrifying expert of the third realm of Great Power, the Immortal Transformation realm!

Yet after one trip into the Void Heaven, he returned with flesh severed and blood staining the void.

Tuoba and Qingling exchanged glances, suddenly feeling incredibly fortunate.

They had entered the Void Heaven and come back alive... their luck had been extraordinary.

The ancient buddha seemed to smile.

He raised a hand to cover the wound; regulatory fluctuations dispersed...

Flesh swiftly regenerated.

He glanced at Tuoba and Qingling with an enigmatic half-smile,

then vanished in a burst of Buddhist light.

Only the rich, buddha-scented blood mist lingered in the void.

Tuoba and Qingling drifted closer, peering into the Void Heaven.

Rumble!

In their eyes, countless densely tangled regulatory blades still writhed.

They inhaled sharply, hearts pounding with lingering fear.

They silently vowed never to enter the Void Heaven lightly again.

...

The Grand Time Array was complete.

A colossal sundial hung above the Five Phoenixes, as though marking the passage of its time.

To the inhabitants, little seemed different.

Though Lu's strength had grown, because the time array now encompassed the entire world, the perceived flow of time remained unchanged for them.

Lu maintained a ten-to-one ratio—perfect.

Rumble!

Within the immortal ruins,

the origin waterfall began to collapse and dissipate.

Many cultivators looked up in alarm. The sundial above had vanished.

The River of Time was gone.

Many felt a pang of loss, but the islands still brimmed with dense spiritual energy—a supreme cultivation ground nonetheless.

The world at large noticed no great change.

The sky was still the same sky; sunrise and sunset proceeded normally.

They had no idea a time array now enveloped the entire Five Phoenixes.

They lived within the mountain, unaware of the passing years.

Above the vast sea,

Lu rode his Thousand-Bladed Chair leisurely.

Qi Liujia followed at his side.

Feeling the peaceful, unchanged Five Phoenixes, Qi Liujia's cheek twitched.

The countless souls of this world likely had no idea they had just walked the line between life and death.

Nor did they know that their time now flowed ten times faster than the outside.

Lu, however, was quietly excited.

With the time array complete, the cultivation speed of the Five Phoenixes' people had increased—meaning his own cultivation speed had increased as well.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

As Lu and Qi Liujia drifted across the sea,

from the direction of the Eastern Sea, near the primordial spirit platforms,

a towering aura suddenly exploded skyward!

Lu's eyes lit up. On his system panel, spiritual energy reserves began skyrocketing...

Qi Liujia was stunned.

"Someone broke through!"

The corners of Lu's mouth curved upward.

The first Great Power of the Five Phoenixes had been born.

Chapter 410: The Preaching Platform Reopens—New Blood Enters

The fluctuation from the primordial spirit platforms instantly piqued Lu Fan's interest.

Someone had achieved Primordial Spirit Unity, transforming their spiritual sense into a true primordial spirit, stepping from the Ninth Turn of Yang God into the realm of Unity.

The very first Great Power of the Five Phoenixes small world had been born.

"Let's go take a look."

Lu smiled, in an excellent mood. The spiritual energy reward from a single Great Power was quite substantial.

"Understood."

Qi Liujia also wore a faint smile. The stronger the Five Phoenixes became, the greater their chances of surviving the great tribulations to come.

Thus, he was in high spirits as well.

However, Lu and Qi Liujia traveled concealed, making themselves undetectable to the world.

Primordial Spirit Platforms.

Statues stood tall across the vast sea, each with unique postures, radiating powerful primordial spirit fluctuations. These waves spread outward, allowing cultivators to easily grasp the profound mysteries within and comprehend their own primordial spirits.

The only blemish was the look of abject terror frozen on every statue's face, somewhat ruining the sacred atmosphere.

At this moment, a huge crowd of cultivators had already gathered around the platforms.

Excitement shone on every face.

Waves rippled across the sea as rings of energy spread outward.

Primordial Spirit Unity was the hardest threshold among the Three Gods Realm, but once crossed, the transformation was terrifying.

It was no exaggeration to call it ascending to the heavens in a single step.

The birth of a primordial spirit was a qualitative leap.

Du Longyang and Ni Chunqiu wore slightly bitter expressions, yet their bitterness was tinged with joy as they looked toward Ye Shoudao in the distance.

Indeed—the first to break through to Unity and become a Great Power was none other than Ye Shoudao.

His single arm fluttered in the wind. Eyes closed, he hovered in midair, powerful primordial spirit fluctuations rolling off him in waves.

Mysterious energy descended from the heavens.

The world origin turned into a galactic cascade, pouring down onto his body.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Ye Shoudao's primordial spirit emerged.

Above his head, an illusory scene materialized.

Within it, Ye Shoudao sat upon a Dao lotus, gripping a blade. He swung it again and again, blade qi flooding the air.

This was the manifestation of the blade art most suited to him.

Many who watched felt tears well up—not from sorrow, but because the blade light was so sharp it pressured their spiritual sense, forcing tears.

Some couldn't bear it and turned away.

BOOM!

Finally, Ye Shoudao opened his eyes.

A surge of qi pierced the horizon like a rainbow.

His primordial spirit, sharp as a blade, slashed downward. The vast sea split cleanly in two.

Rumble!

A massive chasm appeared. Seawater on both sides cascaded like waterfalls.

Crack...

Cracks spider-webbed across one of the statues on the primordial spirit platforms.

The next instant, the statue exploded into countless fragments, turning into boulders that crashed into the sea and sank into the depths.

Many cultivators inhaled sharply, horrified.

There were only a limited number of statues on the platforms.

Ye Shoudao's breakthrough had destroyed one.

What did that mean?

It meant that once all the statues were shattered, this miraculous cultivation ground might vanish forever!

Du Longyang, Ni Chunqiu, and even Young Master Tianxu watching secretly from afar—all felt the pressure intensify.

Opportunities were finite. If they didn't seize them now, they would slip away forever.

An oppressive aura suddenly radiated from Ye Shoudao.

“Fight!”

Du Longyang stepped forward.

BOOM!

His presence erupted skyward.

Half-step Great Power at the Ninth Turn of Yang God, Du Longyang's aura blazed like a scorching sun. His spear thrust forth, spear light dazzling and blinding.

The sea itself seemed to sink beneath the pressure.

Everyone nearby staggered back several steps.

Winds howled; colossal waves surged across the vast sea.

Ye Shoudao gripped his blade with his single arm and actually smiled.

“Good timing.”

He drew his blade with one hand, eyes closed—as though the blade existed in his heart.

Du Longyang’s spear was incredibly powerful, but under Ye Shoudao’s current primordial spirit perception, it was laughably frail.

Before his breakthrough, Ye Shoudao might have been cautious.

Now? He felt no tension at all.

Swish!

A single draw.

Drawing the blade to sever water.

The spear light was casually cleaved apart, as though Ye Shoudao had seen straight through its weakness. The spear intent scattered into a gentle breeze that brushed across his cheek.

Everyone was stunned. How could it be so effortless?

Was this the might of a Great Power?

A realm of true metamorphosis.

Qi Liuji had once said: below Great Power, all are weak.

Only upon entering Great Power could one begin to touch the true secrets of the world.

The crowd erupted in shock.

Du Longyang landed on the sea, retreating several steps. His expression remained unchanged, but inwardly he was utterly shaken.

Ye Shoudao was about to speak when his face suddenly shifted. He released his primordial spirit and stared into a patch of empty void that gave him chills down his spine.

“Young Master Lu!”

His expression tightened as he bowed slightly toward the emptiness.

Everyone turned to look.

Ni Chunqiu’s eyes lit up; she stared eagerly in the same direction.

Yet... there was nothing.

Old Ye, you’re getting cocky right after breaking through, huh?

Ni Chunqiu felt empty and even a little annoyed.

“Not bad...”

Suddenly.

Every pore on every cultivator’s body constricted.

A faint, amused voice drifted from that empty space.

Young Master Lu... was really there?!

The next instant, everyone followed Ye Shoudao’s example and respectfully bowed toward the void.

“As the first cultivator of the Five Phoenixes to achieve Primordial Spirit Unity and earn the title of Great Power, I gift you one blade today.”

Lu’s ethereal voice rang out from nowhere.

Ye Shoudao froze, then looked up in wild excitement, eyes blazing.

There was such a reward?!

Du Longyang, Ni Chunqiu, Young Master Tianxu, and the others felt their hearts bleed with envy.

Personal instruction from Young Master Lu—this was a supreme opportunity!

They cursed themselves—why hadn't they been the ones to break through first?!

Hum...

The air rippled like water.

Spiritual energy condensed into a giant palm that grasped the void, forming a long blade.

The blade slashed down.

An ordinary-looking slash that stretched hundreds of li through the air—then split: one became two, two became four, four became eight...

In moments, the sky was filled with blade light, falling like endless rain.

The entire firmament trembled.

Ye Shoudao's entire body shook uncontrollably.

This single blade left him in complete awe.

After a long while, the blade lights faded.

"How much did you comprehend?"

Young Master Lu's voice echoed through the heavens once more.

"Thirty percent."

Ye Shoudao answered respectfully.

"Acceptable."

"Young Master, what is this blade art called?"

Ye Shoudao looked up anxiously and took a step forward.

“A casual slash. Call it whatever you like...”

Lu’s voice drifted away, growing distant.

Ye Shoudao stood lost in thought, eyes swirling with confusion and madness.

Ni Chunqiu stared longingly at the empty space, eyes shining like the brightest stars in the night sky.

“Young Master has left.”

Ye Shoudao glanced at her and said.

Ni Chunqiu instantly deflated with regret.

Why did he have to leave so soon?

The crowd gradually dispersed. Ye Shoudao's experience only fueled their determination.

Even those who had come merely to watch flew off to cultivate harder—perhaps one day Young Master Lu would notice them and impart his teachings.

...

After parting with Lu, Qi Liujia returned to his disciple Li Sansui.

Li Sansui was speaking with Li Sansi, who was wrapped in a black robe.

Seeing their master, joy lit up Li Sansui's face.

“Master.”

She bowed.

Li Sansi also saluted Qi Liujia.

Qi Liujia looked at Li Sansi. “You possess the Vine Demon Physique—a blessing and a curse. If it matures, it can rival first-rate special physiques. If it stagnates, it will be worse than third-rate.”

“You’ve already reached Soul Projection, and stepping into Unity won’t be difficult. But once you do, advancing further will be nearly impossible. Your physique both makes and breaks you.”

As the former sect master of the Six Armored Formation Sect, Qi Liujia saw through the issue instantly.

Li Sansui’s heart clenched—Li Sansi was her brother; she couldn’t just ignore him.

“Master, is there any way to change this?”

Li Sansi’s eyes beneath the black robe gleamed.

He wanted to grow stronger. He still had a girl to catch up to—he refused to remain weak.

“I have no solution. If you want one, seek the Young Master.”

Qi Liujia shook his head.

Li Sansi's face stiffened beneath the robe.

"Never mind. I'll find my own way."

He turned and vanished.

Qi Lujia was puzzled.

"Why not? I think Young Master Lu has a good temper and is very generous to Five Phoenixes cultivators. Seeking his own solution will be far too difficult."

Li Sansui sighed—she had a guess why.

...

Lu returned to Origin Lake.

The Thousand-Bladed Chair glided forward, stirred by a gentle breeze.

Ni Yu arrived proudly with her newly refined fifth-grade Origin Fusion Pills.

“Young Master, try one?”

She offered them like treasures.

Lu popped a sugar-coated pill into his mouth.

To him, it was just candy. Though Origin Fusion Pills aided primordial spirit formation, his own primordial spirit was already at 99 Yuan. Even an entire cauldron wouldn't move the needle.

“Hmm... a bit too sweet. Use less sugar next time.”

Ni Yu's expectant face froze.

Was sweetness the point?!

Little Yinglong perched on Lu's head cackled, “Kekeke!”

Hearing the laugh reminded Lu of something.

With a wave, he grabbed Little Yinglong by the scruff of his neck.

He sliced open the air.

Space itself seemed cut.

He tossed Little Yinglong inside.

The dragon vanished into the swirling vortex, still confused about what he'd done wrong.

“Beat him thoroughly. Don't let him out until he reaches Great Power.”

Lu said.

“Got it, Daddy.”

Zhulong's voice echoed from the void.

Ni Yu, carrying her cauldron on her back, shrank her neck.

Little Yellow... your life is too hard.

“Young Master, I’ll go practice alchemy now.”

Ni Yu said obediently.

“Wait.”

Ni Yu’s heart skipped a beat.

“You just mastered fifth-grade pills. Don’t rush to refine more. Go to the Dao stele and comprehend a Dao intent first.”

Ni Yu’s chubby cheeks trembled.

Dao intent... so hard...

“However, since you succeeded with fifth-grade pills, I’ll upgrade your cauldron... Come find me when you comprehend a Dao intent.”

Lu added, beckoning.

Ni Yu's black cauldron flew into the air.

Tears welled in Ni Yu's eyes as she clutched it and was lifted off the ground.

Meeting Lu's calm, gentle gaze, she seemed to see the reflection of an extremely tiny heart in his pupils.

Wisely, she let go.

She fell on her butt, looking like life had lost all meaning.

Lu stored the cauldron, glanced at her, and left.

Ni Yu pounded the ground in despair.

Why did she have to show off?

Why show off to Young Master?

Was refining fifth-grade pills that impressive? Why brag?

Now look—she'd shown off her cauldron right out of existence.

Resigned, Ni Yu dragged her sorrowful body to the Dao stele, sat cross-legged, tilted her head back, and began cultivating.

White Jade Capital Tower.

Lu returned.

Seated in his chair, he took out the Spiritual Pressure Board, warmed a pot of plum wine, and prepared to relax.

The 《Northern Emperor Scripture》 had been spread, the Grand Time Array deployed.

For the next period, the Five Phoenixes would enter a phase of explosive growth.

Every high martial world had accumulated strength over countless ages.

The Five Phoenixes was the exception—thanks to Lu’s interference, its development had been nothing short of meteoric, so fast it left people breathless.

But such speed came with terrifying drawbacks: unstable foundations.

The cultivators of the Five Phoenixes were gradually falling behind the world’s own ascension speed.

Even in a Yan Nine high martial world, the presiding sacred land’s Holy Lord would be at the Fortune Venerable level.

Every Holy Lord was a Fortune Venerable Great Power.

In the current Five Phoenixes, aside from Lu himself, there wasn’t a single Fortune Venerable.

Even Unity-level Great Powers were pitifully few.

So Lu needed the Five Phoenixes to slow down and consolidate.

That was the entire purpose of the time array.

With a thought,

Lu drew a wisp of powerful aura from his mysterious ring.

Dragon roars faintly echoed.

This was the Ancestral Dragon Qi he had captured when transcending the high martial tribulation.

His eyes flickered with glowing lines.

The images of the Heavenly Dragon species appeared before him.

Red Dragon had raised his combat strength to Yang God level in the dragon blood pool and was still training diligently near the Dragon Gate.

Cloud Dragon coiled atop Tian Dang Mountain, watching clouds roll by with leisurely enjoyment.

Mist Dragon swam happily in the Dongyan River, occasionally snatching fat fish.

Coiled Dragon in South County was playing in the mud.

On Buzhou Peak, Zhulong was giving Little Yinglong special training—miserable whimpers occasionally rang out.

Green Dragon, in human youth form, was at the Great Xuan Academy discussing life philosophy with a female disciple.

Lu's mouth twitched.

Among the Heavenly Dragons, perhaps only Little Zhulong and Little Red were normal.

The rest... were simply indescribable!

Lu rubbed his forehead.

Then he split the Ancestral Dragon Qi into eight portions of varying sizes and flicked them outward.

Eight streaks shot toward the dragons.

Bathed in Ancestral Dragon Qi, each underwent transformation and growth.

They roared toward the vast sea in gratitude.

With the nourishment of Ancestral Dragon Qi, these Heavenly Dragons would steadily grow stronger over time.

Lu smiled, satisfied, and withdrew his gaze.

He set up the Heaven-Asking Game, sipped plum wine, and enjoyed a rare moment of tranquility.

Three days later,

Lu ended the game and stretched.

His consciousness sank into the Preaching Platform.

Seated on the array, black hair vigorous, robes fluttering.

His gaze sharpened.

Primordial spirit trembled; vast power surged.

The mountain blooming with physique flowers rose before him.

Spiritual energy churned into seas of clouds that swirled around the peak.

Now—he would spread these physique flowers.

“Hmm... but who should receive these special physiques?”

Lu pondered.

Overlord? Nie Changqing?

He shook his head and dismissed the idea. They belonged to the first generation who had seized the initial opportunities.

These special physiques were part of the second phase in Lu's plan.

So he would choose others.

Glowing lines danced and crisscrossed in his eyes.

Rumble!

The spiritual sea roared with towering waves, as though trying to swallow him.

In the old Preaching Platform, selection had been random.

Now...

He could choose based on what he had seen and heard.

“First batch—twenty young geniuses.”

They would compete for seven special physique flowers.

Lu raised his hand; array runes surged.

BOOM!

Terrifying rumbles resounded.

Countless faces from across the Five Phoenixes continent flickered before his eyes.

...

Western Prefecture, Liangzhou City.

Ding Jiudeng, who had been meditating, suddenly opened his eyes. The aura he had been suppressing burst forth, instantly extinguishing his oil lamp.

He shot out of the room.

A strange fluctuation rippled through the void.

“This aura... the same as that immortal encounter!”

“That mysterious immortal... is moving again.”

Ding Jiudeng took a deep breath.

He entered the room where the little monks slept—only to find one of them missing.

...

Northern Prefecture, Great Xuan Academy.

Lu Julian opened his eyes, a strange light within.

His green lotus robes fluttered. With each step, a lotus bloomed beneath his feet.

Sensing the mysterious aura spreading through the air, his gaze sharpened.

His spiritual sense swept out.

Soon he discovered a student from the academy had vanished.

“Hmm?”

“That Tang girl...”

Lu Jiulian frowned.

...

Within the Western Liang army.

Zhao Zixu, cultivating under the moonlight, suddenly felt the world spin. An overwhelming force seized him, and the scene before his eyes changed.

Atop a snow-swept mountain peak,

Meng Haoran, who had been following Kong Nanfei to cultivate righteous qi, abruptly disappeared.

A falling snowflake was torn apart midair.

Kong Nanfei opened his eyes, glanced at the empty space behind him, and raised an eyebrow in surprise.

Beiluo City—Nie Shuang, jogging around the city walls for training, suddenly stepped into nothing and vanished like a burst bubble.

This night was destined to be restless.

Across the Five Phoenixes, young cultivators were mysteriously spirited away by an unseen force, destination unknown.

Within the Preaching Platform,

Lu's lips curved slightly as he savored the familiar atmosphere.

Newcomers entering always brought back fond memories.

“Newcomer Tang Guo, enter the Preaching Platform.”

“Newcomer Nie Shuang, enter the Preaching Platform.”

...

“Newcomer Meng Haoran, enter the Preaching Platform.”