

Starlit Path 451

Chapter 451: Bet Everything, Or Face the Consequences?

They had arrived!

With utter arrogance, they tore through the barriers of space and emerged in the Blood Evil Heaven.

On the ancient warship, the phoenix carved into its hull seemed alive, as if it were about to spread its wings and soar into the sky—a dazzling, breathtaking sight.

Figures stood proudly aboard the vessel, gazing straight ahead. Even under the combined oppressive aura of the many Holy Lords from the high-martial worlds of Blood Evil Heaven, they showed no trace of fear.

They were like a lone boat in a raging storm, rocking violently amid the crashing waves.

Yet they pressed forward with unyielding resolve, cutting through the towering surges.

What truly silenced the Blood Evil Heaven, leaving it in stunned hush, was the single white chess piece that descended from the heavens. A simple piece, yet it carried overwhelming dominance and murderous intent.

The auras unleashed by the Holy Lords shattered one after another in that instant!

“It’s Lu Ping’an! Lu Ping’an of the Five Phoenixes!”

“He’s really come to settle the score...”

“We once mocked the cowards of Pingyang Heaven for yielding... and now, Lu Ping’an has made his move.”

The bloodied Holy Lords stared in horror.

What baffled them most was this:

From such an immense distance, how could Lu Ping’an still strike?

How could he, from within the Nihility Heaven, reach into Blood Evil Heaven and suppress them?

How was Lu Ping’an capable of this?!

Their brazen confidence had stemmed from betting that Lu Ping’an would never dare leave the Nihility Heaven to descend upon Blood Evil Heaven.

But now, that confidence lay in tatters.

Even so...

Wasn't this far too audacious?

Did Lu Ping'an truly believe he could challenge the entire Blood Evil Heaven alone?

So what if he could slay those at the Immortal Ascension realm?

Blood Evil Heaven was not the Nihility Heaven. There were no rules here to restrain anyone. If Lu Ping'an dared show himself, the powers of the Upper Realm would never stand idly by!

So why...

Why did Lu Ping'an dare act this way?

Many Holy Lords clutched their chests, their faces ashen after having their spirits and auras crushed by a single chess piece from Lu.

Overlord burst into laughter.

Worthy of Young Master Lu—truly domineering. This was how the Five Phoenixes should be.

Today they struck Blood Evil Heaven; one day, they would storm the Upper Realm!

They would drench the Upper Realm in rivers of blood!

Overlord's eyes gleamed as he stood aboard the warship, his laughter echoing and darkening the expressions of Blood Evil Heaven's many Holy Lords.

“Insolence!”

Boom!

The Holy Lords trembled with rage, but soon their fury cooled.

They realized that none of the Yan Six or Yan Five high-martial sacred grounds in Blood Evil Heaven had made a move.

“Anyone who blocks the way... dies.”

A calm voice drifted through the void—Lu Ping’an’s voice.

To many Holy Lords, this Lu Holy Lord was a nightmare. In the battle where the Cloud Clan of the Upper Realm Sacred Clan killed the Blood-Robed General, he had descended like a god or demon, shattering the Cloud Clan’s divine son with a single punch and daring to strike an imperial weapon.

Such a madman filled them with dread.

They had believed Lu would never dare come to Blood Evil Heaven, yet here he was—settling accounts.

Overlord’s tyrannical spiritual energy surged.

He steered the ancient warship forward, crushing the void of Blood Evil Heaven as it advanced steadily.

Creak... creak...

The sound rang out like a series of resounding slaps across the faces of every Holy Lord.

Who dared stand in their way?

Those who had moments ago radiated towering auras and hurled abuse now stood frozen—none dared step forward.

Even setting aside Overlord's earlier feat of slaying a Tribulation Transcender Holy Lord, Lu Ping'an's threat alone was enough to paralyze them.

In their respective worlds, the Holy Lords stood in dazed silence.

Since when had the Five Phoenixes—the sole high-martial world in the once-despised Nihility Heaven—grown to command such awe?

At the start of the Heaven and Earth Grand Competition, the sacred grounds of the Lower Nine Heavens had sent cultivators with overwhelming arrogance, treating the Five Phoenixes as beneath notice and intending to strip away their Dao reserves.

Now, the Five Phoenixes sent emissaries into Blood Evil Heaven—and no one dared stop them.

Tang Yimo, Nie Changqing, Du Longyang, and the others stood beside Overlord. Some with hands clasped behind their backs, others with arms folded, their calm gazes hid surging battle intent and killing desire.

“The Five Phoenixes are magnanimous. The worlds of Blood Evil Heaven once gathered a million-strong army to invade us. By rights, we should have marched with our full force, turning Blood Evil Heaven into a river of blood and mountains of corpses. Yet Young Master Lu is kind-hearted and repays enmity with virtue, offering the worlds of Blood Evil Heaven a chance.”

“By Young Master Lu’s command, we have come from the Five Phoenixes to Blood Evil Heaven to find a Yan Five sacred ground—giving you the opportunity to settle our grudge through the format of the Heaven and Earth Grand Competition.”

Overlord stood at the prow. With his energy fueling the ancient warship’s core, it streaked through Blood Evil Heaven like a bolt of light.

His voice boomed across every corner of Blood Evil Heaven.

The Holy Lords of the many Yan Eight and Yan Seven sacred grounds wore strange expressions.

Kind-hearted?

Repaying enmity with virtue?

Settling the grudge through the Grand Competition?

The Five Phoenixes... were being this reasonable?

Many Holy Lords exchanged glances across the void, then broke into laughter.

The Five Phoenixes were afraid!

Holy Lord Lu was afraid!

He clearly feared the Upper Realm backing Blood Evil Heaven. Unable to come personally to settle accounts, he was forced to use this roundabout method to save face after his earlier bold declarations.

Many Holy Lords sneered.

They wiped the blood from their mouths. Lu Ping'an's strike had indeed been domineering.

But in the end... he was backing down, seeking peace through the Grand Competition.

“Do you... dare to fight?!”

Overlord's gaze sharpened.

He stood tall aboard the warship.

Even with the protective barrier shielding them from the ferocious winds of their speed, his hair whipped wildly.

His domineering words thundered across Blood Evil Heaven.

A roar that struck the soul!

Would they fight?!

Would the worlds of Blood Evil Heaven dare accept the challenge?!

Hum...

Moments after Overlord issued his defiant words, powerful auras began rising from the depths of Blood Evil Heaven.

A streak of light shot across the sky.

A figure cloaked in flowing robes emerged.

“It’s the Immortal Transformation powerhouse from the Yan Five high-martial Hexagram Minor World!”

Many Holy Lords recognized the figure and spoke up.

The expert hovered in the void, blocking the warship’s path.

“Turn back...”

The Immortal Transformation powerhouse spoke slowly.

“The Five Phoenixes have no qualification to demand a competition of this sort.”

A faint sneer played across the face hidden beneath the loose robes.

Overlord narrowed his eyes at the Immortal Transformation expert.

“Young Master Lu says we can fight—so we will. Are you... afraid?”

Overlord lifted his chin and spoke calmly.

The moment the words left his mouth, terrifying aura erupted from the Immortal Transformation powerhouse.

Boom!

“Insolent!”

“Though the Five Phoenixes advanced a rank in the previous Grand Competition, they are merely Yan Seven. What gives them the right to challenge Yan Five high-martial worlds?”

“And what qualifies Lu Ping’an to demand such a competition?”

The Immortal Transformation expert unleashed his full aura without restraint.

It transformed into a colossal shadow that blotted out the sky.

Many Holy Lords from smaller worlds in Blood Evil Heaven struggled to breathe under the pressure.

Immortal Transformation—those who had survived heavenly tribulations and earned the potential to ascend as immortals. They were among the supreme existences.

The number of such beings in all of Blood Evil Heaven could be counted on one hand.

Thus, when this Immortal Transformation expert stepped forward, every Holy Lord knew: the situation was under control.

Ruthless!

The Hexagram Minor World, as a Yan Five, was truly ruthless.

The Five Phoenixes sought reconciliation this way—only to be brutally slapped down!

Many Holy Lords laughed.

Overlord rolled his neck.

“I forgot to mention...”

“Young Master Lu said you have no right to refuse. You will compete—whether you want to or not!”

Facing the aura of an Immortal Transformation expert, Overlord showed no fear.

He hefted his axe and shield. Third-sequence Dao intent soared into the heavens.

His unyielding will stood like a mountain, clashing head-on with the Immortal Transformation expert’s pressure.

“Heh...”

The expert chuckled.

“Lu Ping’an is far away in the Nihility Heaven. What right does he have to make threats?”

“Even if I slaughter all of you, what can he do to me?”

With those words, the Immortal Transformation expert truly attacked.

Killing intent surged like a tidal wave, sweeping through the void of Blood Evil Heaven with terrifying force.

He intended to kill Overlord in a single strike.

Overlord was merely a Tribulation Transcender—nothing worth noticing to an Immortal Transformation expert.

Overlord narrowed his eyes.

He cracked his neck. The severed head split open further as he prepared to unleash his full suppressed power multiplied several times over.

Though he could have long since reattached it, he rather liked it this way.

“On what basis?”

Suddenly, just as Overlord readied himself,

the void shuddered again.

Silver-gray light surged, space profound rippling outward.

In the next instant,

another chess piece fell.

Tap!

It emerged from the spatial profound and drifted down lightly, like a snowflake, toward the Immortal Transformation expert's head.

Yet the expert felt an overwhelming aura of death envelop him completely!

“Space profound?! The ‘Travel’ Array Word?!”

His pupils contracted.

He finally understood how Lu was able to crush the auras of so many Holy Lords in Blood Evil Heaven from such distance!

“That damned bald donkey from Pingyang Heaven’s Buddha Realm!”

Boom!

The expert no longer held back. His formidable aura transformed into a rainbow piercing the heavens as he sought to block the seemingly weightless chess piece.

The piece landed—light as a feather—on his brow, as though merely brushing against him.

In the next moment,

to the horror of every Holy Lord in Blood Evil Heaven,

the expert’s head exploded. The area around the chess piece warped like a black hole, pulverizing his body.

Thick blood mist filled the air.

His primordial spirit fled in panic.

A wretched scream rang out—then his primordial spirit vanished into nothingness.

Pop.

Like a soap bubble bursting in sunlight, the white chess piece gently shattered.

Blood Evil Heaven fell into deathly silence.

Lu Ping'an of the Five Phoenixes—using the “Travel” Array Word and space profound from across the Nihility and Pingyang Heavens—was killing people in Blood Evil Heaven?!

...

Five Phoenixes, White Jade Pavilion.

Countless lines danced in Lu's eyes.

He held a chess piece between his fingers, a half-smile on his lips.

Whoever blocks the way dies. Did they think I was joking?

Still, he truly owed the Great Venerable for gifting the “Travel” Array Word. Without it, achieving this would not have been so easy.

Many of the Nine Heavens’ great spatial teleportation arrays were built using patterns derived from the “Travel” Array Word.

Having refined it on the preaching platform to near its true form, its power was naturally formidable.

...

Pingyang Heaven.

Little Thunderclap Buddha Realm, pagoda.

Joyful Venerable and Great Venerable watched the scene in the golden alms bowl. Great Venerable’s face twitched.

Joyful Venerable looked alarmed.

“Great Venerable... does this count as colluding with the Five Phoenixes?”

Joyful Venerable asked cautiously.

Great Venerable shot him an icy glare, silencing him instantly.

At this moment, Great Venerable felt like spitting blood. He was definitely carrying this blame.

But he had only given a flawed replica of the “Travel” Array Word—how had Lu managed this?

Why did the array word struggle to cross from Pingyang to Nihility Heaven in his hands, yet wield such terrifying power in Lu’s?

“If he can wield the ‘Travel’ Array Word so flexibly, why doesn’t Lu Ping’an come to Blood Evil Heaven himself to settle accounts?”

“Why send these elite cultivators on the warship? What is his true purpose?”

“Using the Grand Competition format... given Lu Ping’an’s temperament, could it be...”

Great Venerable pondered—then his pupils shrank.

This young man's ambition was truly terrifying!

...

“Hahahaha!”

“Now—who still dares to block us?!”

Overlord stood aboard the warship, eyes cold yet burning with excitement, passion, and fervor.

Young Master Lu!

Unmatched dominance!

He stared toward the depths of Blood Evil Heaven, at the Hexagram Minor World. Yan Five high-martial—so what?!

“Hexagram Minor World—do you dare fight?!”

Overlord roared.

His voice exploded like a tidal wave!

The lingering blood mist of a fallen Immortal Transformation expert filled the void.

The Holy Lords of Blood Evil Heaven’s sacred grounds no longer dared speak. Fear gripped them.

The death of an Immortal Transformation expert had sounded the alarm.

Lu Ping’an... could truly kill in Blood Evil Heaven!

“Trash! And you thought you could assemble an army to invade our Five Phoenixes!”

Tang Yimo slowly bound white cloth around his hands, speaking calmly.

Disdain filled his sharp eyes.

“Arrogant juniors!”

The experts of Blood Evil Heaven’s high-martial sacred grounds seethed with anger.

Hum...

Suddenly, from the depths of Blood Evil Heaven,

a vast continent shaped like a six-pointed star drifted forward.

Tremendous energy soared into the sky, shaking heaven and earth.

Strands of Dao reserve writhed like dragons in the origin space of the Hexagram Minor World.

“Since Holy Lord Lu wishes to resolve our grudge this way—then let us fight.”

A calm voice echoed from the vast Hexagram Minor World.

Boom!

The misty veil around the world parted, revealing an enormous passage.

“Do you dare enter our world and fight?”

A voice challenged.

“What is there to fear?!”

Overlord’s eyes flashed. Tang Yimo and the others wore cold expressions as they steered the warship forward, shooting into the Hexagram Minor World.

A vast, majestic world unfolded before them.

Towering mountain ranges coiled like dragons. Endless desolate plains stretched to the horizon. Grand cities with walls dozens of zhang high stood proudly, and magnificent immortal palaces perched atop peaks that seemed ready to take flight.

A Yan Five high-martial world that had developed over countless ages—truly boundless and majestic!

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Terrifying auras rose from every corner of the vast land.

Countless mighty experts, entire formations of Tribulation Transcenders, and several Immortal Transformation auras surged, threatening to collapse the mountains themselves.

Cold eyes fixed upon Overlord and the others aboard the warship.

Hum...

Suddenly,

an incomparably colossal figure materialized above the vast land of the Hexagram Minor World,

as though propping up heaven and earth.

Immortal Ascension realm!

Dreadful Immortal Ascension aura spread, the immense pressure threatening to shatter the ancient warship.

Yet the phoenix on the warship cried out sharply, dispersing the Immortal Ascension pressure.

“Well done, Holy Lord Lu.”

“Well done, cultivators of the Five Phoenixes.”

The Immortal Ascension expert gazed at Overlord and the others, then smiled.

“Since Holy Lord Lu wishes to settle this through the Grand Competition format—then let us compete.”

The expert declared.

Across the vast land of the Hexagram Minor World, auras formed radiant seven-colored lights, wave after terrifying wave crashing against the psychological defenses of Overlord and his companions.

This was the pressure of fighting on enemy ground.

“Three individual battles, one five-person team battle! The rules remain the same!”

Overlord narrowed his eyes, neither servile nor overbearing, staring at the heaven-piercing silhouette of the Immortal Ascension expert.

His muscles trembled—not from fear, but from excitement under the overwhelming pressure.

“Agreed.”

The Immortal Ascension expert spoke slowly.

“Then... the wager.”

Overlord narrowed his eyes.

Not only Overlord—Tang Yimo, Du Longyang, and the others felt their hearts tighten.

Truth be told, the pressure was immense!

Betting all their Dao reserves.

This was an all-or-nothing gamble. Young Master Lu had left them no retreat—forcing them to win, to triumph.

The trial, the pressure—it was enormous!

“Oh? How many Dao reserves do you wish to wager?”

The Immortal Ascension expert smiled faintly.

Overlord stared at him and grinned.

He raised his long axe, pointing it at the expert.

“We wager... all of them!”

Silence fell across the vast land of the Hexagram Minor World.

Even the distant Nihility Heaven seemed to hold its breath.

All... of them?!

Madmen!

Absolute lunatics!

After a moment of stunned silence, Blood Evil Heaven erupted into chaos!

What insane notion was this?!

The most horrifying gamble in history!

Which world would ever stake all its Dao reserves?

Every high-martial world in Blood Evil Heaven boiled with shock and uproar.

This... was Lu Ping'an's idea of settling accounts?

Many finally understood: his "settlement" meant stripping them of every last strand of Dao reserve!

A true madman!

But on what basis did he believe the Five Phoenixes' cultivators would definitely win?

A handful of Tribulation Transcenders challenging a Yan Five world guarded by an Immortal Ascension expert and multiple Immortal Transformation powerhouses?

This wasn't settlement—this was delivering Dao reserves on a platter!

Absurd!

Laughable!

Did they truly think that after one minor victory over the Star Moon Minor World in the Grand Competition, the Five Phoenixes were invincible?

That they could now provoke a Yan Five high-martial world?!

In Pingyang Heaven,

watching the scene in the golden alms bowl, Great Venerable's body suddenly erupted with shocking aura.

"So that's it! Of course..."

"Lu Ping'an's settlement... was for this!"

"Thank heavens we made amends early!"

Great Venerable's body trembled slightly as he exhaled long and slow.

One had to admit—this Holy Lord of the Five Phoenixes was truly a madman!

"Daring to make such a decision—doesn't Holy Lord Lu fear losing?"

Joyful Venerable, shocked to his core, murmured.

"Losing?!"

“With the courage to make this decision, how could he not have an ace up his sleeve?”

Great Venerable shook his head, eyes flickering. “Holy Lord Lu must have a guaranteed path to victory!”

In Blood Evil Heaven,

above the vast continent,

the heaven-propping silhouette of the Immortal Ascension expert laughed.

“Excellent... wagering everything.”

“Utterly ridiculous.”

“Our Hexagram Minor World is Yan Five, possessing one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine Dao reserves. You Five Phoenixes... barely over a hundred—not even a fraction. How dare you speak of wagering everything? On what grounds can you compete?”

Boom!

As the words fell,

terrifying pressure swept forth like a storm.

In the Hexagram continent, an Immortal Ascension expert was akin to a god.

His anger darkened the skies, black clouds rolling in as though doomsday had arrived!

The dreadful pressure bore down directly on the warship.

...

Five Phoenixes,

White Jade Pavilion.

Lu's white robes fluttered. One elbow rested on the railing, chin in hand, while his other hand flicked lightly.

“Heh.”

In the next instant, the Phoenix Feather Sword shot forth, streaking through the rift torn open by silver-gray spatial profound.

...

The Immortal Ascension expert’s fury sent terrifying pressure crashing down, forcing the ancient warship representing the Five Phoenixes into a steep plunge.

It smashed into a mountain, pulverizing the entire peak!

Overlord endured the immense pressure, blood boiling within him—pure exhilaration.

Tang Yimo’s eyes gleamed. Too thrilling!

So thrilling he almost wanted to open his six meridians in celebration!

The Immortal Ascension expert’s wrath darkened heaven and earth.

But in the next moment,

the crushing pressure enveloping the warship vanished as though sliced away.

Silver-gray light exploded.

From a massive torn ravine, a faint chuckle drifted out.

“Not betting? Try it and see.”

“We Five Phoenixes are here to settle accounts—not to haggle.”

Swish swish swish!

Crimson light streaked through the ravine.

Along its path,

the Phoenix Feather Sword casually slew several Tribulation Transcenders as though merely brushing past them.

An enraged Immortal Transformation expert charged—only to have his body shattered, his primordial spirit nearly cleaved as well.

Wherever the Phoenix Feather Sword passed, oceans of flame boiled and raged.

Finally, it halted abruptly.

Hovering before the neck of an elder wreathed in faint immortal aura inside a luxurious palace on the vast Hexagram continent.

The once-magnificent palace had already been reduced to ruins by the sword.

The sword's gleaming tip sliced the elder's throat, drawing a thin line of crimson.

The Immortal Ascension elder of the Hexagram continent glanced at the Phoenix Feather Sword, expression calm, heart unmoved.

"I accept the bet."

Chapter 452: A Crushing Victory

In the end, the Immortal Ascension elder of the Hexagram Minor World chose to accept the bet.

Not because of the Phoenix Feather Sword hovering at his throat, its edge gleaming with lethal intent.

But because he was utterly convinced of victory. As a Yan Five high-martial world dominating all of Blood Evil Heaven, backed by Immortal Transformation experts and several peak Tribulation Transcenders, the outcome seemed inevitable.

He agreed not out of fear of Holy Lord Lu's threat, but from absolute confidence in their triumph.

"I accept the bet."

His calm voice echoed through the void.

The Phoenix Feather Sword stilled, then a faint chuckle drifted from the silver-gray spatial rift.

The sword vanished, and the rift sealed itself.

The once-magnificent palace lay in ruins, shattered beyond recognition.

The elder sat cross-legged, swallowing hard.

Holy Lord Lu of the Five Phoenixes—the monster who had once shattered the Cloud Clan’s divine son with a single punch.

He truly lived up to his reputation.

When the Immortal Ascension elder declared that the Hexagram Minor World would wager all its Dao reserves against the Five Phoenixes,

Blood Evil Heaven fell into stunned silence.

This was true dominance. This was what it meant to play by no rules.

The cultivators of Blood Evil Heaven saw it clearly now.

The Phoenix Feather Sword had traversed vast distances, carrying devastating power as it swept through, casually obliterating several Tribulation Transcenders and an Immortal Transformation expert who happened to lie in its path.

Those experts died with deep grievance—but what could they do?

The terrifying might within the sword had even forced an Immortal Ascension elder to yield.

In the eyes of Blood Evil Heaven's many high-martial worlds, the Hexagram elder had submitted.

Overwhelmed by the murderous aura carried on that single blade.

Hum...

Aboard the ancient warship,

Overlord couldn't help but laugh. This was pure Young Master Lu—always true to his word.

He himself had once been pushed to his limits by Lu's uncompromising nature. Now, watching others face it, he felt an exhilarating sense of satisfaction.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

The elder's colossal projection vanished, instantly reappearing in the vast skies above the Hexagram continent, as though teleporting from the ruined palace.

He exuded an ethereal, immortal-like aura, his presence radiating immense pressure, faint immortal energy swirling around him.

“Let us wager, then. Since the Five Phoenixes insist on this gamble—we shall gamble.”

The elder spoke calmly.

He truly believed the Hexagram Minor World could not lose.

On the ancient warship, Overlord and the others’ cultivations were plain to see. Even the strongest—Overlord—was merely a Tribulation Transcender.

Such power posed no threat.

The elder narrowed his eyes.

Suddenly, his pupils contracted.

An ancient mirror’s illusion materialized, as though reflected from distant space.

“The Dao Evolution Mirror!”

Boom!

Immense power surged from the mirror, projecting images of two continents.

The Five Phoenixes continent and the Hexagram continent.

Of course, compared to the Hexagram, the Five Phoenixes appeared pitifully small.

Strands of Dao reserves from both sides manifested as the stakes.

For some reason, the elder felt a twinge of unease. The Dao Evolution Mirror... an artifact from the Upper Realm.

He hadn't expected Lu Ping'an to possess such a thing.

Originally, he had considered renegeing even if they lost. Now... that seemed impossible.

But having agreed, he could not back down.

“You may choose the venue.”

The Immortal Ascension expert spoke.

He hovered in the air, exuding an air of immortal refinement.

As the sole Immortal Ascension being in the Hexagram world, he was its absolute ruler.

“Then right here in the open sky.”

“We’ll finish quickly—we have more battles ahead.”

Overlord cracked his neck and spoke leisurely.

His words caused the auras of countless Hexagram experts to falter.

Fury boiled across the continent.

“Arrogant!”

“More battles? This is a fight they’re guaranteed to lose.”

“They don’t even have an Immortal Transformation expert—what suspense could there possibly be?”

...

The experts of the Hexagram continent sneered.

Yet one thing gnawed at them painfully:

The Immortal Transformation expert who had tried to block the warship earlier had been crushed by Lu Ping’an, and another had been casually slain by the Phoenix Feather Sword’s “accidental” path.

As a result, only three Immortal Transformation experts remained available for battle.

“We cannot be careless. The Five Phoenixes dare act so domineeringly for a reason—after all, all our Dao reserves are on the line.”

A Hexagram expert spoke gravely.

Boom!

From the ancient warship,

five figures shot forth, standing proudly in the void.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, Ni Chunqiu, Luo Mingyue, and Ximen Xianzhi.

The five for the team battle.

Overlord, Tang Yimo, and Nie Changqing remained aboard the warship, watching calmly.

Countless gazes pierced the void from surrounding minor worlds—Holy Lords and Tribulation experts alike.

The Five Phoenixes' reckoning with Blood Evil Heaven, starting with the strongest Hexagram Minor World and wagering everything, had drawn widespread attention.

Even in Pingyang Heaven's Little Thunderclap Buddha Realm, many gathered in the pagoda, staring at the scenes projected in the golden alms bowl.

...

Five Phoenixes.

After subduing the Hexagram's Immortal Ascension elder with a single sword, Lu recalled the Phoenix Feather Sword.

He leaned back in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, lines dancing in his eyes as he seemed to peer through the void, observing the battle in Blood Evil Heaven.

The Hexagram Minor World possessed over a thousand Dao reserves. Seizing them all would easily elevate the Five Phoenixes. Of course, fully integrating and converting such reserves would take time.

But time was no concern for Lu.

The Five Phoenixes had their time acceleration array—digesting the gains would be effortless.

His only worry now was whether the expedition force could secure victory.

Yet Lu had great faith in them.

Each had endured the trials of the time-reversal secret realm, struggling in desperation, clawing their way back from the brink.

Their minds had been forged into unbreakable steel.

That was why Lu dared send them on this campaign.

In the ancient tomb,

emaciated Gu Mangran waved a hand.

An image projected within the tomb.

Lu Changkong, busy hybridizing spirit herbs, paused. Bu Nanxing, assisting him, stared in shock.

“Young Master Lu sent them to conquer Blood Evil Heaven in the name of reckoning.”

Gu Mangran explained, mainly for Lu Changkong's benefit.

Lu Changkong's eyes narrowed with gravity.

Bu Nanxing drew a sharp breath.

Insane!

The Hexagram Minor World—a Yan Five!

He recognized the expedition members—they were monstrous talents, true.

But none had reached Immortal Transformation. How could they win?

“This is a wager of all Dao reserves. Young Master Lu's reckoning means stripping them bare of every strand.”

Gu Mangran said.

“General, what are their chances?” Lu Changkong asked solemnly.

Bu Nanxing looked over as well.

Though skeletal, Gu Mangran smiled.

“If Young Master Lu dares make such a decision, he must be certain. Even if not ten out of ten, at least seven or eight.”

“Besides, Mingyue and Xianzhi are there.”

His eyes flickered.

Luo Mingyue and Ximen Xianzhi, inheritors of the Zither King and Sword King...

They were no weaklings.

...

Hexagram continent.

Above the vast land, clouds churned as mountain ranges coiled like dragons below.

The Immortal Ascension elder's mind stirred, quickly deciding the team representatives.

Hum!

Mysterious ripples spread.

Five figures emerged amid the clouds.

Onlookers from the Hexagram continent scattered, clearing a massive expanse of sky for the arena.

The Hexagram team:

One Immortal Transformation expert, backed by four peak Tribulation Transcenders.

A lineup befitting a Yan Five.

A single Immortal Transformation could usually dictate the outcome!

Even in Pingyang Heaven, only the Great Venerable of Little Thunderclap had reached that realm.

Immortal Transformation experts were no joke.

“No restrictions. Life and death decided by fate.”

The elder’s hair whipped in the wind as he spoke calmly.

Since they were competing...

Let it be brutal.

In his view, victory was assured.

As for Lu Ping’an—

His arrogance wouldn’t last. Word of his actions in Blood Evil Heaven would soon reach the Upper Realm.

The Cloud Clan, whose divine son he had beaten into seclusion, would never let him go.

Thus, this battle was also about stalling the Five Phoenixes forces.

“Any objections?”

The elder swept his gaze over the Five Phoenixes group.

Du Longyang and the others met it with razor-sharp eyes. In their minds, scenes from the time-reversal realm resurfaced—faces of the slain flashing before them.

Killing intent surged like a blaze!

“Let’s fight!”

Du Longyang, clad in black, gripped his Martial Emperor Spear with one hand, voice ice-cold.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Luo Mingyue's goose-yellow dress fluttered. A pipa appeared in her hands as she sat serenely amid the clouds, like a celestial maiden.

Ximen Xianzhi stood beside her, sword case on his back, robes billowing, hands clasped behind him.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and Ni Chunqiu readied themselves.

Thousands of meters away, high in the sky, stood the Hexagram experts.

The Immortal Transformation expert sat cross-legged, four Tribulation Transcenders poised.

"Begin!"

Boom!

The command rang out.

Terrifying auras clashed above the heavens, instantly shredding the clouds!

The four near-Immortal Transformation Tribulation Transcenders of the Hexagram streaked forward like rainbows, unleashing full power from the start.

This was a wager of everything—how could they hold back?

The skies darkened as though night had fallen.

Du Longyang laughed.

Radiant and heroic, his spirit soared.

These people had sought to conquer Five Phoenixes land, to slaughter its people!

In the time-reversal realm, they had witnessed endless carnage, endured unimaginable despair.

The pressure they had shouldered there dwarfed anything these four could muster!

“I, Du Longyang, hail from the Tianyuan domain. Though Tianyuan was not originally part of the Five Phoenixes... the day it merged, I became a man of the Five Phoenixes—for life!”

Du Longyang roared.

His Martial Emperor Spear bent, then thrust forward—a streak of starlight piercing the darkness.

Fearlessly, he met all four Tribulation Transcenders alone!

“We come by Holy Lord Lu’s command to settle accounts with you!”

“We will prove it all... with an overwhelming victory!”

Boom!

Above the heavens,

the two sides collided.

Du Longyang held off four alone, undaunted!

Ye Shoudao, cold and stoic, gripped his blade with his single arm. He closed his eyes slowly.

Memories of Tianyuan flooded back.

Yet nothing in Tianyuan compared to any battle after joining the Five Phoenixes!

Du Longyang was right—they were from Tianyuan, but Tianyuan belonged to the Five Phoenixes. They, too, were people of the Five Phoenixes!

Ye Shoudao opened his eyes.

His robes whipped wildly.

His blade slashed out.

One stroke birthed thousands of blade shadows.

One became two, two became four, four became ten thousand!

Ni Chunqiu's red robes swirled. She wielded strips of red silk—mere cloth, yet each cut like the sharpest sword, laced with terrifying slicing power.

In her eyes appeared the white-robed figure of Lu.

She was Brother Lu's little fangirl, but she was also chasing his footsteps.

In this era, if you didn't advance madly, you didn't even qualify to be a fangirl!

The former three overlords of Tianyuan unleashed dazzling techniques in this moment.

All wielding fifth-sequence Dao intent.

Like three radiant rainbows, perfectly coordinated, erupting with devastating might.

Explosions thundered endlessly. Clouds tore apart; the atmosphere itself seemed to shatter.

Everyone on the Hexagram continent stared in shock, as though heavenly thunder raged above.

Boom!

One Tribulation Transcender was hurled downward, crashing into a mountain range. The peaks came alive under his control, seized and flung back.

Du Longyang's spear thrust down, spear intent swirling, pulverizing the mountains!

Ye Shoudao's blade art—taught by Lu himself—possessed unrivaled killing power.

In this initial clash, the four Hexagram Tribulation Transcenders were evenly matched against the three!

Onlookers across the void gasped.

“How can Five Phoenixes cultivators be this strong?!”

Experts watching exclaimed in disbelief.

Even the hovering Immortal Ascension elder focused intently, a bad premonition rising.

“The Five Phoenixes' cultivation method differs from the norm...”

“Back when they were all Unity realm, they defeated forces with Tribulation Transcenders...”

“But that time they had someone mastering army formations. This battle lacks that—so suspense remains.”

Some who had witnessed the earlier Grand Competition against the Star Moon Minor World spoke up.

Yet compared to then, Du Longyang and the others were vastly stronger now.

Not just in raw power—

Their greatest leap was in willpower.

A momentum forged crawling through mountains of corpses and seas of blood, born from great terror and despair!

“What are you waiting for?!”

Sensing trouble, the elder barked coldly at the seated Immortal Transformation expert.

The expert moved instantly!

Boom!

Immortal Transformation—a metamorphosis after surviving heavenly tribulation, a stepping stone to Immortal Ascension.

Primordial spirit and golden body refined to their pinnacle.

As he charged,

pipa notes rang out.

“City Lord Du, fight to your heart’s content... leave this Immortal Transformation to me.”

Amid the music, Ximen Xianzhi smiled lightly.

His fingers pressed together, sword intent surging in his pupils.

Faintly, his silhouette overlapped with a withered skeletal daoist.

“Though the Four Kings are gone, their legacies endure.”

Ximen Xianzhi spoke softly.

His billowing robes stiffened, infused with upright sword energy.

He brushed two fingers across his sword case.

Clang!

A torrent of sword energy cascaded from the heavens like a mighty river.

Countless strands swirled around him.

“Come on!”

Ximen Xianzhi laughed heartily.

He hailed from the Sword Pavilion, once called the “sword maniac,” obsessed with the blade.

In the era of the Hundred Schools, he was a genius swordsman.

He secluded himself to perfect techniques, only to emerge into a new age of cultivation.

Gifted yet always lagging, a lone boat in the tide of the cultivation era.

But he believed himself a sheathed blade, awaiting the day it would be drawn.

Today was that day!

He had devoted his life to the sword—for one purpose:

To slay enemies!

“Courting death!”

The Hexagram Immortal Transformation expert charged like a ferocious beast, aura overwhelming.

He struck with a palm, condensed power threatening to crush Ximen Xianzhi!

A mere early Tribulation Transcender daring to block an Immortal Transformation?!

Clear pipa notes resounded.

Amid the clouds, the goose-yellow-clad maiden sat like a painting.

Slender fingers danced across the strings, sound waves rolling like tides.

Crisp and melodious, like pearls falling on jade.

The waves enveloped Ximen Xianzhi,

causing his aura to skyrocket, climbing relentlessly!

The Immortal Ascension elder's expression changed drastically.

He stared at Luo Mingyue and Ximen Xianzhi.

“Under the Blood-Robed General... the Zither King and Sword King...”

His body trembled faintly. These two were inheritors of the Zither and Sword Kings!

Demonic figures who once drenched the Nihility Heaven in blood.

The Immortal Transformation expert’s golden body blazed like a dharma idol, towering dozens of zhang, striking like an enraged vajra.

Before it, Ximen Xianzhi seemed tiny.

Yet he laughed with unrestrained joy.

His fingers spun the sword ceaselessly.

Sword King—why dare claim kingship over swords?

Ximen Xianzhi had obsessed over swordplay, only to realize upon entering true sword cultivation that all his prior practice had been wasted.

True swordsmanship was a vast great Dao.

He remembered the withered daoist cleaving an Upper Realm emissary with one strike.

That daoist had been at the end of his life, sustained only by the tomb's restored spiritual energy—barely Yin God level.

Yet he had slain an Immortal Transformation with a single sword.

Ximen Xianzhi might not match the old Sword King's peerless mastery and boundless dominance.

But...

Slaying an Immortal Transformation during his own tribulation—was that too much to ask?

Especially with the Zither King's music aiding him...

If he couldn't manage even this, how could he claim the title of Sword King?!

Sword intent surged from Ximen Xianzhi.

His blade rounded into flawless jade, light swirling.

“Sword, rise!”

Boom!

His robes flared. Without gripping the sword, he pointed forward, meeting the Immortal Transformation palm head-on!

Utter focus filled his eyes,

like the relentless practice on the great plaza long ago.

With his body as center,

within a hundred zhang, endless jade-like sword energy soared skyward.

Each strand became a dragon, converging in a roar.

Pfft!

The Immortal Transformation palm was torn apart by his sword!

“Impossible?!”

The expert’s heart jolted.

His primordial spirit flower and golden body flower bloomed,

unleashing ferocious aura.

He punched, clashing with the cascading sword torrent.

Shockwaves and shattered sword energy raged.

Ximen Xianzhi stood in the heavens, a withered daoist’s shadow faintly behind him.

Clang clang clang!

Pipa notes rang gracefully,

then exploded mid-air.

The music materialized, like heavenly demons dancing wildly.

Golden chimes bound the Immortal Transformation expert, restricting his movement!

In this moment, it was as though the new Sword King and new Zither King fought in perfect harmony!

Ximen Xianzhi's eyes lit up, robes whipping.

He raised his sword fingers like a sword god incarnate.

Pointing distantly at the expert's crown.

Then he slashed downward—as though dropping a heavenly blade!

Sword energy boiled. Thousands of strands wove together into one terrifying, massive beam!

One sword's chill light illuminates nineteen continents!

Pfft!

The strike pierced the Immortal Transformation expert's skull. Both primordial spirit flower and golden body flower were severed!

Boom!

The expert roared in fury, breaking the golden bindings, hammering with dharma idol waves.

Young Master Lu might casually "brush" past and slay Immortal Transformations,

but they were truly formidable!

Ximen Xianzhi's sword seemed on the verge of shattering!

Yet Luo Mingyue, face cold, half-veiled behind her pipa, goose-yellow skirts dancing, fingers flying even as blood mist sprayed from them—unflinching.

The once-sharp notes transformed into terrifying blades.

Crisscrossing, they formed a mysterious domain, shredding the expert's flesh to bloody ribbons!

Pfft!

Ximen Xianzhi shuddered, blood spraying from his mouth, yet his sword fingers continued tracing the air.

Sword energy like a pillar—suddenly exploded the expert's body!

The team battle's sole Immortal Transformation expert was thunderously slain by Luo Mingyue and Ximen Xianzhi in absolute dominance!

His primordial spirit fled.

But how could a fragile spirit withstand the sweeping sword rain and terrifying pipa onslaught?

The Immortal Transformation primordial spirit was forcibly erased!

Amid drifting blood rain,

Luo Mingyue and Ximen Xianzhi rose like two new kings.

...

In the ancient tomb,

emaciated Gu Mangran stared at Luo Mingyue and Ximen Xianzhi.

Faintly, he saw familiar figures who once fought beside him.

He smiled openly.

Though the Four Kings are gone, their legacies live on.

...

Blood Evil Heaven fell deathly silent.

The Immortal Ascension elder's breathing quickened. The higher the realm, the harder to leapfrog—Unity realm might slay Tribulation, but Tribulation slaying Immortal Transformation...

Near impossible!

“Zither King and Sword King...”

His hair and beard whipped wildly, gaze icy.

Yet he wasn't overly shocked by the leapfrog kill.

After all... these were the inheritors of the two kings under the Blood-Robed General!

Ximen Xianzhi's hair flew. Sword fingers traced the air lightly.

In the next instant, sword energy materialized from nothing,

enveloping the four remaining Hexagram Tribulation Transcenders!

Ye Shoudao's blade shadows crisscrossed.

Blade and sword formed a terrifying killing field!

Blood rain poured. In an instant, the four Tribulation experts became bloody paste.

Their primordial spirits wailed,

only to be wrapped and strangled by red silk!

Amid the blood rain, faint anguished soul cries echoed...

Luo Mingyue sat serenely on blood-colored clouds.

Ximen Xianzhi sheathed his flying swords. Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and Ni Chunqiu radiated killing intent.

A crushing victory.

On foreign soil, the campaign of reckoning had begun.

Chapter 453: Why Isn't the Upper Realm Intervening?

Defeated... they were actually defeated?!

The skies above the Hexagram continent fell into utter silence.

Every cultivator from the Hexagram stared in sheer horror.

Many had witnessed the Heaven and Earth Grand Competition—the team battle between the Five Phoenixes and the Star Moon Minor World.

That fight had been anything but easy.

Ye Shoudao had even corroded his remaining arm down to bare white bone.

Yet how much time had passed since then?

Without someone like Jiang Li who could command army formations, they still achieved such an overwhelming, crushing victory?

Many gazes shifted to Luo Mingyue and Ximen Xianzhi.

The unexpected factor—it all came down to these two!

The experts of the Hexagram continent, and those watching from Blood Evil Heaven, drew sharp breaths.

Yes, Du Longyang and Ye Shoudao were strong, but their gap with ordinary Tribulation Transcenders wasn't insurmountable. Three against four—they might hold for a while, but defeat was inevitable in a prolonged fight.

The true game-changers were Luo Mingyue and Ximen Xianzhi.

“Inheritors of the Zither King and Sword King under the Blood-Robed General!”

That was likely the main reason these two were so monstrous!

The Immortal Ascension elder of the Hexagram continent narrowed his eyes.

He had been careless.

He had forgotten that the Blood-Robed General's ancient tomb had opened in the Five Phoenixes, allowing the Four Kings' legacies to continue.

The Four Kings... at their peak, they rivaled ancient Sacred Ancestors!

How could legacies from such beings be weak?!

The team battle...

Just like that, they had lost!

A flicker of reluctance passed through the elder's eyes.

This single loss had pushed the Hexagram continent to the edge of a cliff!

This was a wager involving all of the Hexagram's Dao reserves...

And with the Dao Evolution Mirror as witness, defeat would mean unimaginable consequences—all their Dao reserves truly stripped away!

If that happened, centuries of accumulation would vanish like bursting bubbles.

“Reckoning... so this is your reckoning, Lu Ping’an.”

“What a cunning plan!”

“You intend to destroy the foundations Blood Evil Heaven has built over countless ages!”

...

Origin Lake.

On the lake’s central island, a gentle breeze stirred.

Lu sat in the pavilion, white robes fluttering.

As expected, they won.

Leaning back in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, he toyed with a chess piece but did not place it on the board.

If Luo Mingyue and Ximen Xianzhi had just emerged from the ancient tomb, they might not have achieved this. Though they inherited the two kings' legacies, their mindset had been lacking.

They needed tempering, baptism in blood.

The time-reversal secret realm Lu created forced them to experience a desperate war alone, squeezing out their full potential.

That was why Lu had confidence in this campaign.

“The Four Kings... Gu Mangran once said that at their peak, mere Immortal Ascension experts were nothing to them.”

Thus, this victory was entirely within Lu's expectations.

Was it too overpowered?

Not really. Back then, the Sword King—drained of vitality and blood essence, sustained by less than Yin God-level spiritual energy—had stunned the world by slaying an Upper Realm Immortal Transformation emissary aboard the ancient warship with a single strike.

Compared to that, Ximen Xianzhi's performance today still fell far short.

A breeze swept across the lake.

In stark contrast to the bloody storm in Blood Evil Heaven,

the Five Phoenixes continent remained peaceful and harmonious.

Lu gently lifted a chess piece. White lines danced in his pupils as his gaze shifted, turning to the other front.

The forces had split into two paths—one ancient warship to Blood Evil Heaven, the other to Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Blood Evil Heaven was making quite the commotion now.

As for Yuan Magnetic Heaven, Lu had sensed no fluctuations.

With the team battle concluded in Blood Evil Heaven, Lu could now direct his attention there.

But upon looking, his brows raised slightly.

The situation... was somewhat beyond his expectations.

...

Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Black Magnetic Minor World—a Yan Five high-martial on par with the Hexagram.

Aboard the ancient warship, the phoenix pattern blazed like flames, wings spread as though roaring through the void.

Surrounding the vessel, countless auras locked on coldly.

Terrifying pressures warped the void itself.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven seemed even less welcoming than Blood Evil Heaven.

The warship from the Five Phoenixes had pressed straight into its depths, locating the Black Magnetic Minor World.

On the deck, figures sat cross-legged.

Lu Julian's robes fluttered as he gazed calmly at the Black Magnetic world.

Sima Qingshan, Nie Changqing, and the others sat similarly, eyes indifferent.

They stated their purpose—coming in the name of reckoning.

Yet...

Yuan Magnetic Heaven treated them as nothing.

"Get lost!"

Boom boom boom!

An Immortal Transformation expert blocked the void, his colossal dharma body radiating brilliant golden light, looking down imperiously on those aboard the warship.

From various high-martial worlds, cultivators watched with mocking smiles.

“Settling accounts through the Heaven and Earth Grand Competition format?”

“Laughable.”

“A mere Five Phoenixes dares to ‘reckon’ with us?”

As the heaven closest to the Upper Realm, Yuan Magnetic Heaven matched Blood Evil Heaven in overall strength but far surpassed it in arrogance.

Thus, upon learning the Five Phoenixes had come for reckoning, they all laughed.

Waves of mockery threatened to drown the warship.

Li Sansui’s eyes surged with icy killing intent, dense array words weaving around him.

Compared to Overlord's group, this warship's expedition force was far more restrained.

Sima Qingshan watched calmly. Kong Nanfei smiled faintly, while Bai Qingniao stroked Little Phoenix Jiu's head in her lap.

They remained unfazed by the ridicule.

But then Lu Jiulian stood.

"I don't actually enjoy fighting. I prefer quiet cultivation..."

His gaze was serene.

Mocking eyes rained down, fixed on the blocking Immortal Transformation expert.

Lu Jiulian clasped his hands behind his back and stepped forward. A green lotus bloomed beneath his foot as he walked step by step toward the expert.

Aboard the ancient warship, Sima Qingshan and the others stirred, watching him.

They knew Lu Jiulian's realm: Heavenly Human.

But his combat power far exceeded Immortal Transformation—his score in that secret realm had been terrifying.

What exactly this ruthless man had done in that war remained unknown.

Lu Jiulian stepped off the warship. What was he planning?

Sima Qingshan, Nie Changqing, and the others grew curious.

Was Lu Jiulian going to reason with them?

How would he persuade the Black Magnetic Minor World to accept the Grand Competition?

Soon, they were stunned.

A radiant green lotus bloomed in the void—untouched by mud.

But as it spun, it gradually stained with blood—the blood of the Immortal Transformation expert radiating his golden body dharma idol.

The fight was over in an instant. The expert was enveloped by the lotus, and in the next moment...

He was utterly dead!

Not even his primordial spirit escaped!

Sima Qingshan and the others stared, then couldn't help but laugh bitterly.

Doesn't enjoy fighting... my ass!

"Audacious maniac!"

The instant the Black Magnetic Immortal Transformation expert was erased, every powerhouse in the world erupted in fury!

Three more Immortal Transformation experts soared into the sky, glaring coldly at Lu Jiulian.

Beyond them, countless Tribulation Transcenders filled the void.

Lu Jiulian emerged slowly from the blooming lotus.

“Wager all Dao reserves. Compete in the Heaven and Earth Grand Competition... or not?”

He asked calmly.

Behind him, the blood lotus spun, raining crimson droplets.

Boom boom boom!

From every corner of Yuan Magnetic Heaven, terrifying auras rose.

Immortal Transformation Holy Lords from Yan Six worlds, Immortal Transformation experts from Yan Five—all unleashed pressure to suppress Lu Jiulian.

No one had expected that, surrounded by enemies, Lu Jiulian would strike first and kill an Immortal Transformation expert!

Boom!

From the Black Magnetic Minor World,

a ten-thousand-zhang giant rose—the Immortal Ascension expert's golden body dharma idol.

“Dare to kill an Immortal Transformation expert of my Black Magnetic world...”

The Immortal Ascension expert acted!

A strand of immortal energy shot skyward, forming a whip that lashed toward Lu Jiulian.

It was like a signal. As he moved, experts from all sides charged the ancient warship with overwhelming killing cries.

To them, high-martial cultivators from the Nihility Heaven were mere insects crawling in ruins!

How could they compare to cultivators of Yuan Magnetic Heaven, bordering the Upper Realm?!

Yuan Magnetic Heaven was a place steeped in territorial superiority.

They looked down even on Pingyang Heaven—let alone the Nihility.

Aboard the ancient warship,

countless Dao patterns surfaced around Li Sansui.

Even surrounded by a sea of enemies, they feared nothing.

But ultimately, they didn't need to act. A massive silver-gray rift tore open the heavens.

Lu's faint chuckle emerged.

“What a fine Yuan Magnetic Heaven.”

As the words fell,

the Phoenix Feather Sword shot forth from the rift, splitting into nine fiery streaks across the void.

Pfft pfft!

Expert after expert exploded under the onslaught, bodies shattering—only primordial spirits fleeing in terror.

Holy Lord Lu!

Holy Lord Lu of the Five Phoenixes?!

Space profound!

He could strike from such vast distance...

Those who had intended to reinforce quickly retreated. Yuan Magnetic Heaven's experts knew well the terror of this ruthless Lu Ping'an.

After all, he had even dared to shatter an Upper Realm divine son!

Lu did not interfere in Lu Jiulian's battle with the Black Magnetic Immortal Ascension expert.

That terrifying clash seemed ready to collapse the darkness itself.

Blood lotuses enveloped the fight, raising heaven-shaking uproar.

Heavenly Human realm, plus third-sequence Dao intent...

Finally,

amid widespread shock, the Black Magnetic Immortal Ascension elder coughed blood and staggered back in defeat.

Lu Jiulian's robes were torn, blood trickling from his mouth.

But...

Yuan Magnetic Heaven fell instantly silent.

Third-sequence Dao intent?!

What kind of monster was this? More importantly—an Immortal Ascension expert had truly been defeated!

Expressionless, Lu Jiulian formed an energy lotus in his hand and gently tossed it.

Terrifying energy, carrying astonishing aura, rained down as though to obliterate the entire continent!

Not even Yuan Magnetic Heaven's Immortal Transformation experts dared block it.

They could only watch as the lotus hovered above the elder's head.

“Wager all Dao reserves. Compete... or not?”

Lu Jiulian asked again.

The elder's eyes held sorrow. To be defeated by a junior—if this youth were an Upper Realm Sacred Clan divine son or heaven's chosen, it might be acceptable. But he was merely a lowly being from the Nihility Heaven's Five Phoenixes.

Faint light flickered in the elder's eyes.

“Since I’ve lost, what right do I have to refuse?”

He was unwilling, but in the end, valuing his life, he agreed.

Who reaching Immortal Ascension didn’t cherish their life?

Besides, if they competed, they could stall for time—until Upper Realm experts arrived. Then whatever Black Magnetic lost, the Five Phoenixes would repay in full!

“Very good.”

Lu Julian dispersed the lotus hovering above the elder.

Hands clasped behind his back, he drifted serenely back to the ancient warship.

The nine Phoenix Feather Swords vanished with silver-gray spatial energy, but the lingering terrifying aura kept many frozen.

Holy Lord Lu Ping’an of the Five Phoenixes could kill even in Yuan Magnetic Heaven!

After agreeing,

the Black Magnetic elder withdrew into the continent, dispatching all remaining Immortal Transformation experts according to Grand Competition rules.

Three left—he assigned them all to individual battles.

“This one fought me and was injured! In individual battles, your task is to stall... stall endlessly!”

“Aside from him, the rest of the Five Phoenixes are nothing to fear!”

“As long as you outlast him, we win!”

In the Black Magnetic palace, the pale, blood-coughing Immortal Ascension ancestor instructed the three.

The three felt immense pressure.

They had no confidence—Lu Jiulian was too strong, having battled and even defeated their ancestor.

Even injured, he far surpassed ordinary Immortal Transformation experts.

Still, the ancestor's plan was their only chance.

Per Grand Competition rules,

if Lu Jiulian could fight, he could battle through individual rounds to the end.

Yet...

when the competition began,

every powerhouse in Black Magnetic felt their hearts sink to the depths.

In the team battle, without an Immortal Transformation expert, Black Magnetic was easily crushed by five relatively unknown Five Phoenixes cultivators!

They hadn't even needed full strength.

Sima Qingshan unfurled his scroll, splashing ink to shift mountains and seas.

Kong Nanfei suppressed with vast righteous aura.

Under their pressure, Nie Changqing drew his blade and reaped lives effortlessly!

Faintly, Black Magnetic's Tribulation Transcenders saw a colossal dragon cleaved in half, dragon blood splashing their faces.

In the next instant, their consciousnesses were extinguished!

Mo Liuqi and Bai Qingniao hadn't even acted—the team battle was over.

Losing the team battle left Black Magnetic no retreat. With the Dao Evolution Mirror as witness, they couldn't renege.

Defeat meant Dao reserves stripped away!

The Immortal Ascension ancestor began to panic.

In individual battles, Lu Jiulian hovered a green lotus, crushing all three Immortal Transformation experts effortlessly.

Ordinary Immortal Transformation experts had only primordial spirit and golden body flowers. Entering Heavenly Human, Lu Jiulian added a third-sequence Dao intent flower.

With three flowers gathered, his strength was supreme—ordinary Immortal Transformation experts were no match.

Black Magnetic Minor World...

had lost!

Yuan Magnetic Heaven fell so silent one could hear a pin drop.

Other Yan Five high-martial worlds trembled.

Who could have imagined...

that Black Magnetic—a Yan Five with ages of accumulation—would fall to the Five Phoenixes from the long-ruined Nihilicity Heaven?!

As the Dao Evolution Mirror rose, casting terrifying light,

stripping Black Magnetic's Dao reserves strand by strand, transferring them to the Five Phoenixes,

the Immortal Ascension ancestor let out an unwilling roar.

"No!"

His eyes reddened.

That was all of Black Magnetic's accumulated wealth!

Boom!

From the sacred ground,

the ancestor's colossal dharma idol emerged. He knelt fiercely toward the Upper Realm.

"Great lords of the Upper Realm Sacred Clans!"

“The Five Phoenixes disrupt the balance of the Nine Heavens! Developing through plunder! Great lords, intervene!”

Eyes bloodshot, coughing blood, he wailed to the Upper Realm.

He refused to hand over Black Magnetic’s thousand Dao reserves to the Five Phoenixes!

Yet...

to his despair,

despite his kneeling cries,

the Upper Realm showed no response!

Why?!

Blood vessels filled his eyes in disbelief. The Upper Realm clearly had the power to stop everything the Five Phoenixes were doing!

But... why weren't they intervening?!

Boom!

Black Magnetic's Dao reserves were fully stripped.

Its cultivators panicked.

Short-term, little would change—but without Dao reserves, Black Magnetic would soon decline, possibly dropping from Yan Five all the way to Yan Nine.

It might even fall from high-martial to mid-martial...

Countless cultivators clutched their heads, unable to accept this!

“Why doesn't the Upper Realm care?!”

The ancestor coughed blood endlessly. Then he rose from his kneel, erupting with terrifying aura.

A world-shaking strike aimed at the Dao Evolution Mirror.

He would shatter it—stop the stripping!

He reneged!

He refused the bet!

...

Five Phoenixes, Origin Lake.

White Jade Pavilion.

Lines danced wildly in Lu's eyes as he held the chess piece.

He smiled.

Then, pinching the piece, he arced it onto the board.

“Thousandfold spiritual pressure.”

Instantly,

in Yuan Magnetic Heaven,

a terrifying spiritual pressure beam surged from spatial profound—like a meteor piercing the sky—slamming into the Black Magnetic Immortal Ascension ancestor.

The ancestor’s pupils contracted sharply.

His world-shaking strike hit the Dao Evolution Mirror—leaving it unscathed.

His body, struck by the beam, hurled backward, crashing into the continent, pulverizing dragon-like mountain ranges, forcing him to his knees.

On his back, the beam pressed down from the heavens, carrying incomparable crushing pressure.

This pressure...

left him gasping, drenched in cold sweat.

Holy... Holy Lord Lu!

“If you wager, you must accept the loss.”

Lu’s light voice drifted through.

In the void,

the Dao Evolution Mirror fully stripped Black Magnetic’s Dao reserves.

Dragon-like reserves churned within.

Then silver light flashed, tearing space as it vanished.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven fell into deathly silence.

On the lake island,

Lu grasped the Dao Evolution Mirror, sensing the terrifying reserves within. His brows raised slightly.

He lifted his hand, lines dancing in his eyes.

“Something is indeed strange.”

“Why... has the Upper Realm not intervened? This young master was ready to tear faces with them, yet they make no move.”

“Why is that?”

Lu slowly furrowed his brows, gently tapping the mirror.

“The mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind...”

“Or perhaps the Upper Realm is also eyeing these Dao reserves?”

“Planning to pluck the fruit... from this young master’s hands?”

Chapter 454: Which One Is Real, Which One Is Fake?

Origin Lake.

A gentle breeze stirred, light and carefree.

Lu held the Dao Evolution Mirror. Within it, strands of Dao reserves writhed like swimming dragons.

The Black Magnetic Minor World—an established Yan Five high-martial—possessed even more Dao reserves than the Hexagram Minor World in Blood Evil Heaven: one thousand eight hundred and sixty, compared to the Hexagram's one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine.

Of course, that slight difference meant little to a Yan Five.

Sunlight pierced the clouds over the Five Phoenixes, striking the mirror and casting brilliant, dazzling reflections.

Lu smiled.

He attempted to extract the Dao reserves into the Five Phoenixes' origin.

But he found the mirror seemingly bound by chains—the reserves could not be drawn out.

“Has an Upper Realm expert sealed the Dao reserves within using some special method?”

Lu narrowed his eyes.

The Dao Evolution Mirror originated from the Upper Realm, after all. Tampering by their experts wouldn't be surprising.

He set the mirror aside, plucked a chess piece from the box, and summoned the bronze wine cup with a wave. Warm liquor flowed within, crystalline and gleaming.

He downed it in one gulp, warmth spreading through him.

The Upper Realm...

If they wanted to pluck the peaches, let them come.

But the peaches of Lu Ping'an... they would need the life to harvest them.

...

Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The Immortal Ascension elder, crushed to his knees on the vast Black Magnetic land by the terrifying spiritual pressure beam, stared blankly, focus lost from his eyes.

He felt as though the entire Black Magnetic Minor World had lost its soul.

Lu's words still echoed in his ears.

"You wager, you accept the loss."

The elder had no rebuttal.

But what chilled him most was Yuan Magnetic Heaven's proximity to the Upper Realm—everything here must be crystal clear to them.

Yet the Upper Realm made no move.

Why?

Kneeling on the vast earth, the elder let out a low, bitter laugh.

He understood now.

The Upper Realm... coveted these Dao reserves too.

One thousand eight hundred and sixty strands from Black Magnetic alone—a considerable sum even for them.

The Nine Heavens had rules; Upper Realm experts dared not plunder freely, maintaining a delicate balance.

But Lu Ping'an's appearance, wielding the Dao Evolution Mirror, knew no such restraint. A high-martial from the Nihilism Heaven existed outside those rules. His actions shattered the equilibrium.

He stripped Black Magnetic's reserves—and the Upper Realm was happy to let him.

Once enough accumulated in the mirror, they could intervene "in the name of rules," reclaim it—and all the plundered reserves would fall into their hands.

"Hahaha..."

The elder laughed lowly.

From ancient times to now, the Upper Realm hadn't changed much.

None of them were any good.

Aboard the ancient warship,

Sima Qingshan and the others stood as terrifying winds suddenly whipped through Yuan Magnetic Heaven, billowing their robes.

Lu Jiulian returned serenely, sitting cross-legged at the prow, eyes calm.

This was Young Master Lu's reckoning.

Nie Changqing, blade slung over his shoulder, gazed coldly and mercilessly at the Black Magnetic crowd.

He felt the Young Master had grown far more magnanimous.

In the old days, back in Beiluo City, with his temperament, he might have slaughtered the entire Black Magnetic world.

After all, in that war, had the Five Phoenixes lost, every living soul might have been butchered—rivers of blood, mountains of corpses.

But a world stripped of Dao reserves would soon decay, weaken, and collapse in helplessness and despair.

Such an end might be even more hopeless than outright slaughter.

The Young Master... still had that same wicked temper.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven had fallen deathly silent.

No one had foreseen Black Magnetic's fate—over one thousand eight hundred Dao reserves,

stripped away by the Five Phoenixes!

Boom!

After long silence, gasps echoed endlessly through Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

They truly hadn't imagined this.

So this... was the Five Phoenixes' reckoning!

Far more terrifying than expected!

The ancient warship shifted through the void.

Everyone in Yuan Magnetic Heaven clearly saw the eight figures kneeling at the prow, gazing coldly and calmly across the heaven.

Creak... creak...

Lu Jiulian steered the warship forward slowly.

Ignoring the plummeting auras of the Black Magnetic world, his gaze locked on another high-martial in Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The reckoning... continued.

...

Blood Evil Heaven.

With the Hexagram Minor World's team battle lost, individual battles loomed.

Yet suddenly,

the Hexagram Immortal Ascension ancestor's expression shifted.

Light surged in his eyes—he seemed to glimpse the horrors unfolding in Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

He saw a brilliant star dimming and dying there!

A Yan Five high-martial world withering!

“Black Magnetic Minor World... lost?! Stripped of all Dao reserves?!”

Trembling, the Hexagram ancestor absorbed news from Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

What changed his expression further: individual battles had begun.

His chosen combatants filled him with growing dread.

Boom boom boom!

The Hexagram continent quaked. Mountains shattered; vast deserts emerged on the land, scorching sands rolling.

From a deep crater, a towering, burly figure rose—skin purple, demonic energy swirling fiercely.

Sharp eyes blazed with boundless killing intent.

Boiling vital blood thundered like gods and demons beating war drums.

Tang Yimo, six meridians fully opened, in an invincible stance, had slain the Hexagram's contestant.

Back when he first entered Unity realm, he had nearly defeated a Yan Six Holy Lord.

Now a Tribulation Transcender with six meridians open—Immortal Transformation-level power—he crushed a near-Immortal Transformation opponent with one kick.

“Next.”

His voice was ice-cold.

Tang Yimo now seemed an ancient demonic god.

Ten zhang tall, demonic energy coiling over his skin, black arcane patterns dense across his body.

The Hexagram Immortal Ascension ancestor’s unease deepened.

Was Hexagram... to follow Black Magnetic’s fate?!

Second battle: Five Phoenixes still fielded Tang Yimo.

Hexagram sent an Immortal Transformation expert.

This fight was more spectacle than the first—but spectacle only.

With six meridians blazing, Tang Yimo matched the expert blow for blow, continents rising and sinking, mountains whipped like dragons.

Cultivators across the vast Hexagram gazed in horror toward the battle.

After long,

it ended.

Tang Yimo, drenched in blood, black ichor spraying from pores, looked battered.

But...

ten zhang before him,

in a crater nearly a thousand meters wide, lay the Immortal Transformation expert—reduced to bloody pulp.

Second battle: Five Phoenixes victorious again!

Tang Yimo limped back, laughing.

Aboard the ancient warship, Overlord descended to retrieve him.

The outcome held no suspense.

The Hexagram Immortal Ascension ancestor felt the world lose its color.

Overlord's final axe ended it.

Hexagram Minor World—a Yan Five high-martial—crushed utterly in defeat.

Lost one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine Dao reserves!

“No!”

At last, the ancestor could not accept it.

He unleashed terrifying aura.

“Lu Ping’an... your actions disrupt the Nine Heavens’ rules! The Upper Realm will not tolerate you—nor will the Nine Heavens!”

He roared.

“Past cause, present effect.”

“You once sent armies against the Five Phoenixes. This reckoning... is karma.”

“Besides, this young master gave you a chance.”

Lu’s calm voice resounded.

Boom!

“Stay—all of you!”

Murderous intent flared in the ancestor's eyes.

He stared at Overlord, Tang Yimo, and the others aboard the warship, raising his hand sharply.

Dragon-like energies surged from him.

Forming a razor-sharp blade of light that illuminated Blood Evil Heaven, carrying devastating waves as it slashed toward the warship!

He would detain them—even knowing Lu could strike through space profound.

He acted without hesitation!

Black Magnetic's tragedy showed him: the Upper Realm would not intervene.

So he would do it himself!

Above the heavens,

the Dao Evolution Mirror began stripping Hexagram's Dao reserves.

But the ancestor's killing intent had already locked the warship.

Overlord's demonic energy boiled; he roared like a fiend at the skies.

Tang Yimo's aura exploded in six successive waves—six meridians open, demonic energy surging.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and others readied for battle.

Luo Mingyue and Ximen Xianzhi's eyes sharpened.

"Let me."

Yet to everyone's shock,

Aru, standing quietly at the stern, unslung his longbow.

Thud!

The bow slammed the deck, cracking the ancient planks.

Boom boom boom!

Overlord and the others braced against the Immortal Ascension strike.

The Hexagram ancestor's killing intent remained cold.

Sizzle sizzle...

Aru drew the bow.

As he pulled, three energies Lu had stored in the Five Phoenixes Bow stacked relentlessly. At the bow's tip, an arrow formed—collapsing the void around it!

Boom!

Aura waves surged skyward!

The terrifying presence sent chills through Overlord and the others; they stared in disbelief.

The targeted ancestor felt his scalp numb, heart gripped by an invisible hand!

What was this?!

He sensed Aru's strength—barely a mighty expert. How could he pose such mortal threat?!

Disbelief filled the ancestor's eyes as he fixated on the Five Phoenixes Bow.

The spinning arrow—formed from energies exhaled by three phoenix heads—radiated death.

Whoosh!

Aru released.

In that instant, he felt drained, the bow's recoil splitting his flesh with blood.

The arrow flew.

Void collapsed inch by inch.

Time and space slowed to a crawl.

The three energies within—primordial spirit power, chaos power, and Dao intent power—were Lu's doing.

The arrow shot forth.

Overlord, Tang Yimo, and others scattered explosively.

None dared be caught in its terrifying wake.

This arrow was too dreadful.

Indiscriminate.

The Hexagram Immortal Ascension expert paled in horror.

He soared skyward, speed at maximum, dodging across Blood Evil Heaven, flickering endlessly.

How fast was Immortal Ascension?

Fast enough to cross world barriers effortlessly.

Yet...

the arrow locked on as though fated.

Pfft!

It struck his body.

Immortal energy swirled as he tried to block.

But upon contact, his arms turned to bloody mush in an instant.

Blood sprayed endlessly.

The arrow's force pierced him, hurling him into the vast Hexagram continent.

BOOM!!!!

A heaven-shaking explosion.

The three violent energies broke free of the array word binding.

Devastating blast waves swept like apocalyptic tides.

A massive dome of light—like an upturned bowl—engulfed half the Hexagram continent. Oceans evaporated; mountains vanished into steam.

Sizzle sizzle...

Scorching heat rolled.

The Hexagram Immortal Ascension ancestor never imagined dying on his own world's soil—shot by an Emergence realm cultivator.

The arrow's terrifying power shattered his primordial spirit.

An Immortal Ascension expert... fallen.

Terror spread through Blood Evil Heaven.

Aboard the ancient warship,

Tang Yimo and Overlord stood stunned.

This... was their substitute teammate?

When Lu called Aru a substitute, they hadn't thought much. But after this arrow, their view changed utterly.

Aru knelt, gasping heavily.

His body trembled; hot tears rolled from his eyes.

“Master... this bow is so strong!”

His trembling hand caressed the Five Phoenixes Bow—Gongshu Yu’s life’s masterpiece.

Unmatched in slaughter.

So strong.

Aru knew it would be powerful, but this exceeded expectations.

Most shocking: he, a mere Yang God realm unsuited to combat, had slain an Immortal Ascension expert!

What monstrous weapon had Master forged?!

The Dao Evolution Mirror finally stripped all Hexagram reserves.

Hovering in the heavens, it blazed with light.

The Five Phoenixes’ projection showed thousands of writhing Dao reserves—leaving onlookers dazed.

Just as all thought it ended,

Overlord steered the warship toward another Yan Five in Blood Evil Heaven.

The reckoning continued.

...

Pingyang Heaven.

Little Thunderclap Buddha Realm, pagoda.

Joyful Venerable's face was ashen; his usually jovial features held no smile.

Domineering, unreasonable, barbaric...

That was the Five Phoenixes' stance now!

A completely unreasonable reckoning!

“G-Great Venerable...”

Joyful Venerable swallowed hard, inwardly admiring the Great Venerable’s decision.

Swallowing pride to apologize to the Five Phoenixes Holy Lord had spared Pingyang Heaven this catastrophe.

“Project... project these scenes. Let every world in Pingyang Heaven see clearly.”

Great Venerable closed his eyes slowly.

His lips trembled as he instructed Joyful Venerable.

He knew recent discontent in Pingyang Heaven—many felt no need to yield to Lu Ping’an.

Great Venerable had never explained.

Now...

let the dissenters open their eyes wide!

Could they withstand the Five Phoenixes' reckoning?!

Joyful Venerable hurried to comply.

Dong dong dong!

Ancient Buddhist bells tolled, resounding vast chimes raising brilliant Buddhist light across Pingyang Heaven.

The illuminating light shone into every temple in every minor world.

Every expert and Holy Lord noticed.

Then, within the light, scenes projected:

The two ancient warships campaigning through Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The Black Magnetic Immortal Ascension ancestor forced to kneel under spiritual pressure.

The Hexagram ancestor slain by one arrow—horrifying!

Pingyang Heaven fell deathly silent.

So this was the terror of the Five Phoenixes' reckoning.

Many Holy Lords felt lingering fear. Had they not heeded Great Venerable and apologized...

they might now be the ones stripped.

Compared to losing all Dao reserves, high-grade spirit stone mines and herbs meant nothing.

Mines and herbs could be recultivated.

But lost Dao reserves... the sky would fall.

Watching the two warships rampage unchecked through Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven,

Pingyang Heaven held deathlike silence.

Every Holy Lord knew.

The Five Phoenixes Minor World—once utterly beneath notice—

had become hegemon of the Lower Three Heavens.

...

Blood Evil Heaven.

Aboard the ancient warship,

Tang Yimo poured a bottle of body-tempering pills into his mouth, chewing and swallowing.

Wounds split across his body sprouted buds, wriggling and healing swiftly.

“Pills refined by Lady Ni Yu... truly effective.”

Tang Yimo said.

Below the warship,

Overlord’s demonic energy surged as he returned.

Looking up, they saw the Dao Evolution Mirror plundering all wagered reserves...

“How many now?”

Overlord asked.

“Including what Lu Jiulian’s group won in Yuan Magnetic Heaven, the Five Phoenixes have claimed nearly ten thousand strands this time.”

Nie Changqing replied.

“Nearly ten thousand...”

“And the Upper Realm shows no reaction?”

Overlord’s eyes narrowed.

“Our actions have shaken the storms—severely wounding Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven.”

“Given the Upper Realm’s nature, they cannot sit idle.”

Overlord landed on the warship, staring into distant darkness, eyes squinted.

“Or perhaps they’re waiting to reap the fisherman’s profit.”

“Ten thousand strands—that’s the accumulation of a Yan Four high-martial. The Upper Realm must covet it.”

Tang Yimo stood, ruffling his hair.

Looking at Overlord: “So you think the Upper Realm will act?”

“They must maintain balance in the end. We cannot truly strip every world in Blood Evil Heaven as Young Master Lu said.”

Overlord said.

“Thus, once reserves exceed ten thousand, the Upper Realm will no longer watch.”

Aboard the warship,

everyone tensed.

In truth, after defeating Yan Five high-martials in Blood Evil Heaven, further battles held no pressure—pure one-sided domination.

They knew it was nearly time to return.

Those who offend the Five Phoenixes, though far, must be punished.

They had achieved that.

But Overlord's words made clear...

returning might not be so simple.

Blood Evil Heaven.

The ancient warship rose and fell.

Every high-martial expert trembled, fearing the warship looming overhead.

Forcing them—through “reason”—into Grand Competition wagers.

Suddenly,

experts across Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven felt the world grow eerily still.

In the endless voids of both heavens,

the two ancient warships hovered.

Suddenly,

every probing primordial spirit shuddered.

The warships streaked into light, shooting frantically through Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

As though fleeing in panic!

Instantly, experts in both heavens realized:

The Upper Realm... had finally acted!

“Go!”

Aboard the warship,

light scattered in Overlord’s pupils.

The moment reserves exceeded ten thousand in the mirror,

he steered the warship into explosive flight.

Boom!

Indeed.

As it sped away,

terrifying aura surged in Blood Evil Heaven.

Suddenly, Tang Yimo and others stared ahead fixedly.

They saw it.

At Blood Evil Heaven's end, a rift tore open. Beyond, dense immortal energy poured forth, vast and ancient emerging faintly.

As though connecting to an immortal realm!

The rift widened; light shone down.

Chasing the warship.

Not only Blood Evil Heaven.

In Yuan Magnetic Heaven,

Lu Jiulian sat at the prow, robes whipping, steering into burst speed.

At Yuan Magnetic Heaven's end,

a continent emerged—vast beyond sight, half the size of Yuan Magnetic Heaven itself!

“The Upper Realm.”

Terrifying gales assaulted.

Lu Julian gazed expressionlessly at the continent, speaking calmly.

Sima Qingshan unfurled his scroll abruptly, using spiritual energy as ink, fixating on the vast land.

As though to depict the Upper Realm.

But the moment his brush touched,

terrifying will rolled from the continent.

Sima Qingshan felt his brush weigh like the continent itself—immeasurably heavy.

Rip!

The hovering scroll tore to shreds by unknown force!

Light projected from the Upper Realm.

Chasing the warship.

The light's speed was too great; despite the warship's flight through Yuan Magnetic Heaven, it gradually closed.

Endless radiance like tidal waves from an ocean, threatening to devour all!

Aboard both warships,

Overlord and Lu Jiulian drew jade talismans, ready to crush them.

The talismans bore the "Travel" Array Word—for tearing space profound to return to Nihilicity Heaven.

Once there, special rules barred Upper Realm power.

Crack crack!

Both crushed the talismans.

Silver-gray spatial profound surged violently.

Yet...

Overlord and Lu Jiulian's expressions shifted.

For within the Upper Realm's projected light, silver-gray radiance fell too—smoothing the fluctuating space around them!

From the vast, ancient Upper Realm,

a figure in loose robes emerged, a "Travel" mark in his palm, half-smiling.

"The fake, meeting the real—can't be arrogant anymore."

...

Origin Lake, central island.

Infinite lines danced in Lu's eyes.

His brows raised slightly.

Tap!

He gently stroked the board, placing two pieces in succession.

With the fake, one can still confound the real.

Boom boom!

In the voids of Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven,

beams descended from the heavens.

Vast silver-gray radiance poured forth, dense beyond measure.

Behind each warship, massive abyss-like rifts tore open.

The expert bearing the true "Travel" mark in his palm lost his composure.

For... he discovered his “Travel” Array Word had lost effect!

Could it be... the one in his hand was fake?!

Chapter 455: An Arrow Fired Toward the Upper Realm

The Upper Realm had made its move!

In Yuan Magnetic Heaven, atop the Black Magnetic Minor World,

the Immortal Ascension ancestor—forced to kneel on the continent by Lu’s thousandfold spiritual pressure—appeared utterly aged. He lifted his weary eyelids, glancing at the vast Upper Realm continent emerging from the torn void.

His face twitched, twisting into a smile uglier than tears.

“As expected...”

“They act neither early nor late—but precisely when the Dao Evolution Mirror has harvested over ten thousand Dao reserves. The intentions of those in the Upper Realm are crystal clear.”

“Heh...”

“We of the Lower Realms... are mere pawns.”

“Discarded when no longer useful.”

The ancestor shook his head in sorrow, then raised it, gazing at the ripped-open Upper Realm.

And at the ancient warships fleeing desperately...

A low, mocking laugh escaped him.

“Holy Lord Lu of the Five Phoenixes... heh, for all his brilliance, hasn't he become nothing more than a tool for the Upper Realm to gather Dao reserves?”

“Pathetic.”

Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven boiled with excitement.

Light pierced the darkness like dawn's first rays, cascading like a waterfall from afar.

The two Five Phoenixes warships were like tiny boats fleeing massive waves.

Gradually overtaken, then capsized and swallowed.

The Upper Realm had finally intervened—many experts in Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven breathed sighs of relief.

The Five Phoenixes' reckoning should end here.

The Lower Three Heavens had truly been terrified by a single Five Phoenixes.

Of course, the Five Phoenixes had taught them one harsh truth:

Might makes right.

With a big enough fist, the Five Phoenixes declared reckoning—and reckoned. They forced Grand Competitions. Dare refuse?

This “reasonable” approach stripped worlds of Dao reserves, letting them feel despair as their worlds slowly withered and collapsed.

That was the cruelest part.

...

Boom boom!

The ancient warships swayed under the white light beams.

Spatial profound rippled, tearing massive rifts behind both vessels.

In an instant, the fluctuations could swallow the warships, pulling them from Yuan Magnetic Heaven and Blood Evil Heaven.

On the vast Upper Realm continent—dense with immortal energy—emerging from the massive void tear,

the loosely robed figure's eyes sharpened.

He gazed with interest at the warships shrouded in spatial fluctuations.

“Intriguing...”

“Confusing the real with the fake?”

“The fake remains fake. I hold the true, half-activated ‘Travel’ Array Word. With a thought, I can disable even massive teleportation arrays. Yet... this time, it failed.”

His gaze pierced distance, falling on the swaying ancient warships, filled with curiosity.

Boom boom boom!

Light continued projecting, suddenly forming colossal palms in Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Palms immense—larger than the entire Black Magnetic continent—exuding sky-obscuring might.

Shaking the void itself.

This was the Upper Realm’s power.

Blood Evil Heaven.

Overlord stood aboard the warship, sensing unparalleled, terrifying pressure.

He stared intently at the torn-open Upper Realm, thick with immortal energy.

“That... is the Upper Realm?!”

Overlord murmured.

His first clear sense of its existence. The pressure from the giant palm of light left him no thought of resistance.

He knew he was no match.

Even against Immortal Ascension experts, he had never felt this.

Yet now, such helplessness arose.

“The Upper Realm... also has beings who’ve comprehended third-sequence Dao intent.”

Overlord said.

Tang Yimo, Nie Changqing, and others stood at the prow.

As for life and death—they cared little. The descending beams carried a familiar aura.

Young Master Lu’s aura. With him watching personally, they faced no danger.

“So... we’ve been opposing existences like this?”

Du Longyang spoke suddenly.

His words echoed aboard the ancient warship. Gripping his Martial Emperor Spear, his body trembled slightly.

“Scared?”

Ye Shoudao glanced at him.

Du Longyang fell silent.

Fear flickered in Ni Chunqiu's eyes.

An overwhelmingly unmatched foe could indeed breed despair.

"We're growing stronger."

"One day, we'll reach heights to rival the Upper Realm."

Tang Yimo bound white cloth around his hands, speaking calmly.

Everyone aboard smiled. Yes—they would grow stronger, ever stronger.

The Five Phoenixes would too.

One day, they'd stand against the Upper Realm!

Boom!

The giant palm of light slammed down.

Larger than the Black Magnetic world, it crashed against the white beam.

The beam seemed a mere thread beside it.

Yet...

that slender thread blocked the palm!

Countless radiances halted behind the white beam.

The same in Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Blocked?!

All watching were stunned, horrified.

This was a strike carrying Upper Realm might—yet halted by a thin white beam.

Everyone thought of one possibility.

Holy Lord Lu of the Five Phoenixes?!

Only the Young Master Lu—who shattered an Upper Realm Sacred Clan divine son with one punch—could achieve this!

Hum hum hum...

On the torn Upper Realm continent, thick with immortal energy,

figures emerged one after another.

All in loose robes, immortal energy swirling.

Eighteen in total—nine for Blood Evil Heaven, nine for Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Each wreathed in immortal energy, eyes indifferent, arrogant, cold.

All... Immortal Ascension realm!

In the Lower Three Heavens, supreme and revered—yet eighteen appeared at once.

“The Five Phoenixes of Nihility Heaven stole the Upper Realm immortal-tier artifact, the Dao Evolution Mirror. Committing vile acts—forcing other worlds, plundering their Dao reserves, severely disrupting the Lower Three Heavens’ balance. This is an unforgivable crime!”

The barefoot figure with the “Travel” mark in his palm narrowed his eyes at the beam-shrouded warships.

A smile of interest spread.

“Since you can wield space profound... why not flee?”

He gazed at Overlord, Lu Jiulian, and the others, asking aloud.

Then his vision seemed to bridge space-time.

As though peering into the Five Phoenixes' Origin Lake, White Jade Pavilion.

His eyes manifested above the pavilion.

Lu held a chess piece, white robes fluttering under the gaze.

“Why not escape?”

The figure grinned coldly.

Lu remained expressionless, piece in one hand, bronze wine cup in the other—warm liquor steaming with rich aroma.

Waves rose on the vast sea, white surges forming a serpent that crashed distantly against the ancient tomb, splashing foam.

Inside the tomb,

emaciated Gu Mangran's dark eyes flashed.

“Mr. Lu... how many divine herbs have been prepared?”

Gu Mangran asked gently.

Lu Changkong, configuring divine herbs with Bu Nanxing, paused.

“Nine.”

Lu Changkong replied.

Bu Nanxing glanced at Gu Mangran seated in the coffin, swallowing hard.

“The General needs divine herbs?”

Lu Changkong wondered.

Gu Mangran smiled.

“No... just in case those fellows lose composure and attack shamelessly. Better measure the dosage precisely—to avoid wasting divine herbs.”

Gu Mangran said.

Lu Changkong narrowed his eyes.

Holding a vibrant, multicolored spirit herb, he looked beyond the tomb.

The Five Phoenixes seemed calm, but faintly... he sensed terrifying killing intent swirling outside.

...

Pingyang Heaven.

Pagoda.

Joyful Venerable and Great Venerable stared fixedly at the golden alms bowl's projections.

Not just them—nearly every cultivator in Pingyang Heaven watched.

Standoff!

Finally, confrontation!

The Five Phoenixes sent two warships to conquer Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

With boundless dominance and utter unreasonableness, forcing Yan Five worlds into Grand Competitions—stripping their Dao reserves entirely.

Acts no different from demons.

Many in Pingyang Heaven, shocked, had predicted Upper Realm judgment.

Now, Upper Realm experts acted!

Would the Five Phoenixes... finally pay for their deeds?!

...

“Flee?”

Overlord cracked his neck.

Clad in black armor, he had expected fierce battles in this Blood Evil Heaven campaign.

Yet...

he was wrong. No true great war came; he barely fought to satisfaction.

His body itched for battle.

Unfulfilled.

Now, the Upper Realm stirred, Young Master Lu's beams descended, spatial profound opening behind.

Overlord knew the trial ended.

Tang Yimo, Nie Changqing, and others had exhilarating fights, great gains.

Only he, Overlord, felt unsatisfied.

His one chance at release—when the Hexagram Immortal Ascension ancestor attacked.

Pity—Aru’s arrow exploded him.

So Overlord burned with unwillingness!

He craved battle!

Boom!

He stepped off the warship, striding void like a cannonball.

Luo Mingyue, Ximen Xianzhi, and others stared briefly.

“Come on!”

“Let me see the strength of Upper Realm experts!”

Demonic energy soared from Overlord as he roared domineeringly.

Thud thud thud!

He marched through void.

Black flames seemed to burn around him.

He had known lows and bottlenecks. Now he understood: breakthroughs came in life-and-death struggles.

Since comprehending third-sequence unyielding Dao intent,

he rarely danced on death's edge.

Overlord's path:

Thickest armor, heaviest beatings.

Each endured beating yielded massive growth.

He hoped Upper Realm experts wouldn't disappoint!

From the massive rift,

on the endless, vast Upper Realm continent—seven-colored lights soaring, immortal energy dense—

the array word holder laughed.

He hadn't expected a Five Phoenixes cultivator to charge out.

Upper Realm Immortal Ascension... far beyond Lower Three Heavens equivalents!

Nine dispatched experts in loose robes.

One stepped forward against charging Overlord.

Silver-gray light flashed.

Instantly bridging distance, closing on Overlord.

“Good!”

Overlord’s demonic energy erupted; his battle axe swung fiercely.

Immortal energy whipped down.

Thud!

Axe met energy—tremendous shock rippled through Overlord’s palms.

Tiger’s mouth split, blood spraying.

“Pathetic.”

The Immortal Ascension expert—ethereal and refined, hands clasped—swept immortal energy.

Boom!

Overlord defended.

Energy struck; axe and shield dented, axe slamming his body, armor shattering. He hurled back hundreds of li.

Not dead?

The expert blinked in surprise.

Overlord was mere Tribulation Transcender—his energy whip could slay hordes.

In void, Overlord rose.

Laughing wildly.

He cracked his neck, then slapped his ear.

Smack!

Head soared skyward; he stored it.

Headless Overlord's demonic energy formed a tornado!

Silent roar—like a demon defying lofty immortals!

The expert grew serious.

Boom!

Fist intent erupted into myriad streams!

Primordial spirit flower, golden body flower bloomed!

Overlord leaped; axe cleaved.

Demonic energy gathered behind, forming giant demon shadow.

Pity.

Overlord's assault crumbled instantly!

Body cannonballed away; Upper Realm strikes rained like storm on him.

Bang bang bang!

Explosions hurled Overlord onto the ancient warship.

Tang Yimo and others watched the brutal beating in silence.

"This guy... so tough..."

The expert—immortal energy swirling, robes billowing—said disdainfully.

"Like a stone in a latrine—stinking and hard..."

Crack crack...

Headless Overlord rose slowly. Armor cracked, falling in shards; blood seeped from every pore.

Body trembling—he suppressed himself.

“Upper Realm experts... just this much?”

Overlord’s primordial spirit vibrated.

Boom!

Demonic energy surged again; he charged madly once more.

Boom boom boom!

The expert raged.

Unleashing terrifying slaughter repeatedly.

Each time, certain Overlord would die.

Yet...

Overlord stood!

Wounds covered him; gruesome gashes exposed bone.

Still, he rose.

Even his fortune golden body shattered.

Aboard the ancient warship,

Du Longyang and Ye Shoudao clicked tongues.

“Overlord’s still the same...”

“How is he unkillable?”

Luo Mingyue’s expression complex—recalling her sister’s words, she sighed softly.

As though expecting this.

She drew her pipa.

Half-veiled behind it.

Pluck!

Gentle strum.

Radiance fell, enveloping Overlord.

Healing his wounds.

“No...”

Overlord’s primordial spirit roared.

Don't heal me!

Luo Mingyue froze.

Then, somewhat huffily, sheathed the pipa.

“Reckless brute.”

Luo Mingyue said.

Tang Yimo's eyes gleamed at Overlord.

Grow stronger from beatings?!

That was the deal he once begged from immortals.

So envious.

“Die!”

In void,

the Upper Realm expert fumed.

Body streaked; terrifying aura burst—fifth-sequence Dao intent, not weak!

Immortal energy coiled his fist into spiraling cone!

Pfft!

Pierced Overlord's flesh!

Headless body seemed ready to explode.

Primordial spirit flower emerged; cracked golden body flower too.

On death's door,

Dao intent surged.

“Third-sequence...”

“Unyielding!”

Primordial spirit roared like tsunami, shaking heaven and earth.

Great terror in life-and-death... but great opportunity too!

Next instant,

a slightly blurred Dao intent flower condensed.

Three flowers gathered—enter Heavenly Human!

Now, Overlord half-step Heavenly Human!

He seized the immortal energy whip.

Axe gripped tight.

Endured endless beatings, impacts, pent-up rage.

All unleashed now!

Your past beatings—returned in full!

Boom!

Axe swung, aiming for the expert's head.

Pfft!

Terrifying energy erupted; axe seemed to split heavens!

Arced blast forced anguished howl from the Upper Realm expert!

Instantly bloodied; blood sprayed from pores. Hurlled thousands of li by one strike...

Blood Evil Heaven fell pin-drop silent.

Overlord... had blasted an Upper Realm Immortal Ascension expert's body?!

Overlord reattached his head, spitting blood while sneering.

“Upper Realm Immortal Ascension... nothing special.”

“As for taking beatings—you're far behind.”

Hum...

Ni Chunqiu flung red silk, wrapping Overlord, pulling the immobilized man back aboard.

Tang Yimo stepped forward, pouring two bottles of pills down Overlord's throat.

Meanwhile,

the remaining eight Upper Realm experts in Blood Evil Heaven turned icy.

Killing intent sharp.

The array word holder on the vast continent darkened.

Overlord's act—a resounding slap to the Upper Realm.

“Third-sequence... worthy of Nihilicity Heaven beings.”

“Kill.”

He said coldly.

Pinching seals.

Instantly, experts in Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven stepped forth.

Silver-gray flashed underfoot.

Like teleportation—breaths later, closing on the beams and shrouded warships.

Boom!

Several struck simultaneously.

Immortal energy whips cracked void!

Overlord and Lu Jiulian steered warships into Lu's spatial rifts.

On Upper Realm continent,

“Think you can leave?”

The figure's eyes focused, pinching seals rapidly.

Next, massive “Travel” Array Word glowed overhead!

“Stay!”

“Before the true Travel Array Word... all fakes reveal themselves!”

Boom!

Invisible waves spread.

Aboard warships,

Lu Jiulian, Overlord, and others paled.

Prior talisman failure left shadows.

Truly trapped?

Yet...

warships slid smoothly into spatial rifts.

Effortlessly—beyond imagination.

Upper Realm expert stiffened again.

Failed?!

Why?

Was... his "Travel" true word truly... fake?!

Failing to detain the warships—somewhat awkward.

Yet...

his eyes focused.

Unhurried.

Hum...

Primordial spirit surged, activating array word.

...

Origin Lake,

central island.

Lu sipped wine with a slurp.

Hm?

He tilted his head—spatial energy flowed from the Dao Evolution Mirror.

Whoosh!

Mirror vanished.

...

Instantly appeared in Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The overhead array word expert on Upper Realm continent smiled.

He raised his hand.

Fingers hooked toward the mirror.

Silver-gray spatial energy seeped around it.

Soon, engulfed.

Snap.

Mirror grasped.

But...

not by the Upper Realm expert.

By Lu.

The expert's pupils contracted... why?!

He looked toward the Yuan Magnetic beam.

Unbeknownst when,

beneath the beam, a white-robed youth sat in a silver chair, holding the Dao Evolution Mirror.

He... hadn't seized it from the youth?!

"Bold—stealing this young master's Dao Evolution Mirror."

Lu said calmly.

Next, effortlessly erased Upper Realm spatial marks, storing it in his Mysterious Ring.

Lu raised his hand; silver-gray flashed.

The Five Phoenixes Bow in Aru's arms vanished, enveloped.

Reappearing in Lu's grasp.

One hand on bow.

Lu drew with two fingers on invisible string.

Hum...

Three energies formed an arrow.

Lu aimed at the boundless Upper Realm continent.

And the overhead array word figure.

The latter stiffened.

Death intent surged from soles, engulfing him!

Hair stood on end.

He frantically activated "Travel" Array Word, seeking spatial shift.

If fast enough, Lu's bow couldn't target him.

Yet what drenched him in cold sweat:

His spatial profound...

failed.

No matter how urged, no shift.

Incredulous, he stared at Lu.

Lu gazed calmly back.

“I said your array word is fake—believe me?”

The man’s heart clenched.

Sorrow, confusion, anger.

He finally understood—not weakness, but his array word...

truly fake!

Qi Lijia gave him a counterfeit!

Lu, seeing the man’s sorrowful rage, felt speechless.

He actually believed it?

Of course, Lu cared little whether he believed.

Fingers released.

The long-charged arrow...

shot forth explosively.

Boom!

Rainbow tore void.

Several Upper Realm experts in path instantly burst—bodies to blood mist.

The arrow...

dragging collapsing void like a comet with dazzling tail.

Unhurriedly,

fired toward the Upper Realm.

Chapter 456: To Be a Peace-Loving Qi Refiner

Five Phoenixes.

Ancient tomb.

Emaciated Gu Mangran was truly bewildered this time.

“Young Master Lu... actually fired it?”

He hadn't expected that—even after both ancient warships had withdrawn from Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven, even after Lu reclaimed the Dao Evolution Mirror—

Lu still shot an arrow toward the Upper Realm.

That temper... truly foul.

Though merely an arrow formed from three energies, its power was not to be underestimated.

Gu Mangran's robes billowed as he rose from the coffin.

“Mr. Lu... please give me one divine herb first.”

Gu Mangran said.

Lu Changkong narrowed his eyes—Gu Mangran’s urgency suggested trouble.

“Little Bu, quickly—give the General a divine herb.”

Lu Changkong ordered.

Bu Nanxing nodded hurriedly, carefully retrieving a chrysanthemum-shaped divine herb.

Rich life energy filled the tomb.

Taking the herb from Bu Nanxing, Gu Mangran sighed deeply.

“Mr. Lu... what genius.”

To hybridize mere low-grade spirit herbs into divine ones!

An unimaginable talent.

Gu Mangran nodded slightly to Lu Changkong, then his figure blurred and vanished from the tomb.

...

Boom!

Both ancient warships hovered beyond the spatial rifts.

Aboard,

Overlord and the others stared wide-eyed through the rift at Lu—seated in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, drawing the bow and firing unhesitatingly toward the Upper Realm.

Aru trembled in body and soul. The mere aura released when Young Master Lu drew the bow sent chills through him—what terrifying presence!

Lu Julian's hair whipped wildly. His calm gaze flickered slightly as he watched the figure facing the entire Upper Realm fearlessly.

“Brother Lu!”

Ni Chunqiu nearly jumped from the warship in excitement.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Every high-martial Holy Lord felt fear and bewilderment.

Terrifying aura—as though capable of destroying heaven and earth—shook the entire heaven.

What killing intent?!

Like an ancient Sacred Ancestor unleashing world-ending might!

The kneeling Black Magnetic Immortal Ascension ancestor gazed at the arrow streaking across Yuan Magnetic Heaven’s void, trailing a fearsome tail.

His body quivered helplessly.

This was Lu Ping'an's strength?

The ancestor suddenly regretted—why hadn't he led Black Magnetic to apologize to the Five Phoenixes sooner?

Had he done so, Black Magnetic wouldn't face collapse; its Dao reserves wouldn't be stripped.

Lu Ping'an was this powerful—yet he had believed Lu dared not enter Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

With such an arrow,

even from the Five Phoenixes, Lu could destroy Black Magnetic with one shot!

He had thought Lu might become the Upper Realm's tool—harvesting Dao reserves for them.

Now, watching Lu fire toward the Upper Realm, those thoughts shattered like the arrow's path.

Boom boom boom!

The arrow streaked across.

Like a river unfurling in the heavens.

Eighteen Immortal Ascension experts—in an instant—torn and exploded by the arrow. In a blink, only three survived by luck.

Boom!

The vast Upper Realm continent—emerged from the torn void—seemed to quake violently.

The loosely robed expert with the overhead array word roared.

“Insolence!”

His heart pounded fiercely. Fear gripped him, but he roared to steel himself.

He would withstand this arrow!

Of course, partly because he couldn't flee—the “Travel” Array Word was fake, unactivatable. He couldn't escape the arrow's killing intent.

One, two, three...

Three strands of immortal energy coiled around him.

Each a different hue: white, cyan, crimson.

The three colored energies swirled, lifting him; his loose robes billowed.

Immortal Ascension refines five energies—one energy, one heaven!

A three-energy Immortal Ascension—far from weak!

Stronger than the eighteen one-energy experts sent to the Lower Realms!

Boom!

Three energies surged, forming three immortal dragon heads coiling around him.

Facing the leisurely yet swift arrow,

he charged!

He would force it beyond the Upper Realm continent.

He burst from the rift, meeting the arrow head-on!

Like waters from heaven's river!

The leisurely arrow seemed easily swappable.

Yet the three-energy expert who charged out soon hurled back, slamming into Upper Realm soil.

Repelled by the arrow's unleashed, tsunami-like force.

"No..."

The three-energy expert's pupils contracted in unparalleled terror.

Terrifying waves descended.

The arrow suddenly blazed brilliantly.

In an instant, a vast star seemed to appear in the Upper Realm skies.

Rolling waves crashed down.

Pinning the three-energy expert flat to the ground, utterly immobile.

He couldn't even twitch a finger!

"This... what... arrow?!"

His pupils reflected it.

From initial fury, to shock, to current dread.

His mindset shifted like summer skies—sunny one moment, stormy the next.

Who knew what he endured!

“Im-imperial... weapon?!”

Was this shot from an imperial weapon?!

Boom!

Terrifying aura seemed to evaporate everything.

The three-energy expert’s primordial spirit surged frantically, urging the “Travel” mark in his palm.

He wanted to shift away.

Facing this imperial-like slaughter,

he wanted to flee—only spatial profound could tear space for escape.

Otherwise... certain death!

Bang bang bang!

Void shattered and collapsed.

The arrow descended.

Fortunately, his location was merely a remote corner of the vast Upper Realm.

In a prosperous area,

this arrow would cause mass devastation!

The Upper Realm suffering carnage from a Lower Realm being's arrow?

Unimaginable!

As the arrow closed in, the three-energy expert felt the world lose color—only destruction remained.

On the spinning arrow, three energies whirled wildly.

Crack.

The binding array word dispersed.

Then...

the three suppressed energies—like wild horses breaking free—collided!

Boom boom boom!

Explosion erupted instantly in the immortal-misted Upper Realm!

Wretched screams tore the skies.

The three-energy expert—in his final moment—used the array word to tear a spatial rift.

Bang!

Yet as the rift formed,

the arrow struck.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven's void turned from darkness to blinding day!

Brilliant like a star's explosion!

Dazzling light filled with blinding glory!

The kneeling Black Magnetic ancestor trembled.

Eyes wide in shock—only fear remained.

Many minor worlds in Yuan Magnetic Heaven, and some Yan Seven and Yan Six Holy Lords in Blood Evil Heaven, quivered.

Pingyang Heaven.

Utter silence.

All who witnessed the brilliant bloom on the vast Upper Realm continent—emerged through Yuan Magnetic Heaven's tear—stood petrified.

That... was the Upper Realm!

Many watched mountains and lands collapse under the arrow's might...

feeling their faith crumble.

To countless Nine Heavens experts, the Upper Realm was a dreamed paradise.

Yet now, Holy Lord Lu had shot it into ruin!

Little Thunderclap Buddha Realm.

Pagoda.

Joyful Venerable collapsed to the floor, jovial face now only terror and despair.

Great Venerable's bead-clutching hand trembled slightly.

He rejoiced—rejoiced Pingyang Heaven hadn't utterly offended Holy Lord Lu like Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

That earlier arrow had first aimed at him.

The sensation of death—as though Pingyang Heaven would vanish in one shot—lingered vividly.

Now, witnessing it flatten Upper Realm landscapes,

he understood.

Pingyang Heaven must choose sides carefully henceforth.

...

Boom!

Terrifying energy formed an upturned colossal bowl.

Countless mountains swallowed by energy, shrouded in apocalyptic destruction. Land collapsed; immortal energy shredded by sweeping waves. In an instant, the vast Upper Realm corner seemed ravaged beyond recognition.

Earth torn into abyssal pits; endless sands evaporated...

Scorching heat and devastating aftermath surged.

Even in a remote corner, countless beings wailed into ash.

A massive crater—large enough for a Black Magnetic continent—emerged, black and bottomless.

This harrowing scene left all gasping in horror!

Peerless slaughter!

Truly peerless!

Even Sacred Ancestor-level artifacts might wield such power.

A five-energy Immortal Ascension would surely die to this arrow.

Lu sat in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, maintaining the drawn pose.

Gazing at the crater on the vast Upper Realm continent, his brows raised slightly.

Power... truly formidable!

Most importantly, raging arrow energy within the crater still held terrifying lethality—anything below mighty expert level entering would be instantly shredded.

Glancing at the Five Phoenixes Bow.

Lu smiled. Worthy of the Five Phoenixes' great killer weapon.

He hadn't witnessed true imperial weapon might, but this arrow from the bow was the strongest spiritual artifact he'd seen.

And not even at peak—primordial spirit power merely five hundred yuan, chaos power over a hundred He, and third-sequence Dao intent!

None at their utmost.

If primordial spirit power reached ten thousand yuan, chaos power ten thousand He, and Dao intent... first-sequence!

Would such an arrow rival an imperial weapon?!

Lu caressed the Five Phoenixes Bow.

Great killer though it was...

it needed cooldown. The three phoenix heads' eyes dimmed; faint smoke wisped from beaks.

Hum...

Aboard the ancient warship,

stunned Aru drew a deep breath.

In his hands versus Young Master Lu's—two different weapons entirely!

He had thought Master forged an extraordinary spiritual artifact.

Now...

this was world-ending!

Overlord, Tang Yimo, and others' eyes sharpened—mad fervor fixed on the bow.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The remaining two or three Upper Realm experts sweated coldly.

Bodies streaked to flee.

Yet...

white beams descended.

Smack smack smack!

Slamming their backs, forcing these Immortal Ascension experts to kneel in void.

Creak creak...

Thousand-Bladed Chair's wheels ground void.

The three experts saw Lu seated calmly, gazing at them.

Lu reached out.

Stripping their refined immortal energies.

Spiritual pressure beams dispersed.

The three experts dazed—as though brushed death.

Seeing Lu ignore them,

they fled hastily.

On the boundless Upper Realm continent,

spatial fluctuations rippled.

Plop...

A terrified head fell from within, rolling on ravaged ground.

The three-energy expert with the true array word.

He survived.

In the explosion's instant, he thrust his head into a spatial rift—severing it like a desperate gambit as energies spread, gathering all primordial spirit there to preserve life.

His body—long reduced to ash, not even bone fragments left.

Terrifying... horrifying...

World-ending arrow!

The Five Phoenixes possessed such a killer weapon?!

Suddenly,

void quaked!

In the Upper Realm, terrifying existences seemed to open eyes, gazing this way.

Bang bang bang!

At cracked earth, figures landed swiftly.

Beings wreathed in immortal energies gazed coldly at the head rolling in half-melted sands.

“He failed.”

“Such a shameful task—robbing Lower Realm Dao reserves—should have been easy. Yet failure.”

One spoke.

“This arrow’s power is immense.”

“The Upper Realm... how many years since such casualties?”

Immortal energies around them surged.

Gazes icy, killing intent sharp.

They ignored the head-only survivor.

Flickering, they vanished from the massive crater.

Reappearing together in Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Immortal energies crisscrossed around them.

“Hand over the ‘Dao Evolution Mirror.’ It is an artifact controlled by our ‘Dao Clan’—owned.”

Five figures—each surrounded by five immortal energies.

All five-energy Immortal Ascension experts!

Five such beings—this lineup!

The Upper Realm had clearly prepared long ago.

“Cloud Clan, Dao Clan... Upper Realm Sacred Clans?”

Lu sat in his Thousand-Bladed Chair, stripped immortal energies twining his fingers.

Glancing calmly at the five, lips curling slightly.

“As expected—all the same.”

Lu shook his head.

Gaze passing them to the vast Upper Realm continent beyond the tear.

The Five Phoenixes Bow’s arrow had blasted a Black Magnetic-sized crater—yet on the Upper Realm, it barely scratched the surface.

Withdrawing his gaze, the five five-energy experts already streaked toward him.

Boom!

Yuan Magnetic Heaven quaked.

Five-energy Immortal Ascension—far beyond Black Magnetic’s novice one-energy ancestor.

Immortal Ascension refines five energies—one energy, one heaven!

The five were wary too.

After all, Lu's recent arrow was too terrifying.

They had to capture him swiftly—while he couldn't fire a second!

Lu regarded the five five-energy experts.

Smiling calmly.

“Once the Dao Evolution Mirror is in this young master's hands, it bears the surname Lu.”

As words fell, silver-gray light flashed, gradually engulfing him.

He had no interest fighting five five-energy experts.

Lu Ping'an wasn't one for battle—he merely wished quiet development of the Five Phoenixes.

To be a peace-loving Qi Refiner.

Yet...

the five streaking five-energy experts seemed to anticipate his escape.

Lips curled.

“Think you can leave?”

“Daring to leave Nihility Heaven... today is your death day!”

One said calmly.

Next,

terrifying pressure spread, sealing void.

Lu’s attempt to tear space with “Travel” Array Word grew arduously slow—not impossible, but sluggish.

If he persisted, their thunderous strikes would land before escape!

Lu furrowed brows, sighing.

Narrowing eyes, scanning surroundings.

Seeking the hidden space-sealer.

Soon, he found it—aura from the vast Upper Realm continent!

Familiar.

“The expert who saved the Cloud Clan divine son in the prior battle?”

Lu narrowed eyes.

Boom boom boom!

He waved.

Phoenix Feather Sword burst in dazzling light.

Instantly forming massive shield armor before him.

Thud!

Five experts' assaults landed.

Bang!

Heaven-shaking collision erupted.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven rocked; energy ripples annihilated countless Yan Nine worlds!

Clang clang clang!

Phoenix Feather Sword hurled away, splitting into nine blades streaking void!

Yet Lu's primordial spirit stirred.

Soon, blades restacked into one floating beside him.

"Five-energy Immortal Ascension..."

Lu leaned in his chair, light flickering in eyes.

"Qi Refining seventh layer... roughly equivalent to five-energy Immortal Ascension?"

Lu pondered. No wonder he once shattered the divine son with one punch.

Seventh layer, demonized state—crushing a one-energy Immortal Ascension was natural.

"Seated as immortal, standing as demon—in demonized state... can I slay five-energy Immortal Ascension?"

Lu tapped chair arms lightly.

Rare clarity on his current limits lifted his mood.

“Since so, let’s have a proper battle.”

Lu slapped both arms.

Suddenly rising!

Torrential demonic energy surged.

Silver blades clanged, forming silver wings on his back in an instant.

White robes turned black; Lu’s eyes shifted from gentle to boundless sharpness.

Phoenix Feather Sword—wreathed in black flames—gripped in hand, Five Phoenixes Bow on back.

Lu regarded the five five-energy experts.

“Aura changed—far more aggressive...”

“Hard to imagine such a monster born in the long-abandoned Nihility Heaven.”

One five-energy expert focused intently.

Boom!

The five aligned in Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Terrifying auras linked like tidal waves.

Hum hum hum...

Dao intents surged.

Lu’s pitch-black eyes narrowed. Worthy of Upper Realm Sacred Clan experts.

All five wielded fourth-sequence Dao intent!

Five-energy plus fourth-sequence.

Such might terrified Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Yet...

the five didn't strike immediately—instead gazing at Lu, smiling eerily.

“Think we'll fight you fair?”

“You're wrong—we're merely here to collect your corpse.”

“This isn't Nihilism Heaven—no rules shield you. Daring to leave... you'll learn true terror.”

One said.

Next,

heaven-shaking might emerged like thunder from clear skies.

Lu looked afar—to the vast Upper Realm continent, where the elder who once saved the Cloud Clan divine son sat cross-legged, slowly reaching toward him.

Bang bang bang!

In Yuan Magnetic Heaven,

a jade-like colossal palm spanned across.

Countless Yan Nine and Yan Eight worlds' beings trembled beneath it.

Unmatched palm instantly enveloped Lu.

Bang!

The massive palm suddenly clenched!

Chapter 457: See, He's Dead Now, Isn't He?

A terrifying giant hand—vast as a continent—clenched abruptly, whipping up gales that ravaged all of Yuan Magnetic Heaven!

Bang bang bang!

Many high-martial continents cracked with fissures under the dreadful aura; mountains collapsed.

Figures fled in panic, desperately evading the onslaught.

They had no choice.

The Upper Realm cared nothing for Lower Three Heavens lives.

The Immortal Ascension ancestor kneeling on Black Magnetic trembled uncontrollably.

He had harbored resentment.

Resentment over the Five Phoenixes stripping Black Magnetic's Dao reserves—blaming the Upper Realm for inaction.

Now, no resentment remained.

The Upper Realm... was too strong!

Even a random expert from a Yan Four or Yan Three high-martial could sweep Black Magnetic.

The weak had no right to resent.

Even mighty Holy Lord Lu—wasn't he crushed like an ant by that fearsome palm?!

Useless. No one could oppose the Upper Realm.

...

Dreadful pressure seemed to leak through the spatial rift into Nihility Heaven.

Boom!

Rules above quivered like wind chimes, dropping razor-sharp strands as though slicing void.

Mere leaked aura triggered Nihility Heaven's rules.

The attacker's power—beyond imagination!

Surely surpassing Immortal Ascension!

“This is a trap! Set specifically for the Young Master!”

Nie Changqing—Dragon Slayer at his waist—spoke gravely, voice cold.

Nihility Heaven's special rules made killing Lu impossible there.

Now, Lu had left—perfect timing for assassination.

Thus, the Upper Realm no longer hid.

Using reclaiming the Dao Evolution Mirror as pretext and goal—to slay Lu in Yuan Magnetic Heaven!

“Damn it!”

Overlord swallowed many pills; wounds healed.

He stood, staring fixedly through the rift.

He wanted to aid—but knew his current strength would only burden!

Still too weak!

Overlord clenched fists. Their growth too slow.

Lu Jiulian's robes fluttered; demonic energy surged faintly in his eyes, killing intent sharp.

His body swayed, ready to charge in.

But as he moved,

unbeknownst when,

a skeletal hand rested on his shoulder.

“Going now would only hinder.”

A calm voice drifted.

“Feeling powerless?”

“But greater powerlessness awaits. What you can do is rapidly elevate cultivation in the short term.”

“To become Young Master Lu’s aid in future battles.”

Gu Mangran appeared half-seated in his coffin.

Overlord and others looked over; pupils contracted.

The Blood-Robed General.

They recognized him. The Cloud Clan had invaded the Five Phoenixes precisely to prevent his revival.

A true ancient-era predecessor.

“Senior, please save the Young Master!”

Nie Changqing said.

Gu Mangran shook his head. Robes hanging, deep-sunken eyes gleamed.

“No rush.”

Gu Mangran said.

...

All assumed the Five Phoenixes’ Holy Lord Lu crushed like an ant by that palm.

The five Upper Realm five-energy experts smirked, preparing to collect his corpse.

The attacker—five energies toward origin, communing Nine Heavens Dao—far beyond Immortal Ascension.

Killing Lu—effortless!

Though Dao Clan, with a Cloud Clan expert acting, they happily reaped benefits.

Suddenly,

the five's expressions shifted.

They had thought Lu dead—but perhaps not.

The giant palm slowly unclenched.

Around Lu, silver blades wreathed in demonic energy crisscrossed into a sphere; dense misty rain swirled, shielding him.

Heaven-Covering Array!

Thousand blades forming array, plus Heaven-Covering Array.

Lu had blocked the massive palm.

On the vast Upper Realm continent,

at the edge of the arrow-gouged crater,

a gray-robed elder sat cross-legged, maintaining the grasping pose. Shadowed eyes suddenly lit.

“This old man wants to see how many strikes you can withstand!”

Boom!

Next,

the giant palm slapped fiercely toward Lu.

Heaven-Covering Array and silver blade shield protected him.

The continent-sized palm struck!

Thud!

Terrifying explosion bloomed; wave after wave erupted.

Lu—enveloped in silver and mist—like a ball, hurled away in a streak, crashing into a Yan Eight high-martial continent.

The land cracked inch by inch; countless beings evaporated instantly.

Only the world's cultivators—evacuating early—escaped.

Demonic energy steaming, Lu strode step by step from the collapsing continent.

Phoenix Feather Sword in hand.

“Upper Realm... just this capable?”

Lu gazed at the elder.

Silver blades formed wings on his back.

Wings flapped; next instant, Lu vanished.

Boom!

The giant palm shot from Upper Realm continent—pulverizing the Yan Eight land into dust, annihilating in Yuan Magnetic Heaven's void.

Lu streaked in silver-black light through void—unyielding, closing on the five five-energy experts.

“Collect my corpse?”

Demon Lord Lu's sharp eyes cold.

Next, Phoenix Feather Sword slashed!

Boom!

“Courting death!”

The five five-energy experts raged. Facing pursuit from a superior, he dared provoke them!

In void,

Lu flashed in; one sword cleaved at the five.

On Upper Realm continent,

the elder frowned.

He didn't strike immediately—after all, the five were Dao Clan. One palm might slay them, sparking Dao-Clan conflict.

So he hesitated.

And in that hesitation,

the scene shifted dramatically.

Six lights clashed rapidly in Yuan Magnetic Heaven—each collision heaven-shaking.

Speed too great—uncatchable.

Top-tier Immortal Ascension battle!

Most shocking: Holy Lord Lu—one against five—held his own!

“This man... how is he this strong?!”

Black Magnetic’s Immortal Ascension ancestor trembled ceaselessly.

Upper Realm planned thunderous execution—yet Lu stalled so long.

“Five Phoenixes Holy Lord Lu... truly peerless brilliance!”

Demon Lord Lu clashed endlessly with the five five-energy experts—each impact collapsing void.

Five-energy experts—even in Upper Realm, no weaklings!

“Interesting...”

Boom!

Lu’s silver wings flashed; demonic energy formed tornadoes around him.

As though five immortals battling a peerless demon.

Lu cracked his neck.

Eyes flickering faintly.

Next...

mind sank into the preaching platform.

Seated on the Eight Trigrams array, deducing...

All in an instant. When Lu reopened eyes,

the five five-energy experts already charged.

“The world knows me, Lu Ping’an, as mild-tempered—merely wishing peaceful Qi refining. Why force me?”

Demon Lord Lu said.

Then, countless lines danced in pupils—he saw...

per preaching platform deduction, the five’s attack paths and every move.

Pfft!

A massive head soared skyward.

One five-energy expert—mid-charge—streaked thousands of li, crashing into a continent.

Phoenix Feather Sword spewed flames—like a phoenix spreading wings.

“Retreat!”

The remaining four felt chills.

Boom!

The continent seemed collapsing; scorching waves soared from cracks.

Lu’s demonic energy surged; he landed beside the crashed expert.

Casually tossed Phoenix Feather Sword.

Bang!

The continent pierced through; sword shredded the five-energy expert’s primordial spirit. Recalled by Lu’s wave, it streaked back.

Wretched screams echoed in Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Lu casually stripped the expert's five immortal energies—mingling with demonic energy, coiling around him.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven, Blood Evil Heaven, Pingyang Heaven.

Lower Three Heavens cultivators—stunned.

They never imagined Upper Realm's lofty five-energy Immortal Ascension—slain coldly by Holy Lord Lu's sword.

Recalling Lu's expressionless claim of loving peace...

All felt eerie dread!

Five five-energy experts combined... one slain?!

On vast Upper Realm continent,

gray-robed elder's eyes unmoved. One Immortal Ascension dead—no emotional ripple.

Raised a palm.

Heaven-covering palm shrouded again.

Though Lu killed one, he exposed himself—no worry of hitting Dao Clan experts.

Elder's face cold.

Clenched fiercely; veins bulged on hand.

An ant needing slight effort to crush!

As five fingers enveloped Lu instantly,

Lu smiled.

Raised hand; demonic energy overflowing, tapped his brow.

“Indestructible Demon Body ×1.”

The unfused Indestructible Demon Body—finally used!

Boom!

Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Only the giant palm clenched; within, heaven-shaking rumbles trembled—that was the gray-robed elder's killing method.

Vibrations through palm sufficient to shatter five-energy golden body.

After a pause,

terrifying waves spread from fist.

Yet...

elder's face held no joy—only shock!

Because...

demonic energy seeped from finger gaps.

More and more—like tornadoes—forcing his fist open.

Within palm,

the youth—vigorous black hair, black robes billowing.

Phoenix Feather Sword—black-red flames—hovered beside.

Demonic energy strengthened manifold; Lu slowly unslung the bow from his back.

The remaining four five-energy experts paled in horror.

The bow... usable again?!

Seated on Upper Realm continent, elder's eyes grew grave.

Other hand emerged abruptly.

Clap!

Both palms struck.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Another heaven-covering giant palm appeared.

Two palms—like twin mountains—shifted horizontally, crashing together.

All Yuan Magnetic Heaven seemed to thunder and explode deafeningly!

Yet...

to worldwide horror,

the palms didn't fully close.

Demonic energy surged around Lu—like a pearl—forcibly wedging a gap.

At the clash's center, the youth's eyes sharp.

Vigorous black hair whipping; black robes rippling.

Youth held bow.

One hand drew string; one leg grounded, other knee against bow body; body arched back—drawing great bow full moon!

Five phoenix heads on bow lit one by one.

The slain five-energy expert's five immortal energies—infused by Lu into the Five Phoenixes Bow.

Hum...

Five energies formed a colorful arrow.

Lu's sharp eyes emotionless—fixed on the seated elder on vast Upper Realm continent.

“This arrow... named Peace.”

Whoosh!

Words fallen,

Lu released fingers.

Rip!

Colorful arrow shot explosively—like vibrant serpent streaking void.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven's void torn into dark chasms again!

Gu Mangran once advised Lu: use Immortal Ascension immortal energies to power the Five Phoenixes arrow.

Conveniently stripped five—he tried.

Terrifying killing intent spread abruptly.

Colorful arrow.

Streaked swiftly.

Charging straight at the elder seated by the crater!

The elder felt threat—for the first time.

Threatened... by an Immortal Ascension being!

Elder stood.

“Insolence!”

Boom!

Next, apocalyptic aura instantly swallowed him!

Bang!

Massive energy beam blanketed vast Upper Realm.

Earth quaked; mountains shook.

Soon,

smoke and dust rolled.

A smaller crater appeared nearby.

Within,

a figure smoked, standing.

Gray-robed elder now utterly disheveled.

He deployed defenses—nearly... exploded!

Gray robes tattered; arms bloodied—as though fished from blood sea.

This arrow nearly killed him!

“That... Sacred Ancestor artifact?!”

“Such artifact in Nihility Heaven... could an ancient imperial weapon emerge?!”

Elder’s eyes full of shock.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Black-haired Lu’s demonic energy torrential.

He lowered longbow, pursing lips.

“Gu Mangran lied—this so-called immortal energy... so weak.”

“One arrow failed to kill.”

Lu muttered—unhidden.

All heard—speechless.

Weak... weak?!

Upper Realm expert nearly slain by one arrow!

Not enough?!

Boom!

Upper Realm continent.

Elder’s face utterly grim.

Nearly killed!

He stepped from Upper Realm—step by step, as though void-shifting.

Streaked into rainbow, closing rapidly on Lu.

Originally planned to kill—but now... capture!

He sensed Lu inextricably linked to Nihility Heaven's emerging imperial weapon!

Elder's speed immense.

With unparalleled pressure.

Pressure made Lu focus.

Yet...

as Lu prepared counter,

unbeknownst when,

a coffin appeared behind him.

Chrysanthemum divine herb swaying atop.

The elder—instantly beside Lu—pupils contracted sharply.

Boundless killing intent sensed.

He raised hand hastily—yet...

from coffin, a skeletal arm extended.

Sleeve red as dripping blood.

Blood robes...

Gu Mangran!

Elder horrified!

Ancient fiend... appeared!

“Young Master Lu, I didn’t lie.”

Gu Mangran’s gentle, magnetic voice drifted from tomb.

Next,

the extended arm swept lightly—like a long halberd, sweeping dark light.

Pfft!

The expert—surpassing Immortal Ascension—head soared skyward...

Face frozen in terror.

Primordial spirit—shattered by golden cavalry killing aura.

Cloud Clan expert—dead!

“See... he’s dead now, isn’t he.”

From coffin,

Gu Mangran half-raised, leaning on it—smiling gently at Lu.

Demon Lord Lu—tall, vigorous black hair whipping—bow in hand, glanced at Gu Mangran.

Though sophistry.

But truly... quite strong!

And in the instant Gu Mangran appeared—slaying the gray-robed Cloud Clan expert!

The entire Upper Realm continent quaked abruptly.

The four terrified five-energy experts fled headlong back to Upper Realm!

Blood-Robed Gu Mangran—such fiend... dared leave Nihility Heaven?!

Yuan Magnetic Heaven, Blood Evil Heaven, Pingyang Heaven—great quakes simultaneously!

Blood-Robed Gu Mangran truly lived!

Ancient relic from that primordial war!

How terrifying!

“Young Master Lu, time to return.”

From coffin,

Gu Mangran—skeletal, seeming frail.

He raised head, gazing at vast Upper Realm continent—sneer in eyes.

Spoke slowly to Lu.

Clang clang clang!

Silver blades restacked into Thousand-Bladed Chair.

Lu seated upon; demonic energy receded—returning to refined elegance.

Lu glanced at Upper Realm.

Said nothing.

Drew Dao Evolution Mirror, tossing it lightly.

All in all—this trip, no loss.

Hum...

Primordial spirit stirred.

Silver gleam flashed; dense silver-gray surged rapidly.

Tearing spatial rift.

Lu's chair wheels turned slowly—carrying him unhurriedly through void.

Thud thud!

Yet...

as chair entered spatial rift,

great terror aura spread abruptly.

Lu felt his heartbeat nearly halt!

“Since you’ve come... don’t leave!”

Terrifying aura diffused.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven fell silent; countless beings prostrated.

Even Black Magnetic's Immortal Ascension ancestor knelt motionless!

Boom boom boom!

In Upper Realm, faint silhouette emerged—noble, mighty, even... unviewable!

“Young Master Lu, keep going—don't look back.”

“Cloud Clan Sacred Ancestor, heh.”

“This old thing—let this General chat with him.”

Gu Mangran said to Lu.

Then, reached out—plucking the swaying chrysanthemum divine herb from coffin.

Lu turned back.

Just in time to see Gu Mangran snap the herb—stuffing it into his mouth...

Chapter 458: Sacred Ancestor Bleeds, Ascension Path Severed

A divine herb—rich life essence coiling around it like little dragons.

Emaciated Gu Mangran stuffed it into his mouth, chewing lightly. Energy surged into his body.

The ancient coffin quivered slightly—as though Gu Mangran were about to rise.

With the herb swallowed, his once skeletal, bloodless, withered frame suddenly swelled.

Boom boom boom!

Terrifying aura spread.

A vision of golden cavalry and iron horses, murderous intent soaring, materialized in the skies.

All of Yuan Magnetic Heaven seemed on the verge of collapse—trembling in this moment.

Every high-martial world, every Holy Lord—scalp tingling, sensing immense calamity descending.

In the void tear revealing the vast Upper Realm continent, a figure emerged—pressure world-shaking, unviewable, godlike.

Terrifying pressure emanated from this being!

Many worlds in Yuan Magnetic Heaven seemed unable to bear it—slipping like falling stars.

Sacred Ancestor!

A great terror with power to destroy heaven and earth!

The Immortal Ascension ancestor kneeling on Black Magnetic felt hair stand on end—body quivering, daring not move.

He never imagined this battle would rouse a Sacred Ancestor!

Lu turned back—sensing oppressive aura. It weakened his heartbeat.

Terrifying!

Top-tier expert of the Nine Heavens?

Lu saw Gu Mangran stuff the chrysanthemum into his mouth—odd, but as divine herb, it restored immense power.

“Young Master Lu, didn’t I say not to look back?”

Gu Mangran’s voice held helplessness.

Yet after swallowing,

the ancient coffin unleashed vast aura.

Boom!

In an instant—like streaking void, a ten-thousand-zhang divine statue.

Forcibly repelling the Cloud Clan Sacred Ancestor's dreadful pressure.

Bang bang bang!

Pressures clashed.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven suddenly quieted.

Silent—no sound, as though restored to primal peace and harmony.

Lu furrowed brows, staring where the two vanished.

He sensed confrontation.

Seeming beyond Nine Heavens.

Glancing at ravaged Yuan Magnetic Heaven—endless explosions, the kneeling Immortal Ascension ancestor.

Lu's lips curled slightly.

Chair turned; white robes billowed; he tossed the Dao Evolution Mirror lightly.

Behind, silver-gray light surged—soon engulfing him, vanishing into void.

Nihilicity Heaven.

Lu emerged; both ancient warships hovered quietly.

Silver-gray spatial energy dissipated.

All grew calm and harmonious.

Overlord and others aboard exhaled—relieved at unharmed Lu.

They returned alive.

This trial—undeniably thrilling, unique.

Seventeen total from two warships—invaded Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven, stirring storms, silencing worlds with slaughter.

Each gained much.

Insights in cultivation; breakthroughs in realm.

Most importantly: strength was truth. Strong enough—heaven and earth yielded.

“Return first.”

Lu glanced at crews, speaking slowly.

Overlord, Tang Yimo, and others bowed.

Then steered warships speeding toward Five Phoenixes.

Lu controlled Thousand-Bladed Chair—landing on a lifeless land.

Dead silent continent drifting quietly in Nihility Heaven—no vitality.

Hair whipping; white robes unchanged; leaning in chair, gazing beyond Nihility Heaven.

As though watching that silent yet terrifying battle.

Gu Mangran fought—but where, unknown.

Yet Lu sensed danger.

Time passed—days in a blink.

Void tore.

Ancient bloodstained coffin emerged—drifting quietly in Nihility Heaven.

One corner stained with blood—containing terrifying energy.

Gu Mangran rose from coffin—seemingly thinner; divine herb’s energy fully consumed.

“Ended.”

Blood-robed Gu Mangran—seeming to drip blood—smiled at Lu.

“Slain him?”

Lu asked.

“How? A Cloud Clan Sacred Ancestor... repelling suffices. Killing—with this withered body—impossible.”

Gu Mangran shook head, smiling.

“But this matter settled. Short term, Upper Realm won’t crusade Nihility Heaven.”

“Because of you, General?”

Lu gazed at Gu Mangran.

Since Upper Realm halted—likely Gu Mangran’s display deterred them.

“Where did you fight earlier? No fluctuations sensed.”

Lu asked curiously.

Gu Mangran sat in coffin, smiling—pointing beyond Nihilicity Heaven.

“Sacred Ancestor clashes too strong—full battle easily shatters continents, tears origins. Thus, rarely fight. When they do—tacitly beyond Nine Heavens.”

“Beyond—vast endless chaos. There... Sacred Ancestor power unleashed freely—no fear of destruction.”

Gu Mangran explained.

Beyond heavens?

Lu understood—why sensed battle yet unseen.

“Young Master Lu—this reckoning stripped over ten thousand Dao reserves from Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven. Fully integrated—Five Phoenixes leaps to Yan Four high-martial continent.”

Gu Mangran said.

“But sheer quantity—best fully converted to cultivators’ innate talent...”

“Otherwise—like moon in well—ripples shatter it.”

“Thus, Five Phoenixes needs rest, quiet transformation.”

Gu Mangran weary.

Lu caused too much trouble.

Without his intervention—Sacred Ancestor strike likely doomed Lu.

Lu nodded slightly, smiling.

This haul overflowing—no need for more trouble.

After feast—digest.

Fully absorb gains.

Besides—he, Lu Ping'an, truly disliked violence. His wish: pick chrysanthemums under eastern hedge,
leisurely view southern hills—a peace-loving Qi Refiner.

Seated in Thousand-Bladed Chair, Lu looked up—gaze beyond Nihilism Heaven.

Faintly,

many in Pingyang Heaven saw—bodies weakening.

Lu's deeds in Blood Evil Heaven and Yuan Magnetic Heaven terrified them.

Pingyang already weak—couldn't withstand such.

Light flashed.

Lu teleported back to Five Phoenixes.

Nihilty Heaven.

Bloodstained ancient coffin drifted.

Gu Mangran leaned on it.

Smile faded as Lu left.

“Is Five Phoenixes truly key to ‘imperial weapon’ emergence?”

“Stronger Five Phoenixes—closer to that dust-sealed ancient imperial weapon’s awakening?”

Gu Mangran exhaled.

Growing thinner.

No more dwelling.

Boom!

Coffin streaked.

Soon entering Five Phoenixes.

...

Upper Realm, vast continent.

Blood rain drizzled.

Hurrying Cloud Clan experts paled.

Recovering from meat paste, divine son led many—arriving to bloodied skies, thick bloody scent, raining crimson.

Such phenomenon... Sacred Ancestor bled?!

“No divine herbs left in Lower Three Heavens—all seized for clan. Blood-Robed Gu Mangran—vitality exhausted, half-buried—how oppose our Sacred Ancestor?!”

Divine son incredulous.

“No herb—how rival?!”

“Some clan secretly sent divine herb?!”

“Or Gu Mangran’s ally in Lower Three Heavens obtained immortal herb from Upper Realm?!”

Divine son’s eyes flickered.

Standing in blood rain, staring toward Nihilism Heaven.

There—he suffered great loss, humiliated in own imperial weapon—pounded to paste. Utter scandal.

News spread Upper Realm—his name a joke.

Thought this battle—slay Lu, massacre Five Phoenixes cultivators—vent fury.

Yet Sacred Ancestor acted—and bled.

Divine son hands clasped, gazing at two massive craters—eyes gleaming.

Five Phoenixes wielded such slaughter.

Gaze shifting to ravaged Yuan Magnetic Heaven and Blood Evil Heaven.

Suddenly expression changed.

Sensing overwhelming pressure descending.

Divine son knelt hastily.

“Greetings, Sacred Ancestor!”

Cloud Clan, arriving Dao Clan experts—all knelt.

Lofty Sacred Ancestor aura surged; profound words—like decree—echoed heaven and earth.

All listened.

Next, many expressions shifted drastically.

“Sacred Ancestor orders... seal Lower Three Heavens ascension to Upper Realm?!”

“Why?!”

Many puzzled.

Some confused, some excited—no opposition.

Sealing harmed Lower Three Heavens—Upper Realm unaffected, so indifferent.

Divine son raised head—shock turning to glee.

“Good seal!”

“Lower Three Heavens trash—ascending only adds Upper Realm trash!”

“Also cuts divine herb flow downward!”

...

Ravaged Yuan Magnetic Heaven and Blood Evil Heaven Holy Lords—expressions grim.

Five Phoenixes bullied excessively—they wanted to curse, but recalling Lu Ping’an’s arrow cratering Upper Realm continent—no curses left.

That white-robed, peerless youth.

Absolute ruthless.

Look at Hexagram and Black Magnetic Minor Worlds...

Once Yan Five—now declining after losing all Dao reserves. Soon Yan Six, then Yan Nine—even falling from high-martial...

Experts in both worlds planned exodus.

Boom boom boom!

Suddenly,

the torn vast Upper Realm continent began healing.

Dense immortal energy surged—fully retracting into Upper Realm. Many in Yuan Magnetic Heaven, Blood Evil Heaven, Pingyang Heaven stared at closing rift.

Suddenly!

Experts' pupils contracted.

After closure—chains began coiling in void.

“Chains? Why chains?!”

Yuan Magnetic Heaven—kneeling Black Magnetic Immortal Ascension ancestor looked up sharply—reflecting void chains.

“No!”

Boom!

He rose abruptly; single immortal energy soared.

Streaked into rainbow—crashing void.

Yet chains wove—dropping dreadful aura.

Pfft!

Terrifying might swept; he exploded into blood mist—hurled back to Black Magnetic continent.

Continent collapsed; countless cracks emerged.

“What a fine Upper Realm... fine Sacred Clans!”

He rose wretchedly from land.

Bloodied; once ethereal demeanor gone.

He laughed miserably.

Once-yearned Upper Realm—now fully sealed.

Upper Realm, called Immortal Realm...

“Immortal Realm closed—ascension severed! We Lower Three Heavens cultivators—no longer ascend!”

“No immortal energy—we Immortal Ascension stagnate! Ruthless Upper Realm!”

His wretched words echoed every corner of Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Blood Evil Heaven—Immortal Ascension ancestors roared in fury!

Boom boom boom!

Assaults soared; unwilling Immortal Transformation experts struck.

Yet assaults hit void—no ripple.

Dark void—like terrifying beast—mocking all.

Ascension path to Upper Realm... sealed!

Many Immortal Transformation, even Lower Three Heavens Immortal Ascension ancestors—stared blankly.

Losing ascension qualification.

Meant what?

Immortal Transformation couldn't refine energies into Immortal Ascension.

Immortal Ascension—no energies to refine; cultivation stalled.

Over time—Lower Three Heavens fully decline and fall.

Pingyang Heaven.

Great Venerable soared from pagoda.

Buddhist light burst—like great Buddha propping heaven and earth, standing mid-air—seeking palm-tear ascension path.

Futile.

Great Venerable fell back into pagoda.

Blood sprayed—staining robes; eyes ashen.

His life goal: elevate Little Thunderclap, half-step Immortal Ascension himself—refine energies, ascend Upper Realm—transcend.

Now path severed; Upper Realm gate closed—cutting his advancement.

Thunderbolt from clear skies.

...

Five Phoenixes.

Vast sea rose and fell.

Lu returned to Origin Lake sea—waves crashing giant whale; immortal islands drifting, immortal mists curling.

Both ancient warships hovered quietly on sea.

Figures shot from warships—landing solid islands.

“Young Master Lu.”

All bowed.

Lu regarded them—gentle smile.

“This trial—you all performed well. Strength elevated variably; even unchanged gained insights.”

“This trial—you upheld Five Phoenixes prestige, showed our spirit. With you—Five Phoenixes future prosperous.”

Lu smiled.

White Jade Pavilion—gentle breeze.

Lu raised hand—waving lightly.

Jade-like spiritual energy cups condensed—floating mid-air.

“This wine—victory toast.”

Lu smiled.

Gilded wine pot emerged.

Whoosh.

Cups floated before Lu; pot tilted—crystalline liquor poured like starry river—dazzling.

Origin Lake island—dense spiritual energy surged.

“Please.”

Lu gestured.

Cups streaked to each.

Overlord and others blinked—then grasped cups.

Liquor within—immensely alluring.

Starry gleam in cups—each entranced.

Young Master Lu personally poured!

“Thank you, Young Master Lu!”

Seventeen bowed with cups.

No poison fear—Lu wouldn’t; and if wished death—no need for tricks.

More likely—opportunity from Young Master Lu!

Glug glug!

Downed.

Bodies quaked abruptly.

Lu seated in Thousand-Bladed Chair—sipped his own.

Heavenly Immortal Brew—first taste; celebratory whim.

Into throat—initial ice, then fire.

Ice-fire duality wondrous.

Most importantly—liquor energy surged every corner—like cleansing body.

Refreshed entirely.

Lu opened eyes—gazing below.

Slight surprise.

All below—aura surging; black impurities exuded from pores.

“Heavenly Immortal Brew—marrow cleansing, alters aptitude!”

Lu’s eyes focused.

Useless to him—but to Five Phoenixes cultivators—immortal elixir.

Though Overlord and others tempered bodies to extreme, condensed golden body flowers—still impurities cleansed. Showed brew's dominance.

Exception: Lu Jiulian—post-drink, golden body, primordial spirit, Dao intent flowers bloomed—no thick impurities.

Lu smiled.

“This brew—excellent.”

Surprise in eyes.

Through cleansing—many aptitudes soared.

Breakthroughs easier henceforth.

“This Heavenly Immortal Brew—as reward for ‘time-reversal’ array trial. Those scoring fifty thousand points—gain one cup!”

Lu said.

Words fallen—kept half pot; remaining half streaked into vast mirror over sea.

“Thank you, Young Master Lu, for the grace!”

On island—all awoke; one cup left them tipsy.

Shocked at impurities—yet felt transformation.

Thanked Lu—then streaked away as lights.

After departure,

Lu—intending leisurely rest—felt heart stir.

Countless lights flashed before eyes.

Rows of system prompts popped rapidly.

Lu glanced—startled awake, energized.

Chapter 459: Crafting the Ascension Gate, the Human Emperor Seeks Immortality

“Congratulations to the host for completing the [Glory Mission]: During the Grand Competition, make the beings of the Five Phoenixes Minor World feel glory and mission, and contend with the heaven’s chosen of various sacred grounds.”

“Mission completion rating: Grade A.”

“Rewards obtained: Heavenly Dao Tree Seed ×1, Heaven-Absolving Array, Spiritual Artifact Upgrade Qualification ×1.”

White Jade Pavilion.

Lu sat calmly as lines of system prompts scrolled rapidly before his eyes.

The Heaven and Earth Grand Competition mission had finally been judged complete.

From beginning to now—so much had transpired.

Because of this Grand Competition, the Five Phoenixes had begun contacting Upper Realm forces.

“Grade A rating...”

Lu’s lips curved slightly—satisfied.

This Grand Competition had profoundly impacted his mindset; Lu himself had undergone massive transformation.

More than a glory mission—it was one of mindset change.

Originally, Lu felt out of place in the Five Phoenixes.

Always detached—like existing outside it, somewhat aloof.

If forced to analogize: Lu saw himself as a “game player”—alien to the world.

Coming here—merely a game.

But post-mission, Lu felt Five Phoenixes beings flesh-and-blood—real people. Their lives and deaths affected his emotions.

Even non-natives—like old predecessor Qi Liuja—willingly died for the Five Phoenixes.

All taught Lu much.

Eyes closed—everything experienced flashed by.

He exhaled slowly.

Reopened eyes.

System panel emerged.

Host: Lu

Title: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

Qi Refining Layers: 7

Spiritual Energy Reserves: 76,523,456 / 100,000,000 strands

Primordial Spirit Power: 999 (yuan)

Chaos Power: 120 (He)

World Rating: Five Phoenixes Minor World [High-Martial]

In short time, spiritual energy reserves nearly doubled—mostly from breakthroughs in the time-reversal giant mirror.

Under heavy pressure, some shone brilliantly.

No surprise to Lu.

Primordial spirit power hit 999 yuan—Lu raised brows; another bottleneck.

“Need to accelerate Qi refining.”

“Grand Competition ended—Five Phoenixes should develop steadily awhile...”

Lu murmured.

Constant troublemaking—unfitting.

This time, stripped ten thousand Dao reserves—plus undistributed system rewards.

Hm?

Suddenly, Lu paused.

“System, where are those undistributed Dao reserve rewards?”

Though only hundreds—every bit counted.

For Five Phoenixes’ strength, Lu truly worried endlessly.

“Given host collected ten thousand Dao reserves, drawable shares converted to reward: Heavenly Dao Tree Seed.”

System prompt appeared.

Lu blinked.

Leaning in Thousand-Bladed Chair—deep thought.

Drawable shares plus Grade A—converted to Heavenly Dao Tree Seed?

Heavenly Dao Tree... name alone domineering.

Lu grew curious about the reward.

But as he prepared to inspect,

more system prompts emerged.

“Ascension path severed, immortal gates closed, hope extinguished. Immortal Transformation to Immortal Ascension hopeless; Immortal Ascension no place to refine energies toward origin. Lower Three Heavens sink into despair abyss.”

“[Challenge Mission]: Host please craft Ascension Gate in Five Phoenixes—make Immortal Transformation and Immortal Ascension beings from Pingyang Heaven, Blood Evil Heaven, Yuan Magnetic Heaven willing to ascend.”

“Current ascensions—Immortal Transformation: 0/1000, Immortal Ascension: 0/10.”

Lines wheeled—Lu’s eyes gradually focused.

Originally upturned lips from rewards—stiffened.

“What kind of divine mission is this?!”

Lu speechless.

Challenge mission?

Craft Ascension Gate in Five Phoenixes?

Meaning—turn Five Phoenixes into an immortal realm for ascension?!

Lu laughed wryly.

Preparing Five Phoenixes to compete with Upper Realm for “business.”

Lower Three Heavens wailed endlessly—Lu sensed it. Many Immortal Transformation raged; Immortal Ascension ancestors roared at heavens.

Lu could see clearly if he wished.

Upper Realm sealed ascension—initially surprising to Lu, but likely fearing divine herb loss to Lower Three Heavens.

Thus, Lu crafting an Ascension Gate—allowing ascensions—equivalent to stealing food from Upper Realm mouths?

Sealed path would reopen instantly.

“Troublemaking rhythm again...”

“But... feasible.”

Lu narrowed eyes.

Troublemaking—no fear. Even enmity with Upper Realm—Lu unafraid?

Killed many Upper Realm Immortal Ascension experts already—so enmity not main hesitation.

“If successfully fuse ten thousand Dao reserves from Dao Evolution Mirror—Five Phoenixes elevates to Yan Four high-martial.”

“Yan Four—Upper Realm’s Five Heavens standard... roughly that.”

Lu narrowed eyes.

“Thus, first priority... inscribe ten thousand strands into Five Phoenixes origin!”

Crafting Ascension Gate, stealing from Upper Realm—set aside for now.

“Other two rewards: Heaven-Absolving Array and spiritual artifact upgrade qualification...”

Lu's gaze flickered. Heaven-Absolving Array stirred ripples in his heart.

He once mastered Heaven-Covering Array—defensive, blocked much slaughter for Five Phoenixes.

Heaven-Absolving Array—from same source.

One of the “Four Heaven-Punishing Arrays.”

“Heaven-Absolving Array: Killing array, Heaven-tier grade—specific tier depends on array eye strength.”

Killing array?

Lu narrowed eyes. Heaven-Covering merely Earth-tier defensive.

This time—killing array!

“Wonder... if deployed, with killing array might—could it slay a Sacred Ancestor?”

Lu pondered.

In Yuan Magnetic Heaven, mere aura from Upper Realm Sacred Ancestor showed Lu no match now.

Pressure too great.

Perhaps...

Lu felt—Qi Refining ninth or tenth layer needed to fight Sacred Ancestor level.

Last reward.

“Spiritual artifact upgrade qualification...”

Lu murmured.

Seemingly low prestige—but most practical, straightforward for him.

Hum...

Raised hand.

Phoenix Feather Sword and Spiritual Pressure Chessboard floated out.

[Phoenix Feather Sword] Heaven-tier Low Grade.

[Spiritual Pressure Chessboard] Heaven-tier Low Grade.

Lu regarded both. Chessboard originally Earth-tier—but nurtured by Lu, upgraded to Heaven-tier.

Growth-type from start—followed Lu at merely Xuan-tier low grade.

When Lu Qi Refining second layer.

Now seventh—chessboard Heaven-tier.

“Thus... which artifact to upgrade?”

Lu pondered.

Finally stored Phoenix Feather Sword.

Chose chessboard—mainly because, as master refiner now, crafting sword Heaven-tier artifacts not hard.

If Phoenix Feather insufficient...

Remelt.

But chessboard-type artifacts—Lu less certain.

Seemingly started Xuan-tier—now matched Phoenix Feather might.

“Hum...”

Using qualification,

faint light flashed over Spiritual Pressure Chessboard.

Then reverted to plain ancient look.

But Lu sensed... now terrifyingly formidable!

[Spiritual Pressure Chessboard] Heaven-tier High Grade—possesses “domain” release ability; within domain, spiritual pressure amplified tenfold.

Viewing description,

Lu slightly stunned—hadn’t expected post-upgrade chessboard so fearsome.

Domain release!

“Not bad.”

Lu satisfied—this boost worthwhile.

Chessboard alone—massive leap in strength from before.

Retrieved chess box; Lu rolled sleeves, leisurely placing pieces.

...

Boom!

Beyond Five Phoenixes.

Dense mist swirled; Heaven-Covering Array reactivated. Massive sundial hovered; time river surged, rapidly sweeping around Five Phoenixes.

Now, Pingyang Heaven, Blood Evil Heaven, Yuan Magnetic Heaven—Lower Three Heavens in utter chaos.

Upper Realm sealed ascension—devastating blow to Immortal Transformation and Ascension beings.

Yet none dared question Upper Realm.

All knew: Upper Realm Sacred Clans never regarded Lower Three Heavens beings highly—always overlooking from above.

Sealing ascension—like closing backyard gate.

Yuan Magnetic Heaven—Immortal Transformation tried ascending.

Body exploded by Upper Realm; primordial spirit nearly slain—barely surviving, falling to dust.

Upper Realm sealed gates—not even dog hole left.

Many high-martial worlds in Lower Three Heavens—wails everywhere.

Five Phoenixes ignored.

Lu reactivated Heaven-Covering Array, operated time array—Five Phoenixes entered “ears deaf to outside, focused humble development” phase.

...

Five Phoenixes continent.

Buzhou Peak.

Peak summit—spring year-round; flowers bloomed endlessly, breathtaking.

On blue stone, girl Zhu Long sat eyes closed; legs together; holding long flute, playing slowly. Melodious notes lingered atop peak.

Suddenly.

Silver-gray light flashed.

Wheels crushed fallen leaves—figure appeared on summit.

Lu in Thousand-Bladed Chair; white robes fluttering—arrived atop Buzhou Peak.

Flute notes ceased abruptly.

Joy lit Zhu Long's pretty face.

"Daddy!"

Zhu Long teleported beside Lu—no wind stirred.

“Good—cultivation improved again.”

Lu sensed powerful aura within Zhu Long—smiled.

Zhu Long shyly smiled; cute dimples bloomed.

Lu raised hand—palm held seed radiating seven-colored brilliance.

Next,

Lu smiled.

Tossed seed lightly.

It streaked into light—flying horizon.

“Planning to plant a tree—visiting you incidentally.”

Lu said.

Seed fell lightly—like floating fluff—slowly sinking into soil.

Hearing “incidentally”—Zhu Long’s heart dimmed slightly, disappointed.

Suddenly,

earth quaked; vast energy rippled across Five Phoenixes.

Then,

soil parted; tender sprout grew—raging like flood beast!

One zhang, ten, hundred, thousand, ten thousand!

Soon!

Trunk towered ten thousand zhang; dense green leaves flourished; mysterious fluctuations spread.

“This is Heavenly Dao Tree—irrigated with chaos power; now merely sapling...”

Lu smiled.

“Sense the profound meanings spreading from tree—beneficial to you.”

Lu said.

Zhu Long’s heart rejoiced instantly. As expected—she Daddy’s favorite child.

Planting such treasure beside her—for her cultivation!

Turning back—Lu already gone; only faint silver-gray spatial profound lingered.

Wind blew.

Rustle rustle.

Heavenly Dao Tree leaf drifted—landing in Zhu Long’s palm.

Hum...

In wind,

ten-thousand-zhang tree seemed to hum profound Dao sounds.

Zhu Long's understanding of innate divine ability—grew clearer.

Northern region—sudden towering tree.

Countless cultivators sensed mighty heaven-earth fluctuations.

Rushed over.

Overlord, Tang Yimo, Du Longyang, and others landed beneath.

Sensed mysterious fluctuations—their Dao intent comprehension steadily rose!

Tianji Pavilion soon messaged world via Tianji Pigeons.

Pigeons—repeatedly selected and bred—now streaked like meteors.

Messages lightning-fast.

“This is Heavenly Dao Tree?!”

“Heavenly Dao Tree releases Dao sounds—aiding Dao intent comprehension?!”

Tianji Pavilion announced—world shocked.

Such treasure—Five Phoenixes’ fortune!

Dao intent comprehension—immensely difficult; even with Dao steles—arduous.

Now Heavenly Dao Tree—besides steles, another way. Cultivators rejoiced.

News spread—countless rushed north to behold.

Centered on tree—dense seated cultivators.

Sensing profound Dao sounds—hearts calm, spirits serene.

Of course, nearby Buzhou Peak—still feared as forbidden ground.

After all, Demon Girl's name—still world-shaking.

...

Five Phoenixes, origin space.

Lu drew Dao Evolution Mirror.

Now fully erased Upper Realm will within—mastered by him.

Functional Heaven-tier artifact—though niche—convenient for Dao reserve transport.

Inscribing himself—tedious and boring.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Under primordial spirit release,

mirror projected beams.

Impacting vortex-like Five Phoenixes origin—inscribing strand by strand.

As inscription proceeded...

Heavenly Dao Tree began bearing “Dao Intent Fruits.”

When first “Dao Intent Fruit” fell—Lu understood reward’s immense value!

First fruit dropped—streaked into light, darting wildly.

Under countless gazes—hovered before obscure Great Xuan Academy Nascent Soul student.

Instantly spotlighted—he ate fruit.

Instantly comprehended Dao intent—though fifth-sequence... this scene shook entire Five Phoenixes!

Originally Dao intent required comprehension; eating fruit guaranteed it.

Lu's stripped ten thousand strands—fed back to Five Phoenixes this way!

Dao Evolution Mirror in origin space—leisurely inscribing.

Lu happily idle.

Left origin space—let mirror inscribe slowly; Five Phoenixes gradually transformed—gentle, subtle; over time—ever stronger.

Returned to lake island.

Teleported Aru and Gongshu Yu off.

Island now only Lu, Ni Yu, Nie Changqing, lurking Yi Yue in shadows, and Little Yinglong backstroking in Origin Lake.

Chose seclusion again—with Ni Yu and others; giant whale carried immortal island—vanishing into vast sea. World no longer found White Jade Pavilion.

Secluded researching and crafting Ascension Gate—how to entice—no, make Lower Three Heavens Immortal Transformation and Ascension beings willingly ascend... Five Phoenixes.

Difficulty considerable.

After all—system-called [Challenge Mission]—not trivial.

...

Time trickled.

Eighty years passed in blink.

To cultivators—eighty years nothing; to mortals—a lifetime.

Great Xuan Calendar year 100.

Historians recorded: Northern region Buzhou Peak side—ten-thousand-zhang tree appeared; heavenly phenomenon protected Great Xuan.

Human Emperor Dantai He traveled; held grand sacrifice beneath divine tree.

Many cultivators welcomed.

Year 110.

Western Liang—sky-piercing light; three flowers bloomed in heavens; domineering figure stood between heaven and earth.

Western Liang great cultivator—Overlord Xiang Shaoyun—entered Heavenly Human realm.

Human Emperor personally visited Western Liang—congratulated.

Unofficial histories: Human Emperor invited Overlord to govern Qishi Mansion; Overlord refused again.

...

Year 150.

Human Emperor Dantai He showed initial age; entered Qishi Mansion—seeking immortality method.

Yet Qishi Mansion cultivators—helpless.

Emperor raged; purged many useless cultivators.

Minister suggested establishing crown prince—poking sore spot; Emperor killed minister on spot—court terrified; dared not mention again.

Unwilling to age, Emperor sent envoys overseas—seek... White Jade Pavilion.

Year 160.

Emperor increasingly aged; hair graying. Despite many alchemists' pills—aging unrelenting.

Coincided with decade-sailing envoy group seeking White Jade Pavilion immortal traces—returned empty-handed.

Emperor personally greeted at port—suffered massive blow. That day, decade envoys imprisoned.

Aged Emperor frantically sought immortality—all futile.

Same year, Qishi Mansion cultivator entered imperial capital; personally met Emperor—suggested demon race demon crystals not cultivation path; but essence could extend life, grant immortality.

Emperor denounced—imprisoned cultivator in dungeon.

Year 161.

One imperial decree—flew to Demon Continent.

Chapter 460: To Hell with Your Immortality

Seeking immortality, begging for immortality.

To mortals, immortality was the ultimate temptation.

The more prosperous the world, the harder for mortals to let go—their yearning and craving for eternal life burned like wildfire in their hearts, boundless.

The Human Emperor was mortal—a pure mortal.

Unable to cultivate, untouched by immortal fate. Though free from illness, pain, and disaster in life... he could not resist death, could not seek immortality.

Great Xuan Calendar year 161.

Amid worldwide uproar, Human Emperor Dantai He personally drafted the decree in the imperial capital—imperial order sent to Western Regions' Demon Continent.

The decree's exact contents—unknown to the world.

Only known: that day, Demon Continent quaked; terrifying auras spread!

“Get lost!”

In vast deserts, a Demon King faced east—roaring. Voice like thunder, stirring oases sinking and rising; whipping desert into heaven-shaking sandstorms—like tornadoes churning earth.

That day.

Beyond Tianhan Pass.

Cultivators stood atop walls, gazing afar.

Westward—sandstorms rolled, slamming Tianhan Pass towers. Endless yellow sand buried half the gates in soil.

“Human race... bully demons too far!”

Low voice exploded—crashing towers, spiderwebbing cracks densely.

“We respect Human Emperor Dantai Xuan—surviving in Western deserts, never encroaching human lands one bit. But don’t think demon race good-tempered!”

Cold voice laced with dreadful killing intent.

“One imperial decree—demanding Demon King carve flesh, bleed, gouge demon crystal? Treat demon race as platter?!”

Terrifying voice struck.

Storm's Demon King grew angrier.

Yet endured—streaking into light, vanishing in endless desert.

Atop Tianhan Pass.

Soldiers wide-eyed—already drenched in cold sweat.

The Demon King's aura just now... bred boundless fear.

Demon race... seemed far stronger than before!

Tianhan Pass defending cultivators paled.

Never imagined Emperor ordering gouging a Demon King's crystal?

Such demand—like digging one's heart!

“Outrageous!”

Defending cultivator raged—soaring skyward, streaking to imperial capital.

Tianhan Pass half-buried in sand news—spread swiftly through Great Xuan dynasty.

Deep in imperial capital palaces.

Dantai He hands clasped; dragon robes draped. Temples graying; skin lusterless—increasingly aged; deep wrinkles etched face.

He aged.

Like his imperial father—frail in twilight years.

Eunuch rushed in—relaying Tianhan Pass news.

Dantai He sat by brazier—warming fire; calmly hearing eunuch’s report.

As Human Emperor years—immense pressure emanated.

“Oh... demon race refused.”

Dantai He calm—smiling; wrinkles twitching.

“Demons generally longer-lived than humans—surely due to demon crystals; energy within nourishing bodies...”

“Rumors: Western lands—remnants of old Black Dragon Cult and Marton Dynasty—dug demon crystals for cultivation; using them formed another system—called ‘divine grid’ system.”

“Long lives—easily hundreds of years...” Emperor murmured.

Eunuchs knelt—trembling, unmoving.

Dantai He stood.

Barefoot on floorboards—gazing overcast skies.

“Today’s mountains and rivers—how magnificent; people live in peace and work happily; cultivation civilization highly prosperous...”

“This a golden age?”

“One I forged—my achievements no less than imperial father’s...”

Dantai He spread hands; disheveled gray-white hair whipped in wind.

Eunuchs knelt—content as audience.

“With such great deeds—seeking immortality forbidden?”

Dantai He lowered head.

Eyes closed—heart surging.

High position—inner changes inevitable. Once—he wished emulate Dantai Xuan—outstanding Human Emperor.

Labor heart and blood for world peace.

But he found—he couldn't be as carefree. Nearing death—greater panic.

“This world... countless cultivators—not without immortality. Why denied to me?!”

Eyes snapped open.

Dantai He's gaze sharp.

As though questioning heaven and earth.

...

Dawn's light tore earth's calm; sunlight surged like tides.

Great Xuan imperial capital—daily morning court.

Aged Emperor in dragon robes—imposing; step by step ascending dragon throne.

Hundred officials respectful.

A great scholar detailed Tianhan Pass defender's report of demon race defiance—court uproar rising and falling.

Scholar advised Emperor abandon gouging Demon King crystal.

High on throne, Human Emperor Dantai He gazed level—authority without anger.

“Demon race—sealed in Demon Continent by late Emperor. Ages passed; late Emperor said well: different clans, different hearts...”

“Today demon race developed century in Demon Continent—grown to what extent? Still obey Great Xuan rule? Threaten dynasty peace and harmony?”

“Demons—beasts gaining wisdom; called demons. Blood flows beast nature—ultimately savage and brutal.”

“Thus, my decree: from today, Demon Continent taxes triple; annual tributes add ten demon crystals.”

Dantai He declared.

Words fallen.

Court uproar.

Scholars knelt—crying impossible; but Emperor sleeved away.

Full court officials exchanged glances—sensing bloody storm.

Imperial capital news spread swiftly.

Like cold wind blowing into Tianhan Pass's Demon Continent.

Boom!

In Demon Continent.

Demon King claws crushed decree; cold aura spread.

“Tax hike understandable—why tributes require demon crystals?!”

Demon King raged.

Even old deceased demons’ crystals—touched reverse scale.

“Humans bully demons too far!”

Great Xuan Calendar year 161.

Demon race rejected imperial order; severely wounded messenger cultivator—tossed back to Tianhan Pass.

World commoners heard—fury burned.

Streets everywhere—tales of demon injuries and cannibalism.

Great Xuan dynasty enveloped in demon-extermination storm.

Year 162.

Emperor ordered: Great Xuan iron cavalry exit Tianhan—conquer Demon Continent demons!

Historians recorded: Great Xuan dynasty's second Demon Continent conquest. First—late Emperor Dantai Xuan led army; crushed demons into submission.

...

When Great Xuan iron cavalry strode through sandstorms.

Demon race raged; beast roars echoed everywhere; auras soared.

Yet Demon Kings suppressed clamor.

Unwilling war with Great Xuan dynasty—sent demon envoy to negotiate.

Yet envoy barely left Demon Continent—pierced by powerful arrow; slain on spot.

Great Xuan dynasty peaceful too long—no wars years; many cultivators itched. Now conquest chance—ennoble and prime here—who not excited?!

No tolerance left—no need tolerate.

Demon Kings coldly ordered; vastly expanded Demon Continent stirred; dark clouds rolled.

Dense demon race mounted beasts—charged from Demon Continent.

Great Xuan iron cavalry and Demon Continent army's first clash.

Great Xuan dynasty versus demon race war—truly erupted.

When all Great Xuan subjects felt mighty divine Great Xuan iron cavalry surely flatten Demon Continent easily.

Frontline news returned...

Great Xuan iron cavalry routed like avalanche; countless casualties—demons pressed to Tianhan Pass.

News returned.

Entire Great Xuan dynasty quaked like earthquake.

Emperor incredulous—Great Xuan iron cavalry world's strongest—defeated?

Emperor raged; dispatched Qishi Mansion cultivators to Tianhan Pass.

Nascent Soul, Infant Transformation cultivators joined battlefield.

Shifted tide.

Yet demon race developed century—no longer weak as before; now seemingly stronger beyond imagination.

Battle bloody; many Qishi Mansion cultivators died miserably.

Great Xuan dynasty versus demon race—defeated again.

This news shook not only mortal realm—but cultivation world!

Demon race this strong?!

Great Xuan dynasty—some scholars originally disagreeing with Emperor's methods—trembled inwardly.

Such powerful demons—if invaded unprepared Great Xuan—casualties dire; consequences unthinkable!

Thus, demon-human war fully unfolded!

Even escalating—pulling cultivation world in.

...

Deep vast ocean.

Massive vortex center—steam soared; dense vapor whipped skies.

Seawater boiled; at vortex heart, giant whale floated—bearing immortal island.

White Jade Pavilion atop.

Yet compared to perilous ocean— island utterly peaceful.

Lu sat upon; eyes flickering scenes— Great Xuan dynasty versus demon race war.

Lu shook head—no surprise.

As though long foreseen war between human and demon race.

“After all—only one Dantai Xuan.”

“Demons hold immense benefits—human and demon ultimately cannot develop peacefully.”

Lu leaned in Thousand-Bladed Chair.

Yet no intent to intervene—collision bred growth.

Before—he wouldn't allow; after all, Nine Prisons Reincarnation imperfect then—souls scattered to Nine Heavens upon death; energy loss.

Now—with Dantai Xuan guarding Nine Prisons—souls reincarnated upon death.

Energy cycled within Five Phoenixes—so Lu no longer worried loss.

Thus, let them war mutually.

As for genocide risk—as long as Heavenly Human like Overlord abstained—unlikely; Lu ignored.

Withdrew focus.

Lu rolled sleeves—placing pieces on Spiritual Pressure Chessboard; games increasingly profound—black-white pieces crisscrossing like universe turning.

Of course—placing while thinking.

“Ascension Gate?”

“Making Lower Three Heavens cultivators accept and willingly ascend—not easy.”

“These Immortal Transformation and Ascension beings ascend for what? Naturally immortal energies— with them refine five energies; charge five energies toward origin realm.”

“Thus—to make them acknowledge and accept ascension—must craft realm with immortal energies.”

Lu pinched piece.

Immortal energies—what?

Per Gu Mangran: immortal energies—similar to chaos power; slightly weaker.

Thus, Lu could dilute chaos power with spiritual energy to formulate immortal energies.

Thought—done.

No need preaching platform; Lu raised hand—chaos power surfaced in palm.

Milky chaos power—converted from Dao reserves.

One strand—one He chaos power.

Primordial spirit controlled chaos power rapid spin—palm vortex; endless spiritual energy gathered—coiling in palm.

Lake island—anomaly emerged.

Cultivating Nie Changqing—breath increasingly ethereal—slowly opened eyes.

Boom!

Island exploded.

Ni Yu face cat-black; smoke spewing—ran from alchemy pavilion.

Another furnace explosion.

Glancing coiling spiritual energy—long accustomed; these years, Young Master often tinkered.

Each time Young Master tampered spiritual energy—with Nie Changqing and Ni Yu's strength—clearly sensed odd additions.

Of course—beneficial to cultivation—so asked nothing.

Alchemy continued; comprehension continued.

Ni Yu and Nie Changqing resumed own affairs.

Lake island—countless flowers swayed; lively; Skyfacing Chrysanthemums and Biluo Peaches bloomed ever brilliantly.

Boom!

Finally, palm's rapid energy exploded abruptly.

Next, strands pure misty immortal energies coiled around him.

“This mature immortal energy—chaos power and spiritual energy mixed precise ratio; purer than Immortal Ascension refined spiritual energy.”

Lu's eyes lit.

Immortal energies formulated—next... crafting ascension land no longer impossible.

Of course—Lu accepting mission—not purely altruistic.

Ascension land—not merely for Lower Three Heavens cultivators—but Five Phoenixes ones.

Ascension land naturally controlled by Five Phoenixes cultivators.

“Crafting ascension land—besides immortal energies—need reasons convincing Lower Three Heavens cultivators to willingly ascend.”

Lu wreathed in immortal energies; gaze flickered.

Looked to Nihility Heaven.

Eyes like time river flowing.

He saw—ancient Nihility Heaven glory.

“Ascension land—to attract them—perhaps use ancient Nihilism Heaven glory as hook.”

Lu smiled.

Ancient Nihilism Heaven glory—Lu unknown.

No need know deeply; let ascenders glimpse corner secret—willingly ascend.

Ascension land history—let Lu fabricate.

Lu pinched bronze cup; sipped Heavenly Immortal Brew—liquor down throat; pores relaxed.

Finished.

Mind stirred.

Next—in preaching platform.

Boom!

Eight Trigrams array words surfaced.

Countless array words dropped; heaven's corner—back-facing all beings figure appeared.

None other than ancient Great Emperor "Hao"—creator Nine Character Array Words.

"Hm—using ancient Great Emperor as spokesperson—most fitting."

Lu smiled.

Of course—not enough.

Other Great Emperors—Lu unseen; but mind held many mythical figures.

Boom!

Chaos power rolled; collided spiritual energy—heaven and earth chaos.

Stalwart figure tore chaos—one side sank; one rose.

Sinking became Five Phoenixes land—mountains, rivers, lakes, blessed lands.

Rising—ascension land; dense immortal energies shrouded mystery.

This rising—Lu's crafted ascension land.

Lu flickered—landing within; like above clouds.

Continued building with Eight Trigrams array words; five elements surged; origin power churned—
copying vast continent modeled on Five Phoenixes...

This continent inextricably linked to Five Phoenixes.

Shared world origin.

Lu streaked floating over continent.

Waved—peak rose; pitch-black like ink. Lu struck chaos powers—etching ancient Great Emperor “Hao” figure inside black peak.

Dropped time river—enveloping peak in time power; eerie.

“Ascension land—cannot be ordinary; eerier better.”

Lu smiled.

Rested—awaiting energy recovery.

Resumed building forbidden zones.

One forbidden zone—auras no weaker than ancient Great Emperor “Hao.” In fact—Lu only glimpsed one ancient Great Emperor in time river.

Thus “Hao” Emperor template—building one after another majestic existences with grand pasts.

Such ascension land—surely attract Lower Three Heavens Immortal Transformation and Ascension beings.

Forbidden zones rose—some long extinguished; depths mighty remnants drifted.

Some still mysterious—full of enthralling profound truths.

Of course—ancient Great Emperor “Hao” forbidden zone most prominent.

Additionally—Lu built ruins.

Collapsed immortal gates; shattered plaques; remnant structures—telling former grandeur.

This—Immortal Court ruins.

Lu smiled.

Ascension land rough form—gradually taking shape.

...

Five Phoenixes continent.

Demon-human war—fully pulling century-peaceful Five Phoenixes into clamor.

Warfire swept land—from west to east—all battlefields of demon and human armies.

Initially—after Great Xuan iron cavalry and Qishi Mansion defeats.

Human Emperor Dantai He ordered cultivation world cultivators intervene.

Initially cultivation world ignored.

After all—to cultivators—cultivation paramount.

Yet as some sect juniors brainwashed—hot-blooded joined battlefield; died to demons—many elders moved.

Warfire extended to cultivation world.

Emperor sensed severity; personally visited thatched cottage—invited reclusive Xue Tao.

Xue Tao gazed aged Emperor—somewhat unfamiliar.

He remained youthful; Emperor decrepit.

“Your Majesty... this last thing this old minister does for you.”

“After—this old minister no longer meddles Great Xuan affairs.”

Xue Tao gazed Dantai He.

Dantai He stunned—ultimately agreed.

He craved immortality!

Seeing youthful, vital Xue Tao—craving deepened.

Xue Tao—regret flashed.

Finally acted.

Century bitter cultivation; slaughter in giant mirror—now Xue Tao entered Fortune Venerable level.

Sole Fortune Venerable joining human-demon war—easily turned tide.

Xue Tao speared Yang God demon king; stripped crystal—gave Dantai He.

Boom!

After Xue Tao acted—deep Demon Continent.

Gifted Demon Monkey King acted.

Staff swept—battled Xue Tao in wilderness. Fortune Venerable Xue Tao—blood drenched desert; beaten miserably.

“Demon and human—because you acted—no reconciliation possible!”

Demon Monkey King cold.

Staff swept down.

Earth collapsed.

Unbeknownst when—Lu Jiulian appeared; blocked iron staff.

Xue Tao blood-soaked; knelt desert—guilty deep glance at Demon Monkey King; limped vanishing in sandstorm.

This battle.

Seemed declaring human-demon war ended.

Yet though war ended—cracks between human and demon; Demon Continent split from Great Xuan dynasty.

Great Xuan imperial capital.

Deep palaces.

Dantai He barefoot sat quiet corridor; holding bloodied demon crystal.

Crystal reflected light—enchanted hues; but cracked—Xue Tao’s shattering marks.

Crack crack...

Dantai He clenched fiercely—wanting crush.

Even cracked—he clenched hard.

Finally—crystal shattered.

Whoosh...

Thick liquid dripped—filling golden bowl.

Dantai He hands trembled; lifted bowl—full hope; drank dry.

Golden bowl fell—clear ring.

Dantai He walked steps—to mirror.

Gazing aged, twilight self—wrinkled; unchanged.

Suddenly madly laughed.

Laughing—laughing; abdominal pain twisted; spewed black blood—staining mirror.

“Immortality...”

“To hell with your immortality!”

...

Great Xuan Calendar year 166.

Human-demon war lasted four years—ended; Emperor took Demon King crystal; gravely ill five days.

Same year—Emperor hopeless for immortality; established crown prince.

