

Starlit Path 471

Chapter 471: A Century Among Mortals

The greatest hermits hide in the bustling city; the lesser ones retreat to the wild.

Lu suppressed his cultivation, becoming an ordinary man once more. He wheeled himself into Nanjiang City, hands turning the rims of his chair.

He moved slowly through its streets.

Compared to the serene isolation of Lake Heart Island, Nanjiang—the largest city in the southern prefecture—throbbed with the raw, unmatched vitality of everyday life.

Under the rule of the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty these past years, mortals and cultivators had been almost entirely segregated. Ordinary people knew cultivators existed, but rarely encountered them.

Thus, mortal life remained simple and unadorned.

Lu had originally planned to start in Nanjiang and wander across the entire Five Phoenixes Continent.

Yet this time, something stirred within him upon entering the city. He decided to settle here instead, spending mortal silver and gold to purchase a small shop.

It was a place long gathering dust, aged and forgotten. Its previous owner had been an elderly woodcarver, and the interior was still cluttered with countless small carved trinkets.

After buying it from the merchant, Lu tidied up a little but left the wood carvings untouched.

Living as a mortal in Nanjiang City, he immersed himself in the dust and clamor of the human world.

From the moment he first appeared in the Five Phoenixes, Lu had stood at the pinnacle. He had never truly tasted the ordinary.

Now, at last, he could quiet his heart and experience it.

In the Yuan Magnetic Heaven, the killing formation continued to churn.

The Absolute Heaven Array was a heavenly-tier slaughter formation. With Lu's Thousand-Bladed Chair as its core, its destructive power had become utterly terrifying.

Once activated, the invading army from the Upper Realm was doomed to annihilation.

Lu did not bother to check.

He did not even dispel the array.

The Heavenly Gate vanished.

The region within the Yuan Magnetic Heaven remained shrouded in the rolling formation, now a forbidden domain.

Occasionally, cultivators from the Yuan Magnetic Heaven would glance over and glimpse a sea of blood within, corpses tumbling in crimson waves.

Terrified, they fled in panic.

Was anyone still alive inside?

No one knew, for no one dared enter to find out.

Most likely, no one had survived.

News that the Upper Realm's conquest army had been trapped and destroyed spread like wildfire through the Lower Three Heavens.

Soon, it reached the Upper Realm.

The Yun Clan and Dao Clan were horrified.

They dispatched powerful experts to descend and investigate outside the formation.

The fearsome array still radiated a dreadful aura, crisscrossed with lethal intent.

“This is a peerless murderous formation. It will take at least a decade for its malice to dissipate,” one of the Upper Realm experts declared gravely.

They suspected survivors might remain inside but dared not conclude it.

The investigators soon returned and reported back to their clans.

The powerhouses of the Yun and Dao Clans flew into a rage.

The Yun Clan petitioned their Saint Ancestor to intervene and break the array.

Boom!

The skies above the Yuan Magnetic Heaven darkened as a terrifying presence blanketed the firmament.

A colossal shadow that blotted out sun and moon appeared—the Yun Clan’s Saint Ancestor, manifesting once more.

With supreme methods, he seemed to reverse heaven and earth.

His gaze flickered as visions unfolded before him: the peerless killing array in motion, the ferocious beast atop the Heavenly Gate awakening.

One after another, the invading cultivators of the Upper Realm perished in agony, rivers of blood flowing, the scenes brutal beyond measure.

Yet the Saint Ancestor remained unmoved.

His eyes blazed with divine light, piercing through the formation toward the Heavenly Gate beyond.

Boom!

His aura erupted.

The Heavenly Gate—which only ascendants could summon—materialized within the killing array.

Creak...

As though pushed by an immense force, the gate slowly swung open, revealing the realm beyond.

The Saint Ancestor's radiant gaze bored straight through, seeking the land of ascension.

He beheld a pitch-black mountain and a solitary figure with his back turned.

Suddenly, a chill ran down the Saint Ancestor's spine.

As the Yun Clan's ancient progenitor who had lived countless ages, he had once personally witnessed that Great Emperor's silhouette.

He still remembered those days when he was merely an insignificant member of the clan, gazing in awe at that back...

The Saint Ancestor withdrew his gaze.

He did not dare act rashly against the formation. It was highly likely connected to that Great Emperor.

The Saint Ancestor retreated and returned to the Upper Realm.

The oppressive atmosphere over the Yuan Magnetic Heaven finally eased.

The cultivators of the Upper Realm were stunned. Even the Saint Ancestor refused to break the array?

Whatever terror lurked within must be something even he feared...

Thus, the killing formation in the Yuan Magnetic Heaven endured, awaiting its natural dissipation.

...

On the Five Phoenixes Continent.

Lu had worried the Upper Realm's saintly clans might forcibly shatter the array, but the Saint Ancestor had been scared off outright.

He chuckled, then put the matter out of his mind.

Nanjiang City lay in the south, where misty rains were common.

After taking over the shop, Lu did not open for business immediately. He lived leisurely, brewing tea outside each day and watching the ever-changing weather along the long street.

At first, his aura remained ethereal. Though he had concealed his cultivation and appeared mortal, the bearing forged by years at the apex could not be fully erased.

The neighbors in the alley kept their distance, assuming he was some young master from a great household.

Several months passed like this. He bought chess sets from merchants, set out a few tables, and tidied the shop. Thus, an unremarkable chess hall opened its doors.

Mortal years flowed like clear mountain spring water—plain and mild, yet carrying a subtle sweetness that seeped into the heart.

Few customers visited Lu's chess hall; one could say almost none came.

He was in no hurry. Little by little, he shed the last traces of his former presence, fully transforming into an ordinary man.

At first the neighbors had sensed something aloof about him, like the son of a general from the capital or even a noble prince.

But as time passed, they realized Master Lu was cold in manner yet no different from them.

Occasionally neighbors would drop by to chat and crack melon seeds.

Lu never turned them away; he smiled and conversed warmly.

Time slipped by, and Lu seemed to forget he had ever been a cultivator, gradually melting into mortal life.

Business at the chess hall remained poor. Mostly a handful of terrible local players gathered to challenge one another, occasionally turning red-faced and nearly coming to blows over a single move.

Lu simply basked in the warm sun at the doorstep, sipping hot tea.

From time to time, shopkeepers from nearby stores would chat with him and, seeing how empty his hall was, offer a few business tips.

Lu would listen, smile, and say nothing.

After growing familiar, the alley children began clustering around him.

Unknowingly, every trace of ethereal aura had vanished from Lu; he had become truly ordinary, and even children dared approach.

Children are naturally curious. They pestered him to teach them chess.

Lu did not refuse. Teaching them brought him quiet joy.

Time flew.

The alley children grew up, scattered by the demands of livelihood, and rarely returned to play.

Those who did come carried the weary exhaustion of life.

They sought Lu only to talk; chess had become a luxury for refined folk.

“I really envy Uncle Lu. More than ten years and he hasn’t aged a day. We’ll all be old while he stays the same,” one of the grown children joked.

The casual remark made Lu pause, lost in thought.

After that, he began controlling his appearance, aging naturally like any mortal.

In the alley, former children married and had families of their own; elders reached the end of their spans and passed away.

Lu sat before his chess hall, watching birth, aging, illness, and death unfold like an endless cycle.

Yet no matter what, the chess hall remained open.

Rain or shine.

As the years accumulated, regular customers gradually increased.

Nanjiang was, after all, the greatest city in the south. Many scholars studied the Way of Chess deeply, and because the legendary Lord of White Jade Capital was said to love the game, a strong chess culture had flourished across the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty, producing numerous national masters.

Occasionally, Lu's hall would even fill to capacity.

He spent his days sipping tea and gained a new pastime: watching customers play and listening to their idle talk.

Of course, he sometimes played against them himself.

To this day, Lu had never lost a single game.

Word spread.

The reputation of Lu's chess hall grew.

Mortal years rush by like fleeting water, never to return.

Deep into the night.

Dim candlelight flickered inside the hall.

Lu sat in his wooden wheelchair, now showing clear signs of age—beard hanging from his chin, wrinkles gathering on his face.

Across from him, a young chess enthusiast racked his brain for the next move.

A large crowd of chess lovers surrounded them, holding their breath in silence.

“Sigh... I am in awe of Boss Lu’s skill,” the young player finally said with a wry smile, returning the piece in his fingers to the bowl.

Lu stroked his beard.

“A narrow victory by one piece.”

“Closing time, closing time... It’s late. Everyone head home,” Lu announced.

The onlookers bid him goodnight, still debating the game as they left.

Lu lifted his candle and looked curiously at the young player who remained.

“Aren’t you leaving?”

“It’s late. If you want another game, come back tomorrow.”

To his surprise, the young man dropped to his knees before him.

“Boss Lu, please take me as your disciple! I wish to study chess under you!”

Lu laughed softly and stroked his beard again. “My skill is hardly worthy of elegant halls—just a rustic villager’s play. If you want to learn, seek out a true national master.”

The young man shook his head, eyes burning. “Boss Lu’s skill is unfathomably profound. No matter how I play, the time between your moves is always perfectly even... And in the eight games we’ve played, you have won every single one by exactly one piece.”

“The gap between us is vast.”

Lu raised an eyebrow, surprised the young man had noticed.

“Pure coincidence,” he said, waving it off, then firmly sent him away.

The young player stared at the closed door, gritted his teeth, and left unsatisfied.

Back at his inn, he reviewed that day’s game and pulled out records of the previous seven.

“I’m not mistaken... Boss Lu must be one of the supreme national masters in hiding!”

The next day, he left Nanjiang and headed north to the imperial capital.

Though Nanjiang had a decent chess scene, it paled beside the capital.

Most national masters of the Great Xuan gathered there.

Carrying the eight game records as his calling card, he sought apprenticeship—after several rejections, he finally succeeded under one of the masters.

The master’s discerning eye immediately recognized the extraordinary nature of those games.

Half a year passed in a blink.

Nanjiang City suddenly buzzed with unprecedented excitement.

One of the eight national masters of the Great Xuan, Master Lancang, had arrived. Countless chess enthusiasts flocked to the city.

Even the city lord took notice.

Master Lancang first visited the Tang Mansion to pay respects to the legendary Elder Tang, then—under countless watchful eyes—walked into an alley and stopped before a shabby little chess hall.

“This is the place?”

Master Lancang asked the figure beside him, hands clasped behind his back.

That figure was the same young player, now far more composed.

He bowed, expression complex. “Teacher, yes. The player behind those eight games lives in seclusion here.”

“Your skill was weak back then, yet among the younger generation you stood near the top. To beat you by exactly one piece every time—if not coincidence, this person’s chess must be at national-master level.”

“I’m rather curious about the other seven masters now,” Master Lancang said with a laugh.

Eyes gleaming, he stepped inside.

The hall erupted in astonished murmurs. Customers rose to their feet—Master Lancang!

Who did not know his name?

Lu stroked his beard. The butcher from the next street, his current opponent, shot up, face flushed with excitement.

“It’s Master Lancang!”

The young player approached Lu and bowed solemnly.

“Boss Lu, I’ve returned.”

Lu regarded him coolly. "What, here to trash my place?"

"Please don't be upset," Master Lancang interjected with a warm, spring-breeze smile. "Allow this old man to finish this game for your friend."

He inquired politely with the butcher, who of course had no objection.

Lu raised an eyebrow. "Be my guest."

Master Lancang's gaze sharpened. He sensed a suppressed aura emanating from Lu.

The young disciple pulled out a chair for his teacher.

Master Lancang studied the board, rolled up his sleeves, and picked up a piece.

Clack!

The piece struck the board like thunder.

Onlookers gathered, drawn by the sound.

Lu smiled unhurriedly, placing his own piece.

Back and forth they went, moves swift and decisive.

To the crowd's shock, fine beads of sweat soon appeared on Master Lancang's forehead.

The young disciple's lips trembled.

He stared at Lu in disbelief. Who was this Boss Lu? Even a national master couldn't beat him?

"I lost," Master Lancang admitted, eyes shining brightly. "Boss Lu, shall we play another?"

He had taken over a disastrous opening from the butcher, which partly explained the defeat.

Lu glanced at the darkening sky.

"Very well. One more."

The board was cleared.

As word spread, more and more chess lovers hurried over.

No one had imagined that a tiny alley in Nanjiang hid such a formidable player—one who could face a national master and even prevail.

By twilight, an eerie hush fell over the hall.

Lu rose, stroked his beard, and smiled.

“No need to continue. Your skill is excellent and still has much room to grow. Keep working hard.”

He shooed everyone out.

The crowd knew Boss Lu’s prickly temper; linger too long and he’d start cursing.

So they dispersed.

The young disciple supported the dazed Master Lancang out of the hall.

The master seemed lost in a trance, as though on the verge of enlightenment.

From that day on, Master Lancang settled in Nanjiang City.

News of his games against Boss Lu spread rapidly.

At the Tang Mansion.

Tang Xiansheng lounged in his rocking chair, examining a game record brought by a servant.

He had been curious about the sensational records making waves.

Hm?

One glance was enough.

Even his pretended frailty vanished; he sat bolt upright.

“This game...”

Tang Xiansheng narrowed his eyes, uncertainty flickering deep within.

“Is the owner of that chess hall a dashing young gentleman, refined as jade, graceful as an immortal in exile?” he asked.

The servant looked baffled.

“Old Master, the hall’s owner is quite elderly... hardly a dashing young gentleman.”

Tang Xiansheng squinted. Perhaps he had guessed wrong.

In the days that followed, Nanjiang grew ever livelier.

Word of Master Lancang’s defeat flew beyond the city on winged rumor.

The other national masters in the imperial capital were stunned.

...

At the Qiannv Palace.

A game record drifted into the palace.

Palace Mistress and Empress Ni Chunqiu loved chess—this was no secret.

Naturally, the record of Master Lancang's loss reached her.

Ni Chunqiu had grown rather lazy over the years, yet her own chess skill had reached national-master level.

But after studying this record, her red lips parted and her eyes blazed with sudden light.

Faintly, an overwhelming familiar presence emanated from the board.

That suffocating aura.

“Could it be Brother Lu?”

Ni Chunqiu pressed her lips together, clutching the record, gaze distant.

...

Years flashed by—more than a dozen springs and autumns.

Lu grew ever more aged. He no longer drew on heaven-and-earth spiritual energy to sustain his body; like any mortal, his flesh withered under time's relentless hand.

Old age brought many thoughts.

He often stared into space, sipping tea from his now-ordinary wooden wheelchair, watching clouds gather and disperse.

Master Lancang visited again—an aged Master Lancang who had chosen to remain in Nanjiang, frequenting Lu's hall.

The locals had long grown accustomed.

Games between Lu and Master Lancang ceased to be publicized; the worldly clamor gradually quieted.

“Boss Lu’s skill is immeasurably profound. This old man is in awe,” Master Lancang said respectfully, gathering the pieces before leaving.

Lu glanced at his retreating back and smiled.

He lifted his purple-clay teapot and took a slow sip.

After Master Lancang departed, he soon entered a small courtyard.

Peach trees filled the yard. Though it was winter, peach blossoms bloomed brilliantly.

A curtain hung low, swaying in the breeze.

Behind it, a graceful silhouette was faintly visible.

Gentle zither music drifted through the air.

“Master Lancang, how has Boss Lu been lately?”

Master Lancang looked toward the figure behind the curtain with reverence, not daring the slightest impropriety or blasphemy.

After all, the person behind that veil... was a terrifying celestial being of the cultivation world.

A celestial—one who could open the Heavenly Gate and ascend to the immortal realm.

Yet this celestial had chosen not to ascend, remaining the pinnacle of mortal-world cultivation.

“Boss Lu’s health has declined, but his chess has grown even more profound,” Master Lancang replied.

He sighed with deep emotion. Over the years his own skill had advanced tremendously—he could now dominate the other seven national masters.

Yet the more refined his chess became, the more unfathomable Boss Lu’s appeared.

“Declined?”

A pleasant voice came from behind the curtain, tinged with urgency.

Master Lancang nodded.

After reviewing the game and leaving the record, he departed the courtyard.

The curtain lifted. Ni Chunqiu revealed her face, gazing at the board while twirling a peach blossom.

“Though I don’t know what Brother Lu is doing…”

“I absolutely must not disturb him.”

She pressed her lips together, sat sideways in her chair, studied the board as petals danced around her, and suddenly smiled.

Elsewhere, Tang Xiansheng also examined the records and sighed deeply.

“Could this truly be Young Master Lu?”

...

Spring turned to summer.

Years sped past like a shuttle.

In the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The terrifying killing formation still hovered, blood churning within.

Five years had passed since its activation. Upper Realm observers had watched every change, reporting all back.

In five years, faint signs of weakening appeared.

Another five, and the lingering malice might finally vanish.

Back in Nanjiang City on the Five Phoenixes Continent.

Lu grew ever older.

Many familiar old faces in the alley had passed away, returning to the earth.

The children of old were now middle-aged, occasionally stopping by to chat.

Lu's chess hall remained open, though familiar faces grew fewer.

Things remained; people changed.

A spark gradually returned to Lu's eyes.

He had once considered leaving Nanjiang to tour the hundreds of cities of the Great Xuan.

But he abandoned the thought. How many mortals ever traveled the entire continent?

Most settled in one place, lived through joy and sorrow, aging and illness, and finally became a handful of yellow soil.

Something dawned on Lu. He began setting up a chess endgame.

His withered hand slowly lifted pieces and placed them on the board.

The game progressed agonizingly slowly—sometimes one move a day, sometimes one every ten days or half a month.

When Master Lancang came to play and saw the endgame, his mind reeled; he even coughed up blood.

What kind of game was this? Recalling the mysterious celestial's concern for Lu, he dared not speak.

Lu paid him no mind and continued placing pieces as always.

By now, the unfinished endgame had become the hall's trademark. Many studied it, yet few found any clue.

Decade after decade passed.

Lu grew so frail he could barely push his wheelchair.

He had lived a solitary life. The now-aging former alley children planned to find him a companion.

Lu laughed softly and shook his head.

Fewer and fewer people visited the hall, yet his endgame remained unfinished.

Master Lancang was no ordinary mortal; he had once cultivated, so though slightly aged, he remained vigorous.

“Old Lu...”

Master Lancang gazed at Lu—now so frail he seemed on the verge of death—and faltered.

The hall was silent.

Lu ignored him, eyes fixed on the decades-long endgame.

A chill settled over him.

It was the cold of a withering soul, like darkness swallowing the twilight.

Or the shadow of a sundial reaching its final mark.

Emaciated, Lu tremblingly raised a hand, slowly drawing a piece from the bowl. Age had made even this motion painfully deliberate.

“Birth, aging, illness, and death for mortals; the cry of newborns—this is life...”

“In the vast river of time, is it not the same?”

“Even the ancient emperors, before that endless river, are ultimately no different from common folk—able only to gaze upon the passing years...”

Lu spoke softly.

His aged voice drifted through the hall.

Though mortal, Master Lancang felt an overwhelming oppression.

Ding-ling...

Lu seemed to hear wind chimes.

He smiled.

And continued lifting the piece.

Outside, heavy snow fell, white flakes dancing in the air.

In the alley outside the chess hall.

At some point, a woman in an elegant red dress appeared beneath an oil-paper umbrella. Bells hung at her waist; her red lips burned like flame.

Tang Xiansheng arrived too, leaning against the alley wall, lost in thought.

He watched the falling snow and smiled.

Young Master Lu... was experiencing a full mortal lifetime, wasn't he?

Faintly, he felt a spark of insight.

Gradually.

He sensed the decaying figure inside the hall—its aura steadily fading.

Like a lamp burning its last drops of oil.

Suddenly.

Both Empress Ni Chunqiu and Tang Xiansheng tensed.

The world fell deathly silent.

Then... the aged aura within the hall vanished completely.

Like a flame that had burned out, unable to shine again.

Clack.

The sound of a powerless hand dropping, the piece it held falling onto the board.

In that instant.

Ni Chunqiu and Tang Xiansheng felt heaven and earth spin. Even the celestial Ni Chunqiu collapsed, strength leaving her body.

Brilliant radiance burst from the endgame in the hall. Piece after piece soared into the sky, forming a world-shaking chess formation that instantly enveloped thousands of miles.

Time... seemed to flow backward!

A terrifying presence spread; heaven and earth threatened to collapse in an instant.

He had returned.

The century among mortals had finally ended.

Chapter 472: Qi Refinement Level Eight, Severing a Saint Ancestor's Arm

Lu felt his soul bloom like a fleeting epiphyllum flower, sublimating in an instant.

Yet deeper insights stirred within him.

These were the realizations born from living a full mortal life, stripped of a cultivator's identity—of soaring through skies, escaping the earth, and defying death. It was like a flower sprouting from the soil only to return as spring mud: a unique cycle of rebirth.

The singular charm of life itself.

A century passed in the blink of an eye, while everything around him shifted endlessly.

In his aged state, Lu often sat in his chair for half a day at a time.

When he possessed immortality, he hadn't truly understood this. Only after experiencing it firsthand did he grasp it.

So this was what it meant to grow old—like countless ordinary elders, sitting at the doorstep.

In that stillness, all he saw were memories.

In that stillness, all he pondered was the past.

Time spared no one.

The rolling red dust of the mortal world was a way to cleanse the soul and heart.

Inside the weathered chess hall.

Master Lancang's body trembled. He had never imagined Old Lu's aura could surge with such overwhelming power.

Now he finally understood why that lofty celestial being paid such close attention to him.

Old Lu... was no ordinary man.

A wave of dizziness washed over him.

The next moment.

Master Lancang found himself gently displaced outside the hall.

In the alley.

He saw the empress in her red robes, holding an umbrella.

Beside her stood the legendary figure of the southern prefecture, the centuries-old master of the Tang Mansion—Tang Xiansheng.

Buzz!

A pillar of crimson-white radiance pierced the heavens, turning the night bright as day.

The vault of the sky rippled as though white waves were rolling across it.

In Nanjiang City.

Many deep in slumber jolted awake, gazing out their windows in shock and awe.

Cultivators near the city were roused, rushing toward the beam of light, mistaking it for some heavenly treasure emerging. But upon sensing the empress's terrifying celestial aura, they hastily retreated.

Ni Chunqiu's beautiful eyes rippled like autumn waters as she gazed into the alley.

She ignored the reverent cultivators around her.

"As expected, it's Brother Lu."

Excitement flickered in her eyes.

Yet she also seemed thoughtful. "Comprehending the red dust, experiencing the mortal world?"

Could returning to mortality be a form of cultivation?

...

In the boundless ocean, within the ancient tomb.

In the dim palace depths.

Gu Mangran slowly opened his eyes, sunken sockets filled with astonishment.

Then, a hint of appreciative smile emerged amid the surprise.

"This is a sublimation on the soul level—truly rare and precious."

"Though far from the ancient Great Emperors' instantaneous enlightenment, it greatly aids one's cultivation all the same."

"Worthy of Young Master Lu."

Gu Mangran smiled faintly.

Soon, the coffin returned to stillness. He sank back into slumber—or perhaps preparation for the impending great war.

...

Like a beam of light shooting into the ninth heaven.

Lu felt his mind ascend, a rare and invaluable experience.

In his soul vortex, a new Dao stele appeared.

Originally, one stele already resided there: the Intent of Destruction, fused from the Dao intents of Five Phoenixes cultivators—overbearing and terrifying, now at second-sequence level.

But now, another stele had joined it.

This one bore a different Intent.

Like a solitary blooming flower, standing alone as a stele, it rendered Lu even more profound.

His consciousness rose higher and higher...

Soon, a familiar sensation returned—that of transcending this world and slipping into another realm.

He remembered it from when he first gained chaos force.

Of course, he also remembered... getting kicked that time.

Not because he was petty, naturally.

Boom!

As though breaking free from shackles, with the sea vast and fish leaping freely.

Lu strained to open his eyes, desperate to see clearly.

"Hm...?"

A surprised exclamation seemed to echo through heaven and earth.

The next instant.

Lu felt his soul kicked back by an immense force.

Lu: "..."

Well, damn. Twice now!

When had Lu Ping'an ever suffered such grievance?

Boom!

Just like last time.

Lu raised his hand and seized fiercely, as if grasping raging waves.

Surging chaos force poured forth.

Enveloped in it, he returned.

...

All radiance converged.

Nanjiang City sank back into nocturnal silence.

Tang Xiansheng and Ni Chunqiu did not rashly enter the hall, fearing they might disturb Lu.

But as the oppressive presence filling the world faded, they knew his enlightenment had ended.

Inside the hall.

The oil lamp burned out, plunging everything into darkness.

Lu, seated in his wheelchair, opened his eyes.

He glanced sideways at the chessboard.

This one game seemed a portrait of his mortal life.

Withdrawing his gaze.

Lu rested his hand on the wheelchair arm.

Wood chips began to flake away, revealing flashes of silver light.

In an instant, the dim hall blazed bright as day.

Lu sat upright as his aged features transformed, shedding centuries of wear in a heartbeat.

The century among mortals complete, he felt reborn—his soul lighter in a way words could not capture.

His heart like a clear mirror, untouched by dust.

His garments shifted abruptly into ethereal white robes.

Young Master Lu had returned.

He was still the same Lu, yet somehow more vivid now, infused with a touch of mortal warmth.

That very warmth made him all the more enigmatic, impossible to fathom.

He sensed Tang Xiansheng and Ni Chunqiu in the alley.

No rush to greet them.

In truth, during his mortal return, he had not used his primordial spirit to observe surroundings. So he hadn't known of their presence then. In hindsight, they had likely guessed his identity long ago.

Lu didn't mind.

Suddenly.

System prompts materialized before his eyes.

"Congratulations, Host, on comprehending life: A century among mortals yields sudden enlightenment."

Lu paused slightly. As a mortal, he hadn't seen the system; its abrupt return felt both foreign and familiar.

The system panel unfolded.

Host: Lu

Title: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

Qi Refinement Level: 8

Spiritual Energy Reserves: 213,659,000 / 1,000,000,000 strands

Primordial Spirit Strength: 7,989 (units)

Chaos Force: 8,902 (He) [Pending Extraction: 10,000 He]

World Rating: Five Phoenixes Small World [High Martial]

[Challenge Mission]: Forge the Gate of Ascension. Immortal Abode Realm: 1000/1000, Immortal Host Realm: 10/10.

Lu regarded the panel calmly.

He had stepped into Qi Refinement Level Eight, yet his heart remained serene.

He could feel the shift in his aura—a transformation from lake to vast ocean.

Containing immense power, as if his presence alone could punch a hole through the heavens.

"Qi Refinement Level Nine... requires ten billion strands of spiritual energy."

Lu tapped the armrest lightly.

His primordial spirit strength had exploded from its former cap of 999 to nearly eight thousand.

Beyond his prior accumulation, this surge stemmed largely from his mortal insights.

Chaos force had grown little.

The harvested Dao essence continued slowly etching into the Five Phoenixes' origin.

"Hm? Pending extraction... ten thousand He?"

Lu's eyes narrowed slightly, then his lips curved upward. He remembered.

Like before, this had been stripped away.

Last time, he could only peel off one He. This time, he had seized ten thousand in one go.

"Integrating ten thousand He of Dao essence into the Five Phoenixes' origin will surely elevate it further."

Lu smiled.

But the smile soon faded.

He lifted his head, white robes fluttering, gazing as if through the roof into the boundless sky.

Twice entering that strange space...

What exactly was it?

Why did it hold such abundant chaos force?

Each Qi Refinement breakthrough brought system rewards—this time no exception.

Yet unexpectedly, the system seemed to have brewed this one for quite a while.

Without waiting further for the reward.

Lu slowly maneuvered the Thousand-Bladed Chair out of the hall.

The alley felt dimly profound, the atmosphere heavy.

Master Lancang stood drenched in cold sweat, hardly daring to breathe.

Suddenly.

His eyes widened.

He heard wheels rolling over the ground—could Old Lu have come back to life?

Tang Xiansheng and Ni Chunqiu stared fixedly at the hall.

Thick clouds dispersed; brilliant starlight poured from the heavens.

Illuminating the figure emerging from the shadowed building.

White robes purer than snow, peerless grace.

Eyes profound as endless vortices.

Seeing Lu appear, both Tang Xiansheng and Ni Chunqiu tensed...

It truly was Young Master Lu!

Master Lancang was utterly bewildered—returned from death?

And rejuvenated?

What manner of demon was this?

But soon, a shiver ran through him; he sensed the extraordinary nature of events.

Lu glanced at him.

"This old one congratulates Young Master Lu on his cultivation breakthrough."

Tang Xiansheng smiled, bowing hunched despite his frailty.

Ni Chunqiu beamed with excitement: "Brother Lu is incredible, as always!"

Now a celestial herself, she found Lu ever more unfathomable—a bottomless pool.

Lu nodded slightly.

Then, with a flick of his sleeve, he rose.

White light flashed, whisking Tang Xiansheng and Ni Chunqiu away.

The alley fell silent once more.

Leaving only a dumbfounded Master Lancang.

What had Old Tang just called him?

Young Master Lu?!

In all the Five Phoenixes... who could make Tang Xiansheng address them as Young Master Lu?

A chill shot from his soles to his crown.

Could it be... that most mysterious Lord of White Jade Capital, Young Master Lu?!

A figure of legend?!

Suddenly.

Master Lancang looked up to see the chess hall distorting, twisting in transformation.

He rushed inside.

But found no trace of a chess hall—only cluttered piles of wood carvings.

This shop had always been a woodcarver's; the chess hall seemed never to have existed.

All of it... like a fleeting dream.

...

In the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

A decade passed in an instant.

Boom!

The massive killing formation suspended there began to crumble faintly.

As the anomaly erupted.

Countless Yuan Magnetic Heaven cultivators soared skyward. Holy lords of various high-martial worlds stood atop their realms, gazing at the colossal array beyond.

It collapsed like a melting snow mountain, avalanches thundering down from the peak.

The moment the formation vanished.

Blood sealed within for ten years gushed forth!

Splash!

A crimson river seemed to emerge.

The stench of blood permeated the Blood Evil Heaven, chilling everyone to the bone.

This was the blood of Upper Realm cultivators!

Ten years ago, the entire conquest army had perished here, reduced to this bloody deluge!

Boom!

Suddenly.

From the blood, a figure emerged—mad with laughter and curses.

"It's Ye Bei! He actually survived?!"

"Truly the Dao Clan's Ye Bei? Trapped in the killing array for a decade?"

"Unbelievable. In a grand array even a Saint Ancestor feared to touch, he endured and lived."

Cultivators gasped in horror.

They recognized the raving madman.

Ye Bei was drenched in crimson; even his skin had turned blood-red. Soaked in blood for ten years, his mind had shattered.

Ye Bei had gone insane.

A genius wielding the "Travel" array word—driven mad by a mere grand formation.

The formation dissipated.

The crisscrossing auras lingering between heaven and earth began to fade.

Souls trapped for ten years emerged rapidly, scattering in all directions.

Yet a vast suction drew them in.

As though a sinister underworld materialized—Yellow Springs origin, boundless sea of bitterness.

What was that?

When the strong perished, shouldn't their souls dissipate into the Nine Heavens, becoming its energy?

What was this eerie underworld?

Many were baffled.

This underworld was the realm of the dead, absorbing all souls fallen in the Lower Three Heavens.

Goosebumps rose on many; something profound was shifting.

What had happened to the Lower Three Heavens?

The Heavenly Gate had appeared, a new ascension path—that was one thing.

Now, even an underworld governing souls had emerged.

Figures streaked forth.

Racing toward the Upper Realm.

But before they could return.

Suddenly, at the edge of the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Terrifying silhouettes loomed faintly.

The Yun and Dao Clans had concealed the array's ties to an ancient emperor from other saint clans, harboring intentions to claim it solely.

Yun Clan experts stood at the Upper Realm continent's border, watching the scenes unfold.

They swiftly relayed news back to their clans.

"The underworld?"

Boom!

Within the Yun Clan.

A terrifying existence seemed to awaken.

Overwhelming aura caused heaven and earth to collapse inward.

The Yun Clan's Saint Ancestor was puzzled.

In ancient times, the Order of Death had been governed by the Great Emperor of Death. But after that war and his disappearance, the Nine Heavens' cycle of life and death fell under the Heavenly Dao's autonomous control.

No one had ever heard of an underworld.

"Could this underworld... be a legacy of the Great Emperor of Death?"

The Saint Ancestor's thoughts churned like thunder.

Then.

From the Upper Realm continent torn open by cracks from the Yuan Magnetic depths, figures burst forth at blinding speed.

These were saint clan powerhouses.

They appeared in the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

After restraining the raving Ye Bei and sending him back to the Upper Realm, they turned to the strange underworld floating there.

Soul after soul was absorbed.

Their gazes sharpened.

Suddenly, they witnessed a fallen divine son's soul—wailing in agony, twisted in torment—plunging into the rushing Yellow Springs. Like fish and shrimp swept along with countless others, it drifted toward the boundless sea of bitterness.

Finally sinking into its depths, enduring endless suffering.

Boom!

In the Upper Realm continent.

At the Yun Clan ancestral ground.

A terrifying figure erupted with aura—oppressive, untouchable.

It seemed to fill the entire continent, colossal and seated, gazing toward the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The Yun Clan's Saint Ancestor!

As the divine son's soul fell into the underworld, emotion finally broke his composure.

A hand reached out.

Blotting sky and sun, clawing toward the underworld.

Mysterious force shattered everything in its path.

Countless souls evaporated; faintly, the ten great cities trembled!

In the Nine Hells Underworld.

Dantai Xuan, clad in black ornate robes, sat solemnly like an impassive Yama judging souls.

The lords of the other nine cities manifested as well.

Their ten auras wove together into a vast net.

Seeking to block this horrifying palm!

Puff!

Yet their power fell far short. The net shattered instantly before the palm even neared.

Meanwhile.

In the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The descended Upper Realm saint clan experts thrust forward cultivators they had long nurtured to half-step Immortal Transformation.

Boom!

Aura soared, as if shattering all bonds.

The Heavenly Gate manifested grandly.

Atop the thousand-zhang gate, mystical beasts seemed to stir to life.

Boom boom boom!

From the Upper Realm continent.

Yun and Dao Clan powerhouses shot forth.

Prepared for a decade, they had awaited the formation's end. Now, they would act.

Regardless of secrets beyond the Heavenly Gate, its very existence was intolerable to the Upper Realm.

Though they scorned Lower Three Heavens cultivators, ascendants from there were vital to Upper Realm balance.

They had waited and prepared ten long years.

...

On the Five Phoenixes.

Nanjiang City.

Tang Mansion.

Lu sat in the Thousand-Bladed Chair. Tang Xiansheng faced him across a chessboard; the two played while conversing.

The empress sat obediently to the side.

Her once-unrestrained posture was fully tempered before Lu.

After chatting with Tang Xiansheng a while.

Lu naturally sensed the upheaval in the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The Upper Realm saint clans had finally moved.

In truth, Lu felt some pent-up frustration—they had truly waited a full decade.

"Hm... by twist of fate, they struck the underworld first."

He was mildly surprised. The one acting... was actually a saint clan ancestor!

He could not allow the Nine Hells Underworld to be destroyed by a saint.

Thus...

Lu's lips curved upward.

"How dare you touch the Five Phoenixes' underworld?"

His robes billowed in sudden gale.

Tang Xiansheng, playing across from him, felt crushing aura bear down, leaving him gasping.

Lu pinched a chess piece between index and middle finger.

To Tang Xiansheng and Ni Chunqiu.

That piece gleamed brilliantly!

Like the brightest star in the night sky.

Clack!

Lu slammed it onto the board.

Myriad silver-gray lights exploded forth.

...

In the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The Saint Ancestor palming toward the underworld suddenly blazed with radiant fury.

"How dare you!"

Rage thundered in ten thousand echoes!

The next instant.

The entire underworld was enveloped in silver-gray radiance... vast spatial profundities surging.

The underworld, manifest in the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Instantly shifted position—to the Void Heaven beyond the Five Phoenixes.

In the Yuan Magnetic Heaven, the Saint Ancestor could act unchecked. But in the Void Heaven... even he lacked such audacity.

The Saint Ancestor himself was momentarily stunned.

He hadn't expected his palm—and the underworld with it—to be transposed to the Void Heaven...

Ding-ling!

The dormant rules of the Void Heaven awakened as though alive!

The Saint Ancestor sought to withdraw his hand.

But... too late.

Puff!

Countless rules coalesced into a terrifying blade of light.

A blade that chilled even a Saint Ancestor to the bone.

One slash.

Saintly blood sprayed; an arm severed clean!

Chapter 473: The Heavenly Gate as Board, Immortal Hosts as Pieces

Boom!

Crimson blood sprayed forth.

It formed a rolling river, heavy beyond measure, threatening to collapse the void as it filled the skies of the Void Heaven.

The massive severed arm plummeted, crashing into the underworld.

Dense vital essence... boiled over in that instant.

Within the underworld.

Lord Beigong trembled in fear and excitement.

Dantai Xuan's face flushed red.

The surging essence in that broken arm made the entire underworld feel alive!

This was treasure beyond measure!

He craned his neck and barked an order!

City gates swung wide.

Countless yin attendants ghosted out like specters, hoisting the Saint Ancestor's arm together before fleeing with it.

In the Void Heaven, rules manifested as blades.

This was its most terrifying aspect—even Saint Ancestors avoided it. Ancient emperors had woven these special rules here.

The more powerful the intruder, the deadlier the slaughter!

Thus, the Upper Realm deemed the Void Heaven a ruin, a place for the desperate.

No powerhouse dared linger.

Yet...

No plan was flawless.

The Yun Clan's Saint Ancestor never imagined he would fall for such a trap, losing an arm to the Void Heaven's dreaded rules.

He had clearly struck at the strange underworld appearing in the Yuan Magnetic Heaven, devouring countless souls. Why had his target shifted to the Void Heaven?

What connection bound them?!

Of course.

The Saint Ancestor wasn't pondering that now.

The blade-like rules rang with chilling chimes, carving terrifying gullies in the void, hungry to devour all.

One arm lost, yet those fearsome rules burned like karmic fire, creeping up his stump to claim his entire being!

The Saint Ancestor roared in fury.

Such rules could never erase a saint.

But he felt utterly disgusted!

Outraged at capsizing in a gutter.

The Yuan Magnetic Heaven shuddered!

The colossal Saint Ancestor, vast as a titan propping up heaven and earth, sat upon the Upper Realm continent. Terrifying aura spread like entwining chains.

Boom boom boom!

From the continent's edge, monstrous waves surged.

The Yuan Magnetic Heaven quaked. Many low and mid-martial worlds buckled under his pressure.

Though protected by the Great Dao...

Their inhabitants were crushed into bloody paste.

A Saint Ancestor's wrath drowned worlds in blood!

High-martial worlds fared worse—heaven and earth collapsed, countless lives extinguished...

These fallen souls streamed into rivers of spirit, rushing forth to be absorbed by the underworld.

This only fueled his rage!

Across the Lower Three Heavens, all beings stood stunned.

A Saint Ancestor—supreme, having endured hundreds of thousands of years!

Progenitor of a saint clan!

A saint-realm existence!

Yet an arm severed before their eyes. Everyone gasped in horror.

What a shocking sight.

In ages without ancient emperors, Saint Ancestors reigned supreme.

Yet even one had lost a limb!

"The Void Heaven... truly harbors great terror, capable of severing even a Saint Ancestor!"

"It's the burial ground of ancient emperors—severing a mere saint is no surprise."

"A Saint Ancestor should know better than to tread such peril!"

Holy lords of high-martial sacred grounds whispered.

Then their gazes turned to the underworld, its immense pull drawing in souls of the dead from the Lower Three Heavens.

This underworld was the culprit behind the Saint Ancestor's loss!

"The 'Travel' array word?!"

In the Upper Realm, Yun and Dao Clan experts narrowed their eyes. They had glimpsed silver-gray light moments ago.

Spatial profundity.

"Impossible... Even the 'Travel' array word couldn't shift a Saint Ancestor's arm into the Void Heaven. A saint's body is tempered by the Heavenly Dao—immune to myriad laws. Only another saint... or an ancient emperor could..."

"An ancient emperor's handiwork?! Could it be..."

"The Void Heaven awakens an ancient emperor's will?"

"Is it truly an ancient emperor striking?"

Upper Realm powerhouses speculated, growing ever more fearful.

In another battlefield of the Yuan Magnetic Heaven, tension burned like fire.

The Heavenly Gate manifested. Upper Realm experts had forced it open, yet now they hesitated.

The Saint Ancestor's severed arm had shaken them deeply.

But as the half-step Immortal Transformation summoner was struck dead by lightning...

The gate began to close.

"Attack!"

The Saint Ancestor's voice thundered, cold and stern.

As a saint, even battling the blood-robed Gu Mangran had never cost him a limb. Now, schemed against by lesser beings!

An ancient emperor?

He refused to believe it. If truly one, he would have lost far more than an arm.

Clearly, someone had borrowed the Void Heaven's rules against him.

Thus, the one wielding array words and spatial profundity couldn't be too strong.

"To sever my arm in the Void Heaven, they must ignore its rules. This schemer hails from there... Besides that half-dead Gu Mangran, could it be... the new high-martial Five Phoenixes' holy lord?"

"Impossible. The Five Phoenixes' lord is merely an Immortal Host."

The Saint Ancestor sat, aura vast.

At his command.

Upper Realm assailants charged the gate.

Nearly all were Immortal Hosts who had refined five qi!

Leading them: a Five Qi Grand Primordial expert!

This leader advanced, a two-foot shortsword hovering above his head.

Drifting toward the gate!

Boom!

The shortsword erupted with vast saintly might!

A Saint Ancestor's Dao weapon!

Indeed—after ten years' preparation, though no imperial weapon, they deployed saintly Dao armaments!

Hazy killing intent boiled.

Atop the gate, mystical beasts stirred to life!

Yet...

The two-foot blade's cascading saintly aura suppressed the peerless killing formation, preventing its full activation!

Saint Dao weapon pinning the grand array!

Yun and Dao Clan experts exulted.

This assault on the Heavenly Gate would succeed!

Boom!

Without the grand array's cover, Upper Realm forces swarmed the gate.

The Saint Ancestor sat on the continent, slowly purging rules from his stump.

His cold gaze fixed on the gate.

He sensed a link between it and the underworld—similar auras.

Seated impassively, he watched ahead... as the Heavenly Gate seemed to unfold before him into a vast chessboard.

Lines crisscrossing.

His invading Immortal Hosts: his pieces.

...

On the Five Phoenixes Continent.

Nanjiang City.

Tang Mansion.

Terrifying pressure pinned Tang Xiansheng; he dared not breathe.

He stared at Lu in abject shock, body trembling faintly. Piece pinched in fingers, yet placing it felt impossible.

As if he weren't truly playing against Young Master Lu.

Lu smiled faintly, reclining in the Thousand-Bladed Chair, lines dancing in his eyes.

Effortless, ethereal, dashing.

Tang Xiansheng knew: Young Master Lu wasn't playing him.

Lu lifted a piece and placed it.

Invisible ripples spread.

"Cultivated a century—time to fight when fight comes."

...

Creak...

The Heavenly Gate swung open; beasts atop it seemed alive.

Yet without the killing array's boost, they couldn't break free to slaughter.

"It's open!"

Upper Realm experts gleamed with excitement.

Boom!

Immortal qi gushed forth—dense enough to make even Upper Realm cultivators' pores dilate in bliss!

Open!

They had forced the Heavenly Gate!

Yet what greeted them... was a torrent of deadly assault.

Refined immortal qi formed razor-sharp arrows, whistling with piercing roars, blotting the sky.

At the gate's entrance.

Horrific battle erupted!

War cries shook heaven and earth!

"The Upper Realm is unjust! Kill!"

In the Yuan Magnetic Heaven, a high-martial holy ground's expert cried in shock then joy.

"It's our ancestor! The ancestor's voice!"

Familiar auras—those who had ascended long ago—exploded forth.

Upper Realm forces clashed with defenders beyond the gate!

Boom!

The leading Five Qi Grand Primordial sneered in disdain.

"A rabble. Even with abundant immortal qi, trash remains trash... Kill! Slaughter them all!"

His cold command rang.

At his order, the saint Dao weapon bearer charged.

Without the grand array, pressure eased greatly!

Sword light soared skyward. A Five Qi Immortal Host unleashed peak slaughter, plunging beyond the gate.

One sword shook the world.

Puff!

Several Lower Three Heavens ascendants coughed blood and flew back.

A century's cultivation had birthed many Immortal Hosts in the ascension land, but true elites were rare.

Most had refined only two or three immortal qi.

Challenging a Five Qi expert proved arduous.

The Five Qi laughed, sword qi sweeping like apocalypse as he charged deeper.

An axe cleaved forth.

Overlord wreathed in demonic qi, like a divine demon reborn, swung with fury.

Clashing against the Five Qi!

"Perfect timing. A century without a beating—I've stacked my thickest armor. Don't disappoint this king!"

Overlord roared with laughter.

His hulking frame towered higher, vital blood surging, pinning the Five Qi.

In the ascension land.

A mountain exploded.

Nie Changqing, Dragon Slayer at his waist, war intent boiling.

"Old Nie! Don't steal from this king! He's mine!"

Overlord bellowed.

Nie Changqing sighed in regret.

The pinned Five Qi raged.

"Refined only three qi—who gave you such courage?!"

Boom boom boom!

The century-quiet ascension land ignited in war.

Battle raged.

No one regretted it; most stirred with eagerness.

Lower Three Heavens ascendants fought with do-or-die resolve.

Cornered by the Upper Realm, defending the ascension land was their last chance—their final dignity.

Five Phoenixes cultivators differed.

They had battled their way here. Combat didn't frighten—it thrilled!

Tang Yimo laughed freely.

Two immortal qi coiled around him. Late ascendant, few qi refined—but battle? He feared none!

Atop a peak, demonic arts surged.

Body soared, skin purpling, veins bulging like a primordial sky-splitting demon.

Opening six pulses, he roared—sound waves exploding—locking onto an invading Five Qi and charging!

Yet with fewer qi, he soon endured brutal onslaught.

Nie Changqing joined, one slash wailing with dragon cries.

Tang Yimo glanced—no refusal of aid.

Alone, he couldn't match a Five Qi.

Unlike Overlord, who grew stronger under blows...

Flames roared!

Bai Qingniao sipped fresh chicken soup in her courtyard.

Nine phoenixes rose, flames spreading, effortlessly pinning a Five Qi!

Sima Qingshan and Kong Nanfei laughed.

Geniuses both—century focused solely on refining qi, three each.

Brush strokes moved mountains.

Together, they entangled another Five Qi!

Five Phoenixes celestials displayed monstrous strength.

In short order.

Upper Realm Immortal Hosts couldn't breach the gate!

"Kill!"

Lower Three Heavens ascendants, united in enmity, watched Five Phoenixes celestials fight fiercely.
Flames ignited in their hearts.

In that moment, a spiritual ascension.

Puff!

Many coughed blood and retreated, but more surged forward, fearless of death!

Yet the defensive line steadily yielded to Upper Realm advance.

At the Heavenly Court ruins.

Lu Jiulian slowly opened his eyes.

Profundity swirled within.

This century, his strength had skyrocketed—terrifyingly fast, even to himself.

He didn't know why; insights flooded him.

Even his Dao intent strengthened...

From third-sequence destruction... to second.

The upgrade had startled him.

Dao intent could evolve?

He felt like an anomaly—kept quiet, speaking softer than ever.

Gazing afar at the brutal gate battle.

Watching bloodied ascendants.

All Immortal Hosts, numerous ascendants—no casualties yet short-term.

But prolonged, Upper Realm's superior might would breach. Expanded battlefield meant inevitable losses.

His turn.

Lu Jiulian rose.

Raised a hand; a five-colored lotus spun slowly in his palm.

Formed from refining five qi.

Infused with upgraded destruction intent.

Unrivaled offense!

Testing it, he had sought Overlord.

Had him stack thickest armor.

Then tossed a mere three-colored lotus—not full power.

Overlord lay frozen in a cold hall three years recovering.

At the gate.

Sudden silence.

Blood-soaked Lower Three Heavens Immortal Hosts brightened.

A lean figure emerged before the gate, cradling a five-colored lotus.

Upper Realm forces grew wary.

Unlike others, Lu Jiulian had refined five qi—immense pressure.

He gazed calmly at the invading horde.

Sighed softly. His intent... couldn't stay hidden.

Then gently tossed.

The lotus, wreathed in fearsome destruction, arced toward an oncoming Five Qi!

BOOM!!!

Destruction erupted.

The narrow gate became a deadly cage.

Upper Realm Immortal Hosts swallowed by onslaught.

Wails pierced the air.

Streams of light fled desperately.

But azure robes billowed.

Lu Jiulian hair flying, chin raised, blocked their escape.

He lifted hands slowly upward.

Beneath each gravely wounded Upper Realm Five Qi... a lotus bloomed silently.

Boom!

Explosions thundered.

Unmatched slaughter engulfed Immortal Hosts!

Brilliant fireworks bloomed before the gate.

All in the Yuan Magnetic Heaven stared dumbfounded.

Ascension land's Lower Three Heavens ascendants equally stunned.

The unassuming Lu Jiulian of this century... so strong?

No—just him. All Five Phoenixes celestials were monsters!

Many rejoiced allying with them; otherwise, war would leave ascendants insufficient for Lu Jiulian's slaughter alone.

Some sensed deeper meaning.

"Sec... second-sequence intent!"

Watching Lu Jiulian single-handedly hold the gate.

Even Upper Realm experts paled.

The saint Dao weapon bearer, Grand Primordial, pupils contracted—feeling the intent's might.

Second-sequence: supreme genius even in Upper Realm!

The colossal Saint Ancestor on the continent tilted his head slightly.

Before him, the board...

His position teetered on collapse.

Boom!

From the Dao Clan.

Another Grand Primordial advanced, a whisk atop his head.

Gleaming, stepping toward the gate.

Saint Dao energy cascaded down.

"Another saint Dao weapon?!"

"This one's the Dao Clan's Saint Ancestor's!"

Gasps rose.

Two saint Dao weapons—what dominance!

The Upper Realm was determined to breach!

Not only that.

As the whisk-bearer charged, more Five Qi Immortal Hosts surged from the Upper Realm.

Boom!

Intent... unyielding!

With a furious roar.

Terrifying axe light cleaved the ascension land's sky.

The Five Qi coughed blood, retreating in staggering steps.

Nearly cleaved in half by Overlord's full outburst.

Lu Jiulian flicked a green lotus, finishing him—stealing the kill.

He stood before the gate, gazing coolly at nearly a hundred Five Qi and the whisk-bearing Grand Primordial.

Behind him.

Blood-drenched Overlord, six-pulse demonic Tang Yimo, Dragon Slayer-bearing Nie Changqing, and others hovered.

Joined by countless Lower Three Heavens ascendants.

Unyielding, fearless against Upper Realm assault.

...

Nanjiang City.

Tang Mansion courtyard.

Lu held a piece, smile deepening.

"I've never lost a game as Lu Ping'an."

Lifted one.

Gazed at the board, unhurried, placing it slowly.

Clack.

Silver light bloomed.

...

Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

The Saint Ancestor on the continent narrowed his eyes.

He felt his board... position collapse instantly!

Suddenly.

He gazed at the gate—familiar silver-gray light, familiar spatial profundity...

Linking to the Five Phoenixes celestials guarding.

Rage erupted.

"Retreat!"

His thunderous roar echoed across the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

All stunned.

Clearly, persistence would breach the gate.

Why retreat?

Soon understood.

Silver radiance blazed.

Next instant.

The Heavenly Gate vanished from the Yuan Magnetic Heaven.

Reappearing... in the Void Heaven.

Puff puff puff!

Blade-rules that severed his arm lingered.

Now, so many Upper Realm intruders arrived.

Blade seas swept; countless corpses flew in the Void Heaven!

Blood rain poured!

Only the two saint Dao weapon bearers survived!

Hidden in the gate, Lower Three Heavens ascendants paled.

Fearing the rules would claim them too.

Yet...

Soon realized: rules ignored them. Many laughed in mad joy.

They ascended via Void Heaven's gate—insiders now, safe!

"Damn it!"

Boom!

Beyond the Void Heaven.

The Saint Ancestor, once in Yuan Magnetic, vanished.

Colossal form descended like a firmament.

Five Phoenixes.

Tang Mansion courtyard.

Lu took the Five Phoenixes Bow from his chair; the small bow enlarged.

Chin raised, he drew from the seated chair.

Qi Refinement Level Eight primordial spirit, chaos force, Dao intent...

Poured in.

Whoosh!

Fingers released.

Three forces merged into an arrow.

Puff!

Instantly.

A rainbow streaking from Five Phoenixes toward Void Heaven...

Beyond the Void Heaven, the Saint Ancestor's eyes blazed like twin suns, light melting heaven and earth.

The two saint Dao bearers fled desperately.

Around them, a hundred Five Qi slain by rules!

Corpse mountains and blood seas enveloped them.

They rejoiced in saint Dao protection—else dead like the rest.

Racing outward toward the blotting Saint Ancestor—escape the Void, his shelter meant life.

Yet joy lasted mere seconds.

The arrow approached silently.

Puff!

Pierced both bodies, carrying horrific force, bursting from Void Heaven—accelerating them toward the Saint Ancestor.

Beyond.

The Saint Ancestor raised his hand—vast might, boundless saintly aura.

To catch them.

Yet...

Unexpectedly.

The arrow pierced his palm, enlarging in his sun-like eyes.

Finally... plunging into his pupil!

Chapter 474: You Know Too Much

A single arrow flew lightly and silently through the Void Heaven, piercing straight through the two Chaoyuan Realm experts from the Upper Realms who wielded Saint Ancestor Dao soldiers above their heads.

It shot directly toward the Saint Ancestor's enormous pupil.

In the Lower Three Heavens, every cultivator who witnessed this scene was utterly horrified.

What kind of insane act was this?

This was the Cloud Clan's Saint Ancestor—an ancient monster who had lived for hundreds of thousands of years, backed by the full might of a powerful saint clan in the Upper Realms!

Yet the Lord Lu of the Five Phoenixes feared nothing. He drew his bow and shot at the Saint Ancestor.

Was he mad?

Everyone wanted to call Lu Ping'an arrogant beyond belief.

But then the many cultivators of the Lower Three Heavens paused and reflected—Lu Ping'an of the Five Phoenixes had always been this bold.

So in the end, they fell silent.

The arrow itself was plain and unadorned. Aside from casually piercing the two Upper Realm Chaoyuan experts along its path, it carried no trace of worldly killing intent.

A normal arrow would have been wrapped in overwhelming murderous aura.

But this one from Lu held none at all.

Even without killing intent, no one could deny its sheer terror.

The Saint Ancestor's colossal body loomed like an entire sky.

Vast and boundless, his eyes blazed like twin suns.

That tiny arrow, even after piercing two Chaoyuan experts, seemed no more than a speck of dust drifting toward a blazing sun.

Utterly insignificant.

It looked as if the Saint Ancestor needed only to blink, and the gust from his eyelids would scatter the arrow like chaff.

Yet the Saint Ancestor sensed the provocation clearly.

His gaze seemed to pierce through the Void Heaven, locking onto Lu, who sat calmly in a small courtyard in South River City within the human realm of the Five Phoenixes.

Just that stare alone unleashed a terrifying saintly pressure.

In the courtyard.

The chair beneath Tang Xiansheng exploded in an instant. His body nearly buckled, as if forced to kneel.

Empress Ni Chunqiu's red dress billowed wildly, her expression grave beyond words.

With her Heavenly Human physique, she barely withstood the saintly pressure.

The sky over all of South River City plunged into darkness, thick black clouds rolling in like an ocean.

Lu, however, maintained his shooting posture. The Five Phoenixes Bow in his hand glowed brilliantly.

Faint green smoke curled from the mouths of the three phoenix heads on the bow.

As for that overwhelming saintly pressure—it was as if it didn't exist for Lu at all.

...

Pfft!

Saint blood sprayed once more.

The two Chaoyuan experts burst apart on contact with the Saint Ancestor's palm, reduced to bloody paste.

That was the Saint Ancestor's physical body, tempered by the Heavenly Dao. The saintly pressure it exuded alone was enough to annihilate them instantly, without even a chance to react.

Truth be told, those two Chaoyuan experts died unwillingly—they hadn't wanted to die.

They thought they could still salvage something from beneath the arrow.

What a pity.

The moment they collided with the Saint Ancestor's flesh and blood, their fate was sealed.

Their bodies shattered, their primordial spirits mercilessly crushed by the unleashed saintly pressure.

Yet.

Lu's arrow pierced through the Saint Ancestor's palm and, carrying unstoppable momentum, buried itself in the massive pupil.

Boom!

Terrifying power erupted in an instant!

A massive explosion detonated!

Beyond the Void Heaven lay Pingyang Heaven.

In that moment, the entire Pingyang Heaven quaked, mountains shaking and earth trembling.

Every living being in every world there lifted their heads and saw the explosion that illuminated the entire vault of heaven. Even in the dead of night, it turned bright as day.

A gigantic mushroom cloud bloomed—beautiful and deadly, hiding a bone-chilling aura of destruction beneath its splendor.

In the Lower Three Heavens.

No one had believed Lu's arrow could truly harm the Saint Ancestor.

But sensing that world-ending explosion, they realized they were wrong.

The Saint Ancestor's sky-like body had half his face engulfed by the blast's energy.

Roar!

Unrestrained saintly pressure surged forth like a tidal wave.

In Pingyang Heaven, nearly every creature fell to their knees in terror, trembling. It was oppression from the depths of their souls.

Oppression from a higher plane of existence!

At the Heavenly Gate.

The many Immortal Abode experts stood frozen, staring in disbelief.

Watching the Upper Realm saint clan's Saint Ancestor howl in agony—it all felt utterly unreal!

So...

Even without borrowing the power of an Ancient Emperor, one could wound a Saint Ancestor!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The terrifying mushroom cloud lingered, refusing to dissipate. Cracks spiderwebbed through the void as the cloud roiled, soon stained deep crimson with the Saint Ancestor's blood.

Yuanci Heaven and Xuesha Heaven had fallen deathly silent.

On the Upper Realm continent.

The many powerhouses gazing from afar were utterly stunned.

All except the mad Ye Bei, who laughed maniacally, his laughter grating and piercing.

As if mocking the heavens themselves.

The terrifying saintly pressure swept through repeatedly before finally flushing out the arrow's energy that had exploded inside his eyeball.

Soon, the explosion faded.

In its place, one of the Saint Ancestor's sun-like eyes was gone...

Only a massive hollow socket remained, charred flesh oozing holy blood that rained down across Pingyang Heaven.

Everyone was shaken to their core, chills running down their spines.

This time... it was even more shocking than when the Saint Ancestor lost his arm.

After all, the severed arm had been due to the Void Heaven's rules—rules set by a Great Emperor. So while surprising, it wasn't entirely unexpected.

But for Lu's single arrow to actually wound the Saint Ancestor—that was something no one had foreseen!

What kind of cultivation did the Saint Ancestor possess?

A terrifying existence who had lived hundreds of thousands of years, his power unfathomable, his words becoming law.

A mythical figure like that—wounded by a cultivator from a newly ascended high-martial world?

The Saint Ancestor clutched his eye with his remaining arm, holy blood flowing unchecked.

His icy voice dripped with murderous intent.

"Insolent wretch of the Five Phoenixes—I will kill you!"

...

On the Five Phoenixes continent.

Lu, clad in white, put away the Five Phoenixes Bow, feeling a faint pang of regret.

"To think one arrow couldn't kill him. Saint Ancestors truly are formidable."

Lu sighed.

As expected, his eighth layer of Qi Refinement was still too weak.

In the ancient tomb.

Gu Mangran, who had just fallen asleep only to be roused by the Saint Ancestor's furious aura, was speechless.

Hearing Lu's words made him even more so.

Kill a Saint Ancestor?

Young Master Lu... was getting far too full of himself.

Gu Mangran gazed at the sky, seeing the Saint Ancestor's wretched state, a trace of surprise crossing his face.

He had once consumed a divine herb and fought the Saint Ancestor without wounding him this badly. Yet now... how had Lu reduced him to such misery?

One arm severed already—and now an eye exploded.

Boom!

Gu Mangran couldn't afford to wait. He sensed another catastrophe brewing.

Young Master Lu truly couldn't stay idle for a moment.

If he wasn't causing trouble, he was on his way to it.

He appeared in the divine herb field.

Lu Changkong, tending the herbs, suddenly noticed Gu Mangran and looked mildly surprised.

"Mr. Lu... could I borrow another divine herb?"

Gu Mangran asked, a bit embarrassed.

In the distance, Bu Nanxing's mouth hung open, stunned and speechless.

"Hmm... war again?"

Lu Changkong seemed to guess.

Gu Mangran sat in his coffin and nodded slightly.

"Sigh, you'll get used to it. Compared to the old days... Ping'an has restrained himself a lot."

Lu Changkong shook his head.

Compared to the bloody storms in Northern Luo City back then, this was small potatoes.

Gu Mangran didn't know what to say.

Exploding a Saint Ancestor's eye—and that counted as restraint?

Then what wouldn't be restraint?

Massacring the entire Upper Realm Cloud Clan, leaving none alive?

Lu Changkong had Bu Nanxing fetch a chrysanthemum-shaped divine herb and hand it to Gu Mangran.

Gu Mangran, skeletal and gaunt, eyed the herb and hesitated, wanting to ask for a different one.

But remembering he was borrowing, how could he be picky?

In the end, he sighed deeply, cupped his hands toward Lu Changkong.

Then, wrapping the herb, he vanished in a streak of bloody light.

...

Five Phoenixes continent.

South River City.

Tang Manor courtyard.

Lu put away the Five Phoenixes Bow, glanced at the darkened sky, and shook his head with a smile.

"Old Tang, I'm afraid we can't finish this game."

Lu said.

Tang Xiansheng lay sprawled on the ground, drenched in sweat. But with a flick of Lu's sleeve, the pressure lifted.

He scrambled up awkwardly, wiping his brow.

"No matter. Young Master Lu, attend to your matters first..."

Tang Xiansheng's wrinkled face creased further.

Lu nodded slightly.

He did have things to handle—no time for more chitchat with Tang Xiansheng.

He turned to the poised and reserved Empress Ni Chunqiu.

"No need to linger in the mortal realm. Ascend when it's time... or your strength won't grow."

Lu told Ni Chunqiu.

She stared at him stubbornly.

"Brother Lu, why don't you ascend?"

Lu smiled but offered no answer.

He turned away. The next moment, silver light cascaded like a waterfall, tearing through the sky.

In the eyes of Tang Xiansheng and Ni Chunqiu, he vanished amid dazzling radiance.

Ni Chunqiu pressed her red lips together, gazing at his departing back through spatial profound truths, her beautiful eyes rippling like autumn waters.

The courtyard fell quiet again.

Tang Xiansheng, still disheveled, patted his clothes.

Looking at the defiant Ni Chunqiu, he said, "Palace Lord Ni, you should heed Young Master Lu's advice and ascend soon... otherwise, one day you won't even qualify to watch him from afar."

His voice was hoarse, tinged with emotion.

Ni Chunqiu froze, lost in thought.

...

Waves rose across the vast sea.

Lu appeared seated upon the Thousand-Bladed Chair.

The long-sealed Spiritual Pressure Chessboard emerged.

Clack.

Lu placed a piece.

Instantly, myriad rays of light enveloped the Five Phoenixes' sky, melting away the oppressive saintly pressure like snow under the sun.

The gloom weighing on the world's hearts dissipated.

Countless mortals gasped for air in relief.

Buzz...

A coffin bearing a chrysanthemum divine herb broke through the air.

Gu Mangran appeared beside Lu.

Seeing Lu's calm face, Gu Mangran opened his mouth but hesitated.

Hadn't they agreed to develop steadily, avoid trouble, and let the Five Phoenixes grow stronger?

How long had it been?

Now he'd provoked a saint clan's Saint Ancestor to come killing.

And not only that—Lu had casually shot out one of the Saint Ancestor's eyes.

Gu Mangran's emotions were complicated.

If they truly enraged the ancient saint clans of the Upper Realms and a Saint Ancestor came wielding an Emperor weapon...

Things would get ugly.

The more he thought, the more helpless he felt. His mind spun like a sulking woman. In the end, he just sighed deeply at Lu, said nothing, and soared away to hold the line.

Lu watched his departing back, expression complex.

"I, Lu Ping'an, didn't do anything. He came knocking himself."

Lu felt utterly wronged.

He, Lu Ping'an, wasn't some hot-tempered guy.

"These saint clans think I'm easy to bully."

"If not for your Emperor weapons guarding you..."

Lu leaned back in the Thousand-Bladed Chair and muttered.

...

Beyond the Void Heaven.

The frenzied Saint Ancestor raged.

The lingering destructive energy still corroded his pupil, preventing his flesh from regenerating quickly. What infuriated him most was this:

The energy seemed even trickier than the Void Heaven's rules—harder to resolve.

It contained multiple Dao intents!

One of destruction, one of rebirth!

Such contradictory intents fused into a single force.

Boom!

Suddenly.

Amid the Void Heaven, stained red with the blood of countless Upper Realm Immortal Abode experts.

A coffin emerged.

Atop it, a vibrant chrysanthemum divine herb swayed in the wind, radiating divine light.

The familiar aura calmed the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor.

Blood-Robed Gu Mangran!

Hm?

The Saint Ancestor spotted the chrysanthemum divine herb.

As it swayed, surging with dense vitality and powerful energy, the Saint Ancestor exploded in fury!

"Why does the Lower Three Heavens still have divine herbs?!"

He roared in outrage!

He had severed the ascension path to the Lower Three Heavens, cutting off the flow of divine herbs.

Yet now...

Another divine herb swayed mockingly atop Gu Mangran's coffin!

It felt like blatant mockery, like scorn.

Blood-Robed Gu Mangran was truly detestable!

In that moment.

The Saint Ancestor found Gu Mangran even more hateful than the one who had shot out his eye!

"The Heavenly Gate... the ascension ground... divine herbs?!"

The Saint Ancestor's single eye narrowed sharply.

"As expected... Gu Mangran, your divine herbs come from that ascension ground!"

"This ascension ground is tied to the Void Heaven, and this underworld... is also tied to the Void Heaven!"

His gaze shifted to the Five Phoenixes, now nearly an eighth the size of the Void Heaven, exhaling a vast breath.

"Ascension ground, mortal realm, underworld... Void Heaven. Are you trying to rebuild the Nine Heavens?!"

"The Void Heaven... is forging a new 'Great Emperor'!"

His remaining eye blazed like a sun once more.

He felt he had glimpsed the truth.

The emergence of the Heavenly Gate ascension ground, the underworld... even protected by an Ancient Emperor killing array—it all pointed to one thing:

The vanished Ancient Great Emperors sought to rebuild the Nine Heavens.

To cultivate a new Great Emperor!

Inside the coffin, Gu Mangran's sunken eyes widened slightly.

He thought... the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's words actually made a lot of sense!

Remembering the back of the Ancient Great Emperor "Hao" he had seen in the ascension ground.

Gu Mangran drew a deep breath.

Lu, who had just arrived in the Void Heaven via spatial profound truths, heard these words.

The corner of his mouth twitched.

These people's imaginations... were far too wild.

Overthinking was the scariest thing!

The ascension ground and underworld were really just things he'd built to gather more spiritual energy!

He, Lu Ping'an... just wanted to refine Qi in peace.

To be a peace-loving Qi refiner.

Boom!

Suddenly.

Terrifying aura surged.

Gu Mangran yanked the chrysanthemum divine herb from his coffin.

This one, cultivated by Lu Changkong, was far more potent than the last.

He opened wide and stuffed it into his mouth.

No time to chew—the medicinal power flooded in.

White robes instantly turned blood-red.

He rose from the coffin.

Murderous intent filled the Void Heaven.

His withered flesh plumped under the herb's essence, cold and solemn.

He was once more the killing god who had slaughtered across the ancient era.

Staring icily at the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor, he said slowly:

"You... know too much."

Boom!

The words fell.

Blood robes flashed as he shot out of the Void Heaven.

Lu: "???"

In Pingyang Heaven.

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's saintly pressure surged.

"As I thought!"

"To forge a 'Great Emperor,' the ascension ground and underworld... must hold great secrets!"

"No—the Five Phoenixes holds secrets too!"

"Secrets left by those vanished Ancient Great Emperors!"

His single eye shone brilliantly, like a blazing sun.

There might even be... a chance to become an Emperor!

As a Saint Ancestor who had lived hundreds of thousands of years, his desire was simple:

To become an Emperor.

Watching the blood-soaked Gu Mangran charge with rolling killing intent.

All the frustration from losing an arm and an eye vanished!

Boom!

Vast saintly pressure spread. Countless beings in Pingyang Heaven were crushed to bloody mist.

The void tore.

The two plunged into the heavens, vanishing into the chaotic battlefield beyond.

Faintly, terrifying killing intent rained down, savage clashes shaking the world.

Countless beings trembled.

This time, unlike their previous standoff, they were going all out.

Both fueled by true rage.

Lu sat upon the Thousand-Bladed Chair, gazing at the sky, lost in deep thought.

For a long moment, he was speechless.

If he said now that it was all false... would anyone believe him?

After a long while.

Lu sighed.

"Fine..."

"True or false, what does it matter? When false seems true, true becomes false too."

"Just don't go too far."

Yet the moment he spoke.

Boom!

Pingyang Heaven's sky ripped open, a massive chasm like an endless abyss.

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor, drenched in blood, tumbled back from beyond.

His single eye burned with towering killing intent as he roared coldly toward the Upper Realm Cloud Clan: "If you don't act now... I won't hold much longer!"

The words fell.

In Yuanci Heaven, on the Upper Realm continent.

Vast, overflowing Dao essence surged.

Another Saint Ancestor aura swept the Lower Three Heavens!

The Dao Clan Saint Ancestor had emerged!

The world fell silent.

Countless beings held their breath.

Lu, upon the Thousand-Bladed Chair, narrowed his eyes slightly.

Good, good...

Just one more Saint Ancestor.

Yet.

In the void, the blood-drenched Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor stared toward the Upper Realm Cloud Clan.

His voice boomed with gravity and desperation:

"Activate our Cloud Clan's Emperor Weapon!"

Boom!

The words echoed.

Lu fell silent.

Good my ass.

Now... things had truly gone too far.

Chapter 475: The Spiritual Pressure of Eighth-Layer Qi Refinement

Chaos erupted—complete and utter chaos!

In that moment, the entire Lower Three Heavens was shrouded in an overwhelmingly terrifying aura and pressure.

Dense saintly might poured down like a relentless curtain of rain from the firmament, leaving every cultivator feeling suffocated.

A battle among saints!

And now, they were even resorting to Emperor weapons...

Everyone was stunned.

No one had imagined the conflict would escalate to this extent.

The emergence of a new ascension ground in the Lower Three Heavens had drawn the Upper Realms' attention, but it wasn't the spark for a saint-level war.

It was the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's casual deduction.

The secret of the Void Heaven...

A terrifying secret tied to "becoming an Emperor"!

That was the true cause of the saintly war.

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor clashed fiercely with the blood-robed Gu Mangran. Not only that—the Dao Clan Saint Ancestor joined the fray as well.

And the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor had even issued the command to activate their Emperor weapon!

In an instant, the Lower Three Heavens plunged into total turmoil.

If a saint-level expert unleashed an Emperor weapon, the resulting imperial might could very well annihilate the entire Lower Three Heavens.

Countless lives perished in this war!

From the rifts torn in Pingyang Heaven's void, Gu Mangran struck in fury. A corner of his blood robe whipped out, unleashing world-shaking slaughter.

A vast sea of blood churned, iron horses charging, aura piercing the skies for thousands of miles.

In the chaos beyond the heavens, terrifying killing intent spanned immense distances.

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor was in a sorry state. After all, he had lost an arm to the rules and an eye to Lu's inexplicable Five Phoenixes Bow.

His strength had dipped slightly, and now, suppressed by Gu Mangran—who had consumed a divine herb and fully ignited his combat power—he bled holy blood profusely.

Gu Mangran's roars shook the heavens as his killing blows rained down.

Yet the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor feared nothing and charged back into the chaotic battlefield beyond.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Thunderous roars echoed like deafening thunder.

Vast saintly pressure permeated heaven and earth.

The Dao Clan Saint Ancestor emerged amid dense, unyielding Dao essence, tearing through the void to join the fight beyond the heavens.

The clashes grew even more horrifying!

At the edge of Yuanci Heaven.

On the vast, boundless Upper Realm continent.

Cloud Clan powerhouses roared in rage.

Immortal Abode experts surged upward endlessly, led by Chaoyuan Realm experts, flooding Yuanci Heaven in dense waves.

The terrifying aura threatened to burst Yuanci Heaven apart.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Many Level 8 and Level 9 high-martial worlds fell like dying stars from Yuanci Heaven, countless beings wailing as they evaporated.

The holy lords of those worlds raged helplessly, sorrow welling up from their hearts.

Against such terrifying Upper Realm experts...

What could they do?

Only flee, preserve their lives, and leave seeds of hope for their worlds.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The flames of war spread. Countless beings perished—it was truly a mountain of corpses and sea of blood.

Innumerable souls wailed. Yuanci Heaven seemed to turn into a furnace, a terrifying will burning everything.

That was the Heavenly Dao of the Nine Heavens!

Many souls burned in this furnace.

Yet some—though most were incinerated by the Heavenly Dao—trickled into faint streams, flowing into the Void Heaven and the Nine Prisons Underworld.

The Yellow Springs grew more majestic, the Bitter Sea expanding ever wider, boundless.

Of course, the Upper Realm powerhouses paid no heed to this.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

A burly Chaoyuan Realm expert, bare-chested and etched with runes, carried a massive furnace on his back!

This furnace was the Ancient Emperor weapon that had once suppressed the Void Heaven's rules.

Step by step, he strode through the void, each footfall threatening to shatter it.

Imperial pressure emanated from the furnace, chilling souls to the bone!

"It's truly an Ancient Emperor weapon!"

"They've activated it again... they're really using an Emperor weapon. This will reduce the Lower Three Heavens to ruins!"

"Once imperial might spreads, every being in the Lower Three Heavens will turn to ash—even great powers won't escape!"

In Pingyang Heaven, Xuesha Heaven, and Yuanci Heaven... cultivators across the three heavens fell into despair.

A breath of death enveloped them completely.

Wails echoed through every corner of the Lower Three Heavens.

At the Heavenly Gate.

Lu Jiulian watched gravely.

The cultivators of the Five Phoenixes were solemn, their bodies trembling slightly.

The ascenders from the Lower Three Heavens grieved deeply, watching countless lives turn to ash in an instant.

Their hearts ached like knives twisting.

In Pingyang Heaven's Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm, the Great Venerable wore an expression of compassion. He had long stepped into the Immortal Abode Realm, yet seeing countless beings suffer in Pingyang Heaven...

Rage boiled within him.

The Upper Realms... were utterly lawless!

They truly deserved destruction—to restore order to the Nine Heavens!

But soon, the Great Venerable fell silent.

Even in the Immortal Abode Realm, what could he do?

Before the vast Upper Realms, he was merely a stronger ant.

Boom!

Terrifying roars surged like tidal waves from beyond Pingyang Heaven, hurtling toward the Void Heaven, threatening to crash into the Five Phoenixes.

Lu sat upon the Thousand-Bladed Chair.

His white robes billowed in the fearsome waves.

He had to admit—the Upper Realms' power was truly formidable!

Yet.

Lu placed a piece on the Spiritual Pressure Chessboard.

Instantly.

A radiance descended, enveloping the entire Five Phoenixes.

The waves crashed against it but were blocked, unable to greatly affect the Five Phoenixes' beings.

Lu's expression remained impassive.

His eyes held no ripple.

"The Five Phoenixes... just want to develop steadily in peace."

"Why can't we have that peace?"

"Perhaps I'm too naive. Peaceful coexistence isn't so easy... The Five Phoenixes are weak, so we can only be bullied."

Lu sat upon the Thousand-Bladed Chair.

He tilted his head back.

His gaze fell upon the Upper Realm cultivators streaking down from the vast continent through Yuanci Heaven.

And upon the Emperor weapon blazing with blinding light.

He raised his hand and slammed it down on the armrest, the crisp sound echoing.

Swallow humiliation and develop quietly?

That wasn't what Lu Ping'an sought.

"Time and again... my patience, Lu Ping'an's good temper, has long worn thin."

"Since you insist on treating the Five Phoenixes as an enemy, then the Five Phoenixes... shall be a worthy enemy!"

Buzz...

The Spiritual Pressure Chessboard emerged.

Radiating white light, this top-grade heavenly spiritual tool surged with aura.

Crisscrossing lines spread through Pingyang Heaven.

In the void, a heaven-shrouding chessboard slowly unfolded!

Lu swept his hand grandly. The two chess boxes tumbled open.

White robes fluttering, hair dancing wildly.

Light surged in Lu's eyes.

At the Heavenly Gate.

Overlord, battered and bloodied from battling a Five-Qi Immortal Abode expert, had mostly healed under his unyielding Dao intent.

Seeing Lu's stance—as if ready to face millions alone—his blood boiled.

"This king shall lend Young Master Lu a hand!"

"Why is it so hard for the Five Phoenixes to develop in peace?"

"If that's the case, then we'll kill our way to peace!"

"Peace and stability... are carved through slaughter!"

Overlord roared.

Ax and shield on his back, demonic energy roiling, he strode out from the Heavenly Gate.

Tang Yimo's eyes gleamed.

White cloth unwound from his arms as he exploded forward, charging out!

"I'll aid Young Master Lu too!"

Nie Changqing, white as snow, gently stroked his Dragon Slayer, eyes filled with reminiscence.

"The Dragon Slayer Young Master forged for Changqing is meant for slaying enemies!"

"Today, Changqing shall help the Young Master kill!"

He drew his blade and stepped out.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

One after another, Five Phoenixes cultivators emerged from the Heavenly Gate.

Immortal energies surged as they stepped forward, fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with Lu.

Though they had ascended, the Five Phoenixes remained their home.

If the Five Phoenixes fell, they could not survive alone!

Moreover... in the Five Phoenixes continent were people they cherished and needed to protect.

Sima Qingshan sat cross-legged in the void, scroll unfurled, brush splashing ink.

Vast mountains and rivers materialized in the void.

Kong Nanfei stood disheveled yet sharp-eyed, righteous aura soaring to the clouds.

Bai Qingniao wreathed in flames, phoenixes soaring with piercing cries.

At the Heavenly Gate.

Cultivators from the Lower Three Heavens felt their emotions surge.

Watching the Five Phoenixes experts charge fearlessly toward death...

Their eyes reddened.

Many finally understood why the Five Phoenixes had risen from a tiny new high-martial world to dominate the Lower Three Heavens.

It was this spirit among the Five Phoenixes beings.

Fearless in the face of death, willing to fight for their home!

This was the vitality the many high-martial worlds of the Lower Three Heavens lacked!

The Great Venerable drifted out from the Heavenly Gate.

Many ascenders from the Lower Three Heavens, in this moment, abandoned the comfort of the ascension ground, throwing their heads back in laughter.

Before the Heavenly Gate, figures gathered, immortal energies entwining.

Ascenders stepped out, descending one by one.

Landing outside the Void Heaven, within the domain of the chessboard.

Lu's gaze held faint surprise.

But soon, a smile curved his lips.

His mindset, already elevated by a century of mortal life, rippled and rose further.

Lu chuckled softly.

The gentle laughter spread.

Then, he picked up a piece and placed it on the board.

Buzz...

The Spiritual Pressure Chessboard's domain... expanded!

Enveloping the Lower Three Heavens' Immortal Abode experts and the Five Phoenixes' Heavenly Humans who had emerged from the Heavenly Gate.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

"A ragtag mob."

"Daring to leave the Void Heaven... without the rules' protection, they're courting death!"

From the Upper Realms, Cloud Clan experts sneered coldly.

Whether Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans or Lower Three Heavens ascenders—not one Chaoyuan Realm among them.

Against such forces...

Why should the Upper Realms fear?

It would be utter domination!

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor battled beyond the heavens.

They couldn't falter. They had heard the Saint Ancestor's words.

The ascension ground, underworld, and mortal realm...

The layout of the Ancient Great Emperors—to rebuild the Nine Heavens and create a chance to become an Emperor.

For the Cloud Clan, this was immensely tempting.

The grander the saint clan, the greater the ambition. Among Upper Realm saint clans, the Cloud Clan ranked in the top ten, thanks to their Emperor weapon.

But...

If the Cloud Clan birthed a Great Emperor, they would shine even brighter!

"Kill!"

A top-tier Cloud Clan Chaoyuan expert commanded.

At his order.

Warships laden with cultivators appeared, oppressive aura pressing down as they descended into Pingyang Heaven.

Cultivators stepped out, cold and murderous.

Though the Five Phoenixes had reaped richly in the previous heavenly competition...

They had only ten thousand Dao reserves. Even fusing rapidly, they were at most Level 4 high-martial.

Level 4 was merely average in the Upper Realms.

Without mastering Level 3, one couldn't even claim saint clan status!

Boom!

Warship after warship hovered in Pingyang Heaven.

Masses of experts strode through the air.

Compared to the scattered Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans and Lower Three Heavens ascenders...

The Cloud Clan's forces overwhelmed utterly!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Experts streaked through the void, charging into the chessboard domain Lu had spread outside the Void Heaven.

Atop the vast heaven-shrouding chessboard.

Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans and Lower Three Heavens ascenders charged fearlessly, resolved to die!

"War!"

Roars exploded across the crisscrossing board.

Those who emerged from the Heavenly Gate were like white pieces.

Cloud Clan experts, black pieces.

Black pieces surged with terrifying might, intent on annihilating white in an instant.

Lu sat upon the Thousand-Bladed Chair.

He rolled up his sleeves, casually placing a piece.

The Spiritual Pressure Chessboard flickered softly. Then... the domain's power revealed itself fully!

"Thousandfold spiritual pressure."

Lu said lightly.

Under the domain's tenfold amplification, thousandfold became ten-thousandfold.

Ten-thousandfold spiritual pressure from eighth-layer Qi Refinement!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Cloud Clan cultivators entering the domain felt crushing pressure slam down, displacing organs, bodies trembling uncontrollably, on the verge of kneeling.

Ordinary Immortal Abode experts couldn't withstand Lu's ten-thousandfold pressure.

They burst into bloody mist.

Primordial spirits wailed as they fled, trying to escape the board.

Five-Qi experts endured but were forced flat, sprawled in the domain.

Chaoyuan experts resisted but moved as if mired in mud—every action excruciatingly difficult!

What was this?!

Cloud Clan experts were horrified.

In stark contrast, Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans and Lower Three Heavens ascenders charged freely.

It was... like cutting vegetables!

As they slaughtered...

Even they grew frightened!

Why was it so easy?!

Why weren't these enemies fighting back? Fight back, damn it!

Were they plotting something? Setting a trap?!

Lu sat in the Void Heaven, white robes fluttering, smiling faintly.

With his current eighth-layer Qi Refinement, full spiritual pressure plus the board's amplification...

He could easily wipe out every intruder.

He could—but no need.

Better to let the Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans and Lower Three Heavens ascenders slaughter freely, boosting morale.

Pfft!

Pfft!

Blood stained the skies. Pingyang Heaven turned crimson.

The blood-soaked chessboard radiated eerie might.

A Cloud Clan Chaoyuan expert glared furiously. He saw Overlord's axe coming and tried to block, but his arms felt chained—heavy beyond measure. The axe shattered his skull.

Primordial spirit annihilated!

Too tragic.

This shouldn't have happened!

Corpses floated before the Void Heaven's chessboard barrier.

The Cloud Clan's first wave... annihilated entirely.

Several Chaoyuan experts dead.

Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans and Lower Three Heavens ascenders—unscathed, not one fallen. The only injury: a Two-Qi ascender who split his palm rebounding off a Chaoyuan's body.

The outcome...

Shocked everyone.

The Cloud Clan's top Chaoyuan expert's eyes blazed red.

This wave had wounded the Cloud Clan deeply!

No matter how many experts they had, they couldn't afford deaths like this—meaningless slaughter!

"It's all because of that Lu Ping'an!"

The expert saw clearly.

The chessboard domain was the ultimate support!

Without Lu's domain, the first clash would have wiped out the Five Phoenixes and Lower Three Heavens side.

The power gap wasn't even close!

"We must restrain that Lu Ping'an..."

His eyes gleamed.

"It's all because of that chessboard..."

His gaze lifted to the board before Lu.

"Such might... could it be a Saint Ancestor Dao soldier?!"

His insight was sharp.

"No... it falls short of a Saint Ancestor Dao soldier. It lacks saintly pressure!"

"Then... break it with a Saint Ancestor Dao soldier!"

Buzz...

The heavens tore open.

"Where is the Emperor weapon?!"

A majestic, cold voice boomed everywhere.

It was the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's command.

A bloodied giant hand reached from the chaotic battlefield beyond.

It lifted the Ancient Emperor furnace!

Dong! Dong! Dong...

Resounding tolls echoed, infinite Dao and principles weaving destruction.

The Cloud Clan elder ignored Lu.

He retreated swiftly, avoiding the weapon's fluctuations.

Bang! Bang!

Massive rifts tore through Pingyang Heaven's void, collapsing, black holes devouring.

Boom!

The battle beyond grew more terrifying.

Shaking the entire Nine Heavens.

Even the Heavenly Dao's will seemed to descend. Vast imperial might spread, filling countless beings with dread.

Lu looked up.

Frowning slightly.

Gazing at the battlefield beyond.

Buzz...

Suddenly.

The heavens cracked again. A bloodied hand emerged.

"Well done, Blood-Robed Gu Mangran! One who should have fallen long ago—today, I end you utterly!"

A cold, oppressive voice rang out.

It was the Dao Clan Saint Ancestor's killing words.

The hand descended. A terrifying mirror shot skyward.

Mirror light swept like razor-sharp blades. All beings caught in the imperial-might-wreathed light turned to ash!

The Dao Clan's Ancient Emperor weapon!

From the battlefield beyond came coughing blood.

In the Lower Three Heavens, no one dared move, waiting silently for the outcome.

Crack... crack...

Suddenly.

The heavens seemed to fracture, as if the Heavenly Dao raged.

Boom!

A corner of the coffin fell from beyond, then the whole coffin streaked like a meteor, crashing back into the Void Heaven.

Powerful shockwaves surged endlessly...

Cough... cough...

Crimson blood sprayed.

Seeing the coffin clearly, everyone gasped.

Gu Mangran's coffin was cracked all over, on the verge of annihilation.

A massive hole pierced Blood-Robed Gu Mangran's chest—flesh evaporated, even his beating heart visible.

Defeat!

The ancient fiend, Blood-Robed Gu Mangran, had lost!

Everyone in the Lower Three Heavens felt a heavy oppression. Somehow, they who once sided with the Upper Realms now stood with the Five Phoenixes.

A loss for the Five Phoenixes weighed painfully on them.

The Upper Realms side rejoiced wildly.

Of course, Gu Mangran's defeat surprised no one.

After all...

Two Saint Ancestors, plus two Emperor weapons.

With his vitality long withered, how could Gu Mangran win?

Boom!

From the abyss-like rift.

The one-armed, one-eyed Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor emerged slowly, the great bell above his head.

Imperial might from the Ancient Emperor furnace washed away the rule force on his severed arm and the strange energy in his eye.

Flesh writhed and regrew his arm. His eye restored.

He glanced at the chessboard domain barring the Void Heaven, at the Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans and Lower Three Heavens ascenders within, and at the strewn corpses of Upper Realm cultivators...

His face turned ice-cold.

Boom!

The giant-like Saint Ancestor suddenly punched toward the chessboard domain!

Intent on erasing every Five Phoenixes and Lower Three Heavens cultivator inside with one blow!

Terrifying saintly pressure descended.

Everyone in the domain felt death's breath—they couldn't even move.

Lu Jiulian's eyes flashed brilliantly.

A five-colored lotus bloomed, destruction Dao intent surging!

Yet before the Saint Ancestor's fist... the lotus seemed utterly dim!

No escape!

Despair and oppression gripped the Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans and Lower Three Heavens ascenders.

Suddenly!

Myriad silver blades erupted!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

From spatial profound truths.

Lu appeared. Beneath him, the Thousand-Bladed Chair reversed like a waterfall—countless silver blades stacked overhead.

Forming a silver sword shield.

The Phoenix Feather Sword soared up.

Atop the silver shield, nine segments stacked into a crimson sword shield.

Blocking above the chessboard domain.

Boom!

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's fist slammed down.

Unhindered, smashing into the Phoenix Feather sword shield.

Dazzling light illuminated the dark void in an instant!

A terrifying explosion erupted!

Chapter 476: Emperor Weapons... Gone!

Boom!

A terrifying explosion detonated in an instant.

The deafening blast swept through Pingyang Heaven like a hurricane.

Saintly pressure crashed down in vast waves, making countless beings feel as though blood might surge up their throats.

Within the chessboard domain.

Lu Julian and the others looked up in shock, pupils constricting.

Overlord, Tang Yimo, Nie Changqing—their bodies trembled faintly. The other ascenders from the Lower Three Heavens felt as if the next moment would reduce them to ash.

When the Saint Ancestor unleashed his punch, they had all believed death was certain.

Yet someone had stood before them.

"It's... Young Master Lu!"

Overlord drew a deep breath.

Nie Changqing's eyes betrayed panic. "The Young Master shouldn't have saved us... that was a saint-realm strike!"

It wasn't only him.

The others felt the same unease.

To the Five Phoenixes' Heavenly Humans, Young Master Lu inspired profound respect.

When they had stepped out of the Heavenly Gate, they were already prepared to die.

But never had they imagined Lu would shield them.

A single punch from a Saint Ancestor...

Infused with the boundless imperial might of an Ancient Emperor weapon.

Could Young Master Lu truly withstand it?

Based on the strength Lu had displayed before, it seemed impossible—he might turn to ash under that blow!

Their hearts quaked; sorrow surfaced in their eyes.

In the Void Heaven.

Gu Mangran's body shuddered violently. He couldn't suppress a cough of blood.

Fragments rained from his coffin.

"This foolish boy!"

Gu Mangran's eyes reddened.

Lu had acted too quickly—he hadn't had time to intervene.

Otherwise, he would have stopped him without hesitation.

Lu was the plane lord of the Five Phoenixes, master of the continent. Overlord, Nie Changqing, and the others could fall—but not Lu.

If Lu died, the Five Phoenixes would lose its core and slowly wither.

Of course, Gu Mangran deeply admired Lu. Seeing him rush out to face a Saint Ancestor's punch made his heart tighten.

Young Master Lu was a man who sincerely fought for the Five Phoenixes' strength.

Gu Mangran had witnessed it all: the continent's evolution, Lu leading its cultivators in fearless defiance against the Upper Realms.

He knew Lu's intent was pure—to forge the Five Phoenixes into something greater.

And now, this pure young man was about to perish.

"No!"

Gu Mangran lay in his coffin, coughing blood uncontrollably.

Beyond Pingyang Heaven.

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's gaze remained cold.

Yet beneath it lurked surprise—that Lu Ping'an had dared emerge from the Void Heaven to meet his punch head-on.

He was a Saint Ancestor!

A saint-realm powerhouse. Even Gu Mangran had fled gravely wounded. What could Lu Ping'an possibly use to block him?

The lives of those ants below couldn't compare to Lu Ping'an's.

If this punch erased Lu, he would rejoice.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The explosion's shockwaves caused many Level 9 and Level 8 high-martial worlds in Pingyang Heaven to crumble, their inhabitants annihilated.

What horrifying turmoil!

It chilled the soul.

Radiance bloomed brilliantly, like a fleeting night-blooming cereus.

Soon, the light converged.

As if instantly devoured by a black hole.

Boom!

A muffled roar erupted, like water long dammed suddenly bursting forth.

A figure shot backward from the blast, streaking through the void.

Finally slamming into the Void Heaven.

The scene left everyone stunned.

In Pingyang Heaven.

The Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans and Lower Three Heavens ascenders snapped from their daze.

"Flee!"

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

At a shout, they all became streaks of light, racing into the Void Heaven.

Safety lay only within—protected by the terrifying rules left by Ancient Emperors.

Even a Saint Ancestor entering carelessly would face supreme slaughter: flesh severed, primordial spirit eroded.

In truth.

No one heeded their retreat.

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor stood frozen.

This was his greatest shock yet. Even when Lu's arrow burst his eye, he hadn't reacted so strongly.

"Not... dead?!"

He marveled.

Blocked it?

Impossible!

Lu Ping'an of the Five Phoenixes had withstood a full-powered strike from a true Saint Ancestor!

As the dust settled.

In the Void Heaven.

The figure clarified.

Lu sat upon the Thousand-Bladed Chair, white robes unstained, expression unchanged—hair slightly tousled from the recoil, but otherwise unscathed.

Meaning...

The Saint Ancestor's punch had been blocked without harm.

Well—not entirely.

Countless silver blades gathered.

Keen eyes spotted cracks riddling each one. The Thousand-Bladed Chair was similarly marred.

The crimson Phoenix Feather Sword bore the worst—cracks so severe it seemed forcibly glued.

Lu's face darkened.

Sensing the sword's plummeting aura, killing intent rose within him.

The Phoenix Feather Sword...

After blocking the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's strike—it was probably ruined.

This was Lu's greatest loss yet!

"You... ruined my sword."

"I'll remember that."

In the Void Heaven.

Lu raised his head, hair sweeping his cheek.

He stared coldly at the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor.

Ruined your sword?

Just... your sword?!

In Pingyang Heaven, the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor—with the imperial furnace overhead—grew icy.

A full strike from a Saint Ancestor, and it only damaged a sword.

He had expected Lu's death, but Lu hadn't even bled.

How?

That punch carried saintly pressure and imperial might.

Even Gu Mangran would struggle.

Why... could Lu take it unscathed?

It made no sense!

After brief silence, the Lower Three Heavens exploded in uproar!

Cultivators across Pingyang, Xuesha, and Yuanci Heavens felt reverence surge.

Lu had saved their ascended ancestors!

Preserving the spark for every high-martial world—what boundless grace!

Once Upper Realm lapdogs, Lower Three Heavens cultivators now fully switched allegiance.

At the Heavenly Gate, ascenders and Five Phoenixes Heavenly Humans had retreated into the Void Heaven.

They trembled in aftershock.

Fear from facing a Saint Ancestor's punch.

But greater still—rage.

The Upper Realms truly sought total annihilation.

To them, Lower Three Heavens beings weren't people. Even a revered Saint Ancestor showed no mercy, aiming to erase all ascenders in one blow.

What wrong had the ascenders committed?

None. They sought only ascension, growth. Was that sin?

The fault lay with the Upper Realms for cutting the path!

"You okay?"

Gu Mangran sat in his near-shattered coffin.

He regarded Lu with concern.

He regretted his lapse—nearly costing Lu his life.

"No harm..."

"Saint Ancestors are strong indeed. He damaged my sword."

Lu sat solemnly on the Thousand-Bladed Chair.

Gu Mangran: "..."

Was that the focus?

Blocking a saint strike and losing only a sword—that was a huge gain!

Gu Mangran was baffled. How had Lu blocked it?

No saintly pressure emanated from him—he hadn't entered the saint realm. How could he withstand such terror?

Infused with imperial might!

Lu offered no answer.

He had believed eighth-layer Qi Refinement would allow combat against a Saint Ancestor. Now... it seemed challenging.

A Saint Ancestor's eruption was overwhelming.

In full Indestructible Demonic Body limit state, Lu might trade blows.

But...

Only a few.

Victory near impossible.

More likely—death.

"I'm... still too weak."

Eighth-layer Qi Refinement wasn't enough—far from it.

For world peace... still a long way off.

Lu sighed deeply.

Boom!

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's gaze sharpened like blades.

The furnace overhead activated, imperial might cascading.

As if a true Great Emperor revived.

He stared at Lu, eyes shocked yet brimming with killing intent.

Lu blocking his punch proved what?

Monstrous talent—even a Saint Ancestor felt alarm. Such a prodigy as the Cloud Clan's foe...

Born in the sensitive Void Heaven's lone high-martial world.

A future calamity!

Buzz...

The Dao Clan Saint Ancestor emerged from a heavenly rift.

A mirror of woven Dao essence exuded terror.

The two hovered in Pingyang Heaven, colossal, filling it utterly.

"This youth is indeed monstrous."

The Dao Clan Saint Ancestor's face obscured, light ribbons veiling him.

Ethereal.

But his aura matched the Cloud Clan's.

"Brother Dao."

"The Heavenly Gate, underworld, Five Phoenixes... forging new Nine Heavens. Likely the vanished Ancient Emperors plan a new 'Great Emperor.'"

"Since fate brings this chance... shall we risk it?"

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor proposed.

The veiled Dao Clan Saint Ancestor hesitated.

"Brother Dao, word will spread to other saint clans soon. No time to waver."

Boom...

They conversed, saintly pressure muffling words from the world.

In the Void Heaven.

Lu frowned, turning to Gu Mangran.

"What are they saying?"

Gu Mangran, vitality withered, ever gaunt in his coffin.

"What else? Debating invasion for enlightenment chance."

"The Heavenly Gate, underworld, Five Phoenixes—profound mystery. Likely Ancient Emperors' design, enlightenment legacy. Irresistible to Saint Ancestors."

"Don't see them as exalted. Saint Ancestors' lifespans end too. Emperors age; saints more so."

"That Cloud Ancestor—I saw him in ancient war, mere grunt..."

"Hundreds of thousands years later, his lifespan nears end."

"Unless half-dead like me—sealed, vitality withered."

"Their talk is obvious."

He sighed.

Lu frowned, sensing difficulty.

Invasion would trouble them. Five Phoenixes had Absolute and Covering Heaven arrays...

Guardian formations with Ancient Emperor array words.

But the Emperor weapons overhead were the thorn.

"Then?"

"Fight?"

Lu asked.

"Fight?"

"Without weapons, your domain aiding, another herb—I could hold. With them... we'd best flee."

Gu Mangran shook his head.

Boom!

His words ended.

Pingyang Heaven unleashed tsunami-like terror.

Both Saint Ancestors eyed the Void Heaven.

Lower and Upper Realms beings trembled. Their stance... invasion?

"Brother Dao, you take the Gate; I the underworld. Seal with weapons... Five Phoenixes—we divide later."

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's voice boomed.

Hearts surged in shock.

Lu's brows knit.

Already planning to divide underworld and Gate?

"Agreed."

The veiled Dao Ancestor replied slowly.

Next.

The giants moved.

Stepping into Void Heaven, massive forms shrank to normal.

Jingle!

As auras spread.

Rules rang like cats to blood.

Buzz...

A colossal beast formed, roaring—threatening to scatter souls!

"As expected!"

Gu Mangran's face grim.

Five Phoenixes grew too slowly—no, too little time.

No solid defense.

Yet growth wasn't slow—enemies simply too strong!

"Then... fight."

Lu's gaze surged. He rose from the chair.

Demonic energy roared, demonic god in darkness.

"This aura... half-saint. No wonder he blocked."

Gu Mangran marveled.

Recalling Lu's mortal century.

Likely breakthrough then.

Even he admitted—monstrous talent!

Given time, saint realm certain.

Even Emperor potential!

Pity...

"Can't win. Live for comeback."

Gu Mangran said.

Clang!

Demonic energy surged. Silver blades stacked into metallic wings.

Lu hovered coldly.

"General Gu, hold the Five Phoenixes."

Underworld and Gate—if lost, rebuildable.

Thought triggered.

Spatial energy erupted.

He flashed away.

Gu Mangran, in crumbling coffin, eyes emotional.

Deep sigh.

Lu wasn't resigned—using Mobility word for harassment.

But outcome unchanged.

Boom!

Void Heaven boiled.

Infinite light from Dao Ancestor.

Whisk soared, netting the void.

Ding!

Beast struck, dimming it.

"Dao soldiers hold ten breaths."

"Quick!"

Dao Ancestor urged.

Cloud released his without pause.

Post-battle, both ruined.

But for Emperor secrets—worth it!

Boom!

They suppressed rules.

Weapons overhead, charged in.

Suddenly.

Spatial surge.

Demonic Lu appeared coldly.

Thought: Covering Heaven Array.

"All" word infused, empowering vastly!

Boom!

Mist roiled.

Enveloping them.

"Hinder us?"

"Laughable."

Weapons stirred, imperial might tearing array fiercely.

Even "All" word useless.

Cloud Ancestor, furnace overhead, burst forth.

Punching void.

Demonic Lu watched blankly.

Lips curled.

Spatial surge—vanished.

Boom!

Strike hit nothing, black hole punched.

"Mobility word."

Cloud Ancestor realized—stalling.

Dao soldiers short-lived.

Without weapons, dared not linger in Emperor-aura places.

"Ignore. Direct to underworld and Gate!"

Breath crossed distance, nearing.

Behind Gate: Lu Jiulian, Overlord, Nie Changqing, ascenders—fists clenched, furious.

Five-colored lotus spun in Lu Jiulian's palm.

Underworld.

Tan Taixuan led yin messengers on walls, cold.

Nine city lords behind—unyielding!

"Scram!"

Hair wild, Yama-like.

Hands back, spine straight.

Spatial energy mad.

Demonic Lu appeared.

"Temporal" word overhead, sundial turning.

Time river lashed, halting invaders.

"If Emperor 'Hao' or peer saint used time... I'd fear."

Cloud Ancestor sneered.

Furnace tilted. Flames cascaded, shattering river.

Lu frowned, killing intent sharp!

Spatial vanish.

Thought.

Silver-gray enveloped Tan Taixuan, Lu Jiulian, others.

Teleporting them safe.

Sweat beaded—mass teleport strained.

Face cold. Pupils: array platform flickered.

Mysterious words.

Preaching Platform—trump.

Rarely used.

Touched "system" secrets.

Boom!

As Qian, Dui, Li, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Gen, Kun runes entwined.

Void sensed.

Faint ripple.

Next...

Void Heaven tore!

Vast chasm!

Chaos within—nothing visible.

But...

Whoosh!

Two energy beams shot from rift.

Blinding speed!

Cloud Ancestor at underworld.

Silver-gray swirled around Tan Taixuan as he stepped in.

Underworld quaked.

Suddenly!

Cloud Ancestor cried.

Pfft!

Beam struck. Furnace dimmed.

Power stripped.

Panic—he yanked foot back.

Furnace took it, tumbling into underworld abyss.

"No!"

What force?!

Death's brink.

Gazed abyss: Buddha statue on wall, cradling silhouette.

Pupils shrank.

Statue... eerie smile?

Pores tightened, hairs erect.

Retreated fast.

Dao Ancestor screamed terror.

Mirror fell, might lost—into Gate.

Reached to retrieve.

But...

Ascension ground forbidden zones—terrifying gazes.

Chills; instinctive withdrawal.

Sizzle...

Void Heaven.

Dao soldiers dimmed under rules. Ten breaths gone.

Once gone—without weapons—rules' thousand cuts!

"Go!!!"

Dao Ancestor roared reluctance!

Clan weapon—lost!

Gone!

Lost all!

That death-palpitation force?

Without weapon—he'd die!

Cloud soared.

Both fled Void Heaven desperately.

Lu watched.

Brow raised.

Looked healed rift...

Narrowed eyes.

Not time for that.

Ceased Platform.

Silver flash.

Reappeared—behind them.

Grabbed ankles.

"Rare visit. Don't rush off."

Lu said earnestly.

To them—utterly revolting.

Chapter 477: Make the Emperor Weapons... Take the Surname Lu

Everything unfolded in a flash of lightning.

Ten breaths.

The two Saint Ancestor Dao soldiers that had withstood the mighty rules of the Void Heaven... shattered!

That alone wasn't the most shocking part. After all, while Saint Ancestor Dao soldiers were powerful, they could only resist the rules temporarily. Using them to block the rules meant eventual destruction—it was just a matter of time.

What truly stunned everyone was... the two Saint Ancestors, stripped of their Emperor weapons, desperately trying to flee the Void Heaven in an instant.

Gu Mangran reacted first. Deep in his sunken sockets, brilliant light exploded!

Excitement!

The tide had turned!

With his realm, he clearly saw what happened in that moment.

A massive rift had torn open in the Void Heaven, mysterious beams shooting from within.

Those beams had aimed to slay the two Saint Ancestors.

But the Emperor weapons shielded them.

At the cost of being struck down—the furnace plummeted into the underworld, the mirror crashed into the Heavenly Gate!

The Saint Ancestors tried to retrieve them but were terrified by the suspected Ancient Emperor auras in the underworld and Gate.

So they abandoned the weapons and fled.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

As the Emperor weapons lost their glow...

Unable to resist the rules, the long-brewing forces churned like meat grinders in the Void Heaven.

Lu gripped the two Saint Ancestors' ankles.

Demonic energy formed chains, coiling and clashing with thunderous roars.

"Stay. I'll treat you to a drink."

Lu's eyes gleamed.

The rules swept in like terrifying grinders, numbing scalps.

Even the Saint Ancestors felt death's approach.

The Void Heaven had buried Ancient Emperors—the origin of that ancient cataclysmic war. A place of great terror.

Without Emperor weapons, even their Heavenly Dao-tempered bodies couldn't withstand the rules' slaughter.

They had to escape.

Never expecting the ant-like Lu Ping'an they had crushed... to start disgusting them.

Trying to drag them back, preventing escape!

"Get lost!"

The Dao Clan Saint Ancestor roared in fury—a thunderous bellow.

He had lost his Emperor weapon and now fled like a stray dog.

Emperor weapons were a saint clan's foundation. Losing one would plummet the Dao Clan's status among Upper Realm saint clans.

All because of the Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor!

But the Cloud's weapon was lost too, so he couldn't complain.

Boom!

Terrifying strikes erupted, aiming to kill Lu.

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor unleashed furious slaughter.

Lu's demonic energy surged. Indestructible Demonic Body patterns glowed.

He shifted sideways, spatial profound energy flashing—he vanished.

The strikes hit nothing again.

Again?

"Damn it! He wields the Mobility array word!"

The Dao Clan Saint Ancestor said coldly.

They turned without hesitation—no more delays.

That bastard was purely harassing.

Stalling to let the rules kill them!

Lu avoided direct confrontation, using Mobility's flexibility and spatial mastery to annoy them.

It disgusted the Saint Ancestors utterly!

"The weapons can wait..."

"The Void Heaven's rules will fade eventually. Then... we'll return and reclaim them!"

They exchanged glances.

Decision made. Weapons recoverable.

But if trapped here—lives lost.

Everything gone!

Lu reappeared, grabbing ankles again.

Jade talismans flew, forming blocking arrays ahead.

"Beings in the Void Heaven are hospitable, great conversationalists. No rush to leave."

Lu said.

His words echoed.

Making their faces darken further.

Believe you? Ghosts would!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Rules surged.

The Saint Ancestors blasted through Lu's arrays.

No patience for solving—they tore them with raw power.

Lu's eyes narrowed.

He knew holding both was unlikely.

Saint-level might was unmatched.

"But... one of you stays."

Lu squinted.

Boom!

Demonic Lord Lu, demonic energy towering.

"Who volunteers?"

The resounding question shifted their expressions.

They didn't fear Lu, but if he committed to entanglement... they might truly suffer.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Unrestrained auras exploded like twin stars.

Ignoring Lu, charging out.

Lu smiled.

Next moment.

He released the Dao Clan Saint Ancestor's ankle.

The Dao Ancestor lightened, tearing free—escaping the Void Heaven.

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor's eyes reddened.

Lu's grip tightened, arms clamping legs like tug-of-war, slowing him drastically!

The Cloud Ancestor's body trembled—with rage.

"Lu Ping'an!"

His voice boomed through every corner of the Void Heaven.

Too disgusting!

Full Indestructible Demonic Body—Lu pulled like a mountain-shifting hero, dragging the lower half!

"Come on! Stay!"

"Void Heaven's scenery is picturesque... perfect burial ground!"

Lu said coldly.

Now...

In the Void Heaven and Lower Three Heavens, cultivators witnessed the bizarre scene.

Faces turned utterly strange!

The situation's shift—unpredictable!

Two Saint Ancestors... fleeing?

Five Phoenixes' Lord Lu—forcibly detaining them?

Upper Realm forces found it inconceivable—what was this?

Watching wave-like rules, grinder-like, closing in.

Hearts rose.

Could...

Today witness a saint's fall?

Finally.

The Dao Clan Saint Ancestor escaped.

Dao Clan forces sighed relief.

Their ancestor lived.

Cloud Clan side—far tenser, hearts in throats watching Lu hug their ancestor's lower half, forcibly holding him.

In the Void Heaven.

Gu Mangran in his coffin craned his neck.

Could... they truly slay a saint?

Pfft!

Rules like blades swept with unstoppable imperial terror.

Blood instantly stained the Void Heaven's sky, a churning sea of crimson.

A wretched scream, an ear-shattering roar.

Endless killing intent boiled.

A streak shot from the Void Heaven.

The Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor escaped after all.

But in miserable state!

Lu had dragged his lower half. Given time, saint strength could break free.

But time... was scarcest now.

No time.

So...

He severed his own lower body!

Blood sprayed. Only upper torso from waist up remained.

Lower half lingered in Void Heaven.

Annihilated by rule ocean—flesh exploding into mist...

Even his primordial spirit—slashed, gravely wounded!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Countless silver blades stacked.

Forming the Thousand-Bladed Chair beneath Lu.

He sat slowly. Demonic energy subdued—black to white robes.

Chair dimmed but usable.

Watching rules devour the lower half, Lu expressionless, calm.

Pity. Failed to slay via rules.

But no deep disappointment.

If saints died easily, they wouldn't be saints.

Of course, no kill—but severing half body and slashing primordial spirit: not a loss.

Yet Lu regretted.

The Lower Three Heavens fell deathly silent.

This battle's twists—beyond expectation. A Saint Ancestor nearly fallen!

Five Phoenixes' Lord Lu—truly bold.

Daring to solo-detain two saints!

Too fast—now seeing the halved, blood-rivering, wretched Cloud Ancestor, they reacted.

Uproar shook the heavens!

"My gods, what happened?"

"A Saint Ancestor—supreme!"

"Lost half his body. Upper Realm saint clans... that's all?"

...

Lower Three Heavens cultivators thrilled, enthralled.

The Dao Clan Saint Ancestor felt lingering fear.

Face colder, staring at Lu on the chair in the Void Heaven.

Cheek twitched—heartache.

Emperor weapon... trapped in Void Heaven.

Vital injury to Dao Clan!

But glancing at halved Cloud Ancestor—he felt slight relief.

No weapon—no invasion capability!

Unless borrowing from other clans...

But recalling the rift's terror.

He shuddered slightly.

"Hmph!"

Face grim, he flicked sleeve, vanishing in golden light back to Upper Realms.

Cloud Clan Saint Ancestor bled from waist, ribs writhing—wounds unhealing.

"Lu Ping'an... don't get cocky."

He calmed.

This Void Heaven trip—huge loss.

Twice now: first arm severed, now halved.

But...

Not empty-handed.

Gaze past Lu—to Heavenly Gate and Nine Prisons Underworld.

Eyes rippled.

Confirmed...

Gate and underworld—Ancient Emperor handiwork. That aura unmistakable.

Underworld's eerie-smiling Buddha.

Gate's forbidden zones.

All mysterious.

Weapon lost, but...

Upper Realms had more than Cloud and Dao clans!

This intel—priceless.

Of course, last resort to trade it.

Fewer competitors for Emperor chance—the better.

Cloud Ancestor eyes icy.

No weapon—no rule resistance—no further attack.

So halved, he crossed away.

Upper Realm army exchanged glances—useless lingering—withdrew.

Against Five Phoenixes sheltered in Void Heaven's shell—even superior strength helpless.

Lower Three Heavens cultivators watched retreating conquest army, ancient warships departing to Upper continent.

Faces flushed excitement.

Upper Realms retreated...

And this time—no full ascension severance. Lower Three Heavens retained Upper access.

But cultivators sneered.

Once no choice—now with options, who'd ascend to slave as dogs?

They preferred the Heavenly Gate.

Moreover.

Saint Ancestor said it.

Gate, underworld, Five Phoenixes—might hold "Emperor" chance.

Ascending Gate—perhaps Emperor opportunity!

Brain-damaged to choose Upper Realms.

Once lofty Upper Realms—now trash.

In Void Heaven.

Lu sat.

Coffin drifted. Gu Mangran inhaled deeply—speechless.

Crisis... passed.

Sunken eyes fixed on Lu—deeply.

He sensed great secrets on Lu—perhaps tied to the rift's mystery.

"Next plans?"

Gu Mangran asked.

"This battle bought Five Phoenixes development time."

"But Upper Realms won't let go—especially... two Emperor weapons trapped."

He queried Lu.

Lu leaned on chair, expression steady.

"Weapons fell into Five Phoenixes—henceforth... Five Phoenixes' property."

Lu said.

Gu Mangran speechless.

Emperor weapons—yours because you say so?

Lu raised hand. Cracked, aura-lost Phoenix Feather Sword hovered.

"And... for ruining my sword—this grudge... I, Lu Ping'an, remember deeply."

Lu added.

"You can't beat a Saint Ancestor—even halved, spirit slashed Cloud one—you can't."

Gu Mangran hurried, sensing trouble brewing.

Lu stowed sword, waved: "Five Phoenixes needs growth. I know."

"I'm not vengeful. After all, I'm a scholar—a gentleman."

Lu said.

Gu Mangran relaxed.

This old body couldn't take more.

"Gentlemen avenge from dawn to dusk..."

"Old Gu, you said—if no weapons, us together..."

Lu squinted.

Gu Mangran's heart leaped.

Avenge from dawn to dusk?

What—invade Upper saint clans?

Exterminate them?

"Young Master Lu... don't joke."

"Rest and recuperate. This was pure luck—not always so lucky."

Gu Mangran serious.

"I'm injured too—need recovery."

Lu felt slight regret.

Fearing more shocks, Gu Mangran bid farewell, streaking back to Five Phoenixes.

Planned long recovery.

Sealed tomb—no emergence.

Whatever Lu called for—no response!

He understood Lord Lu's past laments. Young Master once truly small-scale.

Lu sat in Void Heaven, head up, pondering Gu Mangran's words, gazing void.

As if rift lingered.

"Luck?"

Lu tapped armrest thoughtfully.

Looked to Gate and underworld.

Only Lu knew: not Ancient Emperor designs—just his creations for more spiritual energy.

Spatial energy surged.

Lu appeared before Heavenly Gate.

Overlord, Nie Changqing bowed.

Lower Three Heavens ascenders—eyes fervent—bowed.

Young Master Lu's deeds shook them.

Now in Void Heaven—spared rules—they were "insiders" with Five Phoenixes.

Lu waved slightly.

Eyes flickered.

Seeming to pierce Gate—seeing quiet central ancient mirror.

As if built of Dao essence.

The more he looked, brighter his eyes.

"Emperor weapons... seem nice."

Lu withdrew gaze, impassive.

Looked to Lu Jiulian, Overlord, Nie Changqing, Sima Qingshan—familiar faces brimming vitality.

Nodded.

Vanished.

Before Gate, fists clenched.

Battle showed strength gap—they'd grow stronger.

Especially Nie Changqing—sensed Young Master's disappointment.

As White Jade Pavilion's top disciple—must strengthen.

They turned, returning to ascension ground.

Cultivate diligently.

Lower Three Heavens ascenders—infected by Five Phoenixes' will—entered cultivation.

Nine Prisons Underworld.

Lu in white appeared.

Soul storm swept.

Unnoticed, he reached abyss.

Gazing fallen furnace.

Side-tilted, flames pouring—threatening infernal sea filling abyss.

Lu squinted, tapping lightly.

"Saint Ancestors won't abandon weapons easily."

Lu's gaze rippled.

"Two weapons—one in underworld, one in Gate—fated with them. In my, Lu Ping'an's hands—no return."

"Need a way... to make them take surname Lu."

Lu pondered.

But as he did.

System prompt flashed in eyes.

Making them ripple.

Finally... here!

"Congratulations, Host, on completing [Challenge Mission]. Evaluating..."

Chapter 478: First Glimpse of Immortal Martial, Five Phoenixes Births Its Heavenly Dao

Standing at the edge of the underworld abyss, gazing at the sea of flames burning endlessly below and the Buddha statue illuminated in an eerie light, Lu fell into contemplation.

It wasn't truly deep thought—he was examining the system's rewards.

"As expected, completing the [Challenge Mission] ties to the Upper Realms' threat level against the Five Phoenixes. Now... with two Saint Ancestors' Emperor weapons trapped, the Five Phoenixes will be safe for a while. Thus... the mission is deemed complete."

Lu mused.

This aligned with his prior guesses.

In truth, the mission's difficulty was immense—worthy of the "Challenge" title.

A true extreme challenge.

Creating the ascension ground and drawing Lower Three Heavens cultivators wasn't hard; reaching the required numbers wasn't either.

The real difficulty: defending the Heavenly Gate, preserving the ascension ground from destruction.

That was the hardest part.

"Mission evaluation generating..."

"[Challenge Mission] complete. Evaluation: Lower A-grade."

Finally, the flickering system prompt settled.

"Lower A-grade..."

Lu's gaze sharpened. The evaluation surprised him—no perfect Upper A.

But thinking carefully, he understood...

It must be due to the rift's appearance in the Void Heaven, introducing an element of luck.

"Congratulations, Host, on rewards: Immortal Martial World Memory Fragment, Dao Source ×1, <Advanced Artifact Forging>, Indestructible Demonic Body ×1, Vermilion Bird Fruit (Divine Herb)."

What Lu anticipated most was the reward distribution.

As the prompt faded...

Lu narrowed his eyes.

This mission's rewards—names alone felt extraordinary.

"Immortal Martial..."

Lu's eyes blazed frighteningly bright.

Above high-martial... immortal martial?

Though the current Five Phoenixes was only Level 4 high-martial—far from immortal martial.

Immortal martial's power surely exceeded Lu's imagination!

His goal: forge a mighty super-fantasy world.

Now closer than ever, yet pressure mounted.

Even high-martial ascension was slow and arduous; immortal martial even more so.

"This reward likely bundles the eighth-layer Qi Refinement upgrade too."

Lu thought.

Beyond the shocking Immortal Martial World Memory Fragment, many new rewards appeared.

"What is Dao Source? Numbered suffix—collectible like the Phoenix Feather Sword segments?"

Lu flipped his hand, tapping the armrest lightly.

And <Advanced Artifact Forging>—clearly no ordinary technique; high-level forging methods.

But Lu pondered, then paused.

"Could <Advanced Artifact Forging> reveal ways to handle Emperor weapons..."

Lu felt this feasible.

Emperor weapons... products of advanced forging?

Likely yes. With his prior forging level, crafting an Emperor weapon was impossible—even Saint Ancestor Dao soldiers difficult.

The unchanging Indestructible Demonic Body reward stirred no waves in Lu now.

A direct divine herb surprised him slightly.

Past rewards were seeds; now a full herb—saving time river catalysis, perfect potency.

Lu refocused.

Overall, satisfied with the rewards.

At least...

The [Challenge Mission] wasn't a loss.

The Immortal Martial World Memory Fragment alone made it worthwhile.

"Hmm... involving immortal martial—likely exploratory like before. Proceed cautiously; situation unclear—don't probe the fragment yet."

Lu frowned, solemn.

Caution needed—for something beyond high-martial.

"Then... check this 'Dao Source' first."

With a thought.

Couldn't summon it—required origin space.

"Dao Source: Source of Heavenly Dao. Heavenly Dao is high-martial's root, creation's foundation, wielding immeasurable power."

System prompt appeared.

Lu scanned—eyes contracting.

Dao Source... Heavenly Dao's source?

Nine Heavens had a Heavenly Dao...

Did this mean Lu could separate from it, create the Five Phoenixes' own?

This Dao Source... extraordinary!

Lu sensed the gravity.

Buzz...

Five Phoenixes origin space.

Vast suction pulled Lu's soul in.

Boom!

The swirling vortex-like origin, stars orbiting.

Lu appeared. He felt the Five Phoenixes' origin subtly tied to the Nine Heavens.

Like an insect in a vast web.

"That invisible link... the Nine Heavens' Heavenly Dao?"

Lu hovered in the origin space, pondering deeply.

"Heavenly Dao conscious? If so, fusing Dao Source would enrage it."

"One mountain can't hold two tigers; one world won't tolerate two Heavenly Daos."

Lu stroked his chin—issue thorny and severe.

Yet faintly, Lu sensed: separating, birthing its own Heavenly Dao—Five Phoenixes' growth would accelerate vastly.

Like shifting from wage work to entrepreneurship...

Entrepreneurship harder, but promising.

Buzz...

Lu raised his hand.

Origin space distorted—a black hole forming in his palm.

Expanding, extreme darkness blooming white light.

The light... Dao Source.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Lu squinted.

Dao Source pulsed like a heart...

Each beat—not blood, but unique Dao essence surging.

Lu held it, streaking to the massive Five Phoenixes origin.

Now etched with Dao reserves—each like veins, filling it with vast aura.

But prior etching slow.

The ten thousand Dao reserves plundered from the heavenly competition—unfinished.

System's rewarded ten thousand—untouched.

Not unwillingness—etching took time; more reserves, longer.

Etching strengthened the Five Phoenixes.

Why wouldn't Lu want that?

Buzz...

Suddenly.

Dao Source shot from Lu's hand.

A streak like raindrop—falling onto the origin.

Lu's gaze sharpened. In surprise, he retreated from the origin star.

A white glow tore endless darkness—like dawn, unleashing boundless light.

The Five Phoenixes origin flickered brighter and brighter!

Finally—a massive white bulb!

Like a grand star.

Dazzling.

Buzz... buzz...

Unique emotion surged from the origin.

Tied intricately to Lu.

As if... the Five Phoenixes came alive!

"As expected... Heavenly Dao is conscious!"

"Dao Source fused—turning the origin into Heavenly Dao..."

Lu frowned gravely.

He held breath, listening.

The Five Phoenixes' Heavenly Dao—hazy, nascent.

Not listening to it—but the Nine Heavens' reaction.

A new Heavenly Dao emerging—would it notice? Descend terrifying punishment to erase?

Lu doubted Void Heaven rules could block Heavenly Dao.

Those rules... were Heavenly Dao.

Time ticked.

Lu heard his heartbeat.

Long after—he exhaled.

Apparently... Five Phoenixes' Heavenly Dao too weak.

Slightly stronger—Nine Heavens would react.

Like a 1.8m adult staring ahead—a silent <1m infant flailing unnoticed without focus.

But eventually—discovered. Then... trouble.

Lu needed preparation.

Boom!

Suddenly.

Lu narrowed eyes.

He saw—Dao reserves in the Dao Derivation Mirror rapidly drawn, fusing into Five Phoenixes Heavenly Dao.

Far faster than before.

Heavenly Dao's emergence—like an engine, accelerating etching and fusion!

Lu's eyes lit—unexpected boon!

Soon, remaining dozens fused.

Lu thought—tossed the rewarded ten thousand pending.

Five Phoenixes Heavenly Dao accepted all.

Reserves swirled around the star-like Heavenly Dao.

Bottomless pit!

Once slow development—but now, Lu found rapid growth path!

Fast Dao reserve fusion!

"Now, Lower Three Heavens severed from Upper. Pingyang, Xuesha, Yuanci—many high-martial worlds, abundant Dao reserves..."

"Fusing them—Five Phoenixes surges; even Level 1 not hard."

"But..."

Lu soon thought seriously.

"Devouring Lower Three Heavens' reserves—worlds collapse..."

"Thus, enhancing via their reserves—unrealistic."

Lu needed alternatives.

Deep glance at Five Phoenixes Heavenly Dao.

He exited origin space.

Underworld.

Lu opened eyes.

Around him—Tan Taixuan and nine city lords stood.

When Lu contemplated—they dared not breathe, fearing disturbance.

Now open—they spoke.

"Young Master Lu, enlightenment complete?"

Tan Taixuan smiled.

Enlightenment?

Lu chuckled silently—nodded.

"Young Master Lu... war ended, but Lower Three Heavens lost countless lives. Most souls absorbed by Nine Heavens Heavenly Dao, but some streamed into underworld."

"Underworld growing stronger..."

Tan Taixuan's eyes worried: "Too much energy... flooding us. Young Master Lu... I fear losing myself! Becoming slaughter machines!"

"Thus, I beg—if I fall to slaughter, erase me immediately!"

Lu paused—understood.

Massive souls—overwhelming energy.

Tan Taixuan and city lords strengthened via soul energy—but exceeding limits assaulted will.

Turning power-dominated monsters.

"No worry... solutions come."

Lu consoled.

In fact—he had ideas.

Underworld... needed soul energy cultivation method.

Tan Taixuan smiled—assuming acceptance.

Then gazed abyss—flames pouring from furnace.

Confined—he paid little heed.

Bid farewell—returned to city, handling souls.

Lu didn't linger—left soon.

Heavenly Gate closed; underworld operated.

All returned to normal.

Lu back to Five Phoenixes.

Sky blue.

Azure vault—clouds drifting gently.

Beautiful world—Lu gazed entranced.

Floating above ninth heaven.

Wind biting.

Lu spread arms—robes billowing.

As if merging with heaven and earth.

Unique profound—Dao intent elevating.

Five Phoenixes Heavenly Dao loosened Dao intent shackles—upgradable via comprehension.

Surprised Lu.

Meaning... Nine Heavens Heavenly Dao fixed Dao intents—preventing comprehension upgrades.

Why?

Lu couldn't fathom immediately.

Long after.

Lu opened eyes—gazing continent. Clearly felt expansion.

"World expanding rapidly... but cultivators lagging. Next—accelerate strength growth."

"Upper Cloud and Dao clans—weapons trapped; won't rest. Always plotting Five Phoenixes' fall..."

"Wait for attack? Better strike first—wipe saint clans."

"Of course—strengthen people first."

Lu's gaze flickered.

Next.

Spatial energy surged.

Vanished from vault—reappeared East Sea immortal island on giant whale.

Lake Heart Island.

Lu returned—mild surprise.

Young Yinglong lay supine on origin lake, drifting leisurely.

Ni Yu refining pills; Ning Zhao and Yi Yue cultivating.

No restrictions—Ning Zhao fused two immortal energies—Two-Qi Immortal Abode.

Unnoticed by Ni Yu etc.

Lu planned quiet return to pavilion for thought.

But Yinglong startled him.

"Didn't throw this little guy into time-reversed war for tempering? Back so soon?"

"Escaped?"

Thought entered reversed war.

Azure Dragon still tearfully slaying.

Young Yinglong... truly farmed points—now lounging.

"Without pressure... didn't know your potential."

Lu smiled surprised.

But no action—returned pavilion.

Drifting young Yinglong shivered suddenly.

Wings wrapped body—shifted pose, slept on.

As heavenly dragon seed of eight dragon gates—always coveted. Habitual.

Bore pressure beyond his age.

Pavilion above.

Lu took <Advanced Artifact Forging>—studied. Spiritual Pressure Chessboard emerged—showing origin space's Heavenly Dao refining reserves.

Suddenly—Lu recalled.

Massive sundial on board.

Array words struck—time river surged, coiling faster outside continent.

Lu felt rapid primordial spirit and spiritual energy drain—smiled.

"To accelerate—strengthen people—Five Phoenixes time flow: hundredfold outside one."

Lu's gaze gleamed.

His burden—but gains outweighed; acceptable.

Boom!

Not only.

Heavenly Gate ascension ground and underworld—Five Phoenixes' domains.

With Heavenly Dao birth—both transformed variably.

Many sensed Heavenly Dao for cultivation.

Especially Five Phoenixes natives—clearer, easier comprehension.

Thus faster cultivation!

Even—Dao intents evolving!

Ancient tomb.

Gu Mangran slowly opened eyes from coffin.

Felt Lu's accelerated time array.

Eyes warmed comfort.

"That's right..."

"Develop properly—strengthen selves fundamental."

Gu Mangran closed eyes again.

Palace aura quieted.

Though coffin cracked—heart joyful.

Buzhou Peak.

Zhu Long on bluestone—long lashes trembled.

Raised face—sensed world's change.

Boom!

Candle Dragon form—eyes open, black and white filling heaven earth.

Seemed to see Five Phoenixes Heavenly Dao origin.

Mouth opened—inhaled exhaled, Heavenly Dao cascaded. Approaching—energy scoured body, aura strengthening ceaselessly.

White Jade Pavilion pavilion.

Studying <Advanced Artifact Forging>—Lu's brows raised.

Surprised gaze toward Buzhou Peak.

Chapter 479: Forging the Underworld Cultivation Method: Six Paths of Reincarnation

Lake Heart Island.

Lu looked toward Buzhou Peak with mild surprise, watching Zhu Long's aura fluctuate continuously. A trace of astonishment appeared in his eyes.

"Refining her body with the power of the Heavenly Dao born from the Dao Source?"

Lu set aside <Advanced Artifact Forging>, his eyes brightening slightly.

Though Candle Dragon was one of the eight heavenly dragon species, her uniqueness far surpassed the others.

Now, creating another Candle Dragon via the Preaching Platform would be exceedingly difficult—if not impossible.

Thus, Lu had always paid close attention to Zhu Long's growth.

"Cultivating with the Heavenly Dao..."

Lu sat upon the Thousand-Bladed Chair, fingers tapping lightly as he watched terrifying energy cascade from the Dao Source, flooding Zhu Long's body. Her aura strengthened, even her innate divine abilities evolving. He fell into thought.

"As expected... for the Five Phoenixes to accelerate development, the birth of a Heavenly Dao is essential."

"With a Heavenly Dao, the Five Phoenixes' growth will be much faster."

Lu observed Zhu Long inhaling and exhaling Heavenly Dao essence, undergoing transformation. He neither stopped nor had reason to.

Little Zhu Long was the cub he favored most—he wished for her strength to grow, so why interfere?

Legend said saints cultivated by tempering themselves with Heavenly Dao power.

Could... little Zhu Long already be assaulting the saint realm?

"The current Five Phoenixes Heavenly Dao is still tender... but perfect for Zhu Long to draw upon for cultivation. If it were the Nine Heavens' Heavenly Dao—with full consciousness—daring to inhale and exhale it would invite world-ending tribulation."

Lu shook his head.

Gazing beyond the Five Phoenixes, his eyes grew solemn.

The Nine Heavens' Heavenly Dao—since the Five Phoenixes had birthed its own, Lu needed to consider how to face it in the future.

The day of confrontation would come.

Without countermeasures, the Five Phoenixes' Heavenly Dao might be crushed and destroyed by the Nine Heavens'!

Then, the entire Five Phoenixes would suffer calamity.

The Five Phoenixes was the foundation of Lu's Qi Refinement.

Destroying it was akin to killing him, Lu Ping'an...

Thus, intolerable.

His gaze returned to <Advanced Artifact Forging>. He needed to master it quickly, then dismantle the Emperor weapons.

...

Heavenly Dao Tree.

Now the sacred ground of the Five Phoenixes—not only for bearing Dao Intent Fruits that easily birthed Dao intents upon consumption.

But because the tree's Dao essence clarified cultivation.

Thus, many cultivation forces built sect gates near the Heavenly Dao Tree.

To listen to its diffusing Dao essence.

Around the tree, cultivators sat in meditation daily—vast numbers.

From Yang God experts to Body Storage novices—all listening.

Boom!

Suddenly, many looked up toward Buzhou Peak.

"What is that?"

Cultivators gasped in horror.

They seemed to see massive stars descending, a colossal human-headed serpent figure inhaling and exhaling those falling stars.

The vision—like a myth reborn!

Buzhou Peak was the Five Phoenixes' forbidden land. Legend spoke of a demoness atop—eyes closed, fond of killing.

Any fool entering died mercilessly.

Many thought the Buzhou Peak demoness had transcended, ascending to the Heavenly Gate.

But this vision suggested... she hadn't!

Rustle!

The Heavenly Dao Tree swayed.

As if resonating with the Dao essence Zhu Long inhaled and exhaled.

Bells seemed to ring, zither strings to strum.

Manifestation of Dao essence.

Countless cultivators trembled—excitement in their eyes. Great opportunity!

All sat cross-legged, comprehending.

This session flowed like gentle streams—many gained insights.

Some even broke through under the fluctuations.

...

Lu ignored Buzhou Peak's changes.

Though he guessed—after this Heavenly Dao resonance, Zhu Long's strength might surge terrifyingly.

Boom!

Half a month later, Lu sensed heaven and earth's shift.

The Five Phoenixes' sky darkened abruptly.

Then brightened just as suddenly.

Lu set aside his book, feeling divine ability power in the dark-to-light shift.

"Eyes open—day; closed—night..."

"Little Zhu Long's ability grows stronger."

Lu smiled.

He stowed <Advanced Artifact Forging>—content mostly mastered via Preaching Platform deductions.

Drew the Phoenix Feather Sword.

Once flame-like—now dull and gray, cracks spiderwebbing.

"Old companion..."

Lu sighed.

Chaos power surged, origin and Heavenly Dao essence roiling.

Interweaving—they fused into the sword.

Blazing flames rolled. The sword melted into liquid metal, coiling in fire, finally forming a metallic sphere.

Like an egg.

"Nirvana."

Lu formed seals. Vast primordial spirit surged; spiritual energy cascaded like a waterfall, slamming down.

Clang!

Soon, the Phoenix Feather Sword broke shell—reborn in nirvana.

Its sword soul soared winged, bathing in world-ending flames.

Buzz...

All converged.

Lu raised his hand—the sword hovered, ringing as it split into nine segments. Each stronger than before.

"Nine Phoenix Feathers—one top-grade heavenly; united... saint soldier."

Lu smiled.

United, it faintly communed with the Five Phoenixes Heavenly Dao—exuding its might.

One slash—myriad sword rays spanned the stars.

Each ray seeming to gestate Dao essence.

Far more powerful than before.

Repairing Phoenix Feather Sword and Thousand-Bladed Chair took time.

But with accelerated Five Phoenixes time—Lu could afford it.

A month later.

Both repaired.

Lu pondered. Repairing them sparked new ideas.

"Perhaps... attempt the Emperor weapons."

Lu sat on the Thousand-Bladed Chair, Phoenix Feather Sword hovering before him thoughtfully.

"But before that—other matters."

Thought entered Preaching Platform.

"Underworld and Heavenly Gate—my creations. Underworld cultivates soul power; Gate—diluted chaos power, called immortal energy."

In the Platform, Lu wreathed in Eight Trigrams array words.

"Underworld soul power—from Lower Three Heavens influx. Without method—as Tan Taixuan said—they risk will erosion, becoming power-dominated monsters."

"Thus... forge a soul-specific cultivation method."

Lu's loose robes billowed.

Eyes gleamed, as if gazing distant starry seas.

Then closed slowly—becoming a minor yin messenger in the Nine Prisons Underworld.

Countless wailing souls.

Yellow Springs overflowed; Bitter Sea expansion uncontrollable.

Soul power overflowed; many yin messengers—over-refined—lost control, becoming mad ghosts rampaging energy.

Lu's yin messenger walked unhurriedly.

Gradually, excess soul power bloated the body—monstrous.

Soul squeezed by foreign forces—myriad thoughts gathering.

Chaotic.

Twisted chaos bred growing mania.

Lu deduced—evolving method to calm mania without wasting influx soul power.

Unlike ordinary methods.

Lu's yin messenger repeatedly devolved into chaos monsters.

Failure after failure.

"Harder than imagined."

Lu frowned—unexpected consecutive failures.

He had experience creating methods.

This one—obstacles abound.

Yet...

Intuition: success might yield unimaginable benefits.

Making underworld immensely powerful.

Attempt after attempt.

Lu faintly grasped something.

"Underworld... chaotic soul power—mostly death obsessions. Obsession-born will—terrifying, causing chaos."

"Hmm... purify obsessions—making power controllable?"

Lu stroked chin, pondering.

Mind spun like a vast wheel.

Again yin messenger—sat in Bitter Sea. Raised head—reflected scroll.

Scroll unfolded: Lu's mortal life.

Slow exhale.

"This... Human Path."

Lu deduced with Eight Trigrams.

Scrolls unfolded one by one.

Some peaceful, radiant; others evil, dark; death, slaughter.

He embodied—building on Human Path, creating five more scrolls. Purifying chaotic soul power into strength.

Cultivate path—bear fruit; Heavenly Gate welcomes as Heavenly Human—radiant. Heavenly Human Path.

Others: Asura Path, Animal Path, Hungry Ghost Path, Hell Path.

Six scrolls' powers extraordinary—purifying most soul obsessions.

Yielding pure power.

"This power... Karma."

Lu said.

Eyes opened—seeing thick soul power over Nine Prisons Underworld.

Lu didn't personally intervene transmitting "Six Paths Reincarnation Method" to underworld.

World believed underworld tied to Ancient Emperors—Lu made it convincing.

Those vanished Ancient Emperors—perfect scapegoats.

"Six Paths Reincarnation... visualization method. Cultivate karma, strengthen primordial spirit. Visualize all six—primordial spirit transforms."

Lu's eyes gleamed.

Mind exited Platform.

Dizzy spell.

Spiritual energy depleted; primordial spirit near dry.

This visualization—extraordinary; vast consumption.

"Eighth-layer Qi Refinement now—this drain exceeds creating ascension ground..."

"This method... could breed many underworld powerhouses—greatly boosting Five Phoenixes."

Lu's eyes shone.

Anticipation rose.

"But... underworld strengthened—mortal realm and immortal realm can't lag. Mortal has Five Emperors Scripture—manageable. Main issue: Heavenly Gate ascension ground."

Lu tapped renewed Thousand-Bladed Chair armrest slowly.

One bite at a time.

Just forged underworld visualization—exhausted. No rush deducing.

Next days—Lu played chess, recovering energy.

Ning Zhao and Yi Yue awoke from cultivation—paid respects.

Island time—Yi's progress vast; entered Heavenly Human realm—though no immortal energy fused, far stronger.

Ni Yu backpacked black pot—drooping, weary.

Eighth-grade pills—still too hard.

Lu guided Ni Yu—she enlightened, rushed back refining.

Energy recovered.

Lu secluded.

Reentered Platform—building secret realm.

In Nine Prisons Underworld.

Not complex—Lu experienced in realms.

Array words roiled.

"Furnace flames burn, underworld melts; Bitter Sea pours, imperial might clashes... Six Paths emerge, Reincarnation arises."

Lu eyed completed realm—smiled.

Mind returned.

White robes fluttering, hair dancing in wind.

Spiritual Pressure Chessboard hovered. Lu rolled sleeves, picked piece.

Clack!

Piece straight to center—heavenly yuan. Mysterious fluctuation spread.

...

Nine Prisons Secret Realm.

Ten necropolis cities.

Tan Taixuan sat solemnly; Beigong Holy Lord beside—brows knit, worried.

"Tan City Lord—daily new souls influx: millions. Just portion diverted from Nine Heavens Heavenly Dao..."

"Soul energy floods every corner; yin messengers' refinement can't keep pace. Over-refinement assaults will—many already slaughter monsters."

Beigong gravely concerned.

Long in underworld—heart fused with it.

At this rate...

Underworld doomed to collapse.

Unacceptable.

"Other nine city lords striving refinement. We do our best... This king won't see underworld wasteland."

"Its existence bolsters Five Phoenixes—if collapses, vital injury; millennium stagnation at least."

Tan Taixuan deeply worried.

But helpless—influx not just Five Phoenixes'; Lower Three Heavens worlds too.

Upper conquests destroyed many Level 8-9 high-martial worlds—countless perished as souls.

Drawn to underworld—uncontrollable.

"Last resort... this king ventures abyss!"

Tan Taixuan's eyes sharpened suddenly.

"Abyss likely holds clues from underworld-creating Ancient Emperor. Aid would ease soul handling."

Beigong paled: "No! Furnace fell—imperial might weaves; death zone. Wave erases all."

"Only way."

Tan shook head.

Beigong disagreed—argument ensued.

Suddenly!

Underworld quaked—earth cracking.

Both changed expressions—glanced, vanished.

Underworld sky black—but now fire-cloud like.

Nine city lords emerged—aura unstable, near collapse.

Over-refined souls—verge of rampage.

"What anomaly?"

Tan condensed gaze.

Nine unclear.

Soon—abyss thundered terror!

Stunned—they sped down, abyss edge.

Abyss flames soared high—nearly escaping.

Underworld earth melted under furnace flames—crumbling stones tumbling.

"This..."

Tan and nine paled!

Bitter Sea swayed—heavy, threatening land collapse as earth melted.

Crack...

Stones fractured.

Finally!

Abyss sank; Bitter Sea tilted.

Waters surged—pouring into abyss.

As if dousing furnace flames.

"What?!"

Suddenly!

Beigong sharp-eyed—stared Bitter Sea, horrified.

"Stone wall? Sunk in Bitter Sea bed?"

"Bitter Sea's corrosion immeasurable—souls, flesh dissolve instantly. What wall endures?"

A city lord boomed.

Walls bore strange scrolls—curious contents. But now—amid pour, rolled toward abyss.

Soon—out Bitter Sea, mud-sand wrapped—plunged abyss.

"Six walls total..."

Tan murmured.

Brows knit—heart pounding. Felt... great secrets on walls.

Boom!

Bitter Sea waters clashed furnace flames.

Waters reversed—flowing back to Bitter Sea.

Like upside-down waterfall—shocking.

Disappointing those thinking Bitter Sea could extinguish flames.

Buzz... buzz...

Suddenly—chanting echoed.

Abyss wall's flame-shrouded Buddha seemed alive. Cradled silhouette exuded terrifying oppression; sky-pointing arm rumbled, turning—finally pointing abyss bottom.

Imperial might spread.

Next.

Abyss trembled—stones cascaded.

Furnace roared.

As if challenged.

Above—six walls hovered. Ancient aura released supreme might—clashing imperial against furnace, waves rolling!

Tan and others marveled—captivated.

But shifting gaze to walls...

Bodies froze.

Chapter 480: The Rise of the Underworld, Li Sansi's Choice

Five Phoenixes Continent.

Origin Lake, Lake Heart Island.

The Spiritual Pressure Chessboard hovered before Lu, emitting a faint glow. His hair danced in the wind, loose white robes billowing as if stirred by airflow—an immortal seated in tranquility.

His finger pressed a piece firmly into the board's center.

In his eyes, scenes of starry seas flowed. Faintly, a figure sat amid the stars.

Upon closer look, it was none other than the Ancient Great Emperor "Hao"—the one Lu had repeatedly used as a scapegoat.

The chessboard displayed the underworld.

Lu simulated Emperor "Hao's" aura to provoke the furnace's imperial might.

The clash of two imperial forces rocked the underworld like mountains crumbling and seas roaring. Countless souls wailed in terror.

This was precisely Lu's intent.

To make the dissemination of the Six Paths Reincarnation Method more mysterious, more awe-inspiring.

...

Boom! Boom! Boom!

In the Nine Prisons Underworld.

Terrifying might surged, causing mountains to collapse and heavens to cave in.

True imperial power—from a Great Emperor.

It swept through, reversing Bitter Sea waters. Flames pouring from the furnace warped space itself.

Imperial might induced trembling.

Yet...

What unfolded now wasn't one imperial force—but two clashing.

Six stone walls bore hazy, indistinct murals.

Power from the walls shifted mountains and subdued seas—matching the ancient furnace's might blow for blow.

At the Bitter Sea's edge.

Tan Taixuan, Beigong Holy Lord, and the nine city lords stood.

They gazed at the murals on the six walls.

Indeed—murals. From ancient eras, recording great events. Though progress favored text now, murals' pictorial style—rigid yet charming—held unique allure.

Boom!

As their eyes fell upon them, scrolls seemed to unfurl before them.

As if transcending time and space.

Tan Taixuan's eyes widened.

From becoming Human Emperor, he'd been cut off from immortal opportunities—his only one perhaps becoming a necropolis lord.

Earned through a lifetime's merits, post-mortem.

In short, Tan Taixuan had never encountered true fortune. Now...

These six walls brought the breath of destiny for the first time.

Eyes wide—nearly tearing up—he strained to see every detail.

He felt transported through time.

Into an ancient cavern.

A majestic, supreme back silhouette.

Just the back unsettled his breath.

As necropolis lord, Tan Taixuan's soul power had grown vastly—especially with recent influxes.

Yet this silhouette alone pressured him.

The figure painted on the wall.

With reverence and sentiment.

Tan Taixuan's gaze drawn—fixing on the mural.

The first wall held not one image—but an event.

Ancient script named it: Human Path.

Then Tan Taixuan immersed.

A peak cultivator—one thought inverting day and night—hit a bottleneck. Called "sage" in antiquity. Glimpsing mortal dust, inspired—he sealed cultivation, became ordinary, wandering the red dust. Experiencing birth, aging, illness, death; time's blade.

Finally, the ancient sage died plainly. In death's instant—enlightenment. Created a visualization method.

Recording his life—for visualization yielding great fortune.

The sage named it: Human Path.

Tan Taixuan trembled. Mind returned—gazing further. The figure painted the second mural—another event.

Still that mysterious sage—eternal in time's river. Great being. Second mural: from mortal to Heavenly Human. Profound visualization—soul-piercing.

Named: Heavenly Human Path.

Tan Taixuan dared not visualize—sensing vast fortune.

But forced gaze onward—third, fourth...

By fourth—exhaustion.

Sweat poured; head near bursting. Yet persisted—fifth, sixth...

Finally, Tan Taixuan staggered.

The painter ceased.

"This method... Six Paths Reincarnation."

"Purify sentient obsessions—gain supreme karma."

Boom!

The enigmatic being spoke. Tan Taixuan convinced: this timeless sage in time's river.

Murals recorded the sage's created method.

Though called sage—while Upper Realm foes were Saint Ancestors.

Both "saint."

But Tan Taixuan knew: those ancestors unworthy to carry this mural-painting sage's shoes.

Instinct!

Boom!

Tan Taixuan exited the profound state.

In the abyss.

Two imperial forces gradually faded.

But in Tan Taixuan's fervent eyes—the walls' might suppressed the furnace's.

"Purify sentient obsessions... this visualization—for the underworld?"

"Or... remnant from its past decline!"

Tan Taixuan thrilled.

"City Lord—look at the Buddha!"

Suddenly, weakened Beigong spoke. Tan Taixuan glanced—abyss wall. Massive Buddha—once sky-pointing hand now aimed abyss bottom.

Crucially... perilous stone stairs appeared on the arm!

"Stairs to abyss depths?"

Tan Taixuan found it eerie.

The statue... alive?

"No—the ancient sage's guidance?"

Not just him—others exclaimed similarly.

They sped across abyss.

Soon on stairs. Tried examining Buddha for clues—but too divine. Cradled silhouette still back-turned—
eerie.

The smile—bone-chilling.

"What Buddha is this?"

Beigong asked.

Underworld dwellers—how know origins? All shook heads.

They descended treacherous stairs.

Long way.

Abyss bottomless; Buddha arm endless—countless steps.

Finally.

On stairs—hovered ancient wall.

Murals vivid!

"First mural!"

Tan Taixuan said.

Tried descending further—impossible.

Vast imperial might below—shred them.

"Weapon suppressed! Its fall revived ancient murals!"

"Those Upper saint ancestors... good deeds."

Tan Taixuan sighed.

They stood on stairs—visualizing.

Excess soul power—purified.

Obsessions evaporated like boiling water—vanishing.

Strange power coursed limbs.

Powerful—meridians channeling destructive might.

Pure karma—obsession-free soul power!

"So... strong..."

Tan Taixuan flushed; aura majestic.

Nine city lords similarly—Lower Three Heavens influx slowly becoming karma.

Karma directly assaulted souls—terrifying.

Beigong thrilled—growth less, but vastly stronger.

Upper Immortal Abode—no fear; dare clash!

Underworld... his fortune land.

"Hahaha... Six Paths Reincarnation! Underworld's blessing!"

Tan Taixuan laughed.

Had Beigong copy first mural—distribute to all yin messengers. From today—underworld fully practices "Six Paths Reincarnation Visualization."

With this—underworld births supreme experts!

Boom!

Above Tan Taixuan—vast soul power funneled like vortex.

Nine city lords too.

Once headache—even threatening balance—soul power resolved. Became rise's key!

...

Five Phoenixes Continent.

White Jade Pavilion pavilion.

Lu exhaled slowly—guidance ended.

Six Paths Reincarnation disseminated. With his deception—Tan Taixuan unlikely suspect him.

"The deeper you visualize—more karma; stronger my primordial spirit."

Lu smiled.

Underworld crisis resolved—Lu eased.

Heavenly Gate method—not urgent.

"Handle Emperor weapons first."

Lu murmured.

Ancient Emperor relics—in his created worlds—thorn in throat.

Resolve early.

Mind entered Platform—simulated weapons for dismantling.

Unsure if Platform could—Emperor weapons bore insights, Dao and principles.

Attempted—Lu inhaled sharply.

Furnace easily simulated.

System/Platform—higher than Ancient Emperors.

"Indeed..."

"High-martial level... above lies immortal martial."

Lu smiled.

Gaze sharpened—deducing 108 dismantling ways.

...

Buzhou Peak base.

Thatched hut.

Small fence. Black-robed figure emerged slowly.

Watered divine herbs in field.

Glanced towering, immortal-like Buzhou Peak—smiled lightly.

Under robe—if Lu here, surprised: Li Sansi.

Qi Liujia once assessed: Vine Demon Body—strong early, bottlenecked.

Indeed stuck—restrictions many.

After Li Sansui ascended—Li Sansi secluded at Buzhou base. Diligent, but physique-limited gains.

Centuries passed—peers ascended Heavenly Gate.

Li Sansi couldn't summon Gate. Not rushed—useless. Now Creation Venerable—far from Heavenly Human.

Vine Demon aided early—later hindered speed.

Once considered seeking Young Master Lu overseas for physique fix.

But recalling attitude—abandoned.

Visited ancient tomb—sought Gu Mangran.

Saint Ancestor-level—likely solution.

Ximen Xianzhi old acquaintance; Gu taught method for sword king descendant.

"Vine Demon parasitic—find true treasure tree, parasitize."

"But rare. Even found—will likely overwhelmed; trapped lifelong."

Gu informed and warned.

Splash.

Set down gourd ladle. Removed hat. Entering Creation Venerable—appearance normalized.

But combat—grotesque again.

"Treasure tree... what rivals Heavenly Dao Tree?"

Li Sansi gazed distant Heavenly Dao Tree piercing skies—eyes deep.

Boom!

Sensing Buzhou terror; star-falling visions.

Li Sansi closed eyes.

"Gap... widening."

Murmured.

Closed eyes—turned, stepped toward Buzhou stairs.

But as foot lifted.

Boom!

Buzhou pressure descended—Heavenly Dao laced!

Nearly floored him.

Pfft!

Pressure merciless, unfamiliar.

Li Sansi staggered back—eyes dimmed instantly.

Puchi...

Flesh—vines erupted, shielding pressure.

Gap vast—one ninth heaven, one ninth abyss.

Fisted.

He strove for Heavenly Gate ascension—now Zhu Long perhaps one-palm killed Heavenly Humans;
unimaginable realm.

"Perhaps... abandon pursuit."

Li Sansui dimmed.

But recalling wooden sword, limping vow.

Teeth gritted—unwilling.

Retreated from Buzhou—exhaled.

Rehooded—turned toward Heavenly Dao Tree.

Unwilling to quit.

Perhaps... no choice.

...

Heavenly Dao Tree base.

Figures sat meditation.

Li Sansi approached slowly.

Unmasked aura—Creation Venerable: mortal realm supreme now.

Heavenly Humans ascended era—Creation top-tier.

Cultivators parted. Li Sansi sat closest.

Black-robed—face obscured.

Gazed towering Heavenly Dao Tree—opposing Buzhou distantly.

Eyes starry.

Perhaps fusing with it—eye-level Buzhou.

Sat.

Closed eyes. Primordial spirit surged—vines pierced soil silently toward tree...

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Suddenly!

Earth exploded.

Vines like earth dragons charged tree.

Vision—awakened surrounding cultivators.

"Destroying Heavenly Dao Tree!"

"Stop him!"

"Damn... tree Five Phoenixes' fortune—vile intent!"

Cultivators raged.

Boom!

Creation Venerables acted. Tree rise's root; Heavenly Human foundation—intolerable destruction.

Li Sansi rose—robe fully vines.

Waved.

Vines formed sky walls—blocking.

Boom! Boom!

Strikes shattered vines scattering.

Li Sansi unrelenting—vines underfoot propelled toward tree.

Creation Venerables blocked—faces changed.

"Half-step Heavenly Human?"

"Such cultivation—why destroy? Comprehend Dao essence—ascend soon!"

Creation roared—halt him.

Li Sansi smiled faintly.

"You don't understand."

Boom!

Suddenly!

Terrifying explosion.

Li Sansi blasted by irresistible force—half body shattered, vines scattering.

Ground—a flute stuck.

"Dad tasked protecting tree. Said—destroyers, kill."

Faint voice—like thunder.

Li Sansi flipped up—vines rebuilt body. Eyes contracted—glanced flute.

Then unrelenting—extreme speed toward tree.

Zhu Long protecting tree?

Unimagined.

Suddenly.

Void tore.

Terrifying roar tsunami-like from Buzhou.

Around tree.

Cultivators bowled over—even Creation Venerables terror-felled.

Li Sansi pressure immense—speed maxed.

Finally myriad vines—charged tree.

Boom!

Graceful figure emerged—fist halted inch from trunk. Wind punched imprint on indestructible bark.

Li Sansi's form vanished—only withered vines ground. Merged into tree.

Zhu Long eyes closed—long lashes trembled.

Raised hand—touched forehead.

"Done... Dad will be mad."

Zhu Long closed eyes said.

She borrowed Five Phoenixes Heavenly Dao cultivating—distracted, Li Sansi slipped in.

Around.

Five Phoenixes cultivators terrified gazed girl-like Zhu Long.

"Buzhou... demoness!"

"Terrifying—as heavenly might..."

"Even ascended Heavenly Humans—perhaps not withstand one punch!"

First sighting in centuries.

Zhu Long closed eyes—heard chattering behind, frowned slightly. Mild anger.

But Dad said—girls good temper.

So pondered—kill all?

Dad said: kill them—no one knows bad temper.

Thought—abandoned.

Raised hand—delicate fingers tapped tree. No reaction—grabbed flute, returned Buzhou.

Awaited Dad's scolding obediently.

Tree surroundings cultivators still marveled demoness' peerless grace.

Unaware—brushed underworld gates.

Zhu Long back on Buzhou.

Five Phoenixes Heavenly Dao vanished again.

Closed eyes—sat bluestone, played slowly.

Mellow flute wound peak—notes faint sorrow impending Dad's anger.

Buzhou opposite.

Towering Heavenly Dao Tree.

Faintly—with flute winding, leaves gently swayed.