

Starlit Path 521

Chapter 521: The Five Phoenix Immortals Strike—All Dire Beasts Annihilated!

A cold, biting wind swept across the plains beneath the Imperial City.

No one in the world had expected it to come so swiftly.

Beyond the walls of the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty's capital, an endless allied army surged forward, having already smashed through six fortified passes to reach the city gates. Far from dwindling, their numbers only swelled with every victory. Each captured pass saw local cultivators stepping forward voluntarily to join the ranks, causing the force to grow like a rolling snowball.

Of course, a large part of this momentum came from Jiang Li's appearance. As the foremost military god of the Five Phoenixes, his name and legends echoed across every corner of the land. Now that he had emerged in the flesh to crusade against the tyrant, he naturally struck a deep chord with countless cultivators, who flocked to the cause.

Outside the Imperial City, the three main armies were encamped.

Clad in silver armor, Jiang Li stood at the forefront, flanked by the leaders of the rebel army, the Demon Court's king, and the commander of the Heavenly Origin Domain forces. A grim, murderous aura hung heavy over the desolate plain.

No one had imagined that the battle deciding the fate of the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty would arrive so soon. Those six legendary dire beasts had been an unimaginable boon for the dynasty. When news spread that they had become the tyrant's weapons, despair nearly broke the allied forces. The memory

of the six-armed infant beast from years past still haunted the world—brutal, ferocious, unstoppable. The thought of facing so many at once almost shattered their will to fight. Ordinary troops could never hope to overcome such monsters.

Fortunately, the legendary Immortals of the Five Phoenixes—figures who had long existed only in myth—began to appear one after another, displaying peerless grace and power. They slew three of the dire beasts in succession, shattering pass after pass and forcing Tantai Mojie to recall the Beast Cauldron and retreat to defend the capital. This restored the allies' confidence and fueled their determination to take the city.

Jiang Li, in his gleaming silver armor, gazed at the towering city walls. The battlements were packed with soldiers, their golden armor flashing in the sunlight. Overwhelming auras flickered in and out of sight along the ramparts.

“This battle... will be difficult,” he murmured.

Unlike the optimism spreading among many of the allied leaders, Jiang Li shook his head.

“These dire beasts were born from the stolen fortune of the human race by Tantai Mojie. They are weaker than the original Six-Armed Infant, each with its own specific weakness. If we exploit those flaws, victory is still possible.”

“But now, he has gathered all of them together...”

“That makes the pressure far greater. Breaking them one by one by targeting their weaknesses has become nearly impossible.”

Jiang Li's words were grim.

He wasn't alone in this assessment.

In the allied ranks, Lü Mu, Mo Tianyu, and others also understood how daunting this fight would be. The Imperial City was not like the other passes. Tantai Mojie could afford to abandon those—he could always retake them if he won the final battle. But if the capital fell, it was truly lost forever.

He would never leave the city. Therefore, he had concentrated every ounce of his strength here for one decisive clash.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

As the midday sun grew blindingly bright, banners suddenly rose above the city walls.

War drums thundered, each strike pounding like a heartbeat that set the blood boiling.

On the allied side, at Jiang Li's command, the assault finally began.

Roars of battle instantly engulfed the entire capital, like thunder tearing open the calm sky or a colossal stone crashing into a still pond.

The ground trembled.

Hooves thundered, boots pounded, armor clashed—a symphony of war.

From the battlements, a storm of arrows rained down—countless, dense, and deadly.

These were no ordinary arrows. They were Spirit-Breaking Arrows, forged by Tantai Mojie at enormous cost, inspired by the strange and unorthodox sects that had pledged themselves to him. Years ago, Tantai He had abolished the Office of Strange Scholars in shame after his pursuit of immortality caused calamity. Now, Tantai Mojie had revived it—but this time, its members studied only bizarre and sinister arts.

The defending soldiers were all cultivators, the weakest at least at the Body Concealment Realm. Ordinary arrows were useless against them.

Thus, the Spirit-Breaking Arrows were unleashed.

After the first volley, the allied side suffered heavy casualties among their stronger warriors.

Jiang Li hadn't expected such a weapon. But retreat now would shatter their momentum. Under his direction, ten colossal Blood-God War Formations were summoned into being—towering figures forged from battlefield killing intent and blood qi.

With a roar, the formations froze the arrow storm in midair.

Creak—creak—

The massive city gates slowly opened.

A flood of soldiers poured out, followed closely by the Black Tortoise Guard.

Two vast armies charged toward each other across the plain, like white-capped waves rising from opposite ends of a vast sea, colliding with unstoppable force.

The clash of two destinies.

...

Inside the Imperial City, the long streets had been cleared. Civilians hid trembling in their homes, not daring to peek outside or watch the spectacle.

Who would dare spectate in front of a tyrant? That was courting death.

So the common folk waited in fearful silence for the outcome.

A grand procession advanced through the empty streets.

A luxurious palanquin was carried up to the city walls.

Attendants bowed low and carefully lifted the curtain.

Tantai Mojie stepped out, dressed in simple robes, a confident smile on his face.

He spread his arms. Attendants hurried forward and helped him don gleaming golden armor.

On the ramparts, several golden-armored guards rushed over and knelt on one knee.

“Have the three bronze cauldrons containing the sealed divine beasts been retrieved?”

Tantai Mojie asked calmly.

The guards' faces lit with fanatic fervor. They stepped aside, revealing three massive bronze cauldrons placed on the wall.

Fully armored now, Tantai Mojie strode to the parapet, his crimson cloak billowing behind him.

He gazed down at the battlefield where the two armies were locked in slaughter, his eyes gleaming.

"This battle will end everything."

A faint, arrogant smile curved his lips.

Golden blood throbbed in his chest.

Suddenly, strange knowledge flooded his mind—an ancient formation.

Tantai Mojie threw back his head and laughed.

He raised his hand.

Buzz—

The three bronze cauldrons, together with the smaller one that had sealed the Cloud Gu Eagle, floated around him.

Vast spiritual energy surged, transforming into intricate array runes.

Guided by the runes, the four cauldrons formed a grand formation.

“This formation shall be called... the Four Dire Beasts Array!”

Golden light blazed from Tantai Mojie’s eyes.

In that instant, his divine soul erupted with overwhelming force.

From the four cauldrons, four dire beasts roared forth, tearing the sky apart with brilliant light.

Above the Imperial City, the clouds turned blood-red as thick killing intent spread.

Leading them was the Cloud Gu Eagle—born in the Ascension Land, terrifyingly powerful, carrying the aura of world-ending destruction.

The other three were a colossal ox-headed dragon-bodied beast, a gigantic black spider with a thousand eyes, and a purple, ferocious six-tailed civet cat.

Four apocalyptic beasts loomed over the capital.

Their roars swept across the battlefield, shaking the heavens.

Countless citizens stared up in terror, their last spark of resistance extinguished.

The allied forces also felt the crushing pressure.

Four Xuan Immortal-level world-destroying beasts—this was a sight beyond imagination. Each one possessed the power to annihilate the entire capital.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The Immortals of the Five Phoenixes rose into the sky.

Meng Haoran stepped forward with hands behind his back, his Confucian robe fluttering, walking on waves of righteous qi.

His eyes burned with spirit as he raised a hand. Before him, vast righteous energy coalesced into a grand essay.

In it, he listed every atrocity Tantai Mojie had committed, every harm he had inflicted on the world.

With every word of condemnation, the heavens themselves seemed to respond with lightning and thunder.

The morale of the dynasty's army, once soaring, visibly wilted with each crime Meng Haoran recited.

Tantai Mojie stood on the wall, hands behind his back, utterly disdainful.

Even if the entire world turned against him, he feared nothing.

Nie Changqing said nothing. With Dragon-Slayer at his waist, he transformed into a streak of white light and charged straight at the four beasts.

Having slain the six-armed ape and absorbed a massive share of fortune, Sima Qingshan had already broken through to Xuan Immortal. Nie Changqing and the others had received some fortune too, but not enough to push him across that threshold.

He felt somewhat humiliated.

So the moment the beasts appeared, he rushed toward the ox-headed dragon beast without hesitation.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, Empress Ni Chunchiu, and Young Master Tianxu also charged at the thousand-eyed spider.

Nie Shuang laughed wildly. With his Saint King Physique, his battle power was now close to Nie Changqing's. He soared upward and swung a fist that seemed capable of shattering the void, aiming for the purple six-tailed civet.

Ximen Xianzhi, Luo Mingyue, and the others all joined the fray.

Even if the beasts didn't bring world-ending disaster, the immense fortune they carried meant that slaying them would grant a huge reward.

No Immortal of the Five Phoenixes would sit idly by.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The sky shattered like broken glass. Waves of energy rippled outward, shaking mountains and earth.

Yet the battle was far harder than expected.

The four beasts stood in formation, their power greatly amplified. Most crucially, the formation masked all their weaknesses.

The Five Phoenix Immortals clashed with them and gained no advantage—on the contrary, they suffered heavy losses.

Nie Changqing staggered back in the air, blood sprayed by the six-tailed civet's tail.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and the others were similarly suppressed.

Everyone's expression changed.

On the city wall, Tantai Mojie stood with complete confidence.

Indeed, with the four beasts in formation, they were nearly invincible. Unless a Xuan Immortal intervened, no one could defeat them.

In this era where Xuan Immortals were forbidden to act, he was untouchable.

In fact, Tantai Mojie even felt a twinge of regret.

Perhaps he should have gathered all seven dire beasts from the beginning and crushed everything in his path.

With such power, the Demon Court and rebel alliance would have been nothing.

“After today, the landscape of the Five Phoenixes will be rewritten...”

Tantai Mojie stood proudly, golden armor gleaming, ambition blazing.

He raised a hand and pointed west.

“The Demon Court dared interfere in my Great Xuan affairs. After this battle, my iron cavalry will trample every inch of their lands and slaughter every living creature!”

Below, the Demon Court soldiers trembled with rage.

Tantai Mojie laughed again and pointed east—toward the Heavenly Origin Domain.

“The powers of Heavenly Origin also dared meddle in my Five Phoenixes. After this war, Martial Emperor City, Qiannu Palace, Absolute Blade Sect, and Heavenly Void Palace will be erased from history!”

His voice rang with unshakable certainty.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and the others fighting the beasts glared coldly.

Boom!

One after another, Five Phoenix Immortals were sent flying, coughing blood, crashing into the earth.

For a moment, the allied momentum collapsed to its lowest point.

Only Jiang Li’s war formations kept them from total rout.

Jiang Li’s face was grim. He hadn’t expected the battle to be this difficult.

This young tyrant was far more formidable than he had imagined.

On the wall, Tantai Mojie also noticed the war formations.

He raised a hand and beckoned casually.

Whoosh—

Ten golden-armored guards—peak Origin Returning Realm cultivators whose bodies he had forcibly turned into saint-level flesh using his golden blood—shot out like golden swords, charging into the battlefield.

Jiang Li's expression grew even more severe.

The war formations were powerful, but against half-step saints, they were quickly torn apart.

Soon the battle escalated to the True Immortal level.

...

Far away in the Eastern Sea, on the island at the heart of the Origin Lake.

Lu, who had been lounging lazily, slowly sat up straight.

His features were as refined as a painting. He stared at the holographic projection above the chessboard—the brutal battle outside the Imperial City.

Tantai Mojie's side was indeed overwhelmingly strong.

Four dire beasts plus ten saint-bodied golden-armored guards created a force the alliance could barely resist.

Though those guards had lost their chance at true sainthood, to Tantai Mojie they were merely tools. He felt no pity—only joy that they could suppress the rebels.

Watching the Five Phoenix Immortals struggle, Lu's brows furrowed slightly.

One hand propped his chin, the other tapped lightly on the armrest.

Normally, if the Five Phoenixes faced such overwhelming pressure, Lu would have intervened long ago.

But this time, he did not.

He simply watched quietly as the True Immortals bled and fought.

“The Five Phoenixes have established their immortal martial foundation. The enemies of the future will be far more terrifying. You belong to the Five Phoenixes, and the Five Phoenixes belong to you. You have grown together to this point. Therefore... the trials the Five Phoenixes will face in the future, you must also face. If you wish to reach Xuan Immortal, or even Golden Immortal, or transcend the shackles to become a Great Luo Immortal—you must grow.”

The appearance of the Imperial Blood was merely a minor calamity.

From this incident, Lu felt he should be wary of those ancient vanished Emperors.

Beings who had survived millions of years were never easy to deal with.

At the same time, Lu also wanted the cultivators of the Five Phoenixes to grow through hardship.

No rain, no rainbow.

...

The storm of war swept across the entire Five Phoenix Continent.

Every cultivator felt the shift in the heavens and earth. Across every region, they raised their heads, sensing a terrifying aura sweeping over the land.

In the Southern Domain, atop Stargazing Peak, Daoist Nun Li Sansui slowly opened her eyes. Her once jet-black hair had turned silver-white, flowing like mist.

Gazing toward the Imperial City, she smiled softly. Her Daoist robe fluttered as clouds surged beneath her, forming a dragon that carried her through the Dragon Gate toward the capital.

In the Western Domain, in the boundless desert, an ancient temple stood at the center of a newly built city filled with people.

Inside the temple, Monk Ding Jiudeng slowly opened his eyes. From nothing, he had built an entire Buddhist city in the desert, spreading his own vision of the Dharma.

His realm had long surpassed the Buddha-realm Venerable who once influenced him.

Clad in his kasaya, holding his staff, Ding Jiudeng left the temple.

The little monk had grown into a master who could stand alone.

His disciples stood on the city walls, watching his figure vanish into the desert haze, palms pressed together, chanting sutras.

In the Eastern Sea, within an ancient tomb, Lu Changkong paused in the middle of refining a hybrid divine herb. He looked toward the blood-red sky.

Bu Nanxing looked puzzled. "Old Lu, why stop?"

Lu Changkong waved a hand. "I've been cooped up in this tomb for centuries. Time to stretch my legs. Young man, want to come along?"

Bu Nanxing shook his head frantically. No way. Outside was too dangerous. The tomb was safest.

At Nine Phoenix Academy, Bai Qingniao had become even more ethereal, her body wreathed in flames.

She sat cross-legged, while nine little chicks hopped around her.

Suddenly, her eyes opened.

She grabbed Little Phoenix One by the neck and tossed it into the air.

It transformed into a sky-covering fire phoenix. Bai Qingniao sat on its back and took flight.

The other eight chicks stared for a moment, then flapped their tiny wings, ran across the courtyard, and transformed into fire phoenixes, soaring after her.

In the Ascension Land, Tang Guo bid farewell to Lu Jiulian, opened a heavenly gate, and stepped through.

...

Outside the Imperial City.

Ni Yu, with Little Yinglong perched on her head and a black pot on her back, darted through the battlefield, dragging wounded soldiers out of danger one after another.

Each one she fed a pill she had refined.

After swallowing, their injuries quickly healed, and without time for thanks, they rushed back into the fight.

Her greatest concern, however, was the Five Phoenix Immortals battling the four dire beasts.

Whenever one was struck down coughing blood, Ni Yu sent Little Yinglong flapping over with a pill.

Without her medicine, the Five Phoenix side might have already collapsed.

Ni Yu's small figure ran tirelessly, cheeks flushed, sweat pouring, a heartbreaking sight.

As she worked, she muttered, "Everyone else is trash. Only Young Master is the real thigh!"

Boom!

Suddenly, brilliant light burst from the horizon.

Li Sansui arrived riding a cloud dragon.

Bai Qingniao came sideways on her fire phoenix.

A green dragon tore through the void.

Lu Changkong stepped across waves, Ding Jiudeng appeared with staff in hand and kasaya flowing.

One after another, the legendary Immortals of the Five Phoenixes joined the battlefield.

Tang Guo, Zhao Zixu, and other special-constitution True Immortals, along with countless Human Immortals, arrived at lightning speed.

The sight was electrifying.

Nie Changqing and the others felt their blood surge.

On the city wall, Tantai Mojie narrowed his eyes as more and more Immortals appeared. Rage boiled within him.

“What does it matter how many come?!”

With the formation empowering them, the four dire beasts had no weaknesses. Unless a Xuan Immortal acted, no one could defeat them!

Li Sansui sat cross-legged on the cloud dragon’s back.

She raised her hands, slender fingers weaving.

Countless array runes danced around her. A moment later, a gigantic cauldron formed entirely of runes appeared.

It was the very formation Qi Liujia had once taught her.

“Six Jia Formation Sect... enters the battle.”

Li Sansui’s eyes shone.

She gently tossed the Ten-Thousand Rune Cauldron.

Boom!

The massive cauldron crashed down from the sky, instantly becoming enormous and enveloping all four dire beasts.

In an instant, the “Four Dire Beasts Array” shattered.

Boom!

Nie Changqing and the others' eyes blazed with renewed light. Seizing the moment, they divided the battlefield.

Without the formation, the beasts were still powerful—but their weaknesses were exposed once more.

Nie Changqing drew Dragon-Slayer from his waist.

The blade's suppressed aura pressed down, causing even the ox-headed dragon beast to feel a strange sense of dread.

It was a unique suppressive force!

“Dragon-Slayer!”

Nie Changqing roared.

One slash.

Blood sprayed across the sky as the ox-headed dragon beast suffered a grievous wound.

The other Five Phoenix Immortals swarmed the injury, raining down blows.

The beast roared in agony, thrashing and shattering mountains and rivers.

But in the end... it was slain!

The thousand-eyed spider was terrifying, its poison the most deadly weapon.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, Empress Ni Chunchiu, and the others were completely suppressed, even toyed with.

Lu Changkong rose into the air, hands behind his back, smiling kindly.

He walked slowly toward the spider.

The creature, though intelligent, felt a primal fear deep in its soul.

It tried to flee, but Lu Changkong, curiosity piqued, casually pulled it back.

Before the stunned eyes of Du Longyang and the others—

The thousand-eyed spider... was poisoned to death.

The purple six-tailed civet was surrounded and beaten by Ding Jiudeng and the newly arrived Immortals.

The Cloud Gu Eagle roared in fury. Bai Qingniao pointed from afar, and heavenly flames erupted. Nine fire phoenixes arrived together, joining the other Immortals to slaughter the eagle.

Blood seas and fortune surged.

Explosions of killing intent and baleful qi lit up the sky like dazzling fireworks across the Five Phoenixes.

One by one, the four dire beasts fell.

Tantai Mojie's body trembled slightly as he stared into the sky.

His eyes were bloodshot, filled with unwillingness and fury.

Clutching his chest, he coughed up four mouthfuls of blood.

Chapter 522: The Human Emperor Returns—The Tyrant Falls

Golden-tinged blood sprayed across the battlements of the Imperial City.

The sudden shift in momentum sent a chill of foreboding through Tantai Mojie.

He had been utterly confident of victory—yet now everything was unraveling.

Ever since stepping into the Saint Realm, he had come to regard the legendary Immortals of the Five Phoenixes with disdain. To him, those figures who had once stood above the world, immortalized in ancient texts, were... overrated.

They had cultivated for centuries, yet most were merely Human Immortals or True Immortals. True Xuan Immortals—those who could rival a Saint—were exceedingly rare.

He, Tantai Mojie, had been a mere mortal just a few short years ago. In that brief span, he had soared to the Saint Realm.

Such a feat filled him with boundless arrogance.

Yes, his achievement stemmed from the single drop of golden blood in his heart.

But that was his fortune—and therefore his rightful capital. Why shouldn't he be proud?

The four dire beasts, linked by the Four Dire Beasts Array, should have been invincible. Even Tantai Mojie himself could not have shaken that formation. Four Xuan Immortal-level beasts working in concert were a terrifying force.

Yet...

The array had been broken.

Shattered effortlessly by a Daoist nun who arrived riding a dragon.

So the Five Phoenixes still hid such masters?

Only now did Tantai Mojie realize that the Five Phoenixes were far more complex—and far stronger—than he had ever imagined.

Four consecutive coughs of blood marked the death of four peerless dire beasts.

He could accept Nie Changqing's Dragon-Slayer Blade suppressing the ox-headed dragon beast.

He could accept the Cloud Gu Eagle being countered by Bai Qingniao and her nine fire phoenixes—the records had mentioned her as the “chicken-keeper” of Nine Phoenix Academy.

He could even accept the six-tailed civet being overwhelmed by Ding Jiudeng and a swarm of cultivators.

All those beasts had clear weaknesses.

But...

The first to fall was the thousand-eyed spider—poisoned to death.

That left Tantai Mojie utterly speechless.

Watching the old man in thin robes gaze regretfully at the spider's corpse, Tantai Mojie felt an absurd urge to sigh: “The real masters are always hidden among the common folk...”

There was no retreat left.

All his allies had been annihilated.

Now, the only one who could save him... was himself.

“A bunch of trash!”

On the city wall, clad in golden armor, Tantai Mojie wiped the blood from his lips and gave a cold, mocking laugh.

He had expected Xuan Immortal-level dire beasts to dominate, yet they had shown no overwhelming superiority.

Rumble—

As the four beasts perished, vast tides of fortune surged above the Five Phoenix skies.

Every Immortal who had fought in the battle raised their head.

Tantai Mojie looked up as well.

The scene reflected in his pupils made his heart sink.

He had divided the human race's fortune into eight parts, channeling them into the dire beasts to grant them explosive power.

But the beasts had failed.

With their fall, the stolen fortune returned to the Five Phoenix Immortals.

And the fortune that had once shielded Tantai Mojie began to collapse.

Before, protected by human fortune, no Five Phoenix cultivator could strike him without suffering backlash.

But now...

That protection was fading.

Strange phenomena appeared in the sky as fortune surged like rivers.

Xuan Immortals were being born!

One after another, torrents of fortune poured down.

Nie Changqing grasped Dragon-Slayer and received the baptism, stepping into the Xuan Immortal Realm.

Bai Qingniao also broke through, her understanding of the Nine Phoenixes Transformation growing ever clearer.

Lu Changkong, hands behind his back, looked mildly surprised.

He had broken through too.

A faint glow emanated from his body—his Myriad Poisons Physique had advanced once more.

He had left the tomb for a stroll and somehow ended up a Xuan Immortal.

All he did was “befriend” that mildly poisonous thousand-eyed spider.

Such a plain, almost boring breakthrough made him sigh inwardly.

Nie Changqing, Bai Qingniao, and Lu Changkong—three new Xuan Immortals—sent the morale of the crusading army soaring.

But they weren't the only ones.

Ni Yu, panting heavily, her delicate face pale from refining batch after batch of pills, had exhausted herself saving countless lives.

She didn't realize that her actions had interfered with karma and claimed a share of the fortune.

A pillar of fortune descended upon her.

Her depleted spiritual energy instantly replenished; her spirit blazed with vitality.

The beam was so powerful it even knocked Little Yinglong off her head.

The little dragon rolled across the ground like a ball, then flapped its fleshy wings in confusion.

Was this the treatment reserved for a salted fish?

Ni Yu, too, had stepped into the Xuan Immortal Realm.

Perhaps the most unconventional breakthrough in history.

Ning Zhao and Yi Yue were speechless.

Compared to their bloody struggle against the beasts, Ni Yu had practically leveled up while lying down.

But upon reflection, they understood: without her pills, the entire front would have collapsed long ago.

So she deserved every bit of that fortune.

Four new Xuan Immortals.

The phenomena in the Five Phoenix skies could no longer be contained.

Including the earlier ones—Overlord, Tang Yimo, Kong Nanfei...

This single crusade against the tyrant had produced seven Xuan Immortals in the Five Phoenixes!

Other True Immortals and Human Immortals who fought the beasts also received their share.

Breakthroughs rang out one after another outside the Imperial City, like a dazzling fireworks display.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, Empress Ni Chunchiu, Ning Zhao, Yi Yue, and others stepped into Half-Step Xuan Immortal.

Tang Guo, Nie Shuang, and more advanced as well.

Even the Azure Dragon that fought received a portion.

After enduring so much bitterness, dawn had finally broken.

The collective breakthrough of the Five Phoenix Immortals completely reversed the battlefield.

Jiang Li's army, previously suppressed by the Black Tortoise Guard and golden-armored guards, now began to push back.

Without Jiang Li's iron control, the rebel alliance might already have collapsed.

With the dire beasts gone, the Five Phoenix Immortals joined the fray.

Half-Step Xuan Immortals clashed with the golden-armored guards, and the tide turned decisively toward the rebels.

One by one, the golden-armored guards were blasted back or slain on the spot!

Panic spread among the attendants and officials on the city wall.

"Your Majesty... please flee!"

An attendant cried in desperation—only to be silenced by Tantai Mojie's icy glare. His legs gave out, and he collapsed.

Tantai Mojie watched the dynasty's army rout, the crusaders surging toward the city like an unstoppable avalanche.

He took a deep breath, his face hardening into cold resolve.

“Xuan Immortals...”

“Hah. Now that you’ve all become Xuan Immortals, who among you can possibly oppose me?”

His voice was frigid.

“Fortune was divided into eight parts—but I still hold the ninth.”

He raised a hand.

The long spear forged by the Office of Strange Scholars was brought forward.

Gripping it, Saint Might erupted from his body in overwhelming waves.

Step by step, he walked out from the city wall.

His golden armor blazed; his momentum climbed relentlessly.

Above the sky, Overlord, Tang Yimo, Kong Nanfei, and the others grew solemn.

“To reach the Saint Realm in just a few years... is this tyrant truly a cultivation prodigy?” Overlord muttered.

“A prodigy?” Nie Changqing said coldly, Dragon-Slayer at his waist. “My son Nie Shuang possesses the supreme Saint King Physique, yet even his speed can’t compare. There must be some secret.”

“Should we intervene?” Tang Yimo asked, white cloth wrapped around his arm.

“No.”

“Although Tantai Mojie divided human fortune into eight parts for the beasts, there were only seven beasts. The remaining portion resides in him.”

“If we strike, we’ll still suffer fortune backlash. The price is too high.”

Kong Nanfei shook his head.

They chose to observe.

Below the wall, Tantai Mojie laughed.

He clenched his fist.

The golden blood within every golden-armored guard suddenly surged, burning like fire.

Golden flames enveloped them; their aura and power soared dramatically.

“Flee? Why flee?”

“As long as I stand, this world still belongs to Tantai Mojie!”

The routed soldiers, now wreathed in golden fire, turned and charged back into battle.

Tantai Mojie’s gaze locked onto Jiang Li.

He swept his golden spear.

Saint Might roared forth, tearing a deep chasm in the earth. A beam of golden energy sliced through everything, aimed straight at Jiang Li.

Jiang Li shouted coldly.

Behind him, the essence, energy, and spirit of hundreds of thousands of cultivators merged into him.

A towering blood-red War God rose at his back, drawing its blade and slashing down.

The collision unleashed a cataclysmic explosion that shook the entire Imperial City.

Jiang Li coughed blood, his face paling.

Ximen Xianzhi, Luo Mingyue, and the shadowy Mo Qiqi appeared to support him.

But the golden-armored guards, their lives burning away, blocked the Five Phoenix Immortals.

Jiang Li was forced into a disadvantage.

A Saint was still a Saint.

And with fortune protecting him, Jiang Li dared not counterattack for fear of backlash.

Such backlash could damage one's cultivation foundation!

Tantai Mojie's body, tempered by golden blood, was among the strongest even in the Saint Realm.

Jiang Li was steadily pushed back.

Compared to the dire beasts, the tyrant himself seemed even more terrifying.

"You're courting death."

Bai Qingniao's hair turned fiery red; her skin glowed like porcelain. Crimson light rolled in her eyes.

Little Phoenix One through Nine lined up across the sky, releasing terrifying pressure.

"Xuan Immortals of the Five Phoenixes..."

"I am protected by fortune. Do you dare harm me?"

“Do you dare risk your chance at becoming Emperor?”

Tantai Mojie sensed the terrifying auras above and gripped his spear tighter, sneering.

His arrogance was backed by absolute confidence.

Jiang Li raised a hand to stop Bai Qingniao.

She had only just become a Xuan Immortal; he could not let her ruin her foundation for his sake.

Silver armor gleaming, Jiang Li raised his sword once more, pointing it at Tantai Mojie. He could still fight!

“Amitabha.”

Ding Jiudeng appeared beside him.

Tantai Mojie no longer held back. His spear gouged deep furrows in the earth.

Though he trusted fortune would protect him, nothing was ever certain. Hadn't he once believed his seven dire beasts made him invincible?

Yet they had fallen one by one.

Above the sky, Bai Qingniao's expression grew colder.

She could feel Tantai Mojie's killing intent toward Jiang Li—the pillar of the rebel army's morale.

If that pillar fell, the entire force would collapse.

Then it would be Tantai Mojie's turn to counterattack—or at least buy time for the rebels to retreat and give him a chance to recover.

With enough time and the mysterious golden blood, he was certain he could rule the world!

...

On the island in the heart of Origin Lake.

Lu sat with eyes closed, his hair fluttering gently in the breeze.

The breeze, the pavilion, the fine wine, the chessboard—together they formed a scene of quiet beauty.

He slowly opened his eyes.

Terrifying spiritual pressure erupted from him.

The giant whale carrying the island shuddered.

This human... had grown stronger again!

Surviving until this human died just got even harder.

What a headache.

But Lu ignored the whale's thoughts.

A system panel flickered before him.

With seven new Xuan Immortals and numerous Half-Step Xuan Immortals, his total spiritual energy was skyrocketing.

Still, it wasn't quite enough to reach the tenth layer of Qi Refining.

Everything in due time. Lu had a feeling that the tenth layer might be the greatest challenge he had ever faced in cultivation.

He gazed at the chessboard.

The scene reflected clearly in his eyes.

Before the Imperial City wall.

Tantai Mojie, clad in golden armor, swept his spear with unmatched dominance.

"Protected by fortune?"

"Now that your role as a tool is over... it's time to see what that golden imperial blood in your heart really is."

Lu spoke softly.

The moment the words fell, the island fell silent.

Only the wind rustled the bamboo leaves.

He rolled up his sleeve and picked up a chess piece.

He was about to place it—delivering judgment on Tantai Mojie's fate.

Stripping away the last fragment of human fortune that shielded him.

Fortune might be hard to bestow arbitrarily, but taking it back was simple.

Yet just before the piece fell, Lu paused.

Surprise flickered across his face.

Someone had acted faster than him.

A faint smile curved Lu's lips, complex emotions in his eyes. He withdrew the piece.

He knew what the other person intended—and it suited their nature perfectly.

...

In the Nine Hells Secret Realm, the Underworld.

Tantai Xuan stood with hands behind his back at the edge of the abyss.

Countless souls from the Five Phoenix lands flowed into the Underworld, entering the cycle of reincarnation.

Mortal life and death—all followed the natural order.

Tantai Xuan felt no particular emotion.

What he did feel was regret: the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty had failed to become eternal.

But he wasn't overly concerned. No dynasty could last forever.

"Worthy descendant... you've brought utter shame to the Tantai family and calamity to the Five Phoenixes."

"The karma of our bloodline—I alone will bear it."

He slowly closed his eyes.

Memories of the dynasty's founding flashed before him.

The comrades who had fought beside him were now forced to stand against his descendant.

A long sigh.

Fate.

Boom!

Tantai Xuan's mind stirred.

Karmic power surged like a raging river, tearing through the void.

...

Nine Phoenixes soared across the sky, about to intervene.

Though time had lessened her dependence on Jiang Li, she could not tolerate anyone trying to kill him.

But just as she moved, Sima Qingshan stopped her.

"Wait."

Bai Qingniao's eyes burned with flame as she glanced back.

The next moment, the world plunged into darkness.

A terrifying aura spread, shocking everyone.

From the earth, yin energy rolled forth.

From every fallen soldier's corpse, wisps of souls rose like countless fireflies.

Tantai Mojie's heart jolted. He halted his charge toward Jiang Li.

He looked around coldly, trying to understand what was happening.

Suddenly!

The sky split open.

Beyond the rift lay a vast, bitter sea of endless souls.

Boom—boom—boom...

The ground trembled as countless souls were drawn into the fissure.

A colossal Hell Hound slowly stepped forth.

Atop its head sat a figure in meditative silence.

Jiang Li saw him.

The Overlord and others in the sky saw him.

Their eyes widened in shock and disbelief.

“Tantai Xuan?”

“A Xuan Immortal-level Tantai Xuan?”

On the city wall, many cultivators and Black Tortoise Guards burst into tears.

“It’s the Founding Human Emperor! The Human Emperor!”

“Long live His Majesty!”

“The Human Emperor has returned! The Great Xuan is saved!”

Even more common folk knelt in joy.

The Five Phoenix cultivators were at a loss for words.

Tantai Mojie’s golden armor dimmed under the yin energy.

His pupils shrank. The bloodline suppression returned.

“It’s you!”

He drew a deep breath.

When he had entered the Nine Hells Secret Realm to subdue the Hell Hound, this very man had frightened him away.

“The Founding Human Emperor, Tantai Xuan?!”

Tantai Xuan sat calmly atop the Hell Hound, exuding an air of unfathomable depth.

But the moment he saw Tantai Mojie, that composure shattered.

“Scum!”

“I’m your ancestor!”

“The Tantai family produced a wastrel like you—what a sin!”

“Cause in the past, consequence today... your tyranny has brought suffering to countless innocents.”

“You dare claim human fortune?”

Tantai Xuan thundered.

In the void, Overlord, Tang Yimo, and the others couldn’t help but laugh.

Tantai Xuan was still Tantai Xuan—hot-tempered as ever, even as lord of the Underworld.

Tantai Mojie's heart lurched. Hearing those words, a terrible premonition rose within him.

Boom!

Tantai Xuan stood up on the Hell Hound's head.

Behind him, karmic power surged like the Yellow Springs, forming a sky-covering hand that slammed toward Tantai Mojie.

The hand seemed both tangible and intangible.

Tantai Mojie erupted with Saint Might to resist.

But with a single roar from Tantai Xuan, his Saint Might collapsed.

The palm struck him squarely.

"Hahaha... I am protected by fortune—you cannot harm me!"

Tantai Mojie laughed wildly.

The bloodline suppression filled him with humiliation.

Atop the Hell Hound, Tantai Xuan stood with hands behind his back, lips curled in disdain.

A trickle of blood soon slid from the corner of his mouth.

Then, without another word, he turned. The Hell Hound carried him back into the Underworld.

He had arrived domineeringly—and departed the same way.

The black clouds dispersed. The yin energy vanished.

With it went the very last fragment of human fortune that had shielded Tantai Mojie.

The fortune scattered into the heavens and earth.

The instant his protection vanished—

“Damn it!”

Tantai Mojie cursed furiously.

He shot into the sky, trying to flee the battlefield.

Too late.

Boom—boom—boom—boom—boom!

One terrifying aura after another filled the world, like thunder exploding across a clear sky.

Xuan Immortal auras, rivers of fortune, coiled and lashed, distorting the very heavens.

The moment Tantai Mojie’s fortune dispersed, the Overlord and the other Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals—pent-up for far too long—finally struck!

A torrent of Xuan Immortal fortune crashed down like a river.

Pfft!

Tantai Mojie was drenched in blood and smashed into the ground.

The earth exploded into a massive crater.

He knelt on one knee, struggling to rise.

But wave after wave of fortune descended—Tang Yimo, Kong Nanfei, and the others all attacked.

In an instant, his golden armor shattered. Blood sprayed from every pore.

Even his saintly body could not withstand it.

In the depths of the crater, Tantai Mojie bore the fortune of seven Xuan Immortals. Blood poured from his mouth and nose; his body cracked.

Yet he still laughed.

The laughter stopped abruptly.

Because high above, a girl as serene as an autumn leaf floated with eyes closed.

Tantai Mojie, covered in blood, stared at her. His heart sank.

“No... no...”

He whispered.

But Zhu Long’s slender finger gently traced through the air.

Boom!

An even more terrifying, colossal river of fortune slammed down.

Crack!

Under the crushing pressure of eight fortunes, Tantai Mojie’s body... shattered into pieces.

Chapter 523: From This Day Forth, the World Shall Have No More Human Emperor

Eight torrents of fortune crashed down.

Their power was so terrifying it seemed capable of changing the color of the heavens and shattering mountains and rivers.

Under the crushing weight of these eight rivers, Tantai Mojie's saintly body simply exploded. Even his sturdy bones could not withstand it—they disintegrated into dust, scattered into nothingness.

Golden blood sprayed everywhere, staining the ground.

No limbs remained, no corpse—only fine ash that vanished into the void.

Such was the horrifying might of the attack.

Tantai Mojie had never imagined he would die like this.

He had once believed he would leave his name in history for a thousand generations.

He had once believed his flesh could become immortal, enduring forever.

But reality struck him like a thunderbolt.

In the end, he was obliterated by fortune itself—body torn apart, consciousness extinguished.

He had thought himself the child of destiny.

He had thought he would reshape the Five Phoenix Continent, become its sole Great Emperor, rule the world, and lead the Five Phoenixes to conquer all nine heavens.

Now he understood: he was nothing.

Just a fleeting ripple in the endless river of time.

How pathetic.

Yet, as his soul drifted, Tantai Mojie felt no hatred—an astonishing thing even to himself.

In life, the slightest provocation had ignited his fury.

Now, facing annihilation, he felt none.

His soul sank deeper and deeper, as if falling into an endless, bottomless sea.

Deeper. Deeper still.

No hatred, only release.

Ever since the golden blood awakened, it had dominated his emotions, controlled everything about him.

His cruelty, his tyranny—all of it had been shaped by the will within that blood.

Now, with his body destroyed and separated from it, he felt... free.

Perhaps this was his true self.

Everything felt wrong.

He remembered his father entrusting him with the throne, the words of caution he had spoken.

What had he done?

The Great Xuan Divine Dynasty was in ruins. His tyranny and harsh rule had brought untold suffering to countless innocents.

He had failed the father who passed the crown to him.

Boom!

Suddenly, a deafening sound.

His consciousness seemed to tear through the sky, drifting beyond the endless firmament.

Vaguely, he glimpsed several towering figures seated among the heavens.

Each one was colossal, as if capable of suppressing an entire world.

They were gathered, seemingly in discussion.

In the center burned a massive golden flame.

To Tantai Mojie, that flame looked strikingly similar to the golden blood once housed in his heart.

In his final moments, when Zhu Long's last river of fortune descended, he had hoped the blood would protect him.

But he was wrong.

Once his fortune was stripped away, the blood had never stirred again.

Even at the very end, it remained still as dead water.

Then Tantai Mojie truly died.

The golden blood he had always regarded as his ultimate trump card had abandoned him at the last moment.

In that instant, it was not just his body that perished—his spirit shattered too.

The despair of a faith crumbling.

He was no reincarnation of a Great Emperor.

He had merely been a puppet controlled by that blood.

His soul drifted on, soon drawn into the golden flame.

As it was consumed, he faintly saw the figures arguing, terrifying auras clashing across the heavens.

In an instant, the world spun.

His consciousness was utterly extinguished.

...

Outside the Imperial City.

The fires of war died down. The siege had come to an end.

With Tantai Mojie's death, every golden-armored guard collapsed at the same moment, kneeling lifelessly, heads bowed, blood dripping from their mouths and noses.

The Black Tortoise Guard no longer fled—they knew escape was impossible.

They knelt in surrender.

The rebel alliance surged forward, restraining every Black Tortoise Guard and checking the golden-armored warriors.

All were confirmed dead, fallen alongside the tyrant.

Everyone was stunned.

Who could have imagined that Tantai Mojie's death would claim so many lives?

The tyrant was dead.

The crusade against tyranny had achieved a monumental victory.

Beneath the Imperial City walls, the allied forces erupted in cheers.

This battle had been too hard-won.

They had broken through three passes, slain three dire beasts, and fought a cataclysmic battle beneath the capital. Only when all the Immortals of the Five Phoenixes united did they prevail.

Such a hard-earned triumph left everyone sighing in awe.

Yet its impact on the Five Phoenix Continent was immense: seven supreme new Xuan Immortals had been born.

The Five Phoenixes' overall strength and hidden cards had grown far greater.

Now, they could truly be called a top-tier Second-Derivation High-Martial World.

They were not far from First-Derivation.

Once enough Dao Essence was refined, they could leap to First-Derivation in a single bound.

The entire Void Heaven might soon be encompassed by the Five Phoenixes.

With time, as the Five Phoenixes continued to expand, even Void Heaven might prove too small to contain them.

Who could have foreseen that the once-tiny low-martial Five Phoenixes would grow into such a colossal power?

Above the Five Phoenix skies.

Overlord, Tang Yimo, Sima Qingshan, Kong Nanfei, and Zhu Long—eight Xuan Immortals—floated in silence.

They gazed upward, brows furrowed.

“Something feels... off,” Overlord said.

Zhu Long, eyes closed, long lashes trembling slightly, lifted her serene face.

“The oppression hasn’t dispersed. Something terrifying still watches us...”

Sima Qingshan added.

As Xuan Immortals, their minds could touch the Heavenly Dao. Faintly, they sensed a powerful aura awakening.

They had thought the crusade against the tyrant would end easily.

Now it seemed far from over.

Whoosh—

A sudden wind swept across the land.

It scoured the massive crater clean.

The crater had been formed when Tantai Mojie resisted eight rivers of fortune. In time, it might become a great lake.

For now, it remained a deep pit.

Within it, a single golden gleam appeared.

The pupils of Overlord, Tang Yimo, and the others contracted.

At the center of the crater floated a single drop of golden blood.

It radiated immense, terrifying power.

“What is that?!” Overlord asked gravely.

“A drop of blood?”

“Is it the tyrant’s?”

Nie Changqing frowned.

Suddenly, their souls shuddered—as if an overwhelming existence had swept its divine sense across them.

Then they saw the golden drop begin to writhe, expanding, swelling.

Specks of golden light gathered around it.

Finally...

The single drop of blood gave rise to bones, meridians, flesh...

Transforming into a vague humanoid shape!

“Reborn from a drop of blood?”

“Impossible! Tantai Mojie was only a Saint—rebirth from a drop of blood is an Ancient Emperor’s power!”

“So this was the source of his tyranny?!”

The Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals’ expressions grew deadly serious, eyes filled with shock.

Even Zhu Long looked solemn.

Gradually, the vague figure sharpened.

The form reborn from a single drop of blood became clear.

It was Tantai Mojie once more.

Eyes closed, he floated silently in the crater, lying face-up like a dried corpse.

Suddenly, the corpse opened its eyes.

Those eyes were as if forged from molten gold, flowing endlessly!

Boom!

An invisible shockwave exploded outward from him.

...

On the island in the heart of Origin Lake.

Waves surged across the vast sea, crashing violently against the island.

Mist shrouded the immortal isle; immortal qi swirled.

The giant whale rose and fell, its low roars echoing.

Atop the white-jade pavilion, Lu—who had maintained a lazy posture—finally sat upright.

His eyes narrowed slightly, carrying a trace of seriousness.

The Spirit-Pressure Chessboard before him glowed faintly.

He hadn't expected Tantai Xuan to leave the Underworld in person, risking backlash to strip the last fragment of human fortune from his descendant.

“What a Tantai Xuan. Still the same fiery temperament.”

Lu smiled.

He tapped lightly on the armrest of his wheelchair.

“Since you’ve come, enter the island.”

He laughed softly.

Raising a hand, his white robes fluttered. With a gentle wave, the thick mist around the island parted, revealing a winding path.

The seawater hissed and evaporated.

A massive, indistinct Hell Hound appeared in view.

It trembled, stepping forward cautiously.

On its head sat Tantai Xuan.

Seeing the island, he leaped down and arrived at the white-jade pavilion.

“As expected of Young Master Lu—still unfathomable.”

Tantai Xuan laughed heartily.

He glanced back at the Hell Hound, intending to have it wait outside. But without needing instruction, it stayed put, not daring to move.

As if it had encountered something utterly terrifying.

Tantai Xuan paused, then smiled.

With Lu on the island, even this peerless beast was petrified.

He stepped into the pavilion.

The breeze blew as always.

“What brings you to the island?”

Lu smiled at Tantai Xuan and poured him a cup of Heavenly Immortal Wine.

“Drink. It will heal the damage to your foundation from stripping Tantai Mojie’s human fortune.”

“Thank you, Young Master Lu.”

Tantai Xuan accepted with a grin and drained the cup in one gulp.

The wine restored color to his pale face.

“What brings you here?”

Lu’s gaze returned to the chessboard. He had already sensed everything that happened in the Imperial City.

After Tantai Mojie’s death, the true nature of the golden blood had been revealed.

Rebirth from a drop of blood—undoubtedly an Ancient Emperor’s technique.

So the golden blood was indeed the work of ancient Great Emperors.

But why?

To seize the Five Phoenixes?

Truthfully, without Lu's hidden schemes and calculations, Tantai Mojie—with the golden blood's aid—could easily have dominated the entire Five Phoenixes.

Imperial Blood had that power.

As Human Emperor, his fortune was nearly impossible to strip. He was practically invincible.

The perfect "child of destiny" archetype.

But Lu would never allow Tantai Mojie to run wild.

From a weak low-martial world to mid-martial, then high-martial... Lu had poured too much effort into the Five Phoenixes.

Curiously, Lu looked at Tantai Xuan, wondering what he truly wanted.

To beg for Tantai Mojie's life?

Unlikely.

Tantai Xuan sat opposite Lu and glanced at the Spirit-Pressure Chessboard. His heart jolted.

Even as a Xuan Immortal—one of the strongest in the nine heavens—a mere look at the board sent shockwaves through his mind.

He quickly withdrew his gaze and looked at Lu.

“Young Master Lu, back then, you used the black dragon as foundation, transformed it into dragon qi, and established the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty upon it, giving birth to the Human Emperor...”

“The Human Emperor is the faith and symbol of the human race...”

Tantai Xuan spoke slowly, eyes tinged with nostalgia.

Centuries had passed.

The Great Xuan Divine Dynasty had been ravaged by a tyrant and now teetered on collapse.

A feeling of time's relentless change, of vicissitudes.

"You're not here to plead for Tantai Mojie?"

Lu asked curiously.

Tantai Xuan shook his head. "Karma has its retribution. That wretch's deeds are his own to bear. In the Underworld, he will sink to the bottom of the Bitter Sea and taste every calamity."

"But... Tantai Mojie was guilty. The Human Emperor is not."

"The title of Human Emperor represents the faith of the human race. I have come today to implore you, Young Master Lu: do not abolish the Human Emperor because of Tantai Mojie's cruelty and tyranny."

Lu fell silent.

Back then, he had used dragon qi to establish the Human Emperor and gather the fortune of the human race.

Tantai Xuan, as the first Human Emperor, knew well: if Lu chose to abolish the title, there would truly be no more Human Emperors in the world.

“Can you guarantee that no future Human Emperor will become tyrannical?”

Lu asked.

“This time, we were fortunate—Tantai Mojie divided human fortune into eight parts for the beasts, allowing them to be defeated one by one and losing his protection.”

“But next time, luck may not be so kind.”

“The Human Emperor is protected by human fortune—cultivators cannot harm him.”

“If the Emperor turns tyrannical, the crusade against tyranny will repeat itself.”

“Since I can establish the Human Emperor, I can also abolish him. With human fortune now scattered, removing the title will eliminate such future threats.”

Tantai Xuan’s expression grew complex.

No more Human Emperors in the world?

Yet he still shook his head.

“I came today to beg you to preserve the Human Emperor. After this calamity, the human race is weakened while the demon race rises. If the title is abolished now, humanity will suffer irreparable damage.”

Lu gazed calmly at Tantai Xuan.

“Very well. I will give you one chance.”

“Because of this crusade, human fortune has scattered across the world. I grant you one hundred years to regather it.”

“If you succeed, the Human Emperor remains. If you fail...”

“From this day forth, the world shall have no more Human Emperor.”

Tantai Xuan’s gaze sharpened.

A hundred years to restore the shattered fortune of the human race—it would be difficult.

But it was their only chance.

He rose, robes flowing, and bowed slightly.

“Thank you, Young Master Lu.”

Lu nodded faintly.

Tantai Xuan did not linger. He stepped forward and mounted the Hell Hound’s head once more.

Flames blazed around the beast, evaporating seawater into mist as it carried him away and vanished.

Lu held his cup, watching Tantai Xuan’s retreating figure with a meaningful smile.

But soon his gaze returned to the chessboard, eyes hardening.

“Trying to steal my peach...”

One hand held the cup, the other a chess piece.

He placed it firmly on the board.

...

Beneath the Imperial City walls.

Silence reigned.

Everyone was stunned.

No one had expected Tantai Mojie to still be alive!

He had revived in this moment!

Reborn from a drop of blood!

What horrifying power!

A terrifying aura spread, oppressing the world, making all feel the urge to kneel.

“That is not Tantai Mojie,” Zhu Long said softly, eyes still closed.

“Perhaps this is the force that controlled him. The Human Emperor should be benevolent, yet this generation’s was abnormally cruel. Indeed, his mind was dominated by something sinister.”

Kong Nanfei stood with hands behind his back, righteous qi swirling around him, staring at the figure bathed in burning golden flames.

Though it wore Tantai Mojie’s face, the aura was completely different.

“Attack!”

Overlord struck without hesitation.

Whoever controlled Tantai Mojie and turned him into a tyrant could not be good.

Subdue him first.

Tang Yimo opened five meridians, twisting through the air and unleashing shockwaves.

Kong Nanfei, Nie Changqing, Sima Qingshan—five Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals attacked together.

Rivers of fortune reappeared, crashing toward five directions.

The golden Tantai Mojie stood with unmatched majesty, exuding a pressure that demanded submission.

Boom!

A terrifying explosion erupted. The earth cracked again.

On the city walls, people stared in panic at the rising figure.

Under the suppression of five Xuan Immortals, this “Tantai Mojie” moved with ease.

This nightmare seemed to grow stronger with every moment.

The tyrant was not dead?

Boom!

Overlord and the others unleashed their full power. Fortunately, the Five Phoenixes had refined more Dao Essence and given birth to a Heavenly Dao, greatly enhancing the continent's stability.

In a Fifth- or Fourth-Derivation High-Martial World, such a clash would have shattered everything instantly.

Still...

The battle of Xuan Immortals and Saints unleashed apocalyptic destruction.

Six figures shot into the outer void battlefield.

There, brilliant lights collided with overwhelming force.

Explosions rocked the void.

Terrifying clashes and attacks surged like raging waves.

Finally, the sky tore open.

Overlord, Tang Yimo, and the other five Xuan Immortals coughed blood, groaning as they were sent flying back to the Five Phoenix Continent.

Space ripped apart.

The golden Tantai Mojie stood bathed in golden light in the outer battlefield.

He spread his arms.

An overwhelming aura exploded outward, centered on the Five Phoenixes and sweeping across all nine heavens.

He declared his return in the most domineering way possible!

In that instant.

From the lower three heavens to the upper realms, every race felt their hair stand on end!

In an ancient tomb.

Gu Mangran—who had slept through the birth of so many Xuan Immortals—suddenly opened his eyes, filled with disbelief.

He clutched his chest, shocked awake from slumber.

“Ancient Emperor aura? Have the Ancient Emperors of the Heavenly Spirit Race returned?!”

In the first heaven, at the Heavenly Spirit Clan’s Holy Hall.

Lord Micah’s pupils shrank.

“Ancient Emperor aura... The mysterious vanished Ancient Emperors from the ancient war... have they returned?!”

But before the golden Tantai Mojie could bask in the glory of all races bowing before him—

A faint sound rang out.

The sound of a chess piece placed on the board.

Silver-gray light exploded.

A pillar of white Spirit-Pressure light, like a column piercing heaven and earth, crashed down.

It struck the golden Tantai Mojie squarely.

His hair whipped wildly; his neck bent ninety degrees; his body slammed to its knees under unbearable pressure.

Boom!

In that moment, the clamoring nine heavens fell utterly silent.

Chapter 524: The Girl Who Shed All Restraint

The imperial might came to an abrupt halt, as though someone had swung a blade across a raging river, severing its flow.

The vast, surging imperial aura that had stirred countless powerful beings across the nine heavens now vanished just as suddenly as it had appeared.

Those ancient existences who had slumbered for eons awoke one after another, their eyes gleaming with excitement.

Ancient Emperor aura—so distant, yet so familiar.

After countless ages, the supreme rulers of the nine heavens had finally returned!

But the aura disappeared as quickly as it had come—too abruptly.

Panic seized those who had been waiting for the Emperors' return. They emerged from their slumbering chambers, heedless of their dwindling lifespans, and chased after the fading trace.

In the first heaven, within the Heavenly Spirit Clan's Holy Hall.

Micah sat cross-legged, sensing the sudden cutoff. His expression shifted slightly.

“They’ve returned... the vanished Ancient Emperors have returned?”

He drew a deep breath. Light flickered uncertainly in his eyes. The time had come for him to make his choice.

He looked up, wariness etched across his face, toward the distant clouds where the horizon of the nine heavens met seven-colored radiance surging for ten thousand feet.

He did not know whether the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor or the Heavenly Dao of the nine heavens had sensed the aura.

But he had already placed his bet on the Five Phoenixes. There was no retreat.

He formed a seal, splitting a portion of his divine soul and merging it with his avatar in the Five Phoenixes.

...

On the Five Phoenix Continent.

Everyone stared upward in shock.

The “Tantai Mojie” who had been forced to his knees by the Spirit-Pressure beam slowly raised his head. Even under such overwhelming force, the Ancient Emperor’s avatar rose steadily to his feet.

The imperial aura surged outward once more.

The initial stumble had been due to underestimating the sheer power the Five Phoenixes could unleash.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

One aura after another tore across the sky.

Ni Yu distributed pills to the wounded Overlord, Tang Yimo, and the other Xuan Immortals.

Her eyes lit up as she gazed skyward.

“It’s Young Master! Young Master has come out of seclusion!”

Overlord and the others exhaled in relief. Young Master Lu had finally acted.

The transformation of Tantai Mojie had been completely unforeseen.

After all, he had been reduced to dust—dead beyond dead—yet he had been reborn from a single drop of blood. Such a method was utterly shocking.

Zhu Long's eyes remained closed, her lashes trembling faintly.

She was not overly surprised. From the very beginning, she had sensed the golden blood in Tantai Mojie's heart.

Now, having merged even more deeply with the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao, her perception was sharper than ever.

Lu Changkong stood with hands behind his back, eyes narrowed.

He had thought the matter would be settled easily, but this twist had caught him off guard.

Still, he remained calm—because Lu had intervened.

He knew his son's capabilities all too well: the kind of strength that always exceeded expectations.

So many crises had been effortlessly resolved by him. This would be no different.

While the Xuan Immortals remained composed, the other Five Phoenix Immortals could not hide their unease.

“This is not the tyrant Tantai Mojie. The aura is completely different...”

“That pressure... like an imperial weapon. Could the tyrant truly have been an Ancient Emperor reincarnated?”

“Legends say that in the ancient war of the nine heavens, many Ancient Emperors vanished from the world. Yet the upper-realm holy clans have always claimed that one day the Emperors would return!”

“Is this the day?”

Fear spread like wildfire.

No one could remain calm in the face of an Ancient Emperor—an invincible being who stood at the peak of the nine heavens.

...

On the island in the heart of Origin Lake.

Lu held his wine cup, a faint smile on his lips.

His eyes danced with amusement, still carrying that lazy calm.

Now he was certain: the imperial blood had come to the Five Phoenixes with ill intent.

He had once believed that trust still existed between people in this world.

But these Ancient Emperors had indeed come to conquer the Five Phoenixes.

It wasn't hard to guess.

The current Five Phoenixes had established an immortal martial foundation.

The frequent birth of Xuan Immortals—beings comparable to Saints—was proof of its potential.

This was the foundation for breaking through to become a true immortal martial world!

Lu did not know the full story behind the Ancient Emperors' disappearance, nor did he care.

If the Five Phoenixes succeeded in becoming an immortal martial world, then according to the Great Luo Immortal Scripture he had deduced, there existed a realm above Golden Immortal: Great Luo Immortal.

A Great Luo Immortal surpassed even Ancient Emperors.

These Emperors must have sensed the possibility of transcending their realm, and so...

They had acted.

But Lu would never allow it.

"Ancient Emperor..."

"So what?"

He drained the cup of Heavenly Immortal Wine.

Picking up a chess piece, excitement flickered in his eyes as he waited for the Emperors to make their move.

...

“Tens of thousands of years without returning... the creatures of the nine heavens have grown bold.”

A faint voice echoed across the heavens.

The figure bathed in golden flames—Tantai Mojie—spoke calmly.

The world fell silent.

His words were not contained; they rolled through the entire Void Heaven and even reached the lower three heavens.

In Pingyang Heaven, Blood Fiend Heaven, and Yuan Magnetic Heaven, the powerhouses shuddered.

The implication of those words sent chills down their spines.

“An Ancient Emperor has truly returned?!”

In the Little Thunder Sound Buddha Realm, the Great Venerable drew a sharp breath, filled with dread.

What did the return of an Ancient Emperor mean?

It could bring boundless calamity. No one could fathom how terrifying a true Ancient Emperor was!

In the upper realms, the holy clans—already cowed by the Five Phoenixes’ alliance—felt their ancestors’ saintly might surge. Their divine senses stretched across vast distances, gazing toward the Five Phoenixes.

Many saint ancestors wept tears of joy.

They had finally waited long enough!

“The Ancient Emperors have returned at last!”

Some knelt upon the earth, overwhelmed with ecstasy.

On the Five Phoenix Continent, silence reigned.

No living being knew what to say.

The cultivators felt suffocating pressure; the Immortals trembled inwardly.

An Ancient Emperor was the pinnacle of an era.

What oppressed them most was that these Emperors were not friendly toward the Five Phoenixes.

Their manipulation of Tantai Mojie to bring chaos proved that.

Could the Five Phoenixes withstand an Ancient Emperor?

Fortunately, the unfathomable Young Master Lu had finally acted...

The Spirit-Pressure beam gradually dissipated.

The golden figure slowly stepped into the Five Phoenix sky.

His terrifying aura spread, yet the rules of Void Heaven showed no reaction.

Golden pupils turned.

The Ancient Emperor's will, now occupying Tantai Mojie's body, swept his gaze toward the Eastern Sea.

"Found you."

His body dove like a cannonball, trailing a long streak of light across the sky, vanishing in the direction of the Eastern Sea.

The expressions of the Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals changed drastically.

The Eastern Sea—that was where White Jade Capital lay. The Ancient Emperor was heading straight for Young Master Lu!

"Stop him!"

They shot forward.

In the Eastern Sea.

The vast ocean exploded.

Terrifying waves surged skyward.

The eight Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals intercepted the Ancient Emperor in the center of the sky.

At the same time, the Emperor raised his head. A heavenly gate appeared above him.

A figure stepped forth upon a green lotus.

Lu Jiulian emerged from the Ascension Land.

“Interesting...”

The Ancient Emperor smiled.

Boom!

The battle erupted instantly.

Nine Xuan Immortals against an Ancient Emperor avatar. The clash sent monstrous waves surging, evaporating vast swaths of seawater.

Marine creatures trembled in terror.

The arriving Five Phoenix Immortals could only watch from afar, unable to approach this apocalyptic battle.

Who could have imagined that behind this rebellion stood an Ancient Emperor?

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Overlord and the others were sent flying again.

As newly advanced Xuan Immortals who had spent most of their time observing the crusade, they had not had time to consolidate their realm.

Ni Yu was no fighter. She stayed back with her black pot and Little Yinglong, cheering them on.

Thus, the main force fell to Zhu Long, Lu Jiulian... and Lu Changkong.

Though Lu Changkong was also newly advanced, he possessed the Myriad Poisons Physique.

When the Ancient Emperor's fist struck him, the golden flames nearly turned green. The Emperor grew wary.

Among top-tier special physiques, poison bodies were the most terrifying...

So he avoided direct clashes with Lu Changkong.

Zhu Long, eyes closed, darted forward with cold determination, small fists clenched.

Though her father had always said a girl should be gentle and refined...

Right now, refinement was impossible. The Ancient Emperor's presence pressed upon her so heavily that she had no choice but to cast gentleness aside.

Lu Jiulian swept his green-lotus sword, brilliant sword light filling the sky.

After years of consolidating his cultivation in the Ascension Land, his Xuan Immortal combat power had grown even stronger!

Three rivers of fortune surged, clashing against the Ancient Emperor.

Sima Qingshan, Kong Nanfei, and Bai Qingniao supported from the sides.

Sima Qingshan painted the void into a cage.

Kong Nanfei condemned with words of righteousness.

Bai Qingniao pointed from afar, sending nine fire phoenixes to unleash devastating attacks, disrupting the Emperor.

Overlord and Tang Yimo charged fearlessly again and again, acting as shields.

Waves crashed across the vast sea.

The shockwaves from Xuan Immortal-level combat killed countless creatures in the ocean.

The water itself began to turn faintly red with blood!

Above the sea.

The giant whale rose and fell.

Atop Peach Blossom Island, in the white-jade pavilion, Lu watched the back-and-forth between the Ancient Emperor and Zhu Long and Lu Jiulian. His brows rose in mild surprise.

“Seems... not a true Emperor realm after all. Just an avatar.”

Lu murmured thoughtfully.

“A bit disappointing...”

He had hoped for a real Emperor to gauge his own strength against.

“But if it’s only an avatar, that’s not bad. It means the Five Phoenixes still have time to grow...”

His eyes gleamed.

With his current Qi Refining Ninth Layer strength, even with the Innate Spirit Treasure Heaven-Stealing Tower, his odds against a true Emperor were uncertain.

More time for development was welcome.

The longer the Five Phoenixes had, the stronger Lu Ping'an would become.

Suddenly, an idea struck him.

“Hm... since it's not a true Emperor, could we channel the scattered fortune of heaven and earth into this body, then let Zhu Long or Lu Jiulian get a boost and defeat him—gaining fortune in return?”

His eyes lit up. The idea had potential.

His mind entered the Transmission Platform and began deducing.

He sought a method to allow this Ancient Emperor avatar to absorb the scattered fortune of heaven and earth.

It wasn't difficult.

After about nine rounds of simulation, Lu obtained the complete method.

Exiting the platform, he felt pleased.

He took another sip of Heavenly Immortal Wine and decided: treat this Emperor avatar as a tool.

He swept all the pieces off the chessboard.

The board lay empty.

Lu picked up a piece and slowly placed it.

Boom!

The moment it landed, the scattered fortune of heaven and earth began to surge toward the Ancient Emperor avatar's head.

...

The vast sea was plowed into deep, unhealing trenches.

Zhu Long, Lu Jiulian, and Lu Changkong tried to move the battle to the outer void, but the Emperor avatar refused.

He insisted on fighting within the Five Phoenixes—because he knew it was most advantageous to him.

Not only did it force the Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals to hold back, it also allowed him to instill fear and awe in the hearts of the Five Phoenix people.

Even as an avatar, he could plant the seed of dread in their souls.

Boom!

Lu Jiulian was sent flying, his expression grim.

The Ancient Emperor avatar was truly powerful!

Though not at true Emperor level, his oppressive force was top-tier among Xuan Immortals!

Lu Changkong lunged, arms wide, trying to grapple him.

The Emperor was wary of Lu Changkong.

Special physiques were mysterious—even Ancient Emperors had not fully understood them.

He wanted no part of that poison.

The battle was brutal. The heavens and earth changed color, as if the apocalypse had arrived.

In an ancient tomb, Gu Mangran sat up in his coffin, staring blankly.

What had Young Master Lu done this time?

How had he provoked an Ancient Emperor avatar?

Gu Mangran felt a headache coming on.

He suddenly didn't want to sleep anymore. Every time he closed his eyes, something terrifying happened!

This time it was an Emperor avatar.

If he slept again, would a true Ancient Emperor descend next?!

Gu Mangran took a deep breath, refocused, and stared at the avatar clashing with Zhu Long and Lu Jiulian.

He could feel the avatar's strength steadily rising.

"Which Ancient Emperor is it?"

"No clear signature techniques... hard to tell."

Gu Mangran pondered.

Then he stopped thinking.

Beside him, Bu Nanxing approached with a fawning smile, offering a prepared Chrysanthemum Divine Herb.

Gu Mangran glanced over.

Bu Nanxing pushed it forward eagerly, as if to say: take it, no need to return it.

In Old Lu's absence, Gu Mangran was the boss.

Survival in this brutal world required knowing how to please the right people.

Gu Mangran smiled, thanked him, and prepared to swallow the herb.

But...

The situation above the sea changed abruptly.

Zhu Long opened her eyes.

Night and day reversed. Innate Yin-Yang Qi stretched across the heavens.

“Divine ability?”

The Ancient Emperor avatar was startled.

In an instant, he was engulfed by a massive Yin-Yang millstone.

A pit ten thousand li wide appeared in the sea.

Lu Jiulian gripped his sword. A green lotus quietly bloomed around him.

The enormous lotus spread, enveloping the Ancient Emperor.

“Domain?”

The Emperor was shocked again.

So many geniuses in the Five Phoenixes!

Boom!

Under Zhu Long's divine ability and Lu Jiulian's domain, the Emperor was not in dire straits.

His experience and strength allowed him to handle it with ease.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

"Interesting."

The sea grew suddenly calm.

Lu's light laughter echoed, followed by the crisp sound of a piece falling on the board.

When the sound ceased, the vast scattered fortune of heaven and earth surged toward the Ancient Emperor avatar's head.

At first, the avatar was surprised.

He knew of the Great Luo Immortal Scripture. Its allure had moved even Ancient Emperors.

The returning Emperors had planned to implement the path of fortune in the nine heavens.

Perhaps that path could lead them to the realm beyond Ancient Emperor!

“Foolish.”

“To think you could suppress me with fortune!”

The Ancient Emperor avatar sneered.

Using the path of fortune against him—how naive of Lu Ping’an.

“Have you forgotten how those world-ending dire beasts were born?”

He said coldly.

As his words fell, surging killing intent and baleful aura erupted from him. Golden flames roared skyward.

These forces fused with the incoming fortune, causing his power to rise even further.

Gu Mangran drew a sharp breath.

“That’s the divine ability of the Flame Clan Ancient Emperor!”

This avatar was controlled by the Flame Clan Ancient Emperor!

Flame Clan?

Gu Mangran’s shock reached Lu.

No wonder Tantai Mojie’s temper had grown increasingly explosive—like a raging fire consuming everything.

So it was the Flame Clan Ancient Emperor pulling the strings.

But Lu didn’t care which clan it was—the outcome would be the same.

Moreover...

This guy had just called him foolish!

Lu's expression gradually chilled. Throughout history, this was the first being to call Lu Ping'an foolish.

He rolled up his sleeve and placed another piece.

As it landed, the chessboard's aura turned utterly murderous!

Boom!

Heaven-and-earth fortune continued to pour into the Ancient Emperor avatar, pushing his aura to the very limit of what the world could bear!

He resembled an even more terrifying version of the dire beast Six-Infant!

Above the sea.

Zhu Long, Lu Jiulian, and the other Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals instantly recognized the change.

First confusion, then delight.

If the Ancient Emperor avatar truly transformed into something like a dire beast, did that mean slaying him would grant them fortune?!

Overlord and Tang Yimo fought with renewed ferocity.

Though they were still sent flying, their momentum was ferocious.

Boom!

Lu placed another piece—this time, a boost for Zhu Long.

How could he not give his precious little cotton-padded jacket a cheat?

Suddenly, the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao stars illuminated the skies.

A beam of light descended, enveloping Zhu Long.

Carrying the Heavenly Dao, her aura climbed higher and higher—more and more terrifying!

The Ancient Emperor avatar, now fused with heaven-and-earth fortune, sensed the danger.

“Fused with the Heavenly Dao?”

“This aura... Quasi-Emperor?!”

The Flame Clan Ancient Emperor’s avatar paled. He immediately tried to abandon the fortune and flee.

Bathed in Heavenly Dao light, Zhu Long was still slightly dazed—until her father’s voice reached her ears.

Listening to his instructions, her eyes grew brighter.

As expected of Father... so wicked!

Boom!

Seeing the Flame Clan Ancient Emperor try to escape, Zhu Long—bathed in Heavenly Dao radiance—pursued like a teleport, cutting off his retreat.

Her small pink fist shot out.

The Ancient Emperor avatar, wreathed in golden flames, countered with a punch.

Boom!

Their fists collided.

The Flame Clan Ancient Emperor's arm—now fused with heaven-and-earth fortune—shattered!

Zhu Long's spirit surged. She clenched her fist tighter, excitement blazing.

Her small fists rained down in a storm of shadows.

Each strike carried bone-breaking, heaven-shaking force.

They smashed into the Ancient Emperor avatar's body.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Facing Zhu Long empowered by the Heavenly Dao, the Ancient Emperor avatar was utterly helpless.

High above the sky...

The girl who had shed all restraint unleashed a brutal beating!

Chapter 525: No One Will Ever Know How Undignified I Became

The vast sea suddenly exploded!

A streak of golden light shot down from the sky like a meteor, crashing into the waves.

The entire ocean surface boiled, steaming with endless heat. Scorching waves rolled outward, searing the air.

Zhu Long stood in midair, eyes closed. Above her, the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao stars poured down radiant light, enveloping her entire body.

The thin glow wrapped around her like a veil woven from moonlight.

With the Heavenly Dao's blessing, Zhu Long's combat power soared. Though her total fortune remained unchanged, the Dao's amplification was undeniable.

Boom!

The sea erupted.

The Flame Clan Ancient Emperor avatar, wreathed in golden flames, shot skyward with fury etched across his face.

His severed arm had already regrown, but Zhu Long closed in again.

Her delicate little fist swung, blooming with countless colors in an instant.

The Emperor avatar raised both arms to block—only for them to shatter into bloody mist.

“Heavenly Dao empowerment! Quasi-Emperor combat strength!”

The avatar roared in rage.

He had never imagined the Five Phoenixes possessed such a method—capable of creating Quasi-Emperor power.

To receive the Heavenly Dao's blessing was one thing, but what truly shocked him was that the Five Phoenixes had actually birthed their own Heavenly Dao.

Bang!

Zhu Long's fist smashed into the avatar's cheek. Half his face exploded and vanished.

Everyone stared in stunned silence at the two streaks of light clashing in the void.

Zhu Long was completely dominating the Ancient Emperor avatar.

It was pure one-sided abuse. The Emperor was sent flying again and again. He tried to flee, but Zhu Long always sealed the void one step ahead.

Then she resumed the beating.

Punch after punch...

The avatar's body cracked, golden blood spraying outward.

The scene was utterly brutal!

Everyone sucked in a cold breath.

Lu Julian gripped his green-lotus sword, mouth twitching.

So... terrifying!

A woman who had cast aside all restraint was truly terrifying!

Bang!

The avatar crashed into the sea. Zhu Long kicked out, as though detonating a massive bomb.

Seawater shot thousands of meters into the air.

A deep trench split the ocean almost in two.

The avatar plunged to the seabed, carving an unfathomably deep gash.

At first, the Emperor could still resist.

But soon, it became nothing more than a one-sided thrashing.

Zhu Long even grabbed him by the legs and swung him left and right. Each impact on the sea surface caused massive explosions.

Golden blood flowed into the ocean, its energy so vast that marine creatures instinctively craved it.

Yet none dared approach—Zhu Long’s terrifying presence kept them frozen.

“Quasi-Emperor...”

The avatar was dazed.

After such a beating, even he began to question existence.

Why had he come here?

As the mastermind behind the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty's downfall—what was the point?

Was it just to receive this thrashing?

This was nothing like he had imagined. Wasn't he supposed to return in glory, shocking the world and commanding the worship of all races?!

Even as an avatar, he shouldn't have to endure such humiliation!

Outside Void Heaven—beyond the Five Phoenixes.

In Pingyang Heaven, countless powerhouses had gathered at some point.

The remaining five great holy clans of the upper realms were present, even experts from the Heavenly Spirit Clan.

They stared blankly at the battle in the Five Phoenixes.

Lu had sensed their arrival and kindly lifted the concealment of the Heaven-Covering Formation, allowing them to witness the utterly lopsided fight.

An Ancient Emperor avatar—being brutally beaten.

In an instant, the joy of those who had celebrated the Emperor's return turned to cold indifference.

An Emperor couldn't possibly be this weak.

It was all fake!

No Ancient Emperor had returned!

The fervor on many faces faded. Some ancient beings felt deep disappointment.

The avatar sensed this and nearly coughed up blood from rage. As a Flame Clan Emperor, his power grew with anger.

But against a Quasi-Emperor, what good was fury? The gap in raw strength could not be bridged by emotion.

He decided to flee.

But a massive hand appeared in the heavens.

A colossal figure materialized—seated, playing a chessboard.

Like a deity, it blotted out the sky.

The avatar tried to escape, only to be trapped by the spreading chessboard domain.

The character “All” appeared in array runes.

He tried to break free, only to be bounced back—and beaten again by Zhu Long.

The world watched in stunned silence.

Especially the Five Phoenix Immortals, who drew sharp breaths.

“The Demoness of Buzhou Peak... she’s becoming more terrifying by the day! From now on, Buzhou Peak is officially a forbidden zone for life!”

“So strong! This is just too strong!”

“What a arrogant Ancient Emperor—stirring chaos in the Five Phoenixes, igniting the crusade against tyranny, thinking victory was assured. Yet today he’s beaten into a dead dog by the Demoness!”

Human Immortals and True Immortals spoke up—some in awe, some laughing.

Overlord, Tang Yimo, and the others were speechless.

Watching the avatar—bloodied, helpless, body crumbling—they shivered.

Even Overlord, with his unyielding Dao Intent, felt a chill.

If he were the one facing Zhu Long now, even unyielding Dao Intent might not save him.

His fate would surely be worse than this Emperor’s.

“Stop him!”

The avatar—covered in blood, aura wavering—fell into despair.

He couldn't beat Zhu Long head-on. He couldn't outmaneuver her either.

So he could only flee desperately within the chessboard.

But the Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals—aside from Zhu Long—were still present.

Lu Jiulian's green-lotus sword danced, blooming with sword flowers that sealed one escape route.

The avatar immediately changed direction.

Yet every path was blocked, giving him the hopeless sensation of having nowhere to go.

He had thought he knew everything about the Five Phoenixes—knew all their powerhouses.

But now he realized the Five Phoenixes' depths were far greater than he imagined.

They had even birthed a Heavenly Dao!

He should have been delighted. As the only high-martial world to produce a Heavenly Dao, the Five Phoenixes possessed unimaginable potential. The Ancient Emperors had not misjudged.

But right now, being beaten senseless, he felt no joy.

“It’s over.”

After the thrashing, Zhu Long floated silently.

The battered, swollen avatar exhaled slowly. Finally, it was ending.

The girl who wasn’t beating him looked serene as an autumn leaf... yeah, right!

Zhu Long suddenly opened her eyes.

Her left eye was pitch-black as ink; her right eye blazed pure white.

One black, one white.

This was her divine ability.

Under the Heavenly Dao's blessing—

Night and day across the entire Five Phoenixes reversed and shifted!

Zhu Long raised her hand. Black and white qi swirled in her palm, forming a massive Yin-Yang millstone—like a small planet.

The avatar felt a chill run through him.

An unparalleled storm of terror formed around Zhu Long, sweeping the sea into sky-high water dragons, as though the ocean itself was being sucked upward.

The avatar turned and fled without hesitation.

The other Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals moved to block his path.

Zhu Long swung her Yin-Yang millstone—like a planet—and smashed it down.

Terrifying energy swallowed the Ancient Emperor avatar whole.

Dada dada dada!

Boom!

A deafening explosion transformed into a hemispherical white eggshell, enveloping the entire sea region.

A ring of shockwaves spread outward from the eggshell.

Countless waves surged and fell.

Even the giant whale carrying the island in Origin Lake was swept away by the tide.

The heavens and earth changed color.

The entire Five Phoenix Continent trembled.

Even creatures at the continent's poles shivered in terror.

This explosion... it was apocalyptic!

Lu Jiulian, Lu Changkong, Ni Yu, Bai Qingniao, and the other Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals acted at once.

They released their energy to reinforce the land, blocking the surging waves and preventing the Five Phoenixes from being swallowed.

If unchecked, the waves would have flooded half the Eastern Domain.

After a long while.

The white light faded.

Zhu Long closed her eyes again. Smoke rose from them, like the barrel of a cannon that had just fired.

Before her.

A massive hemispherical crater had appeared. Seawater rushed toward its edges.

The exposed seabed had been blasted into a bottomless abyss.

Boiling heat rose from the depths.

It was over.

Lu Jiulian and the other Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals sensed the vanishing Ancient Emperor aura and smiled.

But Zhu Long tilted her head slightly.

Still connected to the Heavenly Dao, she retained Quasi-Emperor-level strength.

Her senses were far sharper than normal.

She raised her delicate fist and struck toward empty space.

Bang!

The air exploded. A massive air bomb detonated.

Pfft!

An invisible drop of golden blood was struck and sent flying.

It writhed like a living thing.

Lu Jiulian, Overlord, Tang Yimo, and the others drew sharp breaths.

Even under Zhu Long's savage assault, it had not been destroyed.

They remembered clearly: Tantai Mojie had been reborn from a single drop of this golden blood.

In other words—the Ancient Emperor avatar was not yet dead.

Zhu Long reached out and pinched the golden blood between her fingers.

Her long lashes trembled faintly.

Her red lips curved upward.

The golden blood writhed.

On the other side, everyone watched gravely.

This should be the interrogation phase. Perhaps Zhu Long could extract information from the blood.

Had the Ancient Emperors truly returned?

The world fell utterly silent.

All eyes were on Zhu Long, who held the Emperor's blood as though pinching an insect.

They waited for her questions.

Zhu Long took a deep breath, lashes trembling.

While the Heavenly Dao's power still lingered.

Her thumb and forefinger squeezed hard.

Pop!

The golden blood burst instantly!

"Now no one will ever know how undignified I was."

Zhu Long exhaled deeply, speaking with utmost seriousness.

The world: "..."

Everyone suddenly felt a chill. As Zhu Long turned her face, they all pretended they had seen nothing.

The silence this time was one of speechlessness. No one knew what to say.

As the golden blood burst, vast Dao Essence poured out and was absorbed by the Heavenly Dao stars above Zhu Long.

Then, the fortune the Ancient Emperor avatar had absorbed began to scatter.

Rumble!

Fortune surged, reshaping mountains and rivers.

The connection between Zhu Long and the Heavenly Dao stars severed. Lu withdrew her cheat.

Zhu Long's strength plummeted...

The massive drop made the girl purse her lips in grievance.

Vast fortune began to descend.

As the main force who killed the Ancient Emperor avatar, Zhu Long naturally received the lion's share.

The other Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals also gained immensely—far more than from slaying the dire beast Six-Infant.

Of course, it wasn't enough to break through—still far from it.

But it was progress.

According to the Great Luo Immortal Scripture, Golden Immortals possessed fortune like seas.

How vast that must be.

Right now, they had only rivers. Becoming a sea was still distant.

Even Zhu Long, who received the greatest share, was nowhere near breaking through to Golden Immortal.

...

On the island in the heart of Origin Lake.

Lu placed his final piece, ending the game on the Spirit-Pressure Chessboard.

When he saw Zhu Long crush the Ancient Emperor's blood just to preserve her dignity, even he laughed.

But he didn't mind. Crushed was crushed.

Even in his hands, he would have done the same.

It was going to be crushed sooner or later—who did it didn't matter.

“Still, the Dao Essence contained in that imperial blood was an unexpected bonus... quite a large amount. Not inferior to what an imperial weapon would hold.”

Lu smiled and took another sip of Heavenly Immortal Wine, feeling very pleased.

Suddenly, Lu paused.

He looked up, gaze turning toward a direction in Void Heaven.

There, a crack slowly appeared.

Vast power surged from within.

Vaguely, a pair of eyes seemed to watch the Five Phoenixes from inside.

Lu narrowed his eyes, watching calmly.

As expected... the imperial blood was connected to that mysterious crack in Void Heaven.

What lay beyond it?

More importantly—during his two consciousness ascensions, had he entered that very place?

If so, who had kicked him?

Lu waited quietly, calm and composed, watching for the entity beyond the crack to act.

Those eyes seemed to sense Lu's gaze.

Their gazes met.

Finally, the crack slowly closed.

But in the final moments before it sealed—

A beam of golden light shot out.

It struck somewhere in Void Heaven.

Buzz...

Winds rose across Void Heaven.

Countless threads of rule power intertwined.

That golden light acted like a key, unlocking the prison that had bound those rules.

The countless rule powers poured out of Void Heaven, melting away like ice and snow...

Seeing this, Lu raised a brow.

Oh? Angry now?

...

The rule power that had once prevented powerhouses from descending directly into Void Heaven—
vanished!

Erased by mysterious force, dissolved, gone!

With the collapse of the chains of order,

Powerhouses from the holy clans beyond Void Heaven rejoiced!

“The rules have completely dispersed! Void Heaven’s rules are gone... this is the sign! The sign of the
Ancient Emperors’ return!”

“The madmen of the Five Phoenixes dared to kill an Ancient Emperor avatar. Now... the Emperor’s will
no longer protects you!”

“Without Void Heaven’s rules... the Five Phoenixes will become everyone’s target! They’ll be swarmed by Saints!”

One holy clan powerhouse after another stood in the void and spoke.

Some ancient Saints, heartbroken over the death of the Emperor avatar, roared with righteous indignation.

They vowed to invade the Five Phoenixes and conquer them in the name of the Emperor’s will!

Of course...

It was all talk.

The current Five Phoenixes were no longer the weak world they once could bully at will.

Now, the Five Phoenixes possessed a vast number of Saint-level combatants.

Overlord, Lu Jiulian, Tang Yimo...

And Zhu Long—who had beaten an Ancient Emperor avatar to death.

From outside, they could only see the avatar being thrashed and finally pinched to death like an insect.

They could not sense the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao.

So they could only guess Zhu Long's strength based on the avatar's power. This girl... might already possess Quasi-Emperor-level strength!

Hiss—

The Five Phoenixes had a Quasi-Emperor guardian?!

In that instant, the saint ancestors sucked in cold breaths.

The Saint who had vowed to invade was dragged away by a group of cursing saint ancestors.

A Quasi-Emperor...

Even Micah, lord of the Heavenly Spirit Clan's Holy Hall, would struggle against one.

An ordinary saint ancestor would simply be courting death.

To deal with the Five Phoenixes, they would need to unite with the Heavenly Spirit Clan's Holy Hall and gather all the Saint-level power it had accumulated over hundreds of thousands of years.

The current Five Phoenixes had grown into a colossus rivaling the Heavenly Spirit Clan.

They were now the second greatest power in the nine heavens.

The first was the Heavenly Spirit Clan of the first heaven—home to a living Ancient Emperor, unmatched by any other force.

Yet they did not know that, at this very moment,

In the Heavenly Spirit Clan's Holy Hall,

Micah—the one they had pinned their hopes of destroying the Five Phoenixes on—was actually sighing in relief at the death of the Ancient Emperor avatar. Joy lit his face.

After this battle, Micah felt even more confident in the Five Phoenixes' future.

His gamble had been right!

At the Five Phoenixes' growth rate... he might truly have a chance to break through his own shackles there!

But soon, he frowned again.

With Void Heaven's rules gone, the Five Phoenixes might face new dangers.

Of course, with their current strength, they no longer feared a united assault from the holy clans.

The Five Phoenixes were no longer weak. A combined attack would only result in the holy clans' deaths.

Moreover, the holy clans—having lost imperial weapons and their Dao Essence—had long since lost the courage for such a joint assault.

“The only concern is that the dispersal of the rules might attract the attention of the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao... and the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor...”

Chapter 526: A Filthy World, the World-Ending Bitter Sea

The uproar finally came to an end.

The greatest victor was, without question, the Five Phoenixes.

The lower three heavens, the upper-realm holy clans, and countless other powerhouses fell silent.

No one had expected such an outcome. The return of an Ancient Emperor avatar should have been a grand, earth-shaking event.

Yet...

That avatar had been brutally tormented in the Five Phoenixes and ultimately crushed to death by a young girl.

The moment the imperial blood burst, everyone shivered. Their fear of the Five Phoenixes deepened.

The Five Phoenixes of today were no longer the world that could be casually crushed by a single Immortal from the upper realms.

Beneath the Heavenly Spirit Continent, they were now the strongest high-martial world!

The second greatest high-martial power in the nine heavens!

After the turmoil caused by the imperial blood, the Five Phoenixes not only emerged unscathed but gave birth to eight Xuan Immortals—equivalent to eight Saints, comparable to a million years of accumulation by a saint ancestor.

Thus, every force in the nine heavens now regarded the Five Phoenixes with awe.

Even though the ancient Emperor rules that once blanketed Void Heaven had vanished.

...

On the Five Phoenix Continent.

Atop the white-jade pavilion.

Lu leaned back, watching the aftermath of the battle. He had barely intervened, which pleased him greatly. Unknowingly, the many powerhouses of the Five Phoenixes had grown to the point where they could stand alone.

With the Heavenly Dao's blessing, Zhu Long had reached Quasi-Emperor strength.

At the very least, the Ancient Emperor avatar had been utterly dominated—no match at all.

The Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao had now refined hundreds of thousands of Dao Essence strands.

So much Dao Essence, channeled through the Heavenly Dao into Zhu Long, allowing her to erupt with Quasi-Emperor power—it was no surprise to Lu.

In fact, he even felt it was a little weak.

After all, Zhu Long empowered by the Heavenly Dao was essentially bearing the entire Five Phoenixes on her back.

In other words, the Ancient Emperor avatar had been fighting against the accumulated might of the whole Five Phoenixes. Being crushed was only natural.

With the matter settled, everyone dispersed.

Lu Jiulian took Tang Guo and returned to the Ascension Land.

Overlord went back to the Western Domain, where Luo Mingsang had been waiting patiently.

Tang Yimo secluded himself in the Southern Domain, digging into the limits of the human body, determined to perfect the Eight Meridians Escape Armor Demonic Art.

Lu Changkong returned to his ancient tomb to continue his hybrid divine herb experiments.

Before leaving, he took the massive thousand-eyed spider corpse with him.

Its venom was mildly poisonous—perfect for cultivating some highly lethal poisons.

Sima Qingshan returned to the Painting Sect. His advancement to Xuan Immortal brought fortune to the entire sect.

Many disciples broke through in cultivation, overjoyed.

In the sect's pavilions, An Miaoyu gazed into the distance.

Seeing Sima Qingshan return safely, she let out a relieved breath and smiled sweetly.

Kong Nanfei led his Confucian scholars back to the northern snowfields, where his Vast Righteousness Sect resided—refining a breath of vast righteousness.

Bai Qingniao and Jiang Li exchanged a nod before parting ways. She returned to her small courtyard to study the Nine Phoenixes Transformation.

Everything in the Five Phoenixes returned to its former rhythm, as though the chaos had never happened.

The Five Phoenix Immortals dispersed, each returning to their own cultivation grounds.

Zhu Long went back to Buzhou Peak.

She immediately entered the Origin Space to swallow and refine the Heavenly Dao. Perhaps having tasted the power of the Dao's blessing, she had become somewhat addicted to that strength.

Everything returned to normal—for the Five Phoenix Immortals.

For the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty, however, the real storm was only beginning.

Great Xuan Calendar, Year 650.

With the tyrant Tantai Mojie dead, the Five Phoenixes plunged into endless turmoil. The dynasty's fortune collapsed. Forces rose everywhere across the land.

Though the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty had not yet fallen, it existed only in name—its rule over the regions shattered.

Rebel armies fragmented, warring endlessly against one another.

They carved out territories and declared themselves kings, causing the dynasty's dominion to crumble further.

The smoke of war spread across the entire Five Phoenix Continent.

Worse still—

With Tantai Mojie's death, the tacit alliance between the Demon Court army and the rebel forces collapsed. They turned on each other.

The reason was simple: the rebels coveted the demon crystals of the demon race and launched an attack.

The Demon Court was naturally furious. They had helped overthrow the tyrant, only for the humans to betray them and try to seize their crystals.

How could they endure? War erupted. After fierce fighting, they seized vast territories northwest of the Imperial City.

The Tianhan Pass, which had guarded the border for centuries, fell to the Demon Court.

The age of chaos had arrived.

Smoke and fire spread without end.

...

On the island in the heart of Origin Lake.

Lu sat in the white-jade pavilion, setting up a chessboard. The pieces reflected the myriad states of the world.

The chaos across the Five Phoenixes appeared on the board.

The world was in turmoil because human fortune had shattered.

Lu did not intervene for now. At his current level, he would not personally handle many matters. The Five Phoenixes was a world—it needed its own natural development.

Still, the scattering of fortune would bring many troubles—troubles that would soon manifest among the people.

As for the disappearance of Void Heaven's rules, Lu was unconcerned.

With the Five Phoenixes' current strength, they feared no one—even without the rules.

When one's power was sufficient, one's confidence was absolute!

Who among the saint ancestors of the nine heavens dared invade the Five Phoenixes?

If they dared, they would die!

Unless the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor descended—but whether the rules existed or not made little difference to a true Ancient Emperor.

Thus, Lu was completely at ease. The mysterious entities beyond the Void Heaven rift had removed the rules in an attempt to intimidate the Five Phoenixes. He scoffed at the notion.

Thinking too highly of themselves.

Boom!

Suddenly, waves surged across the sea.

A streak of light flew in. A massive coffin was carried ashore by the tide.

Gu Mangran sat up from the coffin, looking at Lu with a complicated expression.

“General Gu, what brings you here?”

Lu held a chess piece, pondering his next move. Seeing Gu Mangran, he smiled and asked.

“When the Ancient Emperor’s blood entered the Five Phoenixes, I failed to detect it. Because of my negligence, such a great calamity nearly befell the Five Phoenixes.”

Gu Mangran spoke, voice tinged with guilt.

“No matter. For the Five Phoenixes, though it was a disaster, it was also a grand opportunity.”

Lu waved a hand dismissively.

Gu Mangran looked at the increasingly unfathomable Lu, his expression growing even more complex.

“Young Master Lu, when the Ancient Emperor avatar descended, I kept thinking about one question.”

“Go on.”

Lu raised a brow curiously, shifting his gaze from the board to Gu Mangran.

“This time it was only an avatar. What if next time a true Ancient Emperor descends?”

“And if that Ancient Emperor is the one I once served—Emperor Hao—what then?”

“If Emperor Hao stands against the Five Phoenixes... what should I do?”

Gu Mangran took a deep breath.

The question caught Lu slightly off guard.

“General Gu, follow your heart... do as your heart dictates.”

Lu said calmly.

“Everyone lives for themselves. What matters most is what lies within your heart...”

“No one can replace your inner thoughts, for they are the proof of your own existence.”

Snap.

Lu placed the piece.

A strange aura emanated from the board.

Gu Mangran fell into thought, then smiled in relief.

He bowed to Lu and left the island without lingering.

Lu glanced at his departing figure but said nothing.

He didn't know what Gu Mangran was thinking, nor did he need to.

Everyone had the right to choose, the right to decide.

Not long after Gu Mangran left,

Lu looked up in surprise.

A figure was walking slowly across the waves.

Soon, the figure reached White Jade Capital and ascended the island.

“Hall Master Micah.”

Lu was genuinely astonished.

He knew Micah had left an avatar in the Five Phoenixes and had not exposed it—yet he never expected Micah’s avatar to come in person.

“Young Master Lu.”

Micah bowed.

This avatar possessed Saint-level strength—though among the weakest Saints.

“I came today to deliver a message to Young Master Lu.”

“With Void Heaven’s rules gone, the upper-realm holy clans have entered the Holy Hall in person, requesting the Hall to attack the Five Phoenixes.”

“But Young Master Lu need not worry. With me presiding over the Hall, no action will be taken against the Five Phoenixes.”

“However, the disappearance of Void Heaven’s rules is a grave matter. It has already drawn the attention of the nine heavens’ Heavenly Dao and the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.”

“If the Emperor and the Heavenly Dao return, I will do my utmost to shield the Five Phoenixes, but I cannot guarantee complete success. Therefore, Young Master Lu must prepare for possible investigation by the nine heavens’ Heavenly Dao and the Ancient Emperor.”

Lu narrowed his eyes at Micah’s words.

He hadn’t expected Micah to personally deliver such information. He had no reason to doubt its truth.

Micah genuinely wished to break through his own shackles and saw the Five Phoenixes as his chance.

Thus, he spared no effort to help them.

“May I ask—do you know why the nine heavens’ Heavenly Dao and the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor are absent from the first heaven?”

Lu asked curiously.

Micah shook his head. “I do not know. The Emperor has never spoken of it.”

Lu clicked his tongue, feeling a touch of regret.

He said nothing more.

Micah bowed and departed, vanishing into the misty sea.

He had come solely to warn Lu and urge him to prepare.

The pavilion fell quiet once more.

Lu tapped lightly on the armrest of his wheelchair.

Then, with a thought,

His divine soul surged outward. The time array that had been paused during the war began to operate again.

The sundial floated, absorbing vast amounts of divine soul energy.

With more Dao Essence refined, the Five Phoenix Continent grew stronger and could now bear a faster flow of time.

Thus, Lu planned to gradually increase the time acceleration.

The Five Phoenixes needed time above all else.

The sundial shimmered—this was the modified “临” (Arrival) rune array.

Lu placed piece after piece on the board.

With each move, the scenes before him flickered faster and faster, dizzying to the eye.

His divine soul was devoured like a whale swallowing the sea.

“Two hundred to one... five hundred to one... one thousand to one!”

Golden light flickered in Lu’s eyes as he controlled the time flow.

Boom!

Countless rays of light poured from the sundial.

Finally, Lu stabilized the time ratio at one thousand to one.

This speed was perfect for the current Five Phoenixes—it would not crush the living beings under accelerated time.

Of course, maintaining such a massive drain placed enormous strain on his divine soul.

Every moment left Lu somewhat weary, lacking in spirit.

But for the entire Five Phoenixes, the effect was immense.

Previously, one year outside equaled one hundred years inside.

Now, one year outside equaled one thousand years inside.

Ten times the speed—enough to greatly accelerate the Five Phoenixes' development and the Heavenly Dao's refinement of Dao Essence.

Though Lu spoke casually, the pressure from the entities beyond the Void Heaven rift was real.

If those beings truly were Ancient Emperors—a group of them uniting against the Five Phoenixes—

It could be a catastrophe of unimaginable scale.

...

In the Underworld.

Tantai Xuan returned on the Hell Hound.

Yet he felt no joy—his brows were tightly knit.

Lu had given him a chance: one hundred years to regather the scattered human fortune.

It was no easy task.

But Tantai Xuan had to try.

If he did not, there might never be another Human Emperor in the world.

He could see the endless wars raging across the Five Phoenix mortal realm—flames spreading, lives extinguished.

The Underworld received souls every moment.

The world was in chaos. More lives were lost now than during Tantai Mojie's reign of terror.

Regathering human fortune was far harder than he had imagined.

“What should I do?”

In the Tenth Hall, Tantai Xuan fell deep into thought.

Eventually, he realized thinking alone was useless. He needed to act.

He left the Underworld, transforming into an old man.

He walked through the war-torn, warlord-divided continent.

He saved common folk, gathered fortune, hoping to slowly collect and organize the scattered, chaotic human fortune.

In the process, he also sought a virtuous successor—someone to become the new Human Emperor.

But he soon realized he was wrong.

He traveled the entire Five Phoenix Continent, yet fortune could not be gathered.

It was like picking up sesame seeds while losing the watermelon. As soon as he gathered one area, the fortune he had collected elsewhere began to collapse.

Worse—he could find no virtuous person in this chaotic age.

Almost everyone had been corrupted by the shattered human fortune. Environment shaped character. Kindness vanished; evil reigned.

The gap between rich and poor widened. The wealthy lived in extravagance and debauchery.

The poor became selfish, thieving, and ruthless.

Order collapsed. Decorum and music disappeared.

Walking through such a world, Tantai Xuan's heart suffered a violent shock.

He finally understood why Young Master Lu wanted to abolish the Human Emperor.

A ruler without virtue had brought such terrible consequences to the Five Phoenix Continent.

Those above set the example; those below followed.

It had influenced countless common people.

Even Tantai Xuan began to doubt whether reestablishing the Human Emperor was right.

The cultivators who had once planned to spread their teachings to gather fortune now sealed their mountains.

This mortal realm was no longer worth lingering in.

It might even taint their sects' fortune.

For ten years, Tantai Xuan traveled the mortal world.

His heart gradually sank into despair.

The cultivation world and the mortal world completely separated. Spreading cultivation methods to this generation of mortals would only bring disaster.

On the island in Origin Lake.

Lu naturally observed Tantai Xuan's actions.

His expression was complex.

In truth, if not for the bet with Tantai Xuan, Lu would have already begun addressing these matters.

Because of the ruler's lack of virtue and the collapse of fortune, this era had become the darkest in history.

Lu already had a solution in mind.

But...

Tantai Xuan had come to him, so Lu held off on his plan.

He wanted to see what Tantai Xuan would do.

Clearly, even the first Human Emperor could not change this era.

He persuaded people to be kind—yet the moment they turned away, they were corrupted by evil.

Wrapped in black robes, Tantai Xuan could no longer bear the foul air of the mortal world.

He left the desert, walking through endless dunes. The vast yellow sands finally calmed his heart.

He came upon an ancient temple.

A Buddhist city stood there—every resident practiced Buddhism.

Ding Jiudeng sensed Tantai Xuan's arrival and personally came out to greet him.

“Amitabha. The King of the Underworld visits—forgive this poor monk for not welcoming you from afar.”

Ding Jiudeng smiled.

He respected Tantai Xuan deeply.

In life, he had been the Human Emperor who ushered in the Great Xuan golden age.

In death, he became the King of the Underworld, creating the cycle of reincarnation so souls could rest.

What merit—what could he not respect?

Ding Jiudeng had reached True Immortal level. He had fought in the crusade against the tyrant.

The two walked through the endless yellow sands—both top-tier cultivators, unaffected by the harsh environment.

They spoke of many things.

When Tantai Xuan asked why the Buddhist city had closed its gates and ceased accepting common folk, Ding Jiudeng shook his head.

“Now, many cultivation sects have sealed their mountains, cutting all contact with the mortal world. Because the Human Emperor lacked virtue, human fortune has shattered and cannot gather. People pursue their six desires by any means.”

“This is a dark age.”

Ding Jiudeng sighed.

Tantai Xuan fell silent. Fortune required qi—collective qi from all people. When qi gathered, fortune formed.

But in this dark age, people’s qi was turbid, drowned in six desires. No matter how hard Tantai Xuan tried, he could not gather human fortune. Even if he gathered some and changed a few, the majority would still be assimilated by the era.

After talking much with Ding Jiudeng, Tantai Xuan refused to believe the age could not be changed.

He bade farewell and reentered the world.

Wherever he went, he saw endless war—countless dead, corpses strewn across the land.

Villages burned and plundered, roads lined with frozen bones.

He had once thought the demon race caused the chaos.

He traveled north to the border cities built by the demons.

Yet he found the demon army firmly shut their gates, making no move to invade the mortal realm.

They even feared their own fortune would be tainted.

Tantai Xuan gave a bitter, self-mocking smile.

Standing beneath the demon city walls.

He looked back.

Across the mortal land, smoke rose everywhere. War spread like wildfire. Filth blanketed the earth.

Finally, Tantai Xuan had to admit: in this dark age, he could not gather human fortune.

“To hell with this dark age.”

Tantai Xuan cursed furiously.

Boom!

On this day, he no longer concealed his aura. His Xuan Immortal power erupted fully.

The world trembled.

Countless cultivators emerged from their sealed mountains to watch.

They did not understand what Tantai Xuan intended.

Overlord, Tang Yimo, and the others were stunned.

Tantai Xuan threw back his head and laughed madly.

Floating in the void, he summoned endless karmic power, forming a book.

Flipping through it, he located all the newborn infants.

Infants were innocent—untouched by this dark age.

He gathered them together.

Then.

He raised his hand and snapped his fingers.

Boom!

The void shattered. A colossal rift tore across the sky.

The Hell Hound's head burst forth.

The rift widened.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The raging waters of the Bitter Sea poured from the Underworld into the mortal realm.

In an instant, they became a great flood, swallowing everything.

Tantai Xuan had made his choice.

Since he could not change this age, he would destroy it.

What did it matter if he was stained with sin?

When the mountain flowers bloomed again, he would create a new golden age.

Chapter 527: A Golden Age Returns—The Human Emperor Endures

Boom!

The void tore open.

A colossal rift stretched between heaven and earth, like a vast cloth sliced by a razor-sharp blade.

The waters of the Bitter Sea surged forth in torrents.

Endless floods poured from the Underworld, roaring like landslides and earthquakes.

Rumble!

The sky darkened instantly. Black clouds gathered, as though the Heavenly Dao sensed something unprecedented.

Behind the clouds came torrential rain.

Countless spears of water fell, each drop slicing through the void with horrifying arcs.

Tantai Xuan hovered in midair—one hand holding a book forged from karmic power, the other pointing toward heaven and earth.

His actions were utterly mad, yet his eyes remained perfectly clear.

Just as he had thought:

If he could not change this era, then he would destroy it.

When the mountain flowers bloomed again, he would forge a new, radiant world!

Tantai Xuan knew well that changing these corrupted people was impossible.

Perhaps it could be done—but it would take him centuries, millennia, or even tens of thousands of years.

And even then, success was not guaranteed.

He did not have that much time. Lu had not given him that much time.

So he chose the most extreme path.

Even if it meant bearing countless sins upon himself—so what?

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Across the Five Phoenix Continent, powerful auras shot skyward.

One figure after another rose into the air.

Overlord carried his axe and shield, eyes blazing as he looked into the distance.

He saw the scars in the sky—the Heavenly Rift—from which endless Bitter Sea water poured.

Beyond the rift lay the Underworld. Countless ghostly soldiers stood ready.

“Tantai Xuan... have you gone mad?!”

Overlord’s pupils shrank as he shouted.

Tang Yimo, Sima Qingshan, and the other Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals also ascended.

They spoke out.

But Tantai Xuan shook his head.

He pointed at the land, eyes shining.

“Stay out of my way.”

His voice fell.

He waved his hand.

Clang! Clang!

From beyond the rift came the sound of armor. The lords of the other nine Underworld cities had long prepared their armies.

If Overlord and the others dared interfere, Tantai Xuan would fight without hesitation.

“You sealed your mountains because you could no longer bear this world, didn’t you?”

Tantai Xuan shook his head. “Every cause has its effect. All of this happened because the Tantai family failed. I alone must bear it.”

Boom!

Mountains and rivers collapsed. The earth tilted.

The Bitter Sea flood surged outward with unstoppable force, swallowing everything.

Sima Qingshan hovered in the void, expression grave.

All cultivation sects used their methods to seal their mountains, protecting themselves from the flood.

Screams of agony echoed endlessly.

The walls of a great city were shattered by the descending Bitter Sea water, collapsing instantly.

The humans within—rich and poor, cruel and cunning—wailed in despair.

Yet.

In the face of such heaven-like power,

Mortals were pitifully small.

The Bitter Sea consumed them. Their bodies corroded into ghosts, wailing as they floated and sank.

“Tantai Xuan... he’s trying to end the world!”

Sima Qingshan murmured.

He raised his hand, using spiritual energy as ink to paint a scroll.

The scroll depicted the scene before them.

Tantai Xuan drawing the Bitter Sea from the Underworld to drown this filthy era.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The flood continued to rise.

Southern Domain, Eastern Sun Domain, Western Domain, Northern Domain...

Everywhere except the cultivation sects was swallowed by the deluge.

The sight of mountains and rivers overturned sent chills down spines.

Overlord and the other Xuan Immortals watched in silence.

The Five Phoenixes had lost human fortune. Rulers without virtue rose endlessly. Chaos engulfed the land.

They had all felt and witnessed this reality.

But what could they do?

Just as Tantai Xuan could not change the era, neither could they.

With their strength, destroying an era was easy—but what then?

Leave the world a lifeless wasteland?

Moreover, the sin of world-ending was something even Xuan Immortals could not bear. They lacked Tantai Xuan's resolve.

Perhaps this was why he had once been the Human Emperor.

“Madman...”

Atop Heavenly Mechanism Peak.

Mo Tianyu stood with hands behind his back, chest bared, sighing deeply.

“But he has always been a madman.”

On this day, the world wailed. The Bitter Sea collapsed and poured down. The power of the Underworld swept the earth, harvesting countless souls.

This was a reincarnation—from one era to another.

Tantai Xuan stood motionless in the void, holding the karmic book, gazing calmly across the land.

In the vast sea.

Within an ancient tomb.

Gu Mangran was silent for a long time before sighing, “Truly ruthless.”

Atop a blessed mountain.

Micah’s avatar watched the scene and drew a deep breath. “This man... is a true figure.”

On the island in Origin Lake.

Lu clearly saw Tantai Xuan’s decision.

That decisive resolve even surprised him.

So domineering—even bearing all the sin alone.

To Lu, only two words could describe it: ruthless enough.

But in truth, this was the only way.

When all the world was tainted, one drop of clear water—no matter how hard you tried—could never purify an ocean.

So Tantai Xuan had no choice.

As King of the Underworld, he was perfectly suited for this.

Drawing the Bitter Sea to drown the world.

But this was only the beginning. Destroying the world was easy—creating one was hard.

Lu would continue to watch.

A flicker of interest gleamed in his eyes.

...

The great flood surged relentlessly.

It engulfed the entire territory of the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty.

In the Demon Court, every demon stared in shock at the flood that washed away everything.

When the waters flowed past their borders, the Demon King's heart clenched.

Fortunately, the Demon Court's fortune was strong, protecting them from destruction.

But the sight left a deep impression on all demonkind.

Sima Qingshan gained insight. Using spiritual energy as ink, he painted scroll after scroll.

Each painting came alive.

One depicted the world-ending flood descending, countless beings wailing within.

He named it Scroll of World's End.

Upon completion, it shone with seven-colored radiance, blessed by the Heavenly Dao, becoming a saint-ancestor-level weapon.

Yet Sima Qingshan paid it no mind. He put it away and stared at Tantai Xuan.

He continued painting.

In the scroll:

Tantai Xuan stood against the sky, brows cold. One hand held the book of life and death, the other pointed at the vast land.

Beneath his feet, countless vengeful souls piled up—sin incarnate, like evil spirits clawing at his legs, trying to drag him into the abyss.

Karmic power surged like rivers around him, yet countless flames burned—karmic fire scorching his body.

Countless Five Phoenix Immortals and cultivators hovered in the air.

They stared in silence.

Nie Changqing, Dragon-Slayer at his waist, was at a loss for words.

The world-ending flood covered the entire Great Xuan territory.

All within were swallowed.

A black-sailed bronze ship drifted along the Bitter Sea from the Underworld.

It floated across the vast ocean.

Tantai Xuan had placed all the infants he marked in the book onto the ship.

The vessel was enormous.

The infants, still in swaddling clothes, gazed with pure light. Torrential rain fell, yet not a drop touched the ship.

Soon, cries rose from within.

Tantai Xuan's eyes shone.

He crossed the void to the vast sea and summoned Luo Mingyue.

Luo Mingyue carried her pipa and boarded the black-sailed ship. She sang softly.

The gentle melody enveloped the vessel, lulling the infants to sleep.

When they awoke, perhaps the world-ending flood would already be over.

The children slept.

The rift Tantai Xuan had torn open slowly healed.

The calmed Bitter Sea flowed quietly, gradually becoming clear—revealing everything beneath its surface.

Insects, birds, beasts, mountains, and forests all remained lush and green.

Only humans had vanished—transformed into ghosts and swept away by the Bitter Sea.

Tantai Xuan sat cross-legged in the sky.

The flood lasted seven days. On the seventh day, he opened his eyes.

Bearing countless sins, he sought Bai Qingniao at Nine Phoenix Academy.

He asked her to lead her nine fire phoenixes across the Five Phoenix Continent and evaporate the Bitter Sea waters.

Bai Qingniao looked complicatedly at Tantai Xuan—scorched by karmic fire and laden with sin—yet agreed.

With a command, Little Phoenix One through Nine.

The nine chicks ran, then transformed into nine fire phoenixes soaring through the sky.

Like nine blazing suns, they radiated extreme light and heat, circling the world for thirty days, evaporating the Bitter Sea waters.

When the flood was gone, the land returned to normal.

As for the infants on the black-sailed ship—

Having done all this, Tantai Xuan restrained his aura, becoming an ordinary old man.

He brought the children to a deep mountain.

Though karmic fire scorched his body and soul every day, he remained patient with the infants.

He smiled kindly, raising them.

Many cultivators and Five Phoenix Immortals watched in silence.

Years passed quickly.

The children grew up, and Tantai Xuan quietly departed.

He hid in the sky, watching these newborn humans.

Watching the hope of humanity begin to multiply.

Soon, a tribe formed in the deep mountains.

The tribe grew stronger. The children matured, bore offspring.

Gradually, some ventured out of the mountains.

They saw the outside world. More and more people grew.

During this time, Tantai Xuan began regathering human fortune.

Without the corrupted masses, gathering human fortune became much easier.

Over several years, he traveled the former Great Xuan territories.

Little by little, he collected the human fortune that Tantai Mojie had destroyed.

It formed a soaring dragon, stretching between heaven and earth.

Coiling across the Five Phoenix Continent.

The Demon Court began migrating into this land. How could they miss such fertile territory?

Demons also needed to multiply.

But the Demon King feared Tantai Xuan—a Xuan Immortal, standing at the peak of the Five Phoenixes and even the nine heavens.

So they migrated cautiously, watching for his reaction.

In the end, demons spread across the Five Phoenix Continent, multiplying as well.

Tantai Xuan ignored them.

Not because he did not care—but because he needed the demons to stimulate the newborn humans.

Soon, demons and newborn humans met.

The newborn humans were wary of these strange demons but bore no malice.

But the demons hated the cunning humans. The moment they met, battle erupted.

The humans were injured and banded together against the demons.

They chose a leader. Under the leader's command, they resisted the demons.

In this struggle, humanity grew stronger.

Human fortune was steadily gathered by Tantai Xuan, rising into the sky.

Cultivators grew restless.

Why?

Because these newborn humans were blank slates—perfect for teaching.

Transmitting the Dao could bring fortune. What a precious opportunity for growth.

But Tantai Xuan stood in the world, forcing all sects that wished to descend and teach back into their mountains.

Out of fear of Tantai Xuan's strength, the Five Phoenix Immortals and cultivators did not oppose him.

Tantai Xuan personally went to the northern snowfields and invited Kong Nanfei.

He wanted Confucian teachings to influence the newborn humans.

Kong Nanfei naturally agreed.

He led hundreds of Confucian scholars along a river of vast righteousness into the Five Phoenix Continent.

They taught the newborn humans benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom...

Meanwhile, Tantai Xuan went west and invited Ding Jiudeng to send his monks across the Five Phoenixes to spread Buddhist truths.

Having done all this, Tantai Xuan continued watching the development of the newborn humans.

Karmic fire had burned him for decades.

Yet he paid it no mind, even as his aura grew steadily weaker.

He watched the changes in humanity with joy.

The humans chose a common tribal leader. Under his guidance, they overcame obstacles and resisted the demons.

They excavated relics left by the world-ending flood.

With these, they established a glorious golden age.

Tribes united. Soon, a great city was built.

Decades later, under the teachings of Kong Nanfei and others, the new human civilization took shape. Though their numbers had dwindled, they were no longer tainted by six desires, evil, and sin—no longer a living hell.

Now, everything flourished.

Finally, the third-generation leader was chosen as Human Emperor.

This young emperor was full of vitality, leading humanity against the demons.

In the struggle, humanity's spirit united as one.

Only then did Tantai Xuan descend.

On the island in Origin Lake.

Lu watched this creation-era transformation, surprise gradually filling his eyes.

The Spirit-Pressure Chessboard shimmered faintly.

Lu picked up a piece and slowly placed it—granting Tantai Xuan the authority to distribute human fortune.

Tantai Xuan seemed to sense it. By now, he had been scorched by karmic fire for decades and looked extremely aged.

His appearance startled the young Human Emperor.

But the retired old leader recognized him—the “grandfather” who had raised them as children.

The old leader had thought the old man had long since died.

Yet here he was, alive.

Tantai Xuan smiled kindly and patted the young emperor’s head. Then, from the human fortune dragon, he drew a strand and infused it into him.

“Remember: as Human Emperor, with fortune upon you, your cultivation lies in leading your people to better lives. Water can carry a boat, but it can also overturn it...”

Tantai Xuan said.

The young emperor pondered deeply. When he wanted to ask more,

Tantai Xuan had already departed.

He did not give the emperor all the dragon qi.

He granted only ten percent—enough.

After the lesson of Tantai Mojie, Tantai Xuan knew the emperor could not hold all the fortune.

Yet without a holder, human fortune would slowly dissipate over time.

Tantai Xuan thought for days.

He could find no solution.

So he set out to sea and ascended the island in Origin Lake.

When he stepped onto the island, his heart was uneasy.

He did not know how Young Master Lu would view his actions.

Lu looked at Tantai Xuan with complex emotions. He had not expected such resolve—such vast change for humanity within a century.

Destroying a dark era, ushering in a dawn of hope.

Lu personally poured Tantai Xuan a cup of wine.

“This is Heavenly Immortal Wine. It can dispel the karmic fire and sin upon you.”

Lu said.

But to Lu’s surprise, Tantai Xuan refused.

“This karmic fire is my due... I ended an era. The Heavenly Dao punishes me. That is fair. My heart is at peace.”

Tantai Xuan smiled lightly.

But he had not forgotten his purpose.

He asked Lu if there was a way to prevent the dissipation of human fortune.

Lu smiled. Having observed the world, he had known Tantai Xuan’s purpose all along.

Seated in his thousand-blade chair, clad in snow-white robes, Lu flicked his sleeve.

Seven small, cracked cauldrons appeared before Tantai Xuan.

Each cauldron radiated rich fortune and the aura of dire beasts, causing Tantai Xuan’s expression to shift.

“These are the seven small cauldrons Tantai Mojie used to seal dire beasts. I melted them down and forged four. Use them to suppress human fortune so it does not scatter.”

With that,

Lu flicked his finger.

A flame shot forth. The seven cauldrons melted and reformed into four bronze cauldrons.

Each shone with auspicious light.

One bore the image of a soaring divine dragon, roaring through the nine heavens.

Another showed a spreading Vermilion Bird, crying brightly in flames.

The other two bore White Tiger and Black Tortoise.

Four cauldrons, four divine beasts.

Tantai Xuan's eyes shone. After thanking Lu, he departed with the four cauldrons.

He headed north and placed one in Buzhou Peak.

Westward, he buried one in the boundless desert.

Southward, he buried one in the Southern Domain's primordial forest.

Eastward, he buried one at the bottom of the Eastern Sea.

The four cauldrons suppressed human fortune, ensuring it would no longer dissipate.

The Five Phoenix Immortals ascended and saw human fortune anchored by the four cauldrons—no longer scattering!

Tantai Xuan hovered in the nine heavens, back bent, sin like a mountain pressing down, karmic fire burning like a volcano.

He smiled.

He lifted the order forbidding cultivation sects from contacting the newborn humans.

He watched sect after sect eagerly emerge from their mountains, contacting the new humans, transmitting cultivation methods and the Dao, gaining human fortune.

A prosperous, flourishing human golden age returned.

Tantai Xuan smiled, turned, and tore open the void.

The Hell Hound's head emerged. Tantai Xuan stepped onto it, sat cross-legged, back to all living beings, bearing countless bones and souls of the dead, and returned to the Underworld.

Thus, a golden age returned. The Human Emperor endured.

Chapter 528: The Heavenly Dao's Will Descends

Tantai Xuan returned to the Underworld.

Bearing the full weight of his sins.

The Yellow Springs boiled around him. He sat upon the rushing waters, drifting along the current until he reached the depths of the Bitter Sea.

The karmic fire and sins burned endlessly upon his body.

He sank deeper and deeper, finally settling at the very bottom of the Bitter Sea, where he sat in silence.

The nine other city lords sat upon their thrones. Seeing Tantai Xuan's actions, they sighed deeply.

Boom!

The nine lords rose, parting the Bitter Sea and walking toward Tantai Xuan, who had sealed himself within it.

They urged him to leave the sea, but Tantai Xuan shook his head and refused.

"The sins I committed—I must bear them myself..."

Tantai Xuan spoke with a touch of detachment.

The nine lords had no choice but to withdraw. The rotation of the Underworld still required their oversight.

The Northern Palace Lord was left behind. Tantai Xuan instructed him to assist the nine city lords in governing the Underworld.

The Northern Palace Lord bowed solemnly and accepted.

He knew everything Tantai Xuan had done in the mortal realm—what unimaginable resolve it took.

To destroy an era and create a new one, enduring the karmic fire and sin of world-ending to forge a glorious human golden age.

The pain of karmic fire struck directly at the divine soul and spirit—a punishment among the most severe in the Underworld.

Even a Xuan Immortal could not escape its agony.

“It’s fine. I’ll endure it.”

Tantai Xuan smiled.

The Northern Palace Lord departed.

The Bitter Sea waters surged once more, enveloping Tantai Xuan.

He sat amid the flood, rising and falling with the waves.

Like a statue, he remained motionless as countless vengeful spirits howled and coiled around him.

These were the souls of those cleansed in the world-ending flood.

Their endless wails could shake the mind.

Tantai Xuan's divine soul stirred. He began contemplating the Six Paths Reincarnation Visualization Method in his sea of consciousness, using it to calm and focus his mind.

It worked. The wails gradually weakened. His heart settled into cultivation.

Even the sixth mural—long a mystery to him—began to yield insights.

Under his visualization and recitation, the vengeful spirits were purified. Their malice washed away, they became pure souls and stepped onto the path of reincarnation in the Underworld.

For Tantai Xuan, this was also a form of cultivation. If he could purify all the sins...

His strength might surge dramatically.

...

A golden age had returned. Humanity endured.

Tantai Xuan, in his own way, had preserved the title of Human Emperor.

Yet he had also made changes—using four divine beast cauldrons to suppress human fortune, ensuring that even if the Human Emperor fell to evil, it would not affect the entire human race.

This change was good.

At least, in Lu's eyes, it was excellent. The four beast cauldrons were forged by Lu himself—his tacit approval of the Human Emperor's continued existence.

After Tantai Xuan returned to the Underworld,

The true golden age truly began.

Countless cultivation sects emerged from their sealed mountains, transmitting cultivation methods and allowing humanity to grow strong.

Overlord opened his Body Refining Sect, taking disciples and teaching body techniques.

Tang Yimo founded his Body Sect. Sima Qingshan sent Painting Sect disciples down the mountain to spread the Dao.

Countless cultivators descended, teaching humanity.

Under their guidance, humanity grew stronger and resisted the demons more effectively.

The cultivators, in turn, received the fortune they desired, advancing their cultivation.

Both sides benefited mutually, and all were pleased.

Legends of immortals spread among the common folk. The world now knew that immortals truly existed.

...

On the island in Origin Lake.

Lu reclined in his thousand-blade chair. A gentle breeze swept across the island.

His total spiritual energy was rising rapidly once more. Originally, facing the dark era, Lu had planned to intervene personally.

He had his own methods to change the age.

But since Tantai Xuan had stepped forward, Lu gave him a chance to prove himself.

He had not expected Tantai Xuan to exceed all expectations.

“Once this matter concludes, if Tantai Xuan purifies all his sins in the Bitter Sea and appeases the souls, relying on the Six Paths Reincarnation Visualization Method, his strength will surge dramatically. He may even have a chance to step into the Golden Immortal realm.”

“But only a chance. It would merely lay the foundation.”

Golden Immortal was equivalent to Great Emperor. Tantai Xuan’s actions had forged his own Great Emperor foundation.

Lu was quite satisfied. This meant that in the future, the Five Phoenixes would surely produce a Great Emperor-level powerhouse.

His fingers tapped lightly on the wheelchair armrest.

Soon, with a thought, the system panel appeared before him.

Host: Lu

Title: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

Qi Refining Level: 9

Spiritual Energy Reserve: 89/100 (billion) strands

Divine Soul Power: 80820 (yuan)

Chaos Power: 237909 (he)

World Rating: Five Phoenixes Minor World [High-Martial (Immortal Martial Foundation)]

Lu calmly observed the panel.

Breakthrough was still some distance away.

But his spiritual energy reserves had reached 89 billion strands. Just another 10 billion would meet the requirement.

To break through to Qi Refining Layer 10.

“Qi Refining Layer 10 is already this difficult. Will there really be a Layer 100?”

Lu shook his head.

He dismissed the panel.

The rapid increase in reserves was largely due to the birth of eight Xuan Immortals in the Five Phoenixes. Their contributions had provided him with massive spiritual energy.

Now, with the imperial blood gone, the dire beast era ended, and imperial weapons depleted, producing more Xuan Immortals would be extremely difficult.

“Hm... as my Qi Refining layer increases, the spiritual energy requirements for contributions grow higher.”

“Previously, cultivators at Body Concealment and above could contribute. Now, only those at the Three Spirit Realm or higher qualify. The requirements keep rising. To gain more spiritual energy, the Five Phoenixes must grow stronger.”

Lu frowned.

Xuan Immortals contributed a great deal, but producing more in the Five Phoenix Continent was far from simple.

Only by using the imperial blood and orchestrating the dire beast era had eight Xuan Immortals been born.

Creating more would be nearly impossible.

“It seems time accumulation is the only way.”

Lu pondered.

“Fortunately, I’ve adjusted the Five Phoenixes’ time flow to one thousand to one...”

“And a new era means new vitality.”

Lu smiled. Everything was progressing well.

Next, he needed the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao to refine all acquired origin essence.

Over the years, more than a million strands of Dao Essence had been gathered, but only about two hundred thousand had been refined.

Eighty-some thousand strands remained.

Once refined, the Five Phoenixes could break their shackles and ascend to First-Derivation High-Martial.

Lu smiled.

He took a sip of Heavenly Immortal Wine.

With a thought, the world rotated. The sundial floated, and the time array activated once more.

...

Under a thousandfold time acceleration, time seemed to pass extremely quickly.

Mortals perhaps felt nothing, lacking spiritual sense and divine soul to perceive the changes.

The Five Phoenixes' development became completely isolated from the outside world.

In the Ascension Land.

Lu Jiulian sat in meditation.

He was lost in thought. The bottleneck at Xuan Immortal was suffocating. He had lost his direction.

And he was not alone. Many ascendants from the lower three heavens were also present.

These ancestors from Pingyang Heaven, Blood Fiend Heaven, and Yuan Magnetic Heaven had greatly advanced their cultivation thanks to the accelerated time in the Ascension Land.

They were overjoyed.

But due to the time flow, a thousand years passed inside while only one year passed outside.

In one year, no new ascendants arrived.

And the ancestors' ability to gain fortune became extremely difficult.

The ancestors sought out Lu Jiulian.

After all, the Ascension Land had founded the Heavenly Court, and Lu Jiulian currently presided over it.

When they had waged war against the upper-realm holy clans, it was the Heavenly Court that organized them. Now, facing difficulties, they naturally turned to the organization.

They reported their problem to Lu Jiulian.

Lu Jiulian was a Xuan Immortal—far stronger than most Human Immortal and True Immortal ancestors.

This issue, raised to Lu Julian, naturally reached Lu.

Lu paused slightly.

He had somewhat neglected these ancestors.

Because of the time acceleration, their original high-martial worlds' fortune was gained very slowly.

Thus, their cultivation progress had stalled.

Not because they couldn't advance—but because they couldn't acquire enough fortune.

For Lu, this was also a matter worth addressing.

After all, these ancestors had chosen to ascend through the Heavenly Gate and become one of his sources of spiritual energy contributions.

Lu tapped lightly on the wheelchair armrest.

Slow down the time array?

Lu shook his head. He discarded the idea. With the appearance of the imperial blood, the mysterious entities in the Void Heaven rift could descend at any moment.

Lu needed to seize every opportunity to strengthen the Five Phoenixes.

Moreover, according to Micah, the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao and the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had already taken notice.

The time left for the Five Phoenixes to develop in peace was running out.

Two tigers cannot share one mountain. Likewise, the Heavenly Spirit Clan would not allow a second First-Derivation High-Martial world to emerge in the nine heavens and compete for resources.

"So, how to solve this?"

Lu frowned.

Soon, his eyes lit up. White lines surged in his pupils. The entire Void Heaven appeared before him.

Void Heaven was no longer what it once was.

With the rise of the Five Phoenixes as a top-tier high-martial world, other worlds had also been influenced, beginning their own upgrades.

Now, the number of high-martial worlds in Void Heaven was no longer scarce, but still not many.

Compared to the millions of high-martial worlds in Pingyang Heaven and Blood Fiend Heaven, Void Heaven was indeed lacking.

“If that’s the case, why not make use of the many mid-martial and low-martial worlds in Void Heaven?”

“This is also fortune. Let these ancestors find ways to elevate mid-martial worlds in Void Heaven to high-martial. If successful, they gain fortune, and I gain spiritual energy contributions.”

“Moreover, the Ascension Land can become a destination for beings in Void Heaven who break their world’s shackles. Those capable of shattering their world’s limits are surely peerless geniuses. With sufficient resources, they will advance dramatically, and I will receive massive spiritual energy contributions!”

Lu’s eyes blazed. He made his decision and slammed his hand down, delighted.

He entered the Transmission Platform to deduce.

It seemed simple, but...

It was far from easy.

Void Heaven now belonged to the nine heavens and was covered by their rules.

What Lu planned was to break the nine heavens' rules and establish his own.

Thus, Lu had to be fully alert.

He simulated countless times in the Transmission Platform, but none were perfect. Every method risked provoking the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao will.

After all, altering rules touched the Heavenly Dao's bottom line.

Once crossed, the Heavenly Dao would not tolerate it.

“What if the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao quietly covers Void Heaven?”

Lu's white robes fluttered as he sat cross-legged on the Transmission Platform's Eight Trigrams array, deep in thought.

Since he had thought of it, he would do it.

He controlled the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao, slowly extending branches beyond the Five Phoenixes.

These branches connected to the mid-martial worlds in Void Heaven.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao showed no reaction.

Lu's eyes lit up. Success!

He exited the Transmission Platform. With a thought, he entered the Origin Space.

Following the simulation, he began implementation.

Zhu Long was currently in her Candle Dragon form, swallowing and refining the Heavenly Dao.

Ever since tasting the power of Heavenly Dao empowerment, she had grown increasingly addicted to that strength.

She worked harder than ever to swallow the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao, accelerating the refinement of origin Dao Essence.

Soon, following the simulation, she guided countless branches of the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao to connect with the mid-martial worlds in Void Heaven.

And with words that became law, she established the rules.

Cultivators in these mid-martial worlds who broke their world's shackles could shatter the spatial barriers and ascend to the Five Phoenixes.

In the Ascension Land.

Lu Jiulian opened his eyes.

He sat atop the ancient Heavenly Court ruins. A green lotus bloomed as he slowly expounded the Dao.

The ancestors from the lower three heavens sat quietly, listening to a Xuan Immortal's lecture.

Soon, many ancestors' eyes lit up.

Lu Jiulian seemed to sense something. He shared his guess with them, instructing them to help elevate mid-martial worlds in Void Heaven to high-martial and gain fortune.

It was as if a new world had opened for them.

After bidding farewell, the ancestors descended upon various mid-martial worlds.

The current Five Phoenixes were vast, nearly encompassing all of Void Heaven. Thus, the time array also covered the entire Void Heaven.

Under such accelerated time, the ancestors were confident they could complete the transformation from mid-martial to high-martial.

Above Origin Lake.

Lu placed a piece. The Spirit-Pressure Chessboard displayed the scene, filling him with satisfaction.

He smiled and placed another piece.

On the chessboard, the Void Heaven scenes appeared, with countless strands of spiritual energy surging toward the Five Phoenixes like ten thousand swords returning to their origin.

Lu's total spiritual energy began to rise rapidly.

His strength achieved a massive leap.

...

In Void Heaven, time flew.

But in the first heaven, on the Heavenly Spirit Continent, time flowed normally.

In the Holy Hall.

Saints of the Heavenly Spirit Clan argued heatedly, cloaked in holy light, some visibly angry.

They were still debating the conquest of the Five Phoenixes.

Because of Micah's delays, the plan had yet to begin.

"Lord Micah! We cannot let the Five Phoenixes continue developing!"

"The Five Phoenixes have already absorbed over a million strands of Dao Essence from the upper-realm nine great holy clans. Though refining Dao Essence takes time, the Five Phoenixes are under a time array—time is accelerated. We must act quickly and crush them!"

"Yes! There can be only one First-Derivation in the nine heavens. Another would reduce the resources allocated by the Heavenly Dao. This is not good news for the Heavenly Spirit Clan!"

Saints with powerful auras spoke up.

Yet Micah sat with eyes closed, clad in loose robes, unmoving.

He knew the Five Phoenixes were developing quickly.

He knew even more than they did. Under accelerated time,

The time flow in Void Heaven had reached a terrifying one thousand to one!

They knew the Five Phoenixes had time acceleration, but they did not know the exact ratio.

Micah did not tell them. Doing so would only add fuel to the fire.

“No need to panic... I have already sent word to the Ancient Emperor. Once the Emperor replies, we will move.”

Micah spoke calmly and confidently.

“Besides, what harm is there in another First-Derivation in the nine heavens? Look at the Heavenly Spirit Clan now—lacking motivation, lacking threat. How many Saints have lost their drive?”

Micah said.

The surrounding Holy Hall Saints were left speechless, stifled.

If not for Micah being the Hall Master, they might have suspected he was colluding with the Five Phoenixes.

Of course, they knew that was impossible.

The Hall Master's status was supreme in the nine heavens—second only to the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

No one was more exalted than Micah.

So he had no reason to collude with the Five Phoenixes.

“The Ancient Emperor is deep in the outer void battlefield... who knows when he will return? By the time he replies, the Five Phoenixes may already be First-Derivation.”

“Lord Micah, please issue the order quickly.”

“With forty-nine Holy Hall Saints and your Quasi-Emperor strength, we can easily destroy the Five Phoenixes and eliminate future threats for the Heavenly Spirit Clan!”

The Saints pleaded earnestly.

Micah listened with eyes closed, nodding seriously from time to time.

“You all make good points...”

“But there’s no rush. These are troubled times. With Void Heaven’s rules gone, the ancient Emperors may be returning. This is not the time for major conflicts. Let us observe for now.”

Micah said.

He would buy the Five Phoenixes as much time as possible.

Since he had placed his hopes in them, there was no turning back.

In the nine heavens... his chance of breaking through to Great Emperor was slim.

But the Five Phoenixes, having birthed an independent Heavenly Dao, were his only hope.

Time passed amid arguments.

Suddenly.

While they debated,

Micah’s eyes snapped open.

Boom!

A terrifying wave swept across the entire nine heavens.

It was a will that made even Micah's body and soul tremble faintly.

A powerful will seemed to try to invade his mind.

Micah roared in fury. His aura erupted, fiercely resisting the intrusion.

He, Micah, refused to become a puppet!

After a prolonged struggle, the will seemed impatient. It abandoned Micah.

Suddenly.

One of the Holy Hall Saints shuddered and groaned.

In the next moment, his eyes were engulfed in endless white light.

Holy radiance enveloped him, as though the rules of order had become tangible, coiling around his body.

“Heavenly Dao will...”

Micah panted, staring at the transformed Saint.

His heart sank.

The Heavenly Dao will had returned.

The white-eyed Saint rose. Countless chains of order clanged around him.

He turned his head, glancing at Micah with a strange smile.

Boom!

A surge of power erupted.

As though piercing through space and time, he vanished from the first heaven, heading straight for the Five Phoenixes.

Micah's pupils contracted.

"Damn it... what exactly did Young Master Lu do?"

Chapter 529: Lu Ping'an Battles the Heavenly Dao

The nine heavens, Heavenly Spirit Continent.

When a Saint's body was seized by the Heavenly Dao's will, the Holy Hall erupted into chaos.

No one had expected such an abrupt turn.

This was the Heavenly Dao's will—descending by possessing a Saint's flesh.

As the Dao incarnation tore through the void, racing toward Void Heaven,

The shocked Saints in the hall suddenly burst into joy and excitement.

They seemed to understand something.

The Heavenly Dao's will had returned!

Dissatisfied with the Five Phoenixes' actions, it had manifested a body to eradicate them?

"Lord Micah, if not now, then when?"

"The Dao incarnation has acted! We follow behind—together, the Five Phoenixes are doomed!"

"This is the perfect moment! The moment to destroy the Five Phoenixes!"

Voices rang out one after another.

But Micah's expression turned icy.

The Dao incarnation's move was equivalent to an order from the Heavenly Spirit Emperor.

If he delayed any longer, it would be inexcusable. The Saints present would surely grow suspicious.

So Micah gritted his teeth and gave the order to attack.

He shook his head and rose.

He had no idea what Lu had done to provoke the Heavenly Dao's incarnation.

But one thing was certain: the Five Phoenixes now faced a colossal crisis.

Ancient war vessels emerged one after another.

They hung between heaven and earth, crushing the void and tearing open countless rifts.

More than half the Holy Hall's Saints mobilized. The rest remained behind to guard the Heavenly Spirit Clan.

Micah boarded a vessel and set out with them.

Their speed was swift, trailing close behind the Dao incarnation.

As they moved out,

The entire nine heavens exploded into uproar.

The holy clans, beaten back into hiding by the Five Phoenix alliance, cheered wildly, gloating.

“The Heavenly Spirit Clan has mobilized against the Five Phoenixes!”

“No—not just them! The Heavenly Dao incarnation has descended! The Five Phoenixes... are finished!”

“The chance to witness the Five Phoenixes’ destruction has come!”

Saints from every clan set out, following the army.

A vast, terrifying force gathered. Overwhelming auras blanketed every corner of the nine heavens, making the world tremble.

Most terrifying was the Dao incarnation at the forefront—its body radiating dense Dao essence, awe-inspiring.

The army swept forward, closing in on Void Heaven.

...

Five Phoenix Continent, Eastern Sea.

The giant whale carried the immortal island. In the white-jade pavilion,

Lu sat on the second floor. Compared to the storm raging above, Origin Lake remained peaceful.

Chrysanthemums swayed, their petals blooming brilliantly. Peach blossoms danced, teasing the spring breeze.

Clad in white robes, Lu reclined in his thousand-blade chair. The chair glided slowly through the flowers, relaxing his mind.

After Tantai Xuan destroyed and rebuilt the world, the new mortal realm and cultivation world had temporarily separated.

The new Human Emperor was not tyrannical. He governed diligently, remembering the teaching: the people are water—capable of carrying the boat, but also of overturning it.

Thus, he worked tirelessly for humanity's prosperity.

Human fortune, once weak, gradually grew strong again.

With the vast fortune they gained, the Five Phoenix Immortals all broke through.

Now, countless True Immortals were stuck at the Half-Step Xuan Immortal bottleneck.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, Empress Ni Chunchiu, and others.

Also the younger generation: Tang Guo, Nie Shuang, and more—though “young” no longer quite fit.

The separation of cultivation and mortal realms had meaning.

Without cultivators interfering, the mortal world developed naturally, stable and harmonious.

Cities expanded. The Five Phoenix Continent was vast, so new kingdoms formed everywhere.

But the first and greatest remained the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty.

The new humans excavated records from the Imperial City ruins, learning of the Great Xuan's glory.

Thus, they rebuilt the Great Xuan upon its foundations.

The Human Emperor ruled the Great Xuan.

But the new emperor did not centralize all power. Instead, he divided it.

He established four dynasties.

The four dynasties were unified under the Great Xuan's rule.

The four kings governed peacefully, loyal to the Human Emperor.

Together—four kings and one emperor—they ushered in a golden age.

Humanity's prosperity restored their fortune to its peak.

Cultivators advanced rapidly with human fortune.

Many True Immortals and Half-Step Xuan Immortals were born.

The Five Phoenixes approached their zenith.

Amid the peach blossoms,

Lu twirled a petal. He was quite satisfied with the Five Phoenixes' progress.

Beyond that, Lu also watched the many mid-martial worlds outside the Five Phoenixes.

After setting the rules and having Lu Jiulian convey the plan to the ancestors of the lower three heavens, the ancestors descended upon Void Heaven's mid-martial worlds.

Over the years, many mid-martial worlds in Void Heaven began transforming, like flower buds blooming with brilliant light.

The time array covered all of Void Heaven.

Mid-martial worlds were protected by their world barriers, so their mortals suffered no crushing pressure or bodily destruction.

Once a world became high-martial, the barrier vanished. Lu was prepared—he would infuse vast Five Phoenix spiritual energy during the transformation, strengthening the new high-martial beings' bodies.

This allowed them to withstand the accelerated time flow.

The results were excellent.

Many new high-martial worlds gave birth to geniuses.

Some even astonished Lu—peerless figures of unmatched talent.

Rising from obscurity to greatness.

After ascending through the Heavenly Gate and entering a grander world, their cultivation motivation soared.

Their strength advanced rapidly.

They provided Lu with massive spiritual energy contributions.

Over time, many mid-martial worlds in Void Heaven became a major source of Lu's spiritual energy.

Moreover, the ancestors of the lower three heavens and the Five Phoenix Immortals, having tasted the benefits, began aggressively nurturing high-martial worlds.

Elevating a world to high-martial brought fortune.

This fortune greatly accelerated their accumulation.

...

Above the Eastern Sea.

The calm ocean suddenly erupted in massive waves.

A figure raced across the water.

It was Micah's avatar in the Five Phoenixes.

He landed on Origin Island, face grave, as though facing a great enemy.

"Young Master Lu!"

"What have you done? The Heavenly Dao incarnation has descended—calamity is upon us!"

Micah asked urgently.

In the peach grove, Lu raised a brow in surprise and glanced at Micah.

The Heavenly Dao incarnation had personally descended?

Because of something he did?

These years, Lu had been diligently cultivating, never causing trouble.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao had no reason to target him.

But since it had acted, there must be a reason.

Lu pondered, thoughts racing.

Was it because the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao had covered Void Heaven, causing many mid-martial worlds to become high-martial?

“Was it the world protection barriers of those mid-martial worlds?”

Lu suddenly realized something.

When the Five Phoenixes were still low- or mid-martial, the world protection barrier had benefited them greatly, blocking many powerful enemies.

It seemed those barriers were linked to the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao.

Though Lu's plan did not harm the barriers, connecting the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao to the mid-martial worlds had still affected them.

Was that the reason?

Lu frowned. This was only his guess—he did not know for certain.

Micah shook his head. “Young Master Lu, I have delivered the message... be careful.”

“The Heavenly Dao incarnation has descended. I cannot stop it, nor block it.”

Lu smiled, then narrowed his eyes.

His heart remained calm.

After all, he had long prepared for exposure.

It was only a matter of sooner or later.

Micah’s avatar said no more, bowed, and dissipated.

Lu was not surprised by the avatar’s disappearance. If the Heavenly Dao will discovered Micah’s avatar in the Five Phoenixes,

It would surely grow suspicious.

Moreover, though Micah wished to break through using the Five Phoenixes, if their destruction was certain, he would not die with them.

He was not a fool.

Their interests aligned, but he had no reason to stake his life.

And if the avatar's existence was exposed,

Micah could no longer remain in the Heavenly Spirit Clan.

Though Micah had bet on the Five Phoenixes, he had still left himself an escape.

After Micah vanished,

Lu's expression grew solemn.

He glanced at the system panel. Though he had gained vast spiritual energy contributions during this time,

It was still not enough for Qi Refining Layer 10.

But Lu still had confidence.

Buzz...

His figure blurred.

Lu vanished from Origin Island.

He reappeared beyond the Five Phoenixes.

His arrival was silent. He cast array runes into the void.

The runes stretched out, radiating powerful auras and forming profound formations.

Thanks to the Eight Trigrams Platform, Lu had deep insight into formations.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Overwhelming auras surged, as though to destroy the world.

Faintly,

The once-silent nine heavens seemed to boil like water over flame.

He saw a figure tear through the void, piercing one layer after another, wrapped in terrifying power like a meteor.

It burst from the upper realms, ripping through space.

It passed Yuan Magnetic Heaven, Blood Fiend Heaven, and Pingyang Heaven.

Its terrifying aura spread.

Powerhouses in the lower three heavens' high-martial worlds felt their hair stand on end.

This aura was horrifying.

But what terrified them most was the fleet of ancient bronze war vessels crushing the void.

The vessels hung in the air, densely packed, each radiating overwhelming pressure and boundless saintly might.

Hiss—

Some weaker Ninth- and Eighth-Derivation high-martial worlds fell into despair.

Was this the prelude to another ancient war?

That war had shattered the heavens, exploded Void Heaven, and left countless realms crippled.

Now, it seemed history was repeating.

“It’s the Heavenly Spirit Clan!”

“No—not just them! The other five upper-realm holy clans have all mobilized!”

“So ruthless! They’re trying to crush the Five Phoenixes completely.”

“The Five Phoenixes grew too fast. They’re already Second-Derivation high-martial. Given more time, they might become First-Derivation. The Heavenly Spirit Clan cannot tolerate another First-Derivation sharing the nine heavens’ resources!”

Powerhouses spoke.

Many were ancient beings who had lived countless years. Their analysis was sharp and piercing.

The Heavenly Spirit Clan’s campaign was clearly driven by fear of the Five Phoenixes.

Perhaps the Heavenly Spirit Clan regretted not sending stronger forces to crush them earlier.

Within the Five Phoenixes,

The Xuan Immortals opened their eyes one by one.

They clearly sensed the deadly threat bearing down on the Five Phoenixes.

Overlord shouldered his axe and shield. Tang Yimo rolled up his cloth.

Black light flashed across the Five Phoenixes. Figures shot forth.

Even Ni Yu appeared, Little Yinglong on her head, black pot on her back.

Originally, Lu stood alone beyond the Five Phoenix Continent.

But soon, more figures appeared.

From an ancient tomb,

Gu Mangran opened his eyes.

He sighed deeply. Sensing that familiar aura, he knew—the inevitable had come.

He sat in his coffin and arrived at the front hall.

In the palace, Lu Changkong was refining venom extracted from the thousand-eyed spider corpse.

Mixing it with divine herbs.

“Lord Lu.”

Gu Mangran called.

Lu Changkong carefully dripped a drop of surging, powerful venom into a vessel.

Instantly, the divine herb turned black and withered.

Lu Changkong sighed regretfully, then looked up at Gu Mangran.

The experiment had failed. In a bad mood, he waved a sleeve. Bu Nanxing, who had been holding his breath nearby, quickly handed over bundles of spiritual herbs.

Gu Mangran took the herbs, hesitated no longer, and left the tomb, appearing beyond the Five Phoenixes.

After reflecting on the failure, Lu Changkong also departed, hands behind his back.

...

Overwhelming auras filled the heavens and earth.

No one had expected such a battle to erupt so soon.

Ancient war vessels hung in the air.

Saints of the Heavenly Spirit Clan and the other five upper-realm holy clans stood ready.

They followed behind the Dao incarnation radiating Heavenly Dao fluctuations.

The incarnation descended, shrouded in dense Dao essence.

Its eyes were completely engulfed in white light. It stared at the Five Phoenixes, weaving terrifying auras.

Then, the Dao incarnation raised its hand.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

In Void Heaven,

Countless rules surged forth. The vanished rule power reappeared.

Each rule was like a blade, hanging across Void Heaven.

Like wind chimes ringing.

But this time, the blade-like rules were not for protection—they were for destruction.

Such was the irony of the world.

Aboard the ancient vessels,

The holy clan powerhouses drew sharp breaths. The Dao incarnation was truly powerful—every gesture wielded the will of rules.

Its words became law. It was the true master of the nine heavens!

Unless the Emperor personally acted, no one could stop it.

The Five Phoenixes... were finished!

The holy clan powerhouses were utterly certain.

After all, this was the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

An embodiment of the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao will.

Boom!

Countless rules transformed into sharp blades, sweeping forth.

Lu narrowed his eyes.

Before him, the Spirit-Pressure Chessboard appeared.

He rolled up his sleeve, picked up a piece, and placed it casually.

As though enjoying tea and playing chess on a spring day.

Snap!

The piece landed.

Countless array patterns surged across the Five Phoenixes.

The grand formation activated, clashing with the rule power unleashed by the Dao incarnation.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The entire nine heavens seemed to collapse from the collision. Void shattered. Terrifying roars echoed.

The formation and rule power clashed. Though slowly suppressed and eroded by the rules,

“Impudent!”

Boom!

The Dao incarnation spoke.

Its voice was grand and solemn, like a great Buddha chanting.

It shook the souls of all who heard.

“The Heavenly Dao is impartial. It judges sin. The Dao acts—those who obstruct shall perish!”

The majestic voice rang out.

The Saint whose body it possessed could no longer endure. His flesh began to crack.

Boom!

Most terrifying of all, the grand formation Lu had meticulously prepared to protect the Five Phoenixes began to crumble.

It seemed unable to withstand the Heavenly Dao's rules.

Yet Lu remained unhurried. He cast more arrays.

Massive array runes stretched across the nine heavens.

The character "All."

It anchored the collapsing formation, halting the erosion.

The Dao incarnation's incandescent gaze was cold and emotionless.

It stared at Lu.

It raised a hand and pointed.

"Defying heaven— I am heaven. I judge your life and death."

The incarnation spoke coldly, its tone like an iceberg.

Rumble!

As the words fell, they rippled like a stone dropped into a pond.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The countless rules clashing with the formation

Stacked together, transforming into chains of order. They shattered the void, coiling toward Lu to bind and capture him.

“Judging me to death?”

Lu smiled. His white robes fluttered in the gale stirred by the chains, giving him an air of unrestrained elegance.

“My life—even ‘heaven’ cannot take.”

Lu picked up a piece. The chess piece gleamed white between his fingers and fell onto the board.

The chessboard domain expanded.

Boom!

A thousandfold Spirit-Pressure turned into a white beam and crashed down.

It collided with the black, cold chains.

A terrifying explosion. Terrifying ripples spread.

After the uproar,

In the void, Lu remained seated in his thousand-blade chair, white robes pristine, calm and composed.

His black hair and white clothes were untouched by chaos.

Everyone was stunned.

They looked at Lu with growing awe—he was truly unfathomable.

Gu Mangran's expression was complex. This was the Heavenly Dao incarnation—at least Quasi-Emperor strength.

Even in his prime, Gu Mangran would lose nine out of ten battles.

Yet Lu had effortlessly withstood this “heavenly might.”

On the holy clan side,

Many were shocked.

Even the Heavenly Spirit Clan's Holy Hall Saints sighed in admiration.

No wonder Lord Micah had been so cautious.

This Lu Saint of the Five Phoenixes was terrifyingly strong!

Strong enough to contend with the Dao incarnation.

Many Saints marveled at Micah's foresight.

At that moment, the Dao incarnation pointed toward the Five Phoenixes and yanked.

The next instant,

Above the Five Phoenix Continent,

The Origin Space emerged.

The Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao stars appeared within.

Buzz!

The Dao incarnation's eyes blazed with blinding light!

“In the nine heavens, a second Heavenly Dao is not permitted!”

The Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao was fully exposed to the world.

Everyone was stunned. The upper-realm holy clans and Heavenly Spirit Clan Saints stared in disbelief at the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao stars.

The Five Phoenixes—a Second-Derivation high-martial world—had birthed an independent Heavenly Dao!

Uproar swept through the crowd.

Micah’s gaze grew grave. He drew a deep breath.

“Attack!”

With that,

Micah rose from the bronze war vessel. Quasi-Emperor aura erupted.

He gave Lu a deep look.

The other upper-realm holy clan Saints snapped awake and shouted in excitement.

Boom!

Countless saintly auras surged, shaking heaven and earth.

Micah struck first. He transformed into a streak of light. Quasi-Emperor-level power erupted like a blazing sun!

The attack roared toward Lu.

Everyone was thrilled.

The Five Phoenixes... were done for!

The Dao incarnation was equivalent to a Quasi-Emperor. Add Micah—another Quasi-Emperor.

Two Quasi-Emperors attacking!

How could Lu Ping'an resist?

How could the Five Phoenixes withstand?

Suddenly!

Brilliant light exploded amid the clash, dazzling and radiant, illuminating the entire nine heavens.

The excitement on the Saints' faces froze.

Micah's strike—originally aimed at Lu—had struck the Dao incarnation with lightning speed!

In that moment, all color seemed to fade from the world.

Chapter 530: Chaos Erupts—The Ancient Emperor Strikes While the Fire Burns

Boom!

A terrifying explosion erupted in Pingyang Heaven, unleashing a hurricane that tore through the void. Countless worlds floated and sank within the chaos.

Quasi-Emperor-level power—its might earth-shaking.

Everyone was stunned.

The excitement on the faces of the upper-realm holy clan Saints froze, then slowly drained away.

No one had expected the Holy Hall Master Micah—the supreme powerhouse of the Heavenly Spirit Clan—to attack the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao incarnation at this moment.

What... what was happening?

Wasn't Micah one of them?

Shouldn't he stand with the Dao incarnation?

Something was very wrong!

Weren't they supposed to strike Lu Ping'an of the Five Phoenixes together with the Dao incarnation, slay him, and completely overthrow the Five Phoenixes—restoring order to the nine heavens?

How had it turned into attacking the nine heavens' Dao incarnation?

Not just the upper-realm holy clans were stunned—even the Five Phoenix powerhouses were dumbfounded.

Gu Mangran sat in his coffin, momentarily dazed. The pressure had been immense, yet now he felt bewildered once again.

Was this still the world he knew?

He understood Micah's threat clearly—even at his peak, victory against Micah would be uncertain.

Yet now, this Quasi-Emperor had struck the Dao incarnation.

Gu Mangran had already despaired, but in this moment, a spark reignited in his once-silent heart.

He turned to look at the white-robed Lu.

Lu held a chess piece, expression calm, as though everything had unfolded exactly as he expected.

It seemed even Micah's attack on the Dao incarnation was within his calculations.

Hiss—

This child... his mind ran deep!

Micah and Lu had been in collusion all along!

Gu Mangran realized he had known nothing of this.

Bang!

The void exploded.

The Heavenly Dao will, possessing a Saint's body, could only exert Quasi-Emperor-level power.

Originally, it had tried to seize Micah's body, but the Quasi-Emperor Micah had resisted—so it settled for second best.

But that choice proved disastrous.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Terrifying shockwaves continued to erupt in Pingyang Heaven.

A clash between Saints was already horrifying—let alone at Quasi-Emperor level.

The world fell silent.

The fleet of war vessels halted in the void.

Every Saint stood frozen, hair standing on end.

Soon, some reacted, shouting in horror:

“Micah! What are you doing?!”

This was the Heavenly Dao incarnation!

As Holy Hall Master, attacking it would invite the Heavenly Dao's judgment.

In the nine heavens, only Emperors were free from the Dao's restrictions.

All other Saints were bound by it.

Micah's actions today were utterly suicidal.

Bang!

The Dao incarnation was smashed into the void.

A massive black hole appeared, howling winds devouring everything around it.

The Saint's body that the incarnation possessed shattered instantly, cracking inch by inch.

Yet white light blazed. Even after taking a full-force Quasi-Emperor strike, it had not collapsed.

It floated upward.

Micah's expression was icy. He narrowed his eyes.

“Not dead even after that... worthy of the nine heavens' Dao incarnation.”

His robes whipped wildly. In the next instant, his body transformed into a streak of light. Silver-white spatial mysteries tore through the void.

He appeared before the Dao incarnation once more.

A fist swung.

Boom!

Still Quasi-Emperor-level power. Since he had chosen to act, Micah had no regrets—there was no turning back.

Between safety and gambling everything, Micah chose the gamble.

The Five Phoenixes, with their independent Heavenly Dao, were his only hope of breaking through to Emperor.

When the Dao incarnation first appeared, Micah had wavered—wondering whether to abandon the Five Phoenixes and let them perish.

Becoming an Emperor... he would give up.

But when he saw Lu contending with the Dao incarnation,

His heart stirred again.

He wanted to gamble. His goal was simple: to break through.

Driven by that ambition, he acted.

And this strike had achieved excellent results.

“Young Master Lu, strike! Together, we slay the Dao!”

Micah roared as he struck again.

“Impudent!”

The Dao incarnation struggled out of the black hole, roaring in fury.

It had been betrayed!

The supreme Heavenly Dao will—betrayed!

The creatures of the nine heavens had stabbed it in the back!

Rage surged. The originally pure white light of the nine heavens’ Dao began to tint red!

“Good.”

Lu understood the principle: strike while the enemy is weak.

Buzz...

The Spirit-Pressure Chessboard instantly covered the black hole.

Lu's gaze sharpened. He placed a piece. Invisible force surged, whipping his white robes.

The piece fell.

Lightning seemed to descend from the heavens.

Suddenly!

It struck the center of the chessboard.

Qi Refining Layer 9—ten millionfold Spirit-Pressure!

Boom!

The beam crashed down into the black hole.

The hole expanded further. Void shattered.

The Dao incarnation's protruding head was smashed back inside.

"Attack!"

"Stop them!"

"Micah the traitor! He is unworthy to be Holy Hall Master!"

The Holy Hall Saints roared in fury.

Micah stood in the void. In this moment, he seemed towering. The authority of the Holy Hall Master was fully revealed.

He glanced coldly toward the Holy Hall.

Then he raised a hand and beckoned.

Instantly...

Chaos erupted in the Holy Hall!

Bronze war vessels exploded. Shocks rang out. Saints were struck by their comrades, bodies cracking under devastating attacks.

It turned out Micah had planted his own pieces in the Holy Hall long ago.

The moment he attacked the Dao incarnation, he knew there was no retreat.

So he no longer hid his pawns.

As Holy Hall Master for hundreds of thousands of years, how could he have no preparations?

Of course, if the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had not been absent for so long, leaving all major and minor affairs to the Holy Hall Saints,

Micah would never have had such an opportunity.

Chaos!

The battle instantly descended into madness!

Saints of the upper-realm holy clans began fighting among themselves.

Micah's planted agents struck. Many Saints were caught off guard and suffered attacks.

But they quickly organized a counterattack.

The saint ancestors of the other clans also joined in.

After all, only a minority followed Micah. The Heavenly Spirit Clan's true ruler was still the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

But don't forget—there were also the Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals!

"Good fellow..."

Overlord's eyes gleamed. He stared at the Holy Hall Saints, as though seeing the rolling fortune they represented!

These Saints had come with the intent to destroy the Five Phoenixes—they naturally represented fortune!

“Fight!”

Overlord shouldered his axe and shield and charged forth. A river of fortune surged.

Demonic qi roiled. One axe cleaved toward a saint ancestor.

Tang Yimo’s body erupted like a volcano. Six consecutive explosions rang out.

Six meridians opened. Like a demon god, he charged forward, clashing with a Saint.

With the Five Phoenix Saints joining, the balance of this chaotic battle began to tilt.

Tilt toward the Five Phoenixes.

The moment they saw the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao, everyone understood why the nine heavens’ Dao had descended its incarnation.

A second Heavenly Dao in the nine heavens—how horrifying!

One mountain cannot hold two tigers—let alone two Heavenly Daos.

Thus, the nine heavens' Dao had sent its incarnation to destroy the newborn, still-fragile Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao.

The Saints' gazes flickered.

A newborn Heavenly Dao—that was a supreme treasure!

Many suddenly understood why the Five Phoenixes had erupted with an Ancient Emperor incarnation's aura earlier.

The Ancient Emperors must have sensed the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao's birth and sent an incarnation to seize it...

A newborn Heavenly Dao!

A treasure more precious than imperial weapons!

Unfortunately, the current Five Phoenixes were no longer a weak world anyone could bully.

Hadn't even the Holy Hall Master Micah chosen to stand with them?

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The battle exploded. Pingyang Heaven shook violently.

The ancestors of the lower three heavens' high-martial worlds didn't even dare breathe. Though weaker than the ancient Emperor wars, this was still no small conflict.

So many Saints clashing—unseen for hundreds of thousands of years.

The sky tore open.

Saints poured into the outer void battlefield, slaughtering freely.

Lu placed another piece.

The Spirit-Pressure beam crashed down. The Dao incarnation was smashed back into the black hole.

Though furious, it could do nothing.

Lu's ten millionfold Spirit-Pressure pressed down like an entire world.

Micah struck relentlessly. Quasi-Emperor power erupted again and again.

Each blow shattered vast swaths of void.

Buzz...

The chains of rules binding heaven and earth began to snap.

Clearly, the Dao incarnation was nearing collapse.

In the outer void battlefield, the battling Saints saw this and began to flee.

If the Dao incarnation fell, Micah would surely not spare them.

After all, they had witnessed the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao—and Micah's betrayal of the Heavenly Spirit Clan.

Micah would kill them all to silence them.

But escape was difficult. The Five Phoenix cultivators grew fiercer with every passing moment—utterly mad.

They fought without reason—meeting was killing.

“I can’t hold on! Micah betrayed the Holy Hall—we’ll all die here!”

A Saint roared.

He tried to flee but could not.

“Micah betrayed the Holy Hall—why are you still fighting for him?”

A Holy Hall Saint wept blood, eyes red with fury.

“Micah will die horribly! Colluding with the Five Phoenixes, crippling the Holy Hall... the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor will never forgive him!”

“Traitors to the Emperor meet no good end!”

The Saints roared.

Finally...

In the chaos, one Saint’s body exploded. His divine soul shattered.

He fell completely.

Rumble!

Rules and order emerged. Blood-colored clouds surged.

Soon, torrential blood rain fell. A Saint of the nine heavens had perished—heaven and earth mourned together.

Micah noticed this. Though his heart sank slightly, his gaze remained cold.

Since he had chosen this path, he would see it through.

His goal was simple: to break through.

As a Saint, his lifespan was only a few hundred thousand years. His time was running out. If he could not break through, he would perish in the cold outer void battlefield like many old Saints of the Holy Hall.

Micah refused to accept it.

“I, Micah, a heaven-defying genius—reached Quasi-Saint realm hundreds of thousands of years ago...”

“Yet bound by the Heavenly Dao, unable to become Emperor. Why? My talent, my aptitude—I am no less than any Ancient Emperor. Why, just because they were born earlier, could they attain the throne, while I, no matter how hard I cultivate, cannot cross the Emperor threshold? Why?!”

Micah roared.

His fist struck. The world fell silent for an instant—then a terrifying explosion erupted, annihilating everything. The Dao incarnation was swallowed by the blast.

Micah panted heavily. The energy within him boiled.

Hundreds of thousands of years of resentment poured out in this moment.

Gu Mangran watched in silence.

Seeing the frenzied Micah, he sighed deeply. Time truly could drive people mad.

Gu Mangran thought: if he had not been gravely injured in that ancient war and buried in the tomb,

Perhaps he too would have seized the last straw of hope with such madness.

Hundreds of thousands of years at the peak, yet unable to take one more step—bound by damned rules.

How could he accept it?

The Five Phoenixes, birthing an independent Heavenly Dao, truly was Micah's hope.

Though even now, that hope seemed slim.

But for a genius like Micah, better to burn brightly in a gamble than fade away quietly.

Bang!

Lu remained cold and ruthless. He placed another piece.

The ten millionfold Spirit-Pressure completely crushed the Dao incarnation's possessed body. Faintly, the body seemed on the verge of exploding.

Suddenly.

The blood rain in the sky ceased.

The Dao aura within the clouds descended like beams, pouring into the battered Dao incarnation.

The weakening incarnation began to grow stronger again.

Micah's expression changed slightly.

The Dao incarnation seemed to have thought of something. A cold laugh echoed faintly.

Boom!

When the incarnation erupted with dazzling light,

Micah hurriedly blocked, trying to withstand the explosion.

The terrifying force sent him flying.

White beams shot out like streaks of light across the sky.

Pfft!

One Saint after another—clashing with Five Phoenix Xuan Immortals—was pierced by the beams. Heads exploded!

Divine souls perished. Saints fell.

Thick blood seemed to come alive, writhing across the heavens.

Thick blood clouds gathered.

So many Saints had died—summoning tribulation clouds and blood rain infused with Dao aura!

“Damn it!”

“What did it do?”

Micah drew a deep breath.

Looking at the thick clouds above, radiating dense Dao aura, his face paled.

The Dao incarnation had sensed the Saints’ deaths would summon tribulation clouds and blood rain infused with Dao aura!

And used it to slaughter many Saints!

The incarnation grew stronger!

In the lower three heavens, it seemed a colossal figure of light stood.

Lu's expression grew grave.

The Dao incarnation's actions stunned even Gu Mangran. He acted, swinging his coffin and charging alongside Micah.

But the empowered incarnation was too powerful.

It suppressed Micah's Quasi-Emperor strength.

And Gu Mangran, even after consuming divine herbs, had not fully recovered. He was sent flying again and again.

His coffin lid shattered completely.

Gu Mangran crashed back from the void.

"I am heaven. Heaven establishes rules. If I decree your death—you die!"

The Dao incarnation roared.

It swung both arms like hammers, smashing down.

Micah's arms exploded!

Blood rained through the void. In that moment, all of Pingyang Heaven seemed ready to shatter!

Lu sat in his thousand-blade chair, placed a piece, and unleashed ten millionfold Spirit-Pressure.

Yet the Dao incarnation withstood it.

Its arm swept.

Countless rules in Void Heaven transformed into cold chains, slowly coiling around Lu's body.

Creak... creak...

The icy chains of order made Lu frown.

Boom!

Suddenly.

A massive rift tore open in the sky above Void Heaven.

Vast energy surged within.

The Dao incarnation glanced coldly, then ignored it. Its palm slowly closed.

As it tightened, the chains binding Lu seemed ready to crush him alive.

Micah's arms regrew. Quasi-Emperor power erupted—but he too was bound by the chains.

These chains were formed from Heavenly Dao rules—indestructible, nearly impossible to break.

The more they struggled, the tighter they bound.

“The rules of heaven and earth—all established by me. My words are the rules!”

The Dao incarnation proclaimed grandly.

Lu felt the chains tightening further.

He exhaled slowly.

Then, a voice echoed in his ear.

It seemed to come from the rift in Void Heaven.

Within the rift, a massive eyeball rolled.

The voice transmitted into Lu's ear and mind.

"Need help? Hand over control of the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao... and this Emperor will act, slaying the incarnation for you."

Lu paused. His expression gradually turned cold.

“Taking advantage of the chaos?”

“Shameless. Trying to rob me—I’ll remember this.”

Lu said.

“Want control of the Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao? Keep dreaming.”

Lu’s lips curled.

The next moment.

The thousand-blade chair beneath him began to disassemble. Terrifying demonic qi erupted from his body.

The chains binding him swelled under the demonic qi—though they did not break.

Lu paid it no mind.

The silver blades transformed, clanging and stacking, forming silver wings behind him.

The nine-section phoenix plume sword hovered before him.

His white robes turned black. Lu's expression was ice-cold.

He raised his hand and grasped the Five Phoenix Bow.

Vast divine soul power, chaos power, spiritual energy, and Dao intent...

From the four phoenix mouths on the bow, power surged.

Under the "Union" array rune, they fused into an extremely terrifying four-colored arrow!

The arrow materialized.

Then, Lu released his grip.

Boom!

The arrow shot forth.

It struck the Heavenly Dao's order chains.

Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding!

The chains coiled.

Yet under this arrow, the unbreakable rules were pierced!

The arrow's power undiminished, it continued straight toward the Dao incarnation.

In an instant, it tore a massive black hole through the incarnation's chest. Terrifying explosive energy raged within, destroying everything.

One arrow—pierced the Heavenly Dao incarnation.