

Starlit Path 551

Chapter 551: Don't Bully Honest People

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had returned to the nine heavens.

Yet he had believed everything would turn around—that he would survive, even counterattack.

With the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao—he still had a chance.

Not just him—everyone thought so. Even Lu believed the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had escaped this crisis.

But no one expected—

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had miscalculated.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao did appear.

Yet it did not—as he hoped—help him resist the hidden enemies from the void rift. It did not join him in counterattacking.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor turned back in disbelief—staring at the massive Heavenly Dao face hovering above the nine heavens' sky.

His body gradually emanated chill.

A coldness enveloping his entire being.

He seemed to sense something wrong.

“The Heavenly Dao... won't aid me?!”

The thought struck him.

He couldn't understand—why wouldn't the Heavenly Dao help him?

There was no reason for it not to.

In the ancient war—he had been trapped in the Primordial Starry Sky—unable to return. The Heavenly Dao had to hold the front—otherwise the nine heavens would have been overrun by those terrifying innate divine demons—reduced to a slaughterhouse.

He and the Heavenly Dao had built a tacit understanding. After hundreds of thousands of years fighting together—could it not spare one act of aid?

Was the Heavenly Dao truly heartless?

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor felt a chill in his heart.

He had made a deal with the Heavenly Dao—to attack the Five Phoenixes. Yet now he faced this fate. He had pinned his hopes on the Heavenly Dao—believing it would help him escape pursuit. Now it seemed... all was illusion.

His Heavenly Spirit Clan Saints—and that Quasi-Emperor—had all died in vain!

Perhaps this was all a conspiracy between the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao and those others.

What deal? From the start—it was a plot!

A plot against him—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor!

Too tragic!

Lu—watching this—shook his head. The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor trusted the Heavenly Dao too much.

Or rather—he was too straightforward.

No wonder he was tricked into sitting in the Primordial Starry Sky to fight enemies.

Now—barely returned—he was schemed against again.

But sympathy was sympathy—Lu had no reason to save the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

At this moment—not messing with the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s mentality—was already merciful.

In the nine heavens—

The Heavenly Dao roared—unleashing terrifying pressure.

A life-and-soul-level oppression.

The Heavenly Dao's pressure made even the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor feel suffocated.

Emperor realm was indeed strong—transcending the Heavenly Dao—even able to wrestle with it.

But in most cases—Emperors were at a disadvantage against the Heavenly Dao.

Within its own domain—the Heavenly Dao's power far surpassed ordinary Emperors.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's eyes bulged—furious.

The Heavenly Dao was ruthless.

Not only refusing aid!

But even suppressing him!

If suppressed now—the enemies from the void rift would never miss the chance—they would strike lethally.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—already wounded—could not withstand such an attack. Death was certain.

So—the Heavenly Dao... wanted to kill him!

What a vicious Heavenly Dao!

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor raged.

Yet his rage—at this moment—seemed so powerless.

The golden spear thrust again.

Pfft!

Piercing his flesh precisely—nailing him in the void.

Emperor blood—containing immense energy—flowed endlessly.

The entire nine heavens seemed dyed blood-red.

Pfft!

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor coughed blood.

He stared at the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao.

In this moment—his heart carried bitter laughter.

Compared to Lu's infuriating words earlier—this seemed less maddening.

After all—for Lu—he was an invader—invading the Five Phoenixes.

Lu messing with him—playing mind games—was only natural.

But the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor couldn't understand—how he had fallen into such a desperate situation.

As though an invisible hand manipulated everything—he was merely a pawn—played wantonly on the board.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor laughed mockingly.

Meanwhile—the Saints of the Heavenly Spirit Clan finally reacted.

“The Heavenly Dao... wants to destroy the Heavenly Spirit Clan?”

“Why? What did the Heavenly Spirit Clan do wrong?”

“Conspiracy! All of this is a conspiracy to destroy the Heavenly Spirit Clan!”

One by one—the Holy Hall Saints—who had already reached their breaking point after the Quasi-Emperor’s death—exploded.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

One by one—the Saints soared upward.

They were the Heavenly Spirit Clan’s Saints.

Eyes bloodshot.

They would save themselves—they could not watch the Heavenly Spirit Clan perish!

Watching the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—struggling for survival—caught between the enemies from the void rift and the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao—

The Saints' hearts surged with rage.

What first holy clan of the nine heavens? Utter nonsense.

Even if they were the first holy clan—

If the nine heavens wanted to destroy them—it could do so easily.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor could not die!

If he fell—the Heavenly Spirit Clan would truly lose all hope!

“For the Emperor!”

The surviving Holy Hall Saints roared.

The next moment—they transformed into streaks of light—bursting with extreme brilliance—soaring upward.

They would not flee.

Like that Quasi-Emperor who sacrificed himself—they would fight for the Emperor.

Boom!

One Holy Hall Saint approached the nine heavens’ Heavenly Dao. The holy body—tempered by the Heavenly Dao—ignited instantly.

Like a powder keg—exploding.

Boom!

This explosion—

Forced a gap in the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao's suppression of the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—
as though shaken.

This was an opportunity!

One by one—the Holy Hall Saints acted.

Exploding themselves.

Forcibly blasting open the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao's suppression on the Heavenly Spirit Ancient
Emperor!

Blood rained from the sky—thick crimson falling across all worlds of the nine heavens.

The Heavenly Spirit Clan Saints perished one by one. The scene was shocking.

A clan's unleashed power—truly not to be underestimated.

On the Five Phoenix Continent—

Lu watched this—sighing deeply.

This act by the Heavenly Spirit Clan would likely enrage the Heavenly Dao completely. Lu—having created a Heavenly Dao—understood its temperament somewhat.

As for the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao—ruthless and cold.

Lu deduced—next—the Heavenly Dao would rage—annihilating the entire Heavenly Spirit Clan.

The Heavenly Dao could not be defied.

The Heavenly Spirit Clan's actions—were blatant provocation.

In short—the Heavenly Spirit Clan... was finished.

Lu Jiulian and Zhu Long showed no obvious emotion.

Tantai Xuan—black robes whipping—his heavy imperial robes carrying solemnity.

Hands behind back—he watched the nine heavens' situation—heart heavy.

He seemed to see a clan's desperate struggle for survival before catastrophe—fighting for hope.

Unavoidably recalling the struggling Five Phoenixes of the past.

Micah clenched his fists—eyes reddening.

Though he had proven Emperor in the Five Phoenixes... the blood in his veins was still Heavenly Spirit Clan blood.

He had lived countless years in the Heavenly Spirit Clan.

He turned—looking at Lu.

Eyes fluctuating slightly.

Lu paused—seated in his thousand-blade chair—white robes fluttering.

“Do what you must. But... you might die on this journey.”

Lu said.

Micah’s face was grim—but he smiled—eyes resolute: “I once believed my talent rivaled Ancient Emperors—ambition higher than the heavens. The Five Phoenixes gave me the chance to prove it.”

“The Five Phoenixes gave me rebirth.”

“But the Heavenly Spirit Clan is my homeland. If it remained unharmed—I would stay in the Five Phoenixes—striving to strengthen it. But now... the Heavenly Spirit Clan teeters on the brink. I cannot flee.”

Micah said.

He had never imagined the Heavenly Spirit Clan would face destruction.

Even after proving Emperor—he only thought he could repel the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—remaining to guard the Five Phoenixes.

But events moved too fast—beyond his expectations.

The attacks from those suspected Ancient Emperors in the void rift.

And the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao's betrayal.

All dealt him immense shock.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's miserable state weighed heavily on Micah's heart.

"Go."

"Cause and effect—you must resolve your karma with the Heavenly Spirit Clan yourself."

Lu nodded slightly—not stopping Micah.

"Thank you, Young Master Lu. This journey... is me, Micah—repaying the Heavenly Spirit Clan's grace."

Micah said.

With that—

Fortune surged around him—like a coiling serpent.

Transforming into a rainbow—tearing through the sky—entering the nine heavens.

Zhu Long, Lu Jiulian, Tantai Xuan, and others did not move.

Micah had reason to act—bound by blood karma with the Heavenly Spirit Clan.

While Lu Jiulian, Zhu Long, and Tantai Xuan had no deep ties.

Lu sat.

Narrowing his eyes—watching this grand drama.

A grand drama seemingly orchestrated from the shadows.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor was merely a pawn... even he, Lu Ping'an, was just a pawn.

What was their goal?

This was what Lu was most curious about.

...

As one by one—the Heavenly Spirit Clan Saints self-destructed—their Heavenly Dao-tempered holy bodies blasting open a gap in the Heavenly Dao’s suppression on the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor finally found his chance.

He exerted all strength—pulling out the spear piercing his body.

Breaking free from the Heavenly Dao’s suppression—blood dripping in the void—he looked back—seeing the Saints’ self-destruction.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s eyes reddened instantly.

Buzz...

“Impudent!”

The Heavenly Dao roared—unleashing terrifying pressure and aura.

The Heavenly Spirit Clan Saints trembled—coughing blood. Even the ancestral land in the first heaven cracked.

Countless clansmen—in this moment—turned to ash!

“Damn Heavenly Dao... you want to destroy my Heavenly Spirit Clan!”

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor roared—blood and tears.

The Heavenly Dao’s dominance—within the nine heavens—was absolute. Apart from Emperors transcending the Heavenly Dao—

No being could defy it.

With a single thought—the Heavenly Dao could annihilate the Heavenly Spirit Clan.

Watching clansmen turn to ash—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s heart bled. The Heavenly Spirit Clan—glorious for millions of years—now faced destruction in such a tragic way.

He was unwilling!

The golden spear thrust again—void shattering inch by inch.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—blood-soaked—clenched his fist—striking the golden spear.

The spear turned to golden light—retreating back into the void rift.

But it was not over. Soon—it brewed again—thrusting downward.

The Heavenly Dao suppressed the Heavenly Spirit Clan—countless clansmen perished. One by one—Saints exploded on the spot—turning to primal Heavenly Dao energy—returning to the Dao.

The Heavenly Spirit Clan seemed headed for extinction.

In the void starry sky—

Saints on countless life-bearing stars trembled in fear.

The Heavenly Spirit Clan's fate filled them with dread.

Though now prisoners of the Five Phoenixes in the void starry sky—at least their race survived.

While the once-glorious Heavenly Spirit Clan in the nine heavens—now faced catastrophe.

Boom!

Suddenly—

In the nine heavens—

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao erupted with powerful suppressive aura.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's heart sank—suppressed by the Heavenly Dao.

Abruptly—a powerful fist struck across the void.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—blood-soaked—looked up.

Micah emerged from the void abyss—unleashing Extreme Dao Fist toward the Heavenly Dao's massive face.

Punch after punch—blasting open the Heavenly Dao's suppression.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor felt the pressure lighten.

He looked at Micah—expression complex.

He never expected—Micah would choose to help him.

In the end—the one aiding him was his enemy—the one he had always seen as a traitor.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor laughed even more bitterly.

Micah said nothing.

Facing the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao—having proven in the Five Phoenixes—he had transcended the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao—no longer suppressed by it.

Staring at the Heavenly Dao's massive face—Micah blazed with golden light—pushing forward with Extreme Dao Fist—fortune surging.

His Golden Immortal bearing fully revealed.

He exchanged no words with the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

Standing alone against the Heavenly Dao.

He stared at the massive face in the sky—seeming to smile relaxedly.

“Once—you blocked my path to Emperor for hundreds of thousands of years. Today—I, Micah—block yours!”

Micah said.

With that—he laughed freely and unrestrained.

Boom!

Heavenly Dao power transformed into a giant palm—crashing down.

Seeking to crush this Five Phoenixes Golden Immortal.

Micah roared—his aura surging—unleashing Extreme Dao Emperor Fist.

Clashing with the Heavenly Dao's palm.

A massive explosion erupted—as though everything annihilated.

Countless world continents shattered—countless beings perished.

Finally—

The Heavenly Dao's palm dissipated. Micah stood—blood-soaked—unbowed and unafraid.

The Heavenly Dao once blocked him.

Today—he blocked the Heavenly Dao!

Meanwhile—

Seizing the moment Micah blocked the Heavenly Dao—

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor found his chance.

The golden spear thrust again from the rift.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's eyes flashed with ferocity.

No longer suppressed by the Heavenly Dao—he moved swiftly.

Reaching the coffin he carried—

His palm pressed against the lid—eyes filled with savagery.

Gritting his teeth—he looked at the perished Heavenly Spirit Clan Saints—and clansmen.

The once glorious and powerful Heavenly Spirit Clan—now dead and wounded—reduced to history.

Glory and decline—in a single moment.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—blood-soaked—revealed madness.

Did they truly think he had no trump card?

Did they think he would be slaughtered?

Boom!

The coffin lid was lifted.

The next moment—from within the coffin—a streak of light shot skyward. Terrifying aura spread.

Like a black hole—devouring light and heat—swallowing everything.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's body began energy transformation—flesh melting—flowing like water into the terrifying existence within the coffin.

Soon—the existence inside opened its eyes—dark golden pupils. Meat wings on its back—body covered in scales.

A third eye on its forehead.

All three eyes opened—endless ferocity erupting.

“Destroy my Heavenly Spirit Clan?”

“Today—this Emperor will charge into the rift—overturn the chessboard—and see what you all are plotting!”

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor roared.

This was the innate divine demon corpse he brought back from the Primordial Starry Sky battlefield. Now—he fused with it—gaining immense power.

This was his trump card. Since being tricked into sitting in the Primordial Starry Sky for hundreds of thousands of years—he had learned to prepare a backup plan.

Unfortunately—upon returning to the nine heavens—his backup was not fully prepared—before facing all this.

But the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor feared nothing.

Today—he would overturn this chessboard. He would make those guys pay!

Boom!

Innate divine demons—creatures of the Primordial Starry Sky.

Their flesh was incomparably strong—possessing heaven-destroying power.

This corpse—he had obtained by chance—planning to use it as a last resort—to break the Heavenly Dao's shackles—open the unprecedented path beyond Emperor.

Unfortunately...

It seemed he could wait no longer.

Even if fused with divine demon will—losing reason—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had no choice.

Don't bully honest people.

When honest people turn ruthless—even they scare themselves.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor was such a person.

His meat wings flapped violently. Fused with the innate divine demon—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor turned into black light—crashing into the massive rift.

The golden spear thrust again.

The innate divine demon roared. Its forehead's vertical eye shot golden light.

Under this golden light—the golden spear was repelled—its luster dimming slightly.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—fused with divine demon—charged with overwhelming momentum.

The existence in the rift seemed to hesitate.

Slowly—the rift began closing.

But the divine demon swung its sword—sword light sweeping three thousand miles.

The slowly closing rift was slashed open again.

“Hmph!”

An angry snort echoed from the rift.

“Stop him.”

Buzz...

With terrifying rumbling—

At some point—

A figure—like reflected eternity—quietly stood before the rift.

An Ancient Emperor—face obscured.

Seeming to bear the pressure of many Emperors.

Slowly pushing forward a fist—that fist grew immense—suppressing the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor fused with the divine demon.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor roared.

Resisting this fist—with extreme unwillingness.

He wanted to charge into the rift—overturn the chessboard—make those guys pay!

But this fist was too powerful.

Even fused with the divine demon—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor felt immense strain.

On the Five Phoenix Continent—

Lu smiled—watching the struggling Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

Narrowing his eyes.

“What a coincidence—I, Lu Ping’an... also like overturning others’ chessboards.”

Lu’s lips curved.

With that—

Unhurriedly—he picked a chess piece from the box.

Rolling up his sleeve—eyes suddenly sharp—he placed it.

Snap!

In the nine heavens—

The void rift.

Suddenly—

One hundred millionfold Spirit-Pressure crashed down—smashing the Ancient Emperor guarding the rift.

The figure's head was knocked askew—body freezing. The mysterious mist shrouding its face nearly dispersed.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—fused with divine demon—eyes suddenly brightened.

Messing with mentality—playing dirty—Lu Ping'an was best at it!

Having experienced this Spirit-Pressure many times—he had rich experience.

Seizing this fleeting chance—he roared with mountain-splitting fury.

Instantly breaking through the blockade.

Transforming into black light—carrying unmatched divine demon might—he charged into the rift.

Seeing the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor rush into the rift—

Lu couldn't help but laugh.

He, Lu Ping'an... loved helping others.

Chapter 552: Emperor Falls

No one had expected the Heavenly Spirit Clan's invasion of the Five Phoenixes to end like this.

The ones suffering heavy losses were the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor and his clan.

After this battle, the Heavenly Spirit Clan would be severely weakened. Their once-proud Holy Hall was shattered—every Saint perished under the Heavenly Dao's wrath.

Countless Heavenly Spirit Clan members were crushed by the Heavenly Dao—souls scattered.

The once supreme Heavenly Spirit Clan of the nine heavens had fallen to the abyss.

It could even be called near-extinction.

Yet the final twist—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor charging into the rift—left many stunned.

Lu Jiulian and Tantai Xuan—the two Five Phoenix Golden Immortals—narrowed their eyes.

They had clearly seen Lu's intervention.

“What was the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's final trump card?”

“That seemed like a strange creature—neither in the nine heavens nor the Five Phoenixes.”

“Can he win inside the rift?”

Tantai Xuan and Lu Jiulian asked each other.

Many Xuan Immortals watched this battle—holding their breath.

The situation had spiraled beyond imagination. Those vanished Ancient Emperors—hidden for unknown reasons—seemed on the verge of returning.

Whether this was good or bad—no one knew.

Seeing even someone as powerful as the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor nearly die—

Now entering the rift—no one knew what awaited inside.

Lu was not anxious. Seated in his thousand-blade chair—

Others could not see—but he could.

The Spirit-Pressure Chessboard before him glowed faintly.

Lu picked a chess piece from the box—slowly placing it. As it landed—countless lines flickered in his eyes.

His divine soul left his body—drifting.

Above the sky—the void rift stretched—radiating terrifying pressure.

Because the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had entered—the guardians of the entrance seemed weakened.

At least—Lu's divine soul entered without resistance.

Of course—he did not venture deep.

His divine soul hovered at the entrance—gazing inside.

...

Boom!

Terrifying aura erupted fully.

Through Lu's divine soul observation—he clearly saw—inside the rift—a fearsome battle raged.

An Emperor-realm battle.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—fused with the innate divine demon corpse—his strength had even surged slightly.

This was why he dared charge into the void rift.

Lu saw the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor surrounded and attacked by several figures—terrifying energy waves seeming to crush heaven and earth.

Lu sighed. The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor was truly miserable—gang-beaten in the Five Phoenixes—now gang-beaten again in the rift.

Those figures were shrouded in strange mist—faces obscured.

But Lu clearly sensed—every energy wave was Emperor-realm power. Many auras felt familiar to Lu.

After all—Lu had tampered with various holy clans' imperial weapons—quite familiar with Ancient Emperors' auras within them.

Thus—Lu grew increasingly puzzled.

What was the purpose of these Ancient Emperors hiding here?

What were they plotting?

Hiding in this rift for hundreds of thousands of years—there must be an unknown reason.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Fused with the divine demon corpse—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor grew stronger.

Unfortunately—still not enough. Though he gained immense power—the level remained Emperor realm—hardly able to dominate and overturn the chessboard.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor battled several Emperors—pushing deeper into the rift.

Even standing at the rift entrance—Lu’s divine soul sensed terrifying energy waves surging from within.

That battle—absolutely ferocious.

Lu enjoyed watching the show.

In the nine heavens—

Micah blocked the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao.

The Heavenly Dao manifested an incarnation—Emperor-realm strength.

Micah fearless—raising fists—charging forward. He had long resented the Heavenly Dao. Without its blockage—he might have become Emperor long ago.

Boom!

Extreme Dao Emperor Fist—comprehended in the Five Phoenixes. Micah's talent was monstrous—even Lu admired this fist art.

The Heavenly Dao incarnation was a figure of light.

They clashed in the nine heavens. Heavenly Dao rules coiled around it—Micah's fists hard to land.

But the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao seemed uninterested in prolonged battle—unleashing full dominance.

Soon—Micah was blood-soaked—appearance miserable.

Repeatedly repelled by the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

Even his chest was pierced.

Yet Micah grew fiercer. To describe it as “the more he fought, the more excited” was not exaggerated.

The Heavenly Dao incarnation wanted to enter the void rift—to deal with the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

Because—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor was its true target. As for Micah—it cared not.

After all—Micah proved in the Five Phoenixes. Alive or dead—meant nothing to the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao.

But the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor was different. A living native Ancient Emperor of the nine heavens—his value far surpassed this traitor Micah.

Boom!

Micah—blood-soaked—retreated in the void.

Each step shattered void with cracks.

“I said before—you blocked me. Today—I block you.”

“You blocked me for six hundred thirty thousand years. I block you for half a day—not too much, right?”

Micah grinned—appearance miserable—yet his words roared with boldness.

“Fight again!”

A flame seemed ignited in Micah’s heart.

His Extreme Realm path grew through battle.

The Heavenly Dao incarnation raged.

Each attack sent Micah flying far.

Yet Micah returned again and again—bearing pressure.

Because the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor entered the rift to fight—the world could only see Micah battling the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

Seeing Micah's relentless refusal to yield—inspired many.

Micah indeed felt immense pressure.

But this also ignited his battle desire.

His Extreme Realm path needed such battle to break through and gain insight.

Before—as Quasi-Emperor—he had no right to fight the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

Now—this chance lay before him. He would fight with all his might—vent his obsession—clarify his mind.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The Heavenly Dao incarnation floated high—towering. Its body blazed with blinding white light—face obscured.

Suddenly—

Rule power transformed into chains—tightly binding Micah's body.

Micah struggled—but the more he did—the heavier the chains became—nearly crushing his flesh.

Pfft!

Blood sprayed everywhere.

His flesh exploded from the chains—blood bursting from wounds—each drop brimming with vitality.

After all—he was Emperor realm—though newly proven from hundreds of thousands of years as an Ancient Emperor.

Hundreds of thousands of years—compared to millions—was nothing.

But Micah—newly proven Emperor—was in his prime—full of vigor.

Micah refused to yield.

In his mind—countless scenes flashed.

Because he had severed his cultivation—restarting from Core Formation realm to now—Golden Immortal.

But upon proving Golden Immortal—memories of his Holy Hall Master days—severed earlier—gradually resurfaced.

Soon—he recovered all nine heavens' cultivation memories.

Micah froze—as though watching time rewind through those memories. As they fused with his mind—

Micah sighed deeply.

With a thought—his nine heavens cultivation surged—like climbing a ladder—reaching Quasi-Emperor.

Of course—using Heavenly Spirit Clan methods.

With Golden Immortal cultivation and memories—advancing was easy.

Quasi-Emperor power had little impact on Micah's strength.

But—it gave him a bold idea.

The moment the idea appeared—it surged uncontrollably in his mind.

“If I prove Emperor again with the nine heavens' method... how strong would I become?!”

A mad thought in Micah's heart.

He had proven Emperor through the Five Phoenixes' path—after great difficulty.

If he also proved Emperor with the nine heavens' method—

Dual Emperor cultivation—would he be even more dominant?!

Thus—fight! Micah grew increasingly frenzied—battling the Heavenly Dao.

He would use this battle—to force his potential—to prove Emperor with the nine heavens' method!

Terrifying attacks surged from Micah's fists.

Under Micah's relentless assault—the Heavenly Dao incarnation truly struggled to break free.

...

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's mind was filled with violence.

This was the side effect of fusing with the innate divine demon corpse. No choice—the divine demon was too strong. Without cultivating the Heavenly Dao—it could forge flesh rivaling—or surpassing—Emperor realm.

Relying on this—he charged deep into the rift.

He retained a sliver of clarity.

He wanted to know—who was plotting—who was playing chess.

The moment they clashed—he knew—the ones blocking him—the ones trying to kill him—were his old comrades.

Boom!

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor battled onward.

Countless powerful attacks struck his body.

Even with the divine demon flesh as shield—he was blasted bloody—scales shattering.

Terrifying killing intent crisscrossed—leaving the rift in chaos.

Emperor-realm battle—containing unimaginable destruction.

Blood-soaked—he pushed deeper.

Finally—his body plunged into darkness and nothingness.

When light flickered—

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor saw—seemed to glimpse some secret.

Boom!

Void instantly collapsed.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor stared dazedly at the deepest part of the rift.

A chill enveloped him.

Even fused with the divine demon's powerful flesh—he felt terrifying cold.

“No... impossible!”

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor stared in disbelief.

The next moment—he turned—desperately fleeing toward the rift’s exit.

“Conspiracy! All of it—a conspiracy!”

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s face twisted with madness.

As though seeing an unacceptable truth.

His battle intent vanished—even the divine demon’s battle intent was extinguished.

Perhaps—not knowing the truth allowed peaceful living.

But knowing the truth—brought soul-deep pain.

This was a grand scheme!

Everything between heaven and earth—a scheme!

“All of it... fake!”

All fake!

Boom!

He transformed into black light—fleeing like lightning.

However—

From the rift depths—terrifying killing intent erupted—heaven and earth overturned.

Pfft!

An attack from the rift depths—terrifying beyond measure—smashed into the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s back.

The divine demon flesh—instantly bloodied—blurred.

Immense force made the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's aura dwindle.

At the rift entrance—

Lu—watching the show—changed expression.

He saw the bloodied Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—desperately fleeing.

And the despair and disbelief on his face.

A collapse of mentality after massive shock.

“What exactly is in that rift's depths... to break a millions-year-old Ancient Emperor's mentality?”

Lu's divine soul focused.

“Perhaps—only the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor himself knows...”

“So...”

“I’ll seize it!”

Decisive.

Lu acted—to seize the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul fragments.

Whether to uncover the rift’s secrets—or simply—not wanting those fragments to fall into the enemy’s hands.

Mind set—he acted without hesitation.

In an instant—

He struck with a palm.

Terrifying suction erupted—contending with the array-hand resembling Ancient Emperor Hao—for the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul fragments.

Chapter 553: I, Lu Ping'an, Have Remembered Every One of You

No one expected an Ancient Emperor to choose self-destruction.

What kind of blow—what did he see in the rift's depths—to drive an Emperor-realm powerhouse to detonate himself?

Emperors possess endless lifespan—immortal and unbound—transcending the Heavenly Dao—with the qualification to challenge heaven and earth.

Such peerless existences—how could they simply self-destruct?

Yet the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor did.

In that instant—the unleashed energy shocked the nine heavens—and the Five Phoenixes.

That energy storm was terrifying—like the most frenzied force of annihilation. Even peer Emperors would suffer heavy injuries.

The outside world was utterly stunned by the commotion from the explosion.

The void rift—filled with unfathomable mystery—was torn open into a massive chasm.

As though another heaven and earth was brutally ripped apart—laid bare before everyone.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Space seemed to collapse.

Countless powerhouses retreated in terror—fleeing the energy's sweep.

Inside the rift—the true terrifying competition had just begun.

A battle over the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul fragments.

Lu wanted to seize them—while the mysterious Ancient Emperors in the rift also sought to reclaim them.

What did they want with the fragments?

To conceal the truth—or covet the Emperor's cultivation?

Regardless—Lu would not easily give up.

“Ancient Emperor... Hao?”

Of course—when that palm formed of countless array runes extended from the rift depths—

Lu was shocked.

Ancient Emperor Hao?

This figure Lu had often used to bluff—actually still lived.

Many of Lu’s secret realms bore the shadows of these Ancient Emperors.

Thus—when Ancient Emperor Hao acted—Lu’s heart shook for the first time.

But shock was one thing—yielding was another.

Lu’s palm shot out.

Buzz...

Energy from both palms enveloped the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul fragments. Strange power erupted—forming a terrifying energy storm.

As though order chains clashed—intertwining—seeking to tear the fragments apart.

Lu frowned slightly.

He sensed the overwhelming power of that array-runed palm.

If this continued—Lu might not win.

But...

The stronger the opposition—the more Lu desired the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul fragments.

He desperately wanted to know—what was in that rift's depths.

What secret it hid.

Boom!

Lu's palm nearly shattered.

But Lu smiled.

With a thought—the Eight Trigrams array runes—Qian, Kun, Kan, Zhen, etc.—emerged.

These were Transmission Platform array runes—profoundness rivaling the Six Jia array runes.

The array runes formed a palm.

Two array-runed palms clashed in the void—their profound mysteries fully displayed—like a unique profound force.

Space collapsed—rules shattered—everything dimmed.

The storm of array runes seemed to contain destruction and creation.

Crack! Crack...

Suddenly—

Both array-runed palms exploded—fragments scattering across the void.

Lu retreated a step—exhaling slowly.

From the rift depths—came a surprised sound.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Suddenly—Ancient Emperor auras erupted. Those Ancient Emperors—after evading the self-destruction's power—charged again—targeting the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul fragments.

“Leave them!”

An icy, arrogant roar exploded.

Lu's lips curved—his throat emitting an amused laugh.

“But I, Lu Ping’an... love helping others.”

Lu narrowed his eyes.

The next moment—his white robes turned black—demonic qi surging.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Ancient Emperor auras swept—like they would crush everything.

Demonic Lord Lu's body shook—turning golden—from hair to toe—like coated in gold.

And this... was not the end.

On the Five Phoenix Continent—

In the void starry sky—

Suddenly—a star appeared—reflecting all heavens.

The star was translucent—inside—a blazing white phoenix spread its wings.

Atop the star—Little Yinglong jolted—clenching dragon claws—fleshy wings flapping—roaring at the sky.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

A beam shot out.

From the star—piercing through—landing on Lu at the rift entrance.

“Heavenly Dao power blessing!”

Lu’s eyes blazed—golden hair whipping—he clenched his fist.

Lu felt his body brimming with terrifying power.

Golden Element Immortal Demon Body—plus Heavenly Dao blessing—plus Eight Trigrams array runes engraved on his flesh.

This was Lu's strongest combat power at Qi Refining Layer Ten.

This punch—would decide the outcome!

Boom!

A fist carrying extreme Golden Element power—thrust by Lu.

Void shattered inch by inch—as though space compressed and collapsed under his fist.

“This punch!”

“This child borrowed the newborn Heavenly Dao's power—plus attribute power. Be careful!”

A grave voice came from the rift depths.

Facing Lu's golden-blazing punch—

The Ancient Emperors' movements froze.

Boom!

Terrifying explosion erupted—a golden streak shot from the blast—at extreme speed.

He appeared above the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul fragments.

The Spirit-Pressure Chessboard swept—the fragments turned to chess pieces—rapidly landing on the board.

After seizing the fragments—

Lu retreated without hesitation—turning to flee.

Though at Qi Refining Layer Ten—with Heavenly Dao blessing—Lu was confident he could defeat an Ancient Emperor.

But the number of Ancient Emperors in the rift was too many.

Plus the unfathomable Ancient Emperor Hao—Lu decided to play it safe.

Take what he could—and leave.

But just as Lu prepared to flee—

A powerful fluctuation surged from the depths.

Lu's expression changed.

This aura... was strong. Ancient Emperor Hao?

Probably. Legends said Ancient Emperor Hao reached the peak of Emperor realm—his cultivation terrifying—able to face multiple Ancient Emperors without disadvantage.

Only such a peerless powerhouse could erupt such terrifying aura.

But now—Lu—with Five Phoenix Heavenly Dao blessing—was also confident.

Ancient Emperor Hao—wanting to keep him—was not so easy!

Perhaps he couldn't win—but escaping—no one could stop Lu Ping'an!

Countless array runes descended.

Among them—the “All” array rune—representing sealing.

Heaven and earth seemed to become a cage—instantly seeking to trap Lu.

But facing the “All” array rune's cage—Lu showed no fear.

Hand seals formed—Eight Trigrams array runes emerged.

If Six Jia array runes formed the strongest shield—

Then Lu's Eight Trigrams array runes formed the sharpest spear.

Two supreme array runes clashed—seeming evenly matched.

This was a confrontation between the world's strongest array masters—profound array runes colliding—forming countless runes floating between heaven and earth.

In the Five Phoenixes—

Li Sansui—in Daoist robes—stood in the starry sky. Her lashes trembled—staring incredulously at the rift scene.

Those profound array runes—that intoxicated her—blossomed like brilliant fireworks.

Li Sansui—stuck at a bottleneck—suddenly broke through in this instant.

From True Immortal peak—to Xuan Immortal.

Becoming the Five Phoenixes' first Xuan Immortal-level array master!

Of course—for Lu—this was a minor matter.

Now—Lu had no mood for such things. His focus was on resisting Ancient Emperor Hao’s array runes.

The clash of two supreme array runes—became the focus between heaven and earth.

“Release the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul fragments—and you may leave.”

A booming voice came from the rift depths.

Lu’s golden hair whipped—Golden Element demonic qi surging—he laughed.

“I, Lu Ping’an—want to leave. Who can stop me?”

“Even if you leave—what then? You escape—but can the Five Phoenixes?”

The voice boomed again.

Lu laughed—this time scornfully: “As if—keeping the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul fragments means you won’t attack the Five Phoenixes...”

“When you dropped imperial blood—you already tore face with me, Lu Ping’an.”

“I, Lu Ping’an—have a good temper—but I hate threats most.”

“Every one of you—I, Lu Ping’an, remember!”

Lu said coldly.

Then—no more words.

Boom!

Clenching his fist—the Golden Element Immortal Demon Body surged with extreme power—this power’s ultimate energy—instantly shattered the array cage—tearing open the “All” array runes’ prison!

This punch—contained extreme power—as though to blast the rift apart.

Like the sky collapsing.

Boom!

Lu transformed into golden light—shooting from the rift.

The next moment—he turned back.

Vaguely seeing—inside the rift—countless towering, mysterious figures hovering.

These were the Ancient Emperors in the rift.

They stood—coldly watching Lu.

Lu smiled—turning—rushing toward the Five Phoenixes—without looking back.

Casually raising his hand—middle finger up—waving it mockingly at the Ancient Emperors in the rift.

Appearance carefree—yet utterly infuriating.

Making the Ancient Emperors' gazes grow colder.

But they did not exit the rift—as though the rift was a dividing line.

With terrifying binding effect on them.

After escaping the rift—Lu noticed this.

Thus—his heart grew even more unrestrained.

Boom!

Lu's clash with the Ancient Emperors—actually happened in a flash.

Not even a few breaths—from Lu acting—to seize the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul fragments—to shatter Ancient Emperor Hao's seal—the battle was brief.

But extremely perilous.

A slight mistake—Lu might have been trapped in the rift.

Outside—

In the nine heavens—an Emperor's fall.

For the nine heavens—this was a massive earthquake.

The Emperor-fall phenomenon would last long.

Blood rain fell from the sky—chilling.

The remaining Heavenly Spirit Clan members wailed—roared—hearts in utter grief—tears flowing.

Tragic cries echoed through the nine heavens.

The Heavenly Spirit Clan was tragic—sacrificed in this Emperor battle.

Of course—the main reason was the Heavenly Dao's ruthlessness. The heartless Heavenly Dao—was the true culprit behind the Heavenly Spirit Clan's destruction.

Micah—blood-soaked—

Blocked the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

Without him—the remaining Heavenly Spirit Clan members would have perished.

If the Heavenly Dao incarnation entered the rift—even Lu would struggle.

Newly proven Golden Immortal—Micah battled the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao incarnation. Though the gap was large—Micah gritted his teeth—refusing to retreat even one step.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor fell.

Micah's body trembled.

His heart was complex—emotions sorrowful.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor... was dead?

Fallen?

The target he once chased—the object of envy—had fallen between heaven and earth.

How tragic.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor charged into the void rift—to avoid becoming a pawn—to overturn the chessboard—yet paid with his life.

Those guys...

Micah's eyes reddened. He stared at the massive rift covering the sky.

Infinite rage surged in his heart.

But he was too weak. Even after proving Golden Immortal Emperor realm—he was still the weakest kind.

Emperor realm—also required endless time to cultivate.

Back on the Five Phoenix Continent—

Lu's golden light faded.

He sat back in his thousand-blade chair.

The Spirit-Pressure Chessboard hovered before him—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul fragments—turned to chess pieces—glowed faintly on the board.

Lu did not rush to handle the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul fragments.

His gaze shifted—to the nine heavens battlefield.

There—Micah still battled the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

Lu's mind stirred.

As though transmitting through space—

A voice echoed in Micah's heart.

“The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor has fallen. The nine heavens’ Emperor position is vacant. Why not seize this chance—prove the Dao again? Become the world’s first dual-position Emperor?”

Lu’s divine soul transmitted.

This was a sudden idea.

Now—Micah’s Five Phoenixes cultivation—once he proved Emperor again with the nine heavens’ method—Lu would gain massive spiritual energy contribution.

Thus—faced with such massive spiritual energy temptation—Lu naturally spoke up.

And Lu’s words—

Flashed through Micah’s mind like lightning.

He had already considered this. Lu’s words gave him full confidence—becoming his inner support.

With Young Master Lu’s backing—

Then... prove the Dao!

Micah's eyes blazed with extreme brilliance.

This was unyielding—indignant—unwilling...

In the nine heavens—he was once peerless—once monstrously talented—suppressing all geniuses—called the most promising to prove Emperor.

Yet time dulled his edge—his heart darkened—hope withered.

He was unwilling. In the Five Phoenixes—he scattered cultivation—re-proving the Dao.

But deep in his heart—he still harbored unwillingness and obsession.

“Nine heavens' Heavenly Dao...”

Micah's eyes shone brilliantly.

Today—he, Micah... would defy heaven!

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao incarnation—light figure—seemed to sense Micah's actions.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor fell—so the nine heavens had a vacant Emperor position.

Equivalent to the nine heavens birthing a new Emperor.

This position—was crucial for the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao.

Now—Micah sought to prove the Dao.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao—already at odds with Micah—naturally would not allow it.

Boom!

Tribulation clouds rolled.

Emperor-realm life-and-death tribulation.

Before such tribulation—how many prodigies perished.

How many powerhouses fell in grief and indignation.

Micah looked at the tribulation clouds—laughing heartily.

“The Five Phoenixes’ tribulation clouds are tempering tribulations—for strengthening the foundation of those crossing.”

“The nine heavens’ tribulation clouds... what bullshit is this—pure killing intent—wiping out all who defy your Heavenly Dao rules!”

“Heavenly Dao... you’re utter trash.”

Micah roared!

Boom!

His body blazed with endless light—soaring.

Once—no Emperor position—he, Micah—could not prove the Dao. He accepted it.

Now—with a vacant position—he wanted to prove again—but... you Heavenly Dao still block!

Since the Heavenly Dao is unjust!

Why should he obey?

Naturally... defy this heaven!

Terrifying tribulation clouds crashed down.

Like apocalyptic tribulation—each thunderbolt carrying annihilating aura.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Micah's position—instantly became a void.

Countless energy vanished.

Amid rolling smoke and dust—even the scent of charred flesh.

All hearts tightened—staring at the thunder’s center.

Suddenly—

A sound of destruction.

Micah stepped through the smoke and dust.

Under countless interwoven thunderbolts—he pushed Extreme Dao Emperor Fist.

Like a bloodthirsty wolf—crashing into the tribulation clouds.

“This... is tribulation?!”

“Compared to the Five Phoenixes’ Golden Immortal tribulation—far too weak!”

Micah’s low roar exploded.

Bang!

The tribulation clouds tore apart—his burly figure stood tall.

As though ripping apart eternal night covering the sky—scattering dawn's light across the earth.

Around Micah—two auras intertwined.

One—his Golden Immortal path.

The other—his nine heavens cultivation.

Dual-position Emperor!

Countless radiance burst from Micah's back—the sky's blood rain seemed to stop.

The wailing Heavenly Spirit Clan survivors ceased crying—staring dazedly at the newly ascended Emperor—Micah.

Micah—like the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s continuation—gave the Heavenly Spirit Clan hope once more.

Micah’s eyes blazed—glancing at the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

Dual-position Emperor—his power greatly strengthened.

Facing the Heavenly Dao incarnation—he feared nothing.

After a clash—void collapsed. Micah—too lazy to continue fighting the Heavenly Dao.

Though dual-position Emperor—slaying the Heavenly Dao was still too difficult.

He waved his sleeve—sweeping up the surviving Heavenly Spirit Clan members. Another wave—gathering the cold corpses of fallen Saints floating in the void.

Then—one step—crossing the void abyss—returning to the Five Phoenixes.

From now on...

The nine heavens—no more Heavenly Spirit Clan!

Meanwhile—

Lu withdrew his gaze.

Falling on the Spirit-Pressure Chessboard—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul fragments.

Next—to handle the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul.

And the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s final fate—

Would be decided by him—Lu.

Chapter 554: The Routine of a Powerhouse’s Rebirth

When Micah proved Emperor using the nine heavens’ method—yet also severed the nine heavens’ Emperor position like a lone figure dominating eternity—preventing future beings from proving Emperor again.

The peak lasted only an instant. The madness within the nine heavens—also only an instant.

Micah left without much attachment—taking the surviving Heavenly Spirit Clan remnants and departing the nine heavens.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao incarnation—blazing with light—did not act to detain them.

Setting aside whether it could detain Micah—even if it could—the cost would be too great.

After proving Emperor—Micah had transcended the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao's restraints. For the Heavenly Dao to control him—would not be easy.

For mere remnants of the Heavenly Spirit Clan—the Heavenly Dao had no need to oppose Micah.

To the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao—losing a holy clan was nothing. It could cultivate another.

With countless worlds in the nine heavens—any race, no matter how powerful—would experience rise and fall.

It had seen it many times.

With the Heavenly Dao's power—cultivating another ten great holy clans was not difficult. It only required time.

And for the Heavenly Dao—time was endless.

Thus—it cared not for the departed living beings.

Micah brought the Heavenly Spirit Clan into the void starry sky.

He understood the past enmity between the Heavenly Spirit Clan and the Five Phoenixes—so he did not lead the remnants to the Five Phoenixes.

Instead—like the exiled holy clans—they sought unclaimed life-bearing stars in the void starry sky—to continue their lineage.

The current Five Phoenixes—already contained the Heavenly Dao. If the Heavenly Spirit Clan remnants could cultivate—break their shackles—and grow into Xuan Immortals or Golden Immortals—the Heavenly Spirit Clan might rise again.

Micah would not interfere in the Heavenly Spirit Clan's rise or fall.

At Golden Immortal level—fortune sensitivity grew. If the Heavenly Spirit Clan wished to regain glory—they must seize opportunities in this world of cultivation fortune.

Everything seemed to draw to a close.

Yet Micah felt no joy.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had fallen.

But Micah remained puzzled—why had the mighty Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor fallen?

And in such a way—self-destruction.

What reason could drive an Emperor to self-destruct?

Only utter despair—seeing no hope—could lead to self-destruction. The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—should have had no reason.

Micah's doubts grew heavier.

Tantai Xuan, Lu Jiulian, and Zhu Long—the three Five Phoenix Golden Immortals—arrived.

Micah cupped his hands toward them—all at the same realm—he naturally showed respect.

Especially Zhu Long—the Buzhou Peak Demoness...

With her special innate divine ability—even able to injure the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

And the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had once marveled—that this Buzhou Peak Demoness seemed somewhat like an innate divine demon from the Primordial Starry Sky.

This deepened Micah’s confusion.

What were innate divine demons?

What was the Primordial Starry Sky?

Only now—at his current level—did Micah realize—this world was far larger than he imagined.

Indeed—strength determined vision and perspective.

“Dual-position Emperor—quite domineering.”

Tantai Xuan laughed heartily—chatting with Micah.

Then—Tantai Xuan stepped forward—tearing open the vast Underworld before him—wails of departed souls surging.

Proving Golden Immortal—Tantai Xuan now reigned as Nether Emperor in the Underworld—his title resounding.

Watching Tantai Xuan leave—Micah cupped his hands in farewell.

This Nether Emperor was also extraordinary. Micah felt some wariness—even after dual-position Emperor—he remained cautious.

Lu Jiulian also left—hands behind back—stepping on his green lotus—vanishing into the sky.

The Golden Immortals dispersed.

Micah drew a deep breath—glancing back toward the nine heavens.

His gaze gradually firmed.

From now on—he felt no attachment to the nine heavens. Indeed—nothing there was worth lingering for.

Returning to the Five Phoenix Continent—feet on solid ground—his heart filled with satisfaction.

This was where his dreams rose. He would continue walking here.

Golden Immortal path—in the Five Phoenixes—was not the end—only the beginning. Beyond Golden Immortal—lay Great Luo Immortal.

Becoming Great Luo Immortal—was Micah's goal.

Of course—before that—Micah needed to find Lu. He still had doubts.

Walking across the vast sea—

Soon—he saw Origin Island—carried by a giant whale.

Before Micah reached shore—he encountered a familiar figure—the once-enemy—Blood-Robed Gu Mangran.

Now—Gu Mangran remained at Saint realm. Though his strength gradually fully recovered—even advanced further—he was still far from proving Emperor.

“General Gu.”

Micah smiled.

Gu Mangran—seeing Micah—had an extremely complex expression.

Newly proven Emperor—Micah.

Now—Micah had become Emperor.

While he—Gu Mangran—still marked time.

The two stood speechless—gradually having little common ground.

Standing on the sea—vast waves rippled.

Micah turned—looking at Gu Mangran.

He had some doubts about Gu Mangran.

After all—back then—Gu Mangran was no mediocrity—even a genius not inferior to Micah.

If so—why had Gu Mangran not yet proven Emperor?

From his contact with the Five Phoenixes—Gu Mangran should have seized the chance long ago.

“Obsession?”

Micah seemed to recall something—sighing deeply.

Blood-Robed General—once a mighty general under Ancient Emperor Hao—loyal to him throughout life.

Even sleeping in a coffin for hundreds of thousands of years—awaiting Ancient Emperor Hao’s return.

This obsession—blocked Gu Mangran’s path to Emperor.

Unsettled heart—naturally could not prove Emperor.

Mist rose on the sea.

White fog enveloped—making Origin Island gradually blur.

In the blur—a graceful figure walked out.

A woman in black robes—with a foxy face.

Her aura strong—but in Gu Mangran and Micah's eyes—merely average.

This woman—was the maid Yi Yue—sent on orders.

“Young Master anticipated your arrival—and ordered Yi Yue to wait.”

Yi Yue bowed slightly.

Micah and Gu Mangran paused.

“Young Master knew your purpose—and asked Yi Yue to convey a few words—to resolve your doubts.”

“Please speak, miss.”

Micah said—expression grave.

Yi Yue exhaled slowly—looking at Micah—a Golden Immortal.

And Gu Mangran—she naturally recognized—the Blood-Robed General from the ancient tomb—Xuan Immortal powerhouse.

These two—were top-tier existences.

Yi Yue turned to Micah: “Young Master left word—you would come asking what happened after the rift—and the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s fate.”

“Young Master says—the rift’s depths—your strength cannot probe. The consequences—you cannot bear. Only at Golden Immortal peak may you investigate. As for the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—he has fallen—but his soul endures. In the world—only Young Master can save him—no one else.”

Yi Yue said.

She did not fully understand—but Micah—upon hearing—expression condensed.

The next moment—somewhat moved.

“As expected of Young Master Lu... divine calculations.”

“Miss Yi Yue—please convey my thanks to Young Master Lu.”

Micah said.

Yi Yue bowed modestly—nodding slightly.

She turned to Gu Mangran.

“General Gu—Young Master says he knows you wish to ask about Ancient Emperor Hao—whether he still lives.”

Gu Mangran's breathing hitched—eyes condensing—nodding solemnly.

“He lives.”

“Young Master asked Yi Yue to tell General Gu—Ancient Emperor Hao... still lives.”

Yi Yue said.

Gu Mangran—upon hearing—his tense heart relaxed.

Ancient Emperor Hao—indeed lived. That sweeping aura earlier—was indeed Emperor Hao's.

And the seven-colored array rune clash at the rift entrance—

Clearly—Young Master Lu had clashed with Ancient Emperor Hao.

Gu Mangran drew a deep breath—he understood what this meant.

He raised his head—gaze passing Yi Yue—toward Origin Island shrouded in mist.

Divine calculation Young Master Lu...

Perhaps—Lu was sending him a message.

“Emperor’s return...”

“The time to choose sides... has come.”

Gu Mangran exhaled deeply.

Meanwhile—Micah’s eyes blazed sharply.

Ancient Emperor Hao... still lived.

In that void rift?

Meaning—those vanished Ancient Emperors from the ancient war—were all gathered in that rift?

What was their purpose?

Did those Ancient Emperors force the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor to death?

Suddenly—Micah felt a vast curtain descend—enveloping the Five Phoenixes and nine heavens.

“Young Master Lu... must be under immense pressure now...”

“Who wants to be another’s pawn—let alone someone as proud as Young Master Lu.”

“Us cultivators—if we wish to break the game—perhaps... only by achieving Great Luo Immortal fruit position. Only then—transcending heaven and earth—fearless of any Emperor scheme.”

Micah’s thoughts swirled—suddenly gaining clarity.

In Micah’s view—Lu must have sensed this immense pressure—thus needing rapid secluded cultivation.

After thanking Yi Yue—Micah and Gu Mangran turned to leave.

Both left deep in thought.

Micah returned to the Five Phoenix Continent—creating “Extreme Realm Cultivation Method”—aiming for Great Luo Immortal fruit position. Perhaps—only by advancing his “Extreme Realm Cultivation Method” could he succeed.

After all—this was his foundation.

Gu Mangran returned to the ancient tomb.

Lu said Ancient Emperor Hao lived—but Gu Mangran felt dazed. He thought he should be joyful—yet inexplicably—could not.

“Why?”

In the palace—Gu Mangran hunched—pondering.

Yet—he could not understand.

Leaving the palace—he paced—to where Lu Changkong refined divine herbs.

As Lu Changkong entered Xuan Immortal—his divine herb refinement became effortless.

A seven-colored Chrysanthemum Divine Herb—dazzling.

Its potency—likely rivaling million-year divine herbs!

Lu Changkong was satisfied with this result.

Seeing Gu Mangran—he smiled: “General Gu—what troubles you?”

Gu Mangran hesitated—he wanted to share his doubts with Lu Changkong—believing him wise—able to see clearer.

But he shook his head—giving up.

In the end—he bore it alone.

Lu Changkong paused—then smiled—plucking a Chrysanthemum Divine Herb—handing it to Gu Mangran—patting his shoulder.

“General Gu—if troubled—no need to speak. Worldly matters—all depend on one’s heart. Follow your heart.”

“Go out more. You’ve been cooped in the tomb too long. Experience the outside world.”

Lu Changkong advised.

Gu Mangran nodded. Perhaps—he really needed to wander—to clear his mind.

Even if crisis descended—he need not worry.

Or rather—it was no longer his place to worry—because in the Five Phoenixes—several stronger than him had been born.

Gu Mangran exhaled—leaving the tomb. Sitting on a small bamboo raft—cradling the Chrysanthemum Divine Herb from Lu Changkong.

Drifting on the boundless vast sea.

Wherever the waves carried him.

He sought his heart.

...

Lu Jiulian returned to the Ascension Land. After proving Emperor—he became even more divine—the entire Ascension Land grew more orderly.

Proving Emperor—seemed to influence the Ascension Land's fortune.

Compared to before and after proving—Lu Jiulian's state changed little.

He still sat daily on the green lotus—like a green lotus—on the Heavenly Court ruins—seemingly comprehending something.

Tang Guo—circling her Master—felt the profound aura of Golden Immortal. For those below Human Immortal—perhaps incomprehensible.

But once becoming Immortal—

Comprehending the Golden Immortal aura Lu Jiulian emanated—cultivation could easily break through.

Gradually—

Around Lu Jiulian—countless Immortals gathered.

They sat eagerly.

Lu Jiulian awoke from contemplation—looking dazedly at the circle after circle of seated Immortals around him.

These Immortals—included ascenders from the former lower three heavens' high-martial worlds.

And Heavenly Humans from the Five Phoenixes.

And his silly disciple—Tang Guo.

“Hm? Why so much sudden fortune?”

Lu Jiulian was confused.

He had done nothing—yet fortune descended.

Because of these Immortals comprehending his emanated Golden Immortal aura?

Thinking this—

Lu Jiulian's divine soul stirred.

Mouth opening—cultivation insights flowed.

Each word—from his mouth—turned tangible—flowing with brilliant light.

The Immortals—suddenly enlightened—doubts clearing instantly.

“Green Lotus Golden Immortal... is lecturing?”

“Surely Emperor-realm Great Dao!”

“This is our fortune—our opportunity! One lecture surpasses a hundred years of cultivation!”

The Immortals rejoiced wildly.

Yet none dared make noise. The entire Ascension Land—silent—only Lu Jiulian on his green lotus—lecturing.

As he lectured—fortune surged from heaven and earth—pouring into him.

Lu Jiulian understood.

After lecturing—Lu Jiulian turned—having Tang Guo—True Immortal peak—try lecturing.

Yet Tang Guo's lecture gained no fortune—even drew disdain.

Lu Jiulian sought Kong Nanfei—having him lecture. Kong Nanfei—Xuan Immortal—spoke eloquently—as a Confucian—his tongue sharp.

Yet—though flowery—no fortune descended.

After several comparisons—

Lu Jiulian understood—perhaps lecturing... was a way for Golden Immortals and above to gain fortune.

Meanwhile—Zhu Long returned to Buzhou Peak—living her usual plain days.

Taking her bamboo flute—she sat on green stone—gently playing.

In the distance—the Heavenly Dao Tree swayed to her melody.

...

Origin Lake—Origin Island.

Lu was not as anxious as Micah imagined.

His seclusion—was not for cultivation—but to handle the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul fragments.

Leaning on his thousand-blade chair—holding a cup of Heavenly Immortal Wine.

Lu raised his head—eyes gleaming.

“How to handle the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul fragments?”

Lu thought.

Raising his hand—he clenched.

Instantly—countless chess pieces converged—forming the complete image of the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

Lu flicked a finger—a chess piece shot into the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul.

Countless scenes and memories flashed before Lu.

But Lu remained calm—ignoring them—like fast-forwarding a film. Soon—he found the memories from when the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor reached the rift’s depths.

Lu perked up.

He was curious—what was in that rift’s depths.

What could drive the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor to self-destruct?

This fierce death method—unless seeing something specifically targeting Emperors?

Lu grew more curious. Undoubtedly—a great secret.

Related to the nine heavens' great secret—even the void starry sky's great secret.

Crack! Crack!

Suddenly!

In the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul depths—an array rune emerged.

“Nine Character Array Runes... Dou Character Array Rune!”

Lu's gaze condensed—seeing the Dou Character Array Rune instantly transform into thousands—like a net—sealing the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's memories.

Lu frowned.

“Encrypted at that time?”

Lu drew a deep breath.

During the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s self-destruction—the rift depths had array net forming.

Lu thought it was to stop the explosion—now it seemed—to seal memories.

Indeed—Ancient Emperor self-destruction—could not be easily stopped. Then—the only option was sealing memories.

“Dou Character Array Rune.”

Lu narrowed his eyes—not too concerned. For Nine Character Array Runes—he had countermeasures—after all—he mastered the Transmission Platform’s Eight Trigrams array runes.

But as he activated Eight Trigrams array runes—to break the seal—

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul emitted intense pain—like his soul being torn.

Lu immediately stopped.

“Forcibly breaking the seal—the seal can be broken—but the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul would shatter into countless pieces... impossible to see those memories again.”

“What a calculation.”

Lu exhaled deeply. Ancient Emperor Hao—in that lightning moment—made such a decisive move.

“The more so—the more I, Lu Ping’an, am curious.”

Thus—the method to handle the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—needed changing.

Lu leaned on his thousand-blade chair—staring at the chessboard. Chess pieces shifted like wind and clouds.

Lu’s eyes gleamed—shifting.

Suddenly—Lu’s lips curved upward.

“Since forcibly breaking the seal won’t work—let the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor break it himself slowly...”

“Natural memory recovery—the seal cannot stop it.”

Lu smiled.

Looking at the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul—eyes closed—hovering.

“Let the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor possess and rebirth—and make him think this Young Master does not know. Once he knows it’s all my layout—he will be wary—memory hard to naturally awaken.”

“So—the setting is simple: in the rift battlefield battle—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor self-destructed—thinking his soul would perish—yet due to the divine demon corpse—possessed a mortal in the Five Phoenixes’ mortal realm.”

Lu finished—excitedly snapping his fingers.

Powerhouse possession—monstrous cultivation—rising again—overturning the chessboard...

The routine of a powerhouse's rebirth.

Standard protagonist template.

Lu was quite generous to the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

Not only helping him recover memories—but stimulating his cultivation—creating more spiritual energy for Lu.

A win-win!

Smiling lightly.

Lu rolled up his sleeve—picking a piece.

On the Spirit-Pressure Chessboard—chess situation shifted like wind and clouds.

Then—a piece fell.

Snap!

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's soul—was instantly sent by Lu—breaking through time and space...

...

Five Phoenix Continent.

Great Xuan Divine Dynasty—Eastern Yue Dynasty—Prince Yu's Mansion.

Miscellaneous Courtyard—Woodshed.

A stiff corpse—covered in purple bruises—lay in the foul-smelling woodshed—suddenly twitched—trembling violently.

“Hahahaha... heaven leaves a path! I... cough cough... live again!”

“The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao—plotted against this Emperor—those Ancient Emperors forcing my self-destruction—all wait for this Emperor!”

The stiff servant's body flipped—gasping heavily.

A fleeting surge of powerful soul power.

The servant's wounds rapidly healed.

Suddenly—the servant's expression changed drastically.

A terrifying divine soul swept over.

“Hm? This Young Master clearly sensed Emperor-realm soul power... why gone?”

“Ah—how can I not find it?”

Lu's voice echoed—then gradually faded.

The servant clutched his chest—not daring to breathe—eyes filled with terror.

The next moment—ecstasy!

That aura earlier—was Lu Ping'an!

Lu Ping'an did not know he lived?

Those Ancient Emperors surely did not know either!

He actually had a chance to start over!

He—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor...

Had returned!

Chapter 555: The Clash Between Witch Clan and Demon Clan

No one expected that the Heavenly Spirit Clan's invasion of the Five Phoenixes would end this way.

The ones suffering heavy losses were the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor and his clan.

After this battle, the Heavenly Spirit Clan was severely weakened. Their once-proud Holy Hall was shattered—every Saint perished under the Heavenly Dao's wrath.

Countless Heavenly Spirit Clan members were crushed by the Heavenly Dao—souls scattered.

The once supreme Heavenly Spirit Clan of the nine heavens had fallen to the abyss.

It could even be called near-extinction.

Yet the final twist—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor charging into the rift—left many stunned.

Lu Jiulian and Tantai Xuan—the two Five Phoenix Golden Immortals—narrowed their eyes.

They had clearly seen Lu's intervention.

“What was the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's final trump card?”

“That seemed like a strange creature—neither in the nine heavens nor the Five Phoenixes.”

“Can he win inside the rift?”

Tantai Xuan and Lu Jiulian asked each other.

Many Xuan Immortals watched this battle—holding their breath.

The situation had spiraled beyond imagination. Those vanished Ancient Emperors—hidden for unknown reasons—seemed on the verge of returning.

Whether this was good or bad—no one knew.

Seeing even someone as powerful as the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor nearly die—

Now entering the rift—no one knew what awaited inside.

Lu was not anxious. Seated in his thousand-blade chair—

Others could not see—but he could.

The Spirit-Pressure Chessboard before him glowed faintly.

Lu picked a chess piece from the box—slowly placing it. As it landed—countless lines flickered in his eyes.

His divine soul left his body—drifting.

Above the sky—the void rift stretched—radiating terrifying pressure.

Because the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor had entered—the guardians of the entrance seemed weakened.

At least—Lu’s divine soul entered without resistance.

Of course—he did not venture deep.

His divine soul hovered at the entrance—gazing inside.

...

Boom!

Terrifying aura erupted fully.

Through Lu’s divine soul observation—he clearly saw—inside the rift—a fearsome battle raged.

An Emperor-realm battle.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—fused with the innate divine demon corpse—his strength had even surged slightly.

This was why he dared charge into the void rift.

Lu saw the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor surrounded and attacked by several figures—terrifying energy waves seeming to crush heaven and earth.

Lu sighed. The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor was truly miserable—gang-beaten in the Five Phoenixes—now gang-beaten again in the rift.

Those figures were shrouded in strange mist—faces obscured.

But Lu clearly sensed—every energy wave was Emperor-realm power. Many auras felt familiar to Lu.

After all—Lu had tampered with various holy clans' imperial weapons—quite familiar with Ancient Emperors' auras within them.

Thus—Lu grew increasingly puzzled.

What was the purpose of these Ancient Emperors hiding here?

What were they plotting?

Hiding in this rift for hundreds of thousands of years—there must be an unknown reason.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Fused with the divine demon corpse—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor grew stronger.

Unfortunately—still not enough. Though he gained immense power—the level remained Emperor realm—hardly able to dominate and overturn the chessboard.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor battled several Emperors—pushing deeper into the rift.

Even standing at the rift entrance—Lu’s divine soul sensed terrifying energy waves surging from within.

That battle—absolutely ferocious.

Lu enjoyed watching the show.

In the nine heavens—

Micah blocked the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao.

The Heavenly Dao manifested an incarnation—Emperor-realm strength.

Micah fearless—raising fists—charging forward. He had long resented the Heavenly Dao. Without its blockage—he might have become Emperor long ago.

Boom!

Extreme Dao Emperor Fist—comprehended in the Five Phoenixes. Micah's talent was monstrous—even Lu admired this fist art.

The Heavenly Dao incarnation was a figure of light.

They clashed in the nine heavens. Heavenly Dao rules coiled around it—Micah's fists hard to land.

But the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao seemed uninterested in prolonged battle—unleashing full dominance.

Soon—Micah was blood-soaked—appearance miserable.

Repeatedly repelled by the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

Even his chest was pierced.

Yet Micah grew fiercer. To describe it as “the more he fought, the more excited” was not exaggerated.

The Heavenly Dao incarnation wanted to enter the void rift—to deal with the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor.

Because—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor was its true target. As for Micah—it cared not.

After all—Micah proved in the Five Phoenixes. Alive or dead—meant nothing to the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao.

But the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor was different. A living native Ancient Emperor of the nine heavens—his value far surpassed this traitor Micah.

Boom!

Micah—blood-soaked—retreated in the void.

Each step shattered void with cracks.

“I said before—you blocked me. Today—I block you.”

“You blocked me for six hundred thirty thousand years. I block you for half a day—not too much, right?”

Micah grinned—appearance miserable—yet his words roared with boldness.

“Fight again!”

A flame seemed ignited in Micah’s heart.

His Extreme Realm path grew through battle.

The Heavenly Dao incarnation raged.

Each attack sent Micah flying far.

Yet Micah returned again and again—bearing pressure.

Because the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor entered the rift to fight—the world could only see Micah battling the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

Seeing Micah's relentless refusal to yield—inspired many.

Micah indeed felt immense pressure.

But this also ignited his battle desire.

His Extreme Realm path needed such battle to break through and gain insight.

Before—as Quasi-Emperor—he had no right to fight the Heavenly Dao incarnation.

Now—this chance lay before him. He would fight with all his might—vent his obsession—clarify his mind.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The Heavenly Dao incarnation floated high—towering. Its body blazed with blinding white light—face obscured.

Suddenly—

Rule power transformed into chains—tightly binding Micah's body.

Micah struggled—but the more he did—the heavier the chains became—nearly crushing his flesh.

Pfft!

Blood sprayed everywhere.

His flesh exploded from the chains—blood bursting from wounds—each drop brimming with vitality.

After all—he was Emperor realm—though newly proven from hundreds of thousands of years as an Ancient Emperor.

Hundreds of thousands of years—compared to millions—was nothing.

But Micah—newly proven Emperor—was in his prime—full of vigor.

Micah refused to yield.

In his mind—countless scenes flashed.

Because he had severed his cultivation—restarting from Core Formation realm to now—Golden Immortal.

But upon proving Golden Immortal—memories of his Holy Hall Master days—severed earlier—gradually resurfaced.

Soon—he recovered all nine heavens' cultivation memories.

Micah froze—as though watching time rewind through those memories. As they fused with his mind—

Micah sighed deeply.

With a thought—his nine heavens cultivation surged—like climbing a ladder—reaching Quasi-Emperor.

Of course—using Heavenly Spirit Clan methods.

With Golden Immortal cultivation and memories—advancing was easy.

Quasi-Emperor power had little impact on Micah's strength.

But—it gave him a bold idea.

The moment the idea appeared—it surged uncontrollably in his mind.

“If I prove Emperor again with the nine heavens' method... how strong would I become?!”

A mad thought in Micah's heart.

He had proven Emperor through the Five Phoenixes' path—after great difficulty.

If he also proved Emperor with the nine heavens' method—

Dual Emperor cultivation—would he be even more dominant?!

Thus—fight! Micah grew increasingly frenzied—battling the Heavenly Dao.

He would use this battle—to force his potential—to prove Emperor with the nine heavens' method!

Terrifying attacks surged from Micah's fists.

Under Micah's relentless assault—the Heavenly Dao incarnation truly struggled to break free.

...

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's mind was filled with violence.

This was the side effect of fusing with the innate divine demon corpse. No choice—the divine demon was too strong. Without cultivating the Heavenly Dao—it could forge flesh rivaling—or surpassing—Emperor realm.

Relying on this—he charged deep into the rift.

He retained a sliver of clarity.

He wanted to know—who was plotting—who was playing chess.

The moment they clashed—he knew—the ones blocking him—the ones trying to kill him—were his old comrades.

Boom!

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor battled onward.

Countless powerful attacks struck his body.

Even with the divine demon flesh as shield—he was blasted bloody—scales shattering.

Terrifying killing intent crisscrossed—leaving the rift in chaos.

Emperor-realm battle—containing unimaginable destruction.

Blood-soaked—he pushed deeper.

Finally—his body plunged into darkness and nothingness.

When light flickered—

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor saw—seemed to glimpse some secret.

Boom!

Void instantly collapsed.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor stared dazedly at the deepest part of the rift.

A chill enveloped him.

Even fused with the divine demon's powerful flesh—he felt terrifying cold.

“No... impossible!”

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor stared in disbelief.

The next moment—he turned—desperately fleeing toward the rift’s exit.

“Conspiracy! All of it—a conspiracy!”

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s face twisted with madness.

As though seeing an unacceptable truth.

His battle intent vanished—even the divine demon’s battle intent was extinguished.

Perhaps—not knowing the truth allowed peaceful living.

But knowing the truth—brought soul-deep pain.

This was a grand scheme!

Everything between heaven and earth—a scheme!

“All of it... fake!”

All fake!

Boom!

He transformed into black light—fleeing like lightning.

However—

From the rift depths—terrifying killing intent erupted—heaven and earth overturned.

Pfft!

An attack from the rift depths—terrifying beyond measure—smashed into the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s back.

The divine demon flesh—instantly bloodied—blurred.

Immense force made the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's aura dwindle.

At the rift entrance—

Lu—watching the show—changed expression.

He saw the bloodied Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—desperately fleeing.

And the despair and disbelief on his face.

A collapse of mentality after massive shock.

“What exactly is in that rift's depths... to break a millions-year-old Ancient Emperor's mentality?”

Lu's divine soul focused.

“Perhaps—only the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor himself knows...”

“So...”

“I’ll seize it!”

Decisive.

Lu acted—to seize the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul fragments.

Whether to uncover the rift’s secrets—or simply—not wanting those fragments to fall into the enemy’s hands.

Mind set—he acted without hesitation.

In an instant—

He struck with a palm.

Terrifying suction erupted—contending with the array-hand resembling Ancient Emperor Hao—for the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s soul fragments.

Chapter 556: Gu Mangran's Choice

The Witch Clan exists in the Western Continent, having long become its sole overlord.

Born with powerful flesh and a warlike nature, even the youngest Witch Clan children can chase ferocious beasts across the land.

When it comes to combat, the Witch Clan fears no one.

Thus, when Wu Qi saw one of his own great shamans being chased by a blazing sun, rage instantly ignited.

In a flash, he crossed the distance, erupting with shocking blood qi.

Golden Crow Demon Saint was equally stunned. He never expected such a race to exist in the far west—possessing Xuan Immortal-level combat power!

Yet Golden Crow Demon Saint was fearless. Zhu Long's sermon had benefited him greatly—his strength had slightly advanced. Combined with his unique bloodline, he was no longer the fledgling Xuan Immortal he once was.

Boom!

Golden flames swept outward. A resounding cry echoed from the Golden Crow's beak.

Transforming into human form, spear in hand, he clashed with Wu Qj, whose body blazed with Golden Crow Divine Fire.

The earth shook, the vast sea boiled.

This was a battle between a Witch Clan Witch King and a Demon Clan Demon Saint.

The great shaman, panting heavily, looked at Golden Crow Demon Saint with eyes full of awe and fear.

A Witch King-level powerhouse!

He was truly fortunate to have survived.

“Must hurry back and inform the other Witch Kings!”

With this thought, the great shaman turned and fled in disgrace.

Meanwhile, Wu Qi and Golden Crow's battle showed no sign of stopping.

The sky burned crimson. Wu Qi's power was terrifying—Witch Clan bloodline, honed by Overlord and Tang Yimo, made him far from weak.

Golden Crow was equally formidable—his powerful demon bloodline granting immense strength.

“Kill my Demon Clan's great demon—regardless of your race—today you must die!”

Golden Crow roared in fury.

Golden flames scorched the earth, cracking the soil.

Wu Qi grew more excited the longer they fought—red light surging, qi like a dragon.

“Fine bird! Be my mount, and live!”

Wu Qi bellowed.

Blood qi roiled. He uprooted a mountain peak and hurled it at Golden Crow.

Golden Crow swung his spear, shattering the peak.

Their verbal sparring fueled the battle's ferocity.

For a time, they fought evenly.

The clash moved to the vast sea, then to the sky—each move threatening to overturn the land.

Finally, Wu Qi unleashed his innate divine ability—speed reaching extreme limits.

As though piercing space itself.

Golden Crow was suppressed—golden feathers scattering. Yet Golden Crow was no weakling—sun divine fire blazed, sealing Wu Qi's retreat.

Wu Qi's skin charred—face blackened.

The two fought fiercely.

Meanwhile, the other Witch Kings—alerted by the great shaman—rushed from their tribes.

Boom!

Terrifying flames soared. Zhu Yan glared furiously.

One by one, Witch Kings' auras erupted—like rainbows piercing the sun—changing the color of heaven and earth.

Golden Crow sensed it—expression changing drastically.

So many Xuan Immortal-level powerhouses?

What kind of race was this?

The Five Phoenixes—besides humans—had such a powerful race?

This was Golden Crow's first discovery of such a secret.

Struggling even against Wu Qi alone—now facing so many Witch Kings—Golden Crow dared not linger.

In an instant, he streaked across the sky—wings blazing—fleeing toward the Demon Clan.

Like a sun, trailing scorching light.

“Don’t run!”

“Be my mount!”

Wu Qi—unwilling to let go—had taken a liking to Golden Crow during the fight.

Thus, Wu Qi charged—exploding with extreme speed—like traversing space.

However...

Golden Crow transformed into blazing sun—also extreme speed.

No matter how Wu Qi chased—he always fell just short.

The other Witch Kings did not pursue—there was no need. Wu Qi was strong enough—not easily suppressed.

Over the vast sea—Wu Qi pursued wildly—Golden Crow soared above.

From afar—it looked like chasing the sun—quite dazzling.

When Golden Crow reached the Demon Clan Court—

Terrifying auras erupted instantly.

One by one—demons stood on the city walls—seeing their Demon Saint chased by a ferocious figure.

Boom!

From the Demon Clan city—auras surged skyward.

One by one—great demons rushed from the walls.

Yet under Golden Crow's command—all retreated to defend the city.

Wu Qi—seeing the Demon Clan city—eyes narrowed. The next moment—battle intent boiled.

He had worried the Witch Clan tribesmen grew too slowly—lacking combat—blood cooling.

Now—seeing the Demon Clan Court—he grew excited.

Perhaps—the Witch Clan warriors could finally find a place to fight and train!

“This Demon Saint-level powerhouse!”

On the Demon Clan walls—great demons felt dread.

They never expected such Xuan Immortal-level existences in the far west!

A human powerhouse?

Didn't seem like it!

Golden Crow and Wu Qi clashed before the Demon Clan city—the shockwaves cracking the walls.

The Demon Monkey King soon sensed it—arriving as a streak of light.

Iron staff sweeping—joining the battle.

With Demon Monkey King and Golden Crow—Wu Qi quickly felt pressure.

After all—neither was a weak Xuan Immortal. Together—they turned the tide.

Knowing he couldn't defeat Golden Crow—Wu Qi retreated.

Golden Crow landed on the city walls—coldly watching Wu Qi leave—vaguely sensing immense pressure looming over the Demon Clan.

“What kind of being is this?”

Demon Monkey King's expression grave.

“They call themselves ‘Witch’—possess innate divine abilities—very strong.”

Golden Crow said.

“One of our great demons—killed—shamefully eaten as food.”

Golden Crow’s words made Demon Monkey King’s gaze sharpen.

Other great demons roared in fury.

Humans and demons had warred for endless years—yet never ate each other. Humans sought demon crystals.

Now—a race emerged—treating demon consumption as purpose.

How could the Demon Clan not feel threatened?

Golden Crow raised his head—seeing the Demon Clan’s fortune begin to waver.

“Fortune turbulent... this Witch Clan’s appearance will surely bring great calamity to the Demon Clan.”

“Blessing or disaster—impossible to predict.”

“Moreover—this race seems not to cultivate fortune—unaffected by it...”

Golden Crow said gravely.

Demon Monkey King stared into the distance.

“Furthermore—this clan has eleven more Xuan Immortal-level powerhouses. The Demon Clan Court... may not withstand them.”

Golden Crow’s words shocked Demon Monkey King.

Eleven more powerhouses like Wu Qi?

“Is this race... no weaker than the human cultivation world?”

Demon Monkey King was stunned. When did such a powerful tribe quietly emerge in the far west?

After Wu Qi retreated—soon five more Witch Kings arrived.

The remaining Witch Kings guarded their tribes.

Wu Qi—delighted—gathered five Witch Kings' power—attacking the Demon Clan Court again.

As dawn's light—shattered gold across the vast sea's horizon—

Six Witch Kings stepped across the sea—arriving at the Demon Clan Court.

On the Demon Clan walls—the horn sounded.

The prepared Demon Clan army mobilized—surrounding the six Witch Kings.

Golden Crow Demon Saint and Demon Monkey King acted together.

This battle—utterly brutal.

The Demon Clan city ran red with blood—many demons dying before its gates.

The six Witch Kings' power was terrifying.

Wu Qi and the six Witch Kings—stimulated by blood—grew frenzied—even entering berserk states.

Golden Crow—heavily injured—detonated sun divine fire—repelling the Witch Kings.

But the Witch Kings only temporarily withdrew—soon returning.

Under Wu Qi's lead—the six Witch Kings charged deep into the Demon Clan Court's palaces.

Golden Crow Demon Saint—gravely wounded—coldly watched them.

Golden Crow fervently sought Zhu Long's aid.

As her disciple—under his sincerity—Zhu Long soon sensed it.

For Zhu Long—the current Demon Clan provided her vast fortune. How could she watch it perish?

Moreover—Father arranged for her to protect the Demon Clan. Naturally—she could not allow its destruction.

Thus—

Just as the six Witch Kings surged with unstoppable momentum—

Zhu Long’s statue radiated light.

Soon—her phantom appeared above the statue.

“Leave at once.”

Zhu Long said calmly.

The Witch Kings—except Heavenly Witch—feared nothing. Naturally—they had no fear of Zhu Long.

Witch Clan warlike—with an axe—they would even split the heavens.

Thus—the Witch Kings roared—charging Zhu Long.

Golden Crow's face flushed with rage. These Witch Kings... utter barbarians—complete idiots!

Zhu Long's phantom remained calm.

Flicking her finger lightly.

Instantly—wind and cloud shifted. Heaven and earth seemed to dim before the Witch Kings.

The six Witch Kings—blown by gale—like balls—were sent flying from the Demon Clan Court—crashing into the western vast sea—pressed to the seabed by immense pressure.

The Demon Clan's crisis—temporarily resolved.

But this battle—was immense humiliation for the Demon Clan.

Their high-end combat power—still too weak.

After this battle—

The Witch Clan and Demon Clan became irreconcilable enemies.

The Demon Clan shifted city defenses from the human border—stationing them westward—guarding against the Witch Clan.

After being flicked away by Zhu Long—

The Witch Kings dared not easily enter the Demon Clan Court. One flick from Zhu Long—next time—she might swat them like flies.

They were warlike—but not foolish.

“That’s Heavenly Witch-level powerhouse! Terrifying! Cannot provoke!”

Wu Qi said seriously.

Soon—the Witch Clan tribe warriors and great shamans gathered—twelve tribes forming an expedition army—attacking the Demon Clan.

Demon Clan and Witch Clan clashed on the plains—Demon Clan fortune rumbling.

Demon Monkey King—iron staff in hand—left the Demon Clan—heading to human lands.

Soon—using his connections—he invited several human Xuan Immortals.

Overlord and Tang Yimo—currently in seclusion—were alerted.

When Demon Monkey King invited them—they were stunned.

From Demon Monkey King's description—they quickly determined—these idiots were the twelve Witch Kings.

In the end—Overlord and Tang Yimo refused Demon Monkey King. Though Demon Clan fortune turbulent and tempting—

They had ties with the twelve Witch Kings—karmic bonds. Even participating—gaining fortune would be difficult. Better cultivate in human lands.

They would not wade into this mess.

Demon Monkey King invited many human Xuan Immortals to guard—greatly affecting Demon Clan fortune.

After all—inviting human Xuan Immortals required cost.

But without human Xuan Immortals—the Demon Clan alone could not resist the Witch Clan’s twelve Xuan Immortal-level powerhouses.

Du Longyang, Ye Shoudao, and other human Xuan Immortals with Demon Clan ties—also joined.

Helping the Demon Clan weather the crisis.

The Demon Clan-Witch Clan war affected not only Demon Clan fortune—but worldly fortune.

When fortune turbulent—prodigies emerge.

Soon—the Demon Clan’s special bloodline great demons—gained fortune in battle—proving Demon Saint.

The Demon Clan gradually caught its breath.

In battle with the Witch Clan—they slowly gained resistance.

...

Origin Lake—Origin Island.

Regarding the Witch Clan-Demon Clan war—Lu did not intervene.

The Five Phoenixes could not lack conflict. Without competition—no development. Mutual rivalry stimulated rapid growth.

Chaos breeds heroes—battle births powerhouses. This had always been Lu's philosophy.

Moreover—without conflict—fortune stagnant—birthing Xuan Immortals or Golden Immortals would be too difficult.

This was why Lu did not stop the fighting.

The effect was clear. During the war—both Witch and Demon Clans' overall strength grew visibly.

In contrast—humanity gradually fell behind. Over the years—human Xuan Immortals were few—because humanity had grown too comfortable.

Thinking this—Lu fell into contemplation.

“A race’s development—if lacking ‘tribulation’—may stagnate. Previous beast calamity, later imperial blood calamity—these brought humanity great opportunities—birthing many Xuan Immortal powerhouses.”

“Now—the nine heavens holy clans that once pressured humanity have settled. Humanity has lost pressure... perhaps—some great tribulations need arranging.”

Lu thought.

Shouting about birthing new Golden Immortals—but how?

Without sufficient opportunity—how to birth them?

Like heavenly tribulation—designed to temper cultivators. Surviving brings great harvest—even transcendence.

For the entire world—entire race—the same.

Surviving tribulations—brings strength.

Thus—arranging some great tribulations was necessary.

Entering the Transmission Platform—he began deducing with it.

How to arrange “tribulations” to advance the Five Phoenixes’ development—crucial for its future.

...

While Lu deduced “tribulations”—

While the Witch Clan and Demon Clan warred—

On the boundless vast sea—

Gu Mangran sat on his solitary bamboo raft—drifting endlessly—as though one with heaven and earth.

Drifting with the waves—feeling the world’s changes—gaining faint insights.

After drifting countless days—

Gu Mangran's divine soul sensed beings spying on him.

This left him both astonished and curious.

Though the vast sea teemed with life—most knew to avoid danger.

As a Saint—his aura naturally kept sea creatures away.

Yet now—someone spied—even planned to attack.

Which bold sea creature dared?

Gu Mangran's divine soul swept over.

Boom!

Sea water exploded—water prisons rising.

Within—captive humanoid creatures.

“Hm? What race is this? Such a race in the vast sea?”

Gu Mangran was puzzled.

He dispersed the bubbles.

The humanoid creatures—immediately kowtowed to Gu Mangran.

Seeking to learn cultivation from him.

“Sea Clan?”

“When did such a race appear in the vast sea?”

Gu Mangran laughed.

With a thought—he flung the sea creatures far away—continuing to drift on his raft.

Yet the sea creatures—thrown away—refused to give up—swimming back—begging to learn cultivation.

Gu Mangran—ruthless—threw them away again and again.

His heart was confused—where was the mood to teach sea creatures cultivation?

After driving them off—he lay back on the raft.

Yet the sea creatures persisted—unfazed by Gu Mangran’s terrifying aura—like a demon god.

Gu Mangran froze.

“Why aren’t you afraid?”

“Why not give up? I drive you away again and again—yet you still follow?”

Gu Mangran asked the sea creatures.

A sea creature—gathering courage—spoke crisply.

“You are a great powerhouse—stronger than us! Our instinct tells us—following you—we can learn great cultivation arts!”

“Learning cultivation requires cost—we are prepared. But if fear makes us flee—we miss the chance. Even with willingness—we’d lack ability.”

The crisp voice—like a heavy hammer—struck Gu Mangran’s heart.

Making his confused mind gradually clear.

Fleeing from fear—once missed—the chance is gone forever.

What was Gu Mangran afraid of?

He raised his head—sitting on the raft—gazing at the starry night sky—beautiful enough to intoxicate.

This was the Five Phoenixes—a place that intoxicated him.

“To understand truth—price must be paid. Such simple truth—even these newly intelligent beings understand—yet I remain confused?”

Gu Mangran laughed.

The Five Phoenixes or Ancient Emperor Hao—he could only choose one.

Whichever he chose—price must be paid.

Since so—he would prepare to pay the price—choose by heart—by instinct.

Gu Mangran laughed.

This laugh—felt like clouds parting—revealing clear sky.

As though laying down a heavy burden.

He looked at the sea creatures floating on the water—eyes full of longing.

Gu Mangran said: “Wait for my return. If I return... I will teach you cultivation—how about it?”

The sea creatures’ eyes brightened—nodding repeatedly.

Gu Mangran laughed heartily—clutching the Chrysanthemum Divine Herb—standing on the bamboo raft for the first time.

He felt an urge to sing at the sky.

One step—

Transforming into a streak of light—rushing beyond the Five Phoenixes.

In the ancient tomb—

Lu Changkong—studying divine herbs—paused—looking out the palace window—at Gu Mangran soaring into the clouds—smiling.

Then—lowering his head—continuing his work.

Gu Mangran rushed out of the Five Phoenix Continent—at extreme speed—soon exiting the void starry sky—plunging into the void abyss.

The void abyss contained terrifying corrosive power.

Yet he feared nothing.

White robes turned blood-red—he crossed the void abyss.

Hovering in the nine heavens.

Raising his head—gazing at the sky—eyes blazing.

He needed an answer. Since Ancient Emperor Hao lived—he would ask directly. Even if the price was heavy—to clarify his heart—he feared nothing.

These little sea creatures understood—why should he remain confused?

Boom!

Blood robes whipped—Gu Mangran stared at the void.

Blood qi rose like a crimson pillar—piercing the clouds.

As though knocking on a gate.

Or issuing a silent roar.

“Emperor Hao—I know you live.”

Gu Mangran’s eyes shone—blood robes fluttering—said.

With his words—

A faint rumble sounded.

In the void—

A light slowly emerged—then tore open the sky—forming a rift stretching endlessly.

Chapter 557: Young Master Lu’s Shot Was Beautiful!

When Gu Mangran left the Five Phoenixes, Lu—who was deducing the Five Phoenixes' tribulations—suddenly opened his eyes.

A faint sense stirred within him. He looked toward the direction where Gu Mangran had vanished.

It was as though he knew exactly what Gu Mangran intended. Lu slowly exhaled, not planning to interfere.

The Five Phoenixes must hold special meaning for Gu Mangran.

After all, when Gu Mangran first arrived, the Five Phoenixes were weak. Watching it grow stronger step by step—perhaps Gu Mangran could not easily let go.

As for the final choice, it could only be made by Gu Mangran himself.

Lu could intervene, but he chose not to.

Sipping Heavenly Immortal Wine, he smiled faintly.

His divine sense sank back into the Transmission Platform.

...

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Four golden streaks streaked through the sky.

Lu Jiulian, Zhu Long, Tantai Xuan, and the reclusive Micah all appeared—hovering beyond the Five Phoenixes.

Their gazes pierced through the vast starry void—toward Gu Mangran crossing the void abyss.

“Blood-Robed General Gu—what is he doing?”

Micah frowned, watching Gu Mangran’s figure disappear into the void abyss.

Tantai Xuan stood with hands behind his back, gaze deep.

Lu Jiulian and Zhu Long remained silent. They had fought alongside Gu Mangran before.

In truth, they knew Gu Mangran's identity—former Blood-Robed General, the most loyal subordinate under Ancient Emperor Hao.

Now—Ancient Emperor Hao seemed alive and at odds with the Five Phoenixes. Thus, the time had come for Gu Mangran to make his choice.

“He must be seeking an answer.”

Tantai Xuan said.

That answer might decide Gu Mangran's future.

Micah nodded slightly—he seemed to understand Gu Mangran's purpose.

He sighed softly.

“If Ancient Emperor Hao truly orchestrated everything... then Gu Mangran's journey this time—life or death is uncertain.”

“But this is ultimately his own decision.”

Tantai Xuan replied. He understood well how agonizing it was to choose sides—how confusing.

Sometimes—clarifying one's stance, even at great cost, brought peace of mind.

For a moment, the four Golden Immortals hovered silently—watching the void beyond.

...

A massive rift stretched across the void.

Terrifying Emperor pressure surged endlessly.

Gu Mangran hovered—feeling immense pressure. His body trembled slightly.

This was true Emperor pressure.

With his strength—facing these Ancient Emperors—he would be easily killed.

Though he had gradually recovered Quasi-Emperor power—he was still too weak.

Boom!

The rift widened further.

Terrifying pressure descended—oppressing his body.

Gu Mangran breathed heavily—staring at the figure deep within the void rift.

He knew—his call had been answered.

Suddenly—he saw vague figures. Each radiated overwhelming terrifying pressure.

Indeed—the vanished Ancient Emperors.

So—their disappearance was not true disappearance.

“Emperor Hao.”

Gu Mangran’s heart suddenly became strangely calm.

Scenes flashed through his mind.

His four kings—once fighting by his side—now vanished in the river of time.

The four kings stayed with him until life's end.

In truth—the four kings' talents were extraordinary. Had they left the ancient tomb—they could have shaken the nine heavens—peerless in glory.

Yet they turned to dust beside him—sleeping eternally in the tomb.

Back then—his heart was filled with grievance—but for his convictions—he endured.

Now—he was about to face the one he had always faithfully awaited.

Buzz...

From the rift depths—Gu Mangran saw a pair of eyes.

A pair of eyes and a gaze he could never forget.

He had once been Ancient Emperor Hao's most loyal subordinate—thus he remembered that gaze deeply.

Indeed—Ancient Emperor Hao... still lived.

Lu had not lied.

Gu Mangran's heart grew complex—a feeling of drawing his sword, looking around in bewilderment.

Vaguely—he seemed to sink into those eyes—as though whispers summoned him from his ears.

This made Gu Mangran step uncontrollably toward the rift.

Gazes fell upon him.

From the surrounding Ancient Emperors—but mostly from the rift depths.

Gu Mangran felt summoned—walking inward uncontrollably.

To follow the Emperor he once followed and revered.

Suddenly—

Gu Mangran stumbled.

He seemed to see the Five Phoenixes Continent collapse—Heavenly Dao shattered—countless Five Phoenixes lives perishing.

He saw Young Master Lu—face bloodied.

He saw Tantai Xuan weeping blood and wailing.

He saw Lu Changkong—holding the Chrysanthemum Divine Herb—peacefully closing his eyes...

Familiar faces—familiar Five Phoenixes lives—and the Five Phoenixes Continent he had personally witnessed rise from weak high-martial to now—First-Derivation high-martial.

All shattered before terrifying attacks.

And he—followed the orchestrator—witnessing it all.

Gu Mangran's heart clenched—like knives twisting.

He seemed to tear apart the confusion binding his heart.

Eyes suddenly cleared.

“No!”

Gu Mangran gasped—eyes gradually firm. He stopped before the rift—said solemnly.

His halt seemed to change the eyes deep in the rift.

They became terrifyingly sharp—carrying heaven-crushing pressure—as though to crush Gu Mangran.

Gu Mangran instinctively retreated.

This retreat—was his decision.

“You were once Void Heaven’s ruler—why now destroy the world that brings hope to Void Heaven!”

“You once spoke of truth—the beautiful nation and world you wished to create... have they turned to dust with endless time?”

Gu Mangran asked.

From the rift depths—terrifying aura erupted.

An angry snort thundered.

Gu Mangran—instantly—crushed bloody—blood spraying from mouth and nose—kneeling before the void rift.

“You are not Emperor Hao—at least... not the Emperor Hao in my heart...”

Gu Mangran breathed heavily—struggling to raise his head—shaking it.

He realized—he knew what his heart truly wanted.

“Once—Emperor Hao was the truth in my heart. Now—the truth in my heart... is the Five Phoenixes.”

Gu Mangran said.

He had finally made the choice that felt so agonizing.

He chose—the Five Phoenixes!

The Five Phoenixes he had personally witnessed rise!

Boom!

“Impudent!”

From the rift depths—terrifying pressure crushed down.

Gu Mangran’s flesh cracked continuously.

Yet Gu Mangran—coughing blood—laughed.

“Emperor—my cultivation—all taught by you. Since you want it back—take it.”

Gu Mangran said.

The next moment—his body erupted with torrential blood mist—each wisp containing immense power.

As the power released—

Gu Mangran’s aura rapidly faded—rapidly diminishing.

Blood robes whipped—but his lips carried a relaxed smile.

When the power fully dissipated—

Gu Mangran’s body could no longer hold.

He felt vitality rapidly draining—disappearing.

“Emperor—I have changed.”

Gu Mangran stood unsteadily—sighing.

Indeed—perhaps Emperor Hao had not changed.

It was he who changed.

This sigh—seemed to exhaust all his strength.

Gu Mangran’s body—losing power—fell toward endless void.

The void rift remained silent.

Only those eyes coldly watched Gu Mangran’s falling body.

Allowing him to fall into the void—turning to decay.

Gu Mangran's blood robes whipped—maintaining his falling posture—feeling vitality rapidly drain.

Yet he revealed a satisfied smile.

A sense of liberation.

Farewell—Five Phoenixes.

Gu Mangran murmured.

Boom!

Suddenly—a streak of light shot over.

Catching Gu Mangran's body.

Micah—golden hair whipping—held Gu Mangran—expression filled with emotion.

“Questioning the heart—breaking the shackles of inner confusion.”

“Brother Gu—you deserve my respect.”

Micah said slowly.

Next—he took the Chrysanthemum Divine Herb from Gu Mangran’s hand—energy interwove—crushing the herb—feeding it into Gu Mangran’s mouth.

Perhaps due to consuming too many divine herbs—Gu Mangran absorbed it differently—fully absorbing the herb’s potency instantly.

The fading vitality—was forcibly pulled back by the herb.

The moment Micah and others appeared—

Terrifying auras erupted from the void rift figures.

Especially the eyes deep in the rift—cold and merciless.

Boom!

From behind the rift—a giant palm slammed down.

Void shattered inch by inch!

Seeming to crush Gu Mangran—along with Micah, Lu Jiulian, and the others.

This was killing intent.

Lu Jiulian drew his Green Lotus Sword—sword light flashing—like a green lotus blooming in the sky.

Tantai Xuan roared—imperial aura erupting.

Zhu Long opened her eyes—yin-yang millstone crushing down.

Boom!

Terrifying explosion—turning the area into vacuum—all energy swept clean.

The spear's power exceeded expectations—no wonder it pierced the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—driving him to despair.

Rolling energy dissipated.

Then—the golden spear—after pausing—thrust again from within.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao appeared—acting instantly. Endless rule power transformed into order chains—entangling.

In an instant—everyone fell into terrifying killing intent.

Gu Mangran—revived by the divine herb—saw this—expression filled with guilt.

If Zhu Long, Lu Jiulian, and others fell in the nine heavens because of him—he would be the Five Phoenixes' sinner!

How could he face the Five Phoenixes?

Face Young Master Lu?!

Yet Gu Mangran knew—he was insignificant now. The Ancient Emperors in the void rift cared not for his life—only for Micah, Tantai Xuan, and others.

“When we return—we must begin forging our own imperial weapons!”

“Without imperial weapons—we... are too disadvantaged.”

Tantai Xuan said gravely.

Lu Jiulian and Zhu Long nodded.

Indeed—they were disadvantaged due to lacking imperial weapons. This golden spear was imperial weapon level—in true Ancient Emperor hands—it erupted heaven-shaking power.

Even their attacks could not damage the golden spear!

But the premise—was escaping this place.

Now—this had become a death trap.

The terrifying existences in the rift unleashed sky-toppling killing intent.

On Origin Lake—Origin Island—

Lu sipped Heavenly Immortal Wine.

His eyes reflected this scene.

Frowning slightly—his gaze flashed with ruthless light.

“Bullying my Lu Ping’an’s little cotton-padded jacket... and bullying my Five Phoenixes Golden Immortals?”

Lu sneered coldly.

“Since so—take this golden spear as compensation.”

Lu said slowly.

With that—

From behind his thousand-blade chair—he drew a great bow.

The Five Phoenixes Bow.

Drawing it—a surge of energy poured from five phoenix mouths—converging into a five-colored arrow.

Boom!

Lu's hair turned golden—Golden Element Immortal Demon Body activated—his entire body enveloped in golden energy.

Standing on Origin Island.

He drew the bow fully—creaking...

The bow reached full moon.

The dazed giant whale felt its scalp tingle.

What was the human on its back doing?

Tired of it—wanting to kill it?

This terrifying and oppressive aura made the giant whale tremble.

Bang!

Suddenly—a terrifying explosion—as though even light was torn apart.

In the instant the arrow shot—

The entire vast sea roared.

Centered on Origin Island—the surrounding sea water caved in—like blasted by the arrow's massive recoil.

The arrow was originally brilliant—but when its speed surpassed light—

It turned pitch black—as though even light could not catch it.

Whoosh!

The arrow shot out of the Five Phoenixes Continent—crossing the void abyss instantly.

The next moment—like a fierce beast—it plunged into the nine heavens!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Terrifying explosions erupted continuously.

Zhu Long and others felt terrifying pressure surge.

Tearing through the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao's defensive line.

Rule chains exploded—like pierced and shattered.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao light figure coldly looked over.

Seeing the five-colored arrow—slamming into the golden spear.

Terrifying explosion soared.

Spear and arrow collided—void groaning under the strain.

A massive spherical annihilation energy sphere formed in the void—its destructive power even Ancient Emperors dared not touch lightly.

Micah was shocked.

Lu Jiulian's eyes blazed—it was Young Master Lu's attack!

This was the Five Phoenixes World-Destroying Arrow from the Five Phoenixes Bow!

Zhu Long smiled—adorable dimples appearing. With Father present—no need to worry.

Tantai Xuan laughed heartily.

“Young Master Lu’s shot—beautiful!”

Crack!

A crisp sound rang out.

The annihilation energy sphere contracted sharply—then suddenly expanded—turning into a raging energy storm.

Finally—scattered and vanished into the void.

The arrow disappeared.

The golden spear’s surface—now covered in dense cracks—like fine porcelain struck by a hammer—suddenly shattered—covered in fractures.

This sight made Micah draw a deep breath.

Young Master Lu... had such a method?

This arrow—truly domineering!

The figures in the void rift watched coldly.

Suddenly—

Everyone was stunned.

At some unknown moment—a white small tower hovered above the cracked golden spear.

The tower descended—shattering the spear completely—then suction erupted.

The golden spear—was fully absorbed—taken into the tower.

All this happened in a flash.

Micah, Zhu Long, and others had no time to react—the tower had already completed its operations.

Then—it turned into a streak of light—crashing into Zhu Long's embrace.

Zhu Long pursed her lips—without hesitation—holding the tower—flying rapidly toward the Five Phoenixes.

Micah, Tantai Xuan, and Lu Jiulian reacted instantly.

Turning to flee.

If they didn't run now—it would be even harder later.

Thanks to the arrow—the blockade was torn. They easily shattered the seal—turning into four streaks of light—plunging into the void abyss—returning to the Five Phoenixes.

In the nine heavens—

The atmosphere was deathly silent.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao silently dispersed—vanishing.

In the rift—though the Ancient Emperors' faces were obscured—the embarrassment was palpable.

The golden spear... was gone.

An imperial weapon—just lost like that.

Robbed right in front of them—by that damn Lu Ping'an... brazenly!

Chapter 558: That Damn Lu Ping'an...

The void was silent as an abyss.

The atmosphere was heavy, with undercurrents surging like hidden river flows.

The rift remained as before—unhealed. Figures shrouded in strange mist stood at its edge—like gods gazing down upon mortals.

The golden spear was gone. None of them had expected the affair to end this way.

“Lu Ping'an... as insidious as ever.”

“I never thought he'd dare use four nascent Emperors as bait—lure us into releasing the imperial weapon—only to snatch the Devouring Yuan Spear. His heart is truly filthy.”

Divine souls collided—exchanging thoughts.

“What now?”

Many divine souls turned toward the rift depths—seeking solutions.

“The Five Phoenixes has grown—no longer the weak existence it once was...”

“Especially that Lu Ping’an—he has completely escaped our control—even daring to provoke us.”

“The Five Phoenixes has birthed four nascent Emperors. When that Lu Ping’an unleashes his secret art—he can match even Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor’s level.”

“Give him enough time—he will surely reach Extreme Emperor. Then... even if we emerge from the rift—we may not be able to deal with him.”

Divine souls intertwined—filled with wariness. Lu had reached a level that truly threatened them.

After a long silence—divine soul fluctuations came from the rift depths.

The many Emperor discussions fell quiet.

“No matter...”

“Since the Five Phoenixes severed Void Heaven—becoming an independent heaven—naturally... it must bear what it should.”

“The Five Phoenixes can no longer shelter under the nine heavens. Lu Ping’an no longer qualifies to hide safely behind us.”

The calm voice echoed.

The words lifted the spirits of the many powerhouses.

They seemed to guess the intent of the one deep in the rift.

“Could it be...”

“Yes... exactly. Since the Five Phoenixes became its own heaven—birthing its own Heavenly Dao—there is no reason for it to enjoy our protection.”

“The nine heavens guard the Primordial Starry Sky. Now that the Five Phoenixes stands alone—how can we help it fend off those ferocious divine demons?”

“Those divine demons are no easy foes. If one Extreme Emperor-level innate divine demon appears... the Five Phoenixes will be destroyed.”

Their exchanges grew excited—imagining the Five Phoenixes crumbling under divine demon assaults.

None understood the terror of innate divine demons better than they.

“By the way—we failed to seize Heavenly Spirit’s soul fragments. If the memories in them are exposed—it could be detrimental to us.”

One Emperor seemed to recall—speaking up.

From the rift depths—divine soul fluctuated faintly.

“No need to worry. I sealed his memories with the ‘Dou’ Character Array Rune. Any external interference will shatter his soul—even the intruder will suffer backlash from the ‘Dou’ Character Array Rune.”

The voice echoed—unconcerned.

The many Emperors laughed.

Losing the Devouring Yuan Spear pained them.

But to them—an imperial weapon was replaceable.

They controlled the entrance between Primordial Starry Sky and nine heavens.

Besides terrifying innate divine demons—the starry sky held countless ancient stars—rich with supreme materials for forging imperial weapons.

Reforging another Devouring Yuan Spear—though troublesome—was within their means.

Boom!

Soon—terrifying rumbling echoed.

The massive rift in the void slowly closed—vanishing once more.

...

In the void starry sky.

Four streaks of light tore through the void abyss—rushing back.

Boom!

Their speed was too great—uncontrolled force shattered an uninhabited star.

Zhu Long—eyes closed—long lashes trembling—cheeks flushed—dimples like ripples from spring rain on a calm lake.

She breathed lightly—clutching the Heaven-Stealing Tower—heart racing.

Stealing an imperial weapon and running—too thrilling.

Meanwhile—Tantai Xuan held Gu Mangran. After the divine herb—the wounds healed gradually under its energy.

But the lost cultivation—hard to recover.

Blood robes fluttered—face weary.

Yet beneath the fatigue—excitement of rebirth.

Lu Jiulian and Micah ignored him—Gu Mangran’s survival was enough. They looked at the Heaven-Stealing Tower in Zhu Long’s arms—recalling the scene—expressions shifting.

“Young Master Lu’s arrow... truly unfathomable.”

Micah drew a deep breath.

“That was the Five Phoenixes Bow—the Five Phoenixes’ foremost killing weapon—endless potential to overcome the greater with the lesser.”

Lu Jiulian said.

“That arrow’s power—terrifying. Even we had no confidence to withstand it.”

“Clearly—Emperor realm also has tiers...”

Micah said gravely.

This clash with the rift’s Ancient Emperors made them realize the gap with those millions-year-old existences.

“Emperor lifespan averages eight million years. Such long years—allow Ancient Emperors to walk unimaginable distances on the Emperor path.”

Micah said.

Lu Jiulian nodded—even his Seven-Colored Fury Lotus could not harm those in the rift.

This made them understand—the opponents’ overall strength surpassed theirs.

It fueled their cultivation drive even more.

Emperor realm—was not the end.

Beyond Emperor—lay Great Luo Immortal.

Of course—to reach Great Luo—they must first reach the end of the Emperor path.

Instantly—Micah and Lu Jiulian felt motivated—burning with ambition.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Under the furtive gazes of powerhouses on countless life stars—

The four Golden Immortals returned to the Five Phoenixes.

Placing Gu Mangran on solid ground—Tantai Xuan patted his shoulder—then tore open an Underworld passage—yin qi surging—returning to the Underworld under Hell Hound's escort.

Returning to the Underworld—Tantai Xuan planned to forge an Emperor-realm weapon.

This battle's gap—was not only in strength—but in weapons.

Lu Julian returned to the Ascension Land—continuing to guard it—lecturing Immortals—while—like Tantai Xuan—conceiving his imperial weapon.

After deciding—Micah bid Gu Mangran farewell—striding away—vanishing into the mortal dust.

He would continue with his “Extreme Dao Cultivation Method”—reaching Emperor’s end—becoming Great Luo Immortal.

Zhu Long—upon returning—hugged the Heaven-Stealing Tower—running off.

Rushing across the vast sea—soon arriving at Origin Island.

Like presenting a treasure—she handed the Heaven-Stealing Tower to Lu—leaning on the railing.

Lu smiled—accepting it.

Buzz...

The Heaven-Stealing Tower shook—golden spear fragments from the shattered spear spilled out.

Clinking before the pavilion.

Ni Yu, Ning Zhao, and Yi Yue curiously gathered.

The golden spear fragments radiated strange energy—astonishing.

“Hm... this material is interesting.”

Lu picked up a fragment—crystalline—exuding faint devouring suction—as though drawing blood.

Clearly refined from special treasure ore.

Unlike previous holy clan imperial weapons—obtainable in the nine heavens.

This spear’s material—was hard to find.

“Could it be Primordial Starry Sky ore?”

Lu’s mind stirred—guessing.

He knew little of the Primordial Starry Sky—but someone knew more.

Confirming if it was Primordial Starry Sky ore—was simple.

With a thought—

His divine soul crossed vast distances—instantly descending to the mortal realm.

...

Prince Yu's Mansion.

After the maid's healing pills—the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's wounds healed quickly. This mistake planted a karmic seed with the young princess—leaving him emotionally complex.

Today—the shy young princess invited him to spar swordplay again.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor did not refuse—how could he?

In the small courtyard—flowers bloomed—sunlight brilliant—beauty like a painting.

He and the young princess—like a perfect pair—wielded swords under sunlight.

Involuntarily—the millions-year-old virgin Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—watching the sunlit young princess—felt his icy heart stir.

But...

In that moment of stirring—

Terrifying—familiar—divine soul pressure swept over again!

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor's pupils contracted—his stirring heart instantly became... cardiac arrest.

Boom!

His mind plunged into chaos once more.

The young princess—uncontrolled—stabbed her sword into his body again.

The Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor felt hot tears nearly flow.

He was truly dead this time.

That damn Lu Ping'an...

Still messing with his mentality!

Chapter 559: Emperor Divided into Three Realms, Nine-Turn Golden Immortal

When Gu Mangran left the Five Phoenixes, Lu—who was deducing the Five Phoenixes' tribulations—suddenly opened his eyes.

A faint sense stirred within him. He looked toward the direction where Gu Mangran had vanished.

It was as though he knew exactly what Gu Mangran intended. Lu slowly exhaled, not planning to interfere.

The Five Phoenixes must hold special meaning for Gu Mangran.

After all, when Gu Mangran first arrived, the Five Phoenixes were weak. Watching it grow stronger step by step—perhaps Gu Mangran could not easily let go.

As for the final choice, it could only be made by Gu Mangran himself.

Lu could intervene, but he chose not to.

Sipping Heavenly Immortal Wine, he smiled faintly.

His divine sense sank back into the Transmission Platform.

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Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Four golden streaks streaked through the sky.

Lu Jiulian, Zhu Long, Tantai Xuan, and the reclusive Micah all appeared—hovering beyond the Five Phoenixes.

Their gazes pierced through the vast starry void—toward Gu Mangran crossing the void abyss.

“Blood-Robed General Gu—what is he doing?”

Micah frowned, watching Gu Mangran’s figure disappear into the void abyss.

Tantai Xuan stood with hands behind his back, gaze deep.

Lu Jiulian and Zhu Long remained silent. They had fought alongside Gu Mangran before.

In truth, they knew Gu Mangran’s identity—former Blood-Robed General, the most loyal subordinate under Ancient Emperor Hao.

Now—Ancient Emperor Hao seemed alive and at odds with the Five Phoenixes. Thus, the time had come for Gu Mangran to make his choice.

“He must be seeking an answer.”

Tantai Xuan said.

That answer might decide Gu Mangran's future.

Micah nodded slightly—he seemed to understand Gu Mangran's purpose.

He sighed softly.

“If Ancient Emperor Hao truly orchestrated everything... then Gu Mangran's journey this time—life or death is uncertain.”

“But this is ultimately his own decision.”

Tantai Xuan replied. He understood well how agonizing it was to choose sides—how confusing.

Sometimes—clarifying one's stance, even at great cost, brought peace of mind.

For a moment, the four Golden Immortals hovered silently—watching the void beyond.

...

A massive rift stretched across the void.

Terrifying Emperor pressure surged endlessly.

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This was true Emperor pressure.

With his strength—facing these Ancient Emperors—he would be easily killed.

Though he had gradually recovered Quasi-Emperor power—he was still too weak.

Boom!

The rift widened further.

Terrifying pressure descended—oppressing his body.

Gu Mangran breathed heavily—staring at the figure deep within the void rift.

He knew—his call had been answered.

Suddenly—he saw vague figures. Each radiated overwhelming terrifying pressure.

Indeed—the vanished Ancient Emperors.

So—their disappearance was not true disappearance.

“Emperor Hao.”

Gu Mangran’s heart suddenly became strangely calm.

Scenes flashed through his mind.

His four kings—once fighting by his side—now vanished in the river of time.

The four kings stayed with him until life’s end.

In truth—the four kings' talents were extraordinary. Had they left the ancient tomb—they could have shaken the nine heavens—peerless in glory.

Yet they turned to dust beside him—sleeping eternally in the tomb.

Back then—his heart was filled with grievance—but for his convictions—he endured.

Now—he was about to face the one he had always faithfully awaited.

Buzz...

From the rift depths—Gu Mangran saw a pair of eyes.

A pair of eyes and a gaze he could never forget.

He had once been Ancient Emperor Hao's most loyal subordinate—thus he remembered that gaze deeply.

Indeed—Ancient Emperor Hao... still lived.

Lu had not lied.

Gu Mangran's heart grew complex—a feeling of drawing his sword, looking around in bewilderment.

Vaguely—he seemed to sink into those eyes—as though whispers summoned him from his ears.

This made Gu Mangran step uncontrollably toward the rift.

Gazes fell upon him.

From the surrounding Ancient Emperors—but mostly from the rift depths.

Gu Mangran felt summoned—walking inward uncontrollably.

To follow the Emperor he once followed and revered.

Suddenly—

Gu Mangran stumbled.

He seemed to see the Five Phoenixes Continent collapse—Heavenly Dao shattered—countless Five Phoenixes lives perishing.

He saw Young Master Lu—face bloodied.

He saw Tantai Xuan weeping blood and wailing.

He saw Lu Changkong—holding the Chrysanthemum Divine Herb—peacefully closing his eyes...

Familiar faces—familiar Five Phoenixes lives—and the Five Phoenixes Continent he had personally witnessed rise from weak high-martial to now—First-Derivation high-martial.

All shattered before terrifying attacks.

And he—followed the orchestrator—witnessing it all.

Gu Mangran's heart clenched—like knives twisting.

He seemed to tear apart the confusion binding his heart.

Eyes suddenly cleared.

“No!”

Gu Mangran gasped—eyes gradually firm. He stopped before the rift—said solemnly.

His halt seemed to change the eyes deep in the rift.

They became terrifyingly sharp—carrying heaven-crushing pressure—as though to crush Gu Mangran.

Gu Mangran instinctively retreated.

This retreat—was his decision.

“You were once Void Heaven’s ruler—why now destroy the world that brings hope to Void Heaven!”

“You once spoke of truth—the beautiful nation and world you wished to create... have they turned to dust with endless time?”

Gu Mangran asked.

From the rift depths—terrifying aura erupted.

An angry snort thundered.

Gu Mangran—instantly—crushed bloody—blood spraying from mouth and nose—kneeling before the void rift.

“You are not Emperor Hao—at least... not the Emperor Hao in my heart...”

Gu Mangran breathed heavily—struggling to raise his head—shaking it.

He realized—he knew what his heart truly wanted.

“Once—Emperor Hao was the truth in my heart. Now—the truth in my heart... is the Five Phoenixes.”

Gu Mangran said.

He had finally made the choice that felt so agonizing.

He chose—the Five Phoenixes!

The Five Phoenixes he had personally witnessed rise!

Boom!

“Impudent!”

From the rift depths—terrifying pressure crushed down.

Gu Mangran’s flesh cracked continuously.

Yet Gu Mangran—coughing blood—laughed.

“Emperor—my cultivation—all taught by you. Since you want it back—take it.”

Gu Mangran said.

The next moment—his body erupted with torrential blood mist—each wisp containing immense power.

As the power released—

Gu Mangran's aura rapidly faded—rapidly diminishing.

Blood robes whipped—but his lips carried a relaxed smile.

When the power fully dissipated—

Gu Mangran's body could no longer hold.

He felt vitality rapidly draining—disappearing.

“Emperor—I have changed.”

Gu Mangran stood unsteadily—sighing.

Indeed—perhaps Emperor Hao had not changed.

It was he who changed.

This sigh—seemed to exhaust all his strength.

Gu Mangran's body—losing power—fell toward endless void.

The void rift remained silent.

Only those eyes coldly watched Gu Mangran's falling body.

Allowing him to fall into the void—turning to decay.

Gu Mangran's blood robes whipped—maintaining his falling posture—feeling vitality rapidly drain.

Yet he revealed a satisfied smile.

A sense of liberation.

Farewell—Five Phoenixes.

Gu Mangran murmured.

Boom!

Suddenly—a streak of light shot over.

Catching Gu Mangran's body.

Micah—golden hair whipping—held Gu Mangran—expression filled with emotion.

“Questioning the heart—breaking the shackles of inner confusion.”

“Brother Gu—you deserve my respect.”

Micah said slowly.

Next—he took the Chrysanthemum Divine Herb from Gu Mangran's hand—energy interwove—crushing the herb—feeding it into Gu Mangran's mouth.

Perhaps due to consuming too many divine herbs—Gu Mangran absorbed it differently—fully absorbing the herb’s potency instantly.

The fading vitality—was forcibly pulled back by the herb.

The moment Micah and others appeared—

Terrifying auras erupted from the void rift figures.

Especially the eyes deep in the rift—cold and merciless.

Boom!

From behind the rift—a giant palm slammed down.

Void shattered inch by inch!

Seeming to crush Gu Mangran—along with Micah, Lu Jiulian, and the others.

This was killing intent.

Lu Jiulian drew his Green Lotus Sword—sword light flashing—like a green lotus blooming in the sky.

Tantai Xuan roared—imperial aura erupting.

Zhu Long opened her eyes—yin-yang millstone crushing down.

Boom!

Terrifying explosion—turning the area into vacuum—all energy swept clean.

The spear's power exceeded expectations—no wonder it pierced the Heavenly Spirit Ancient Emperor—driving him to despair.

Rolling energy dissipated.

Then—the golden spear—after pausing—thrust again from within.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao appeared—acting instantly. Endless rule power transformed into order chains—entangling.

In an instant—everyone fell into terrifying killing intent.

Gu Mangran—revived by the divine herb—saw this—expression filled with guilt.

If Zhu Long, Lu Jiulian, and others fell in the nine heavens because of him—he would be the Five Phoenixes' sinner!

How could he face the Five Phoenixes?

Face Young Master Lu?!

Yet Gu Mangran knew—he was insignificant now. The Ancient Emperors in the void rift cared not for his life—only for Micah, Tantai Xuan, and others.

“When we return—we must begin forging our own imperial weapons!”

“Without imperial weapons—we... are too disadvantaged.”

Tantai Xuan said gravely.

Lu Jiulian and Zhu Long nodded.

Indeed—they were disadvantaged due to lacking imperial weapons. This golden spear was imperial weapon level—in true Ancient Emperor hands—it erupted heaven-shaking power.

Even their attacks could not damage the golden spear!

But the premise—was escaping this place.

Now—this had become a death trap.

The terrifying existences in the rift unleashed sky-toppling killing intent.

On Origin Lake—Origin Island—

Lu sipped Heavenly Immortal Wine.

His eyes reflected this scene.

Frowning slightly—his gaze flashed with ruthless light.

“Bullying my Lu Ping’an’s little cotton-padded jacket... and bullying my Five Phoenixes Golden Immortals?”

Lu sneered coldly.

“Since so—take this golden spear as compensation.”

Lu said slowly.

With that—

From behind his thousand-blade chair—he drew a great bow.

The Five Phoenixes Bow.

Drawing it—a surge of energy poured from five phoenix mouths—converging into a five-colored arrow.

Boom!

Lu's hair turned golden—Golden Element Immortal Demon Body activated—his entire body enveloped in golden energy.

Standing on Origin Island.

He drew the bow fully—creaking...

The bow reached full moon.

The dazed giant whale felt its scalp tingle.

What was the human on its back doing?

Tired of it—wanting to kill it?

This terrifying and oppressive aura made the giant whale tremble.

Bang!

Suddenly—a terrifying explosion—as though even light was torn apart.

In the instant the arrow shot—

The entire vast sea roared.

Centered on Origin Island—the surrounding sea water caved in—like blasted by the arrow’s massive recoil.

The arrow was originally brilliant—but when its speed surpassed light—

It turned pitch black—as though even light could not catch it.

Whoosh!

The arrow shot out of the Five Phoenixes Continent—crossing the void abyss instantly.

The next moment—like a fierce beast—it plunged into the nine heavens!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Terrifying explosions erupted continuously.

Zhu Long and others felt terrifying pressure surge.

Tearing through the nine heavens' Heavenly Dao's defensive line.

Rule chains exploded—like pierced and shattered.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao light figure coldly looked over.

Seeing the five-colored arrow—slamming into the golden spear.

Terrifying explosion soared.

Spear and arrow collided—void groaning under the strain.

A massive spherical annihilation energy sphere formed in the void—its destructive power even Ancient Emperors dared not touch lightly.

Micah was shocked.

Lu Jiulian's eyes blazed—it was Young Master Lu's attack!

This was the Five Phoenixes World-Destroying Arrow from the Five Phoenixes Bow!

Zhu Long smiled—adorable dimples appearing. With Father present—no need to worry.

Tantai Xuan laughed heartily.

“Young Master Lu's shot—beautiful!”

Crack!

A crisp sound rang out.

The annihilation energy sphere contracted sharply—then suddenly expanded—turning into a raging energy storm.

Finally—scattered and vanished into the void.

The arrow disappeared.

The golden spear's surface—now covered in dense cracks—like fine porcelain struck by a hammer—suddenly shattered—covered in fractures.

This sight made Micah draw a deep breath.

Young Master Lu... had such a method?

This arrow—truly domineering!

The figures in the void rift watched coldly.

Suddenly—

Everyone was stunned.

At some unknown moment—a white small tower hovered above the cracked golden spear.

The tower descended—shattering the spear completely—then suction erupted.

The golden spear—was fully absorbed—taken into the tower.

All this happened in a flash.

Micah, Zhu Long, and others had no time to react—the tower had already completed its operations.

Then—it turned into a streak of light—crashing into Zhu Long's embrace.

Zhu Long pursed her lips—without hesitation—holding the tower—flying rapidly toward the Five Phoenixes.

Micah, Tantai Xuan, and Lu Jiulian reacted instantly.

Turning to flee.

If they didn't run now—it would be even harder later.

Thanks to the arrow—the blockade was torn. They easily shattered the seal—turning into four streaks of light—plunging into the void abyss—returning to the Five Phoenixes.

In the nine heavens—

The atmosphere was deathly silent.

The nine heavens' Heavenly Dao silently dispersed—vanishing.

In the rift—though the Ancient Emperors' faces were obscured—the embarrassment was palpable.

The golden spear... was gone.

An imperial weapon—just lost like that.

Robbed right in front of them—by that damn Lu Ping'an... brazenly!

Chapter 560: The Calamity That Envelops the Three Realms

When an ancient scripture was split in two—one half descending into the Netherworld, the other rising through the Heavenly Gate—the entire cultivation world of the Five Phoenix Continent erupted in excitement.

Even Golden Immortals would be moved by such a scripture; how could ordinary cultivators not be thrilled?

The moment the Demon Lord and Devil Lord vanished, powerful Golden Immortals like Micah and Lu Jiulian had already set out.

Numerous Profound Immortals followed closely behind.

The Heavenly Gate had appeared. Even someone as mighty as Micah or Lu Jiulian could not freely travel between the Heavenly Realm and the Five Phoenix Continent without passing through it.

This had always been a mystery.

Where exactly was the Heavenly Realm? How did it exist? These questions had long puzzled cultivators.

To move between the Five Phoenix Continent and the Heavenly Realm, one had to pass through the Heavenly Gate.

Whether a newly ascended immortal or a fully realized Golden Immortal, all were bound by this rule.

Logically, Golden Immortals should have transcended the Three Realms entirely. Yet this restriction suggested that, despite their immense power, they still fell under the jurisdiction of the Five Phoenix Continent's heavenly laws.

For the next six months or more, the Heavenly Gate remained visible in the sky above the Five Phoenix Continent. Immortals constantly came and went, so that even ordinary mortals could look up and clearly see the magnificent gate hanging in the Ninth Heaven.

Historians of the mortal world recorded this period as the "Wrath of Heaven" era.

The appearance of the Heavenly Gate triggered countless bizarre and inexplicable phenomena across the continent—events that defied common sense.

Seawater surged violently, rivers raged with primal fury, and long-hidden sea beasts and river monsters emerged from the depths, attempting to storm the Heavenly Gate and bringing catastrophic disasters upon the mortal realm.

Thus, the chroniclers named this time the "Wrath of Heaven" era.

It felt like the prelude to a great calamity.

Meanwhile, inside the Heavenly Gate...

The attention of every immortal was fixed upon the towering golden stele.

Micah and Lu Jiulian sat cross-legged before the stele that pierced the heavens, their expressions grave and eyes cold.

Through their spiritual senses, they quickly confirmed that the scripture inscribed upon it was indeed a Golden Immortal-level cultivation method.

The upper volume of the Nine Revolutions Golden Immortal Scripture was located in the Heavenly Realm, while the lower volume had undoubtedly fallen into the Netherworld.

“So Golden Immortals are divided into stages after all. No wonder we always felt suppressed when facing those ancient Great Emperors.”

Micah took a deep breath, realization dawning.

Even though he had achieved dual enlightenment, his raw strength still lagged behind those ancient Great Emperors.

It wasn't a matter of experience, but of stage: Micah and the others were only at the first stage of the Emperor Realm.

Most ancient Great Emperors, however, had reached the second stage—equivalent to the sixth revolution of the Golden Immortal Realm.

The upper volume in the Heavenly Realm detailed cultivation methods from the third to the sixth revolution, including profound techniques for manipulating destiny and fortune.

All the immortals within the Heavenly Gate sat before the stele, diligently studying the method.

...

On the Five Phoenix Continent, at the heart of the Origin Lake, on the central island.

Having just finished directing another grand performance, Lu gave a faint smile.

But soon his brows furrowed.

The Demon Lord and Devil Lord... performing the same act once was fine, but doing it every day would eventually arouse suspicion.

Perhaps for the next sermon, it was time to bring in fresh actors.

“Hmm... maybe next time I should pull out the long-absent ‘Six Paths Immortal’ for a cameo?”

Lu smiled thoughtfully.

Many powerful cultivators on the continent had experienced the Sermon Platform and were familiar with that “Immortal.”

The next time, perhaps he could let this “Immortal” take the stage.

Although in the end it was still Lu acting alone, he had truly gone to great lengths to help the Five Phoenix Continent grow stronger.

“The Golden Immortal cultivation method has been released, but there aren’t many Golden Immortals on the continent yet. The impact of this scripture on the world remains limited.”

“As for the great heavenly tribulation I’ve been planning... I finally have some clear ideas. A true great tribulation should encompass all three realms: Heaven, the mortal world, and the Netherworld.”

“Right now, most of the continent’s destiny is concentrated in the mortal realm. But Heaven and the Netherworld also possess vast reserves of destiny.”

Leaning back in his Thousand-Blade Chair, Lu pondered deeply.

Countless thoughts swirled in his mind.

He entered the Sermon Platform and began to deduce.

Because the ancient scripture had been divided, an idea had taken shape in his heart.

The purpose of a great heavenly tribulation was to propel the Five Phoenix Continent forward—to allow more and more powerhouses to emerge through the shifting tides of destiny.

Otherwise, at the current pace, even powerhouses like the Hegemon or Tang Yimo would need countless years to become Golden Immortals.

Lu had a vague premonition: the ancient Great Emperors hidden in the void rifts would not allow the Five Phoenix Continent to develop smoothly. They would surely bring terrifying disasters.

But what form would those disasters take?

For now, Lu couldn't see it clearly.

The ancient Great Emperors in the void rifts were a hidden threat. If possible, Lu would love to strike immediately and wipe them out.

Unfortunately, that was nearly impossible.

That was why he had to rapidly strengthen the Five Phoenix Continent—nurturing more Golden Immortals, and eventually even Ninth-Revolution Golden Immortals who could give birth to purple qi. With a host of Golden Immortals guarding it, the continent would have nothing to fear.

Even those ancient Great Emperors in the void rifts could then be swept aside with ease.

Lu sat cross-legged.

Though he desperately wanted the Five Phoenix Continent to reach the Immortal-Martial level immediately, he knew it couldn't be rushed.

Moreover, he understood very well that every world ascension would face an extremely difficult ascension trial.

The trial for ascending to the Immortal-Martial level would undoubtedly be even harder.

It might very well involve the gods and demons of the Primordial Starry Sky... or even those ancient Great Emperors in the void rifts.

So if the Five Phoenix Continent truly touched the threshold of the Immortal-Martial ascension trial, it would be bad news—not just for Lu, but for the entire continent.

His mind sank into the Sermon Platform.

Lu's gaze burned brightly. Like an exiled immortal seated upon the Eight Trigrams Array, countless array runes swirled around him, and faint, ancient voices seemed to echo in the distance.

It looked as though he was deducing, yet also as though an ancient god was performing a sacrifice.

Bit by bit, the shape of a great heavenly tribulation formed under his calculations.

As the mastermind behind the tribulation, Lu had to consider every detail.

He deduced again and again, overturning and restarting countless times.

The effort left him mentally exhausted.

Even creating the world hadn't tired him this much.

A true heavenly tribulation must have a beginning, a process, and an end.

Moreover, since Lu was orchestrating this tribulation, it was not meant to destroy the Five Phoenix Continent—there had to be opportunity hidden within the disaster.

BOOM!

When the terrifying rumbling within the Sermon Platform finally subsided,

It was as though ten thousand rays of divine light burst forth.

The corners of Lu's mouth curved upward as he slowly exhaled.

His powerful primordial spirit pulsed.

He withdrew from the Sermon Platform and returned to the pavilion.

The world was utterly silent.

At some point, a wind had risen.

Lu's white robes fluttered in the breeze as a light rain began to fall, pattering softly.

The Spirit-Pressure Chessboard glowed faintly.

Lu picked up a chess piece and slowly placed it.

The moment the piece landed, it was as though the curtain had risen on a grand drama.

War erupted across the chessboard—the war between the Demon Race and the Witch Race...

“Since that’s the case, let this war be the beginning.”

“This tribulation... shall be called the Calamity of Witches and Demons.”

As Lu's words fell,

An invisible wave of energy seemed to radiate outward from him in all directions.

...

In the Great Xuan Divine Dynasty, at Heavenly Secrets Peak,

Lu Mudui and Mo Tianyu suddenly opened their eyes.

Both of them, masters of heavenly secrets, felt a tremor in their hearts.

Rumble...

The sky instantly turned dark and oppressive.

Lu Mudui looked up, his expression grave. "This weather... it seems something monumental is about to happen."

Mo Tianyu, bare-chested as always, nodded solemnly.

The two exchanged a glance.

Because they walked the path of heavenly secrets, their cultivation progress had been slow.

Mo Tianyu was stuck at the half-step Profound Immortal level.

Lu Mudui, having repeatedly divined the great trends of the world, was also stuck at half-step Profound Immortal.

But this time, both their hearts suddenly pounded violently.

They turned their gazes toward the Eastern Sea.

It felt as though an enormous chessboard was rapidly spreading from that direction.

Both men felt an overwhelming sense of oppression.

Lu Mudui pinched his fingers in calculation while Mo Tianyu closed his eyes.

The wind blew past.

After a long moment, they opened their eyes—bloodshot.

“A great heavenly tribulation is descending. It will sweep through all Three Realms. Even Golden Immortals will struggle to stay uninvolved!”

“Yet this is both a calamity and an immense opportunity! If one can seize the chance within this tribulation, they might ascend to Golden Immortal in a single leap!”

“The disturbance to the destiny of heaven and earth... it’s simply too massive!”

Lu Mudui and Mo Tianyu looked at each other. Though they had only glimpsed a corner of that terrifying chessboard, even that glimpse was enough to make breathing difficult.

“No... this is far too big.”

Mo Tianyu stood up, his face deadly serious.

Lu Mudui gripped his bamboo staff tightly, his expression equally grim.

They exchanged another glance and began to divine again.

Mo Tianyu held three copper coins. With a sudden flick, radiant light burst between them.

His consciousness seemed to soar out of his body, rushing into the clouds and landing upon the heavenly chessboard ahead of time.

Suddenly,

He stood upon the board and looked up—only to see a colossal figure faintly watching from beyond the chessboard.

That figure was all too familiar to Mo Tianyu!

“It’s the Immortal!”

Mo Tianyu’s breath caught in his throat.

This was the ancient Immortal who had appeared back in the Five Phoenix Continent’s low-martial era—

The very Immortal who had guided the Hegemon, Tang Yimo, and others to become supreme cultivators!

“Is the Immortal the one behind this?!”

“The Immortal led the Five Phoenix Continent into the age of cultivation... and now is going to end it?!”

“The mastermind of this great heavenly tribulation... is the Immortal?!”

Pfft!

But Mo Tianyu had probed too deeply.

The terrifying pressure nearly shattered his mind and primordial spirit.

He opened his eyes. The three copper coins cracked. Blood flowed from his nose and mouth. His face was pale and sallow.

He had paid a heavy price for peering into the secrets of heaven.

“I must go to the Central Island. This is too big... I need to find Young Master Lu.”

Mo Tianyu wiped the blood from his face.

Lu Mudui understood the gravity as well.

The two rose into the air, transforming into streaks of light as they sped toward the Eastern Sea.

Soon they arrived at the Central Island and respectfully stopped before it.

On the island,

Lu leaned against the railing, listening to the wind and sipping Heavenly Immortal Wine.

Sensing their arrival, he smiled and said to Yi Yue, "Let them in."

Yi Yue bowed and stepped out across the waves.

Mo Tianyu and Lu Mudui were respectfully led onto the island.

"Young Master Lu."

Lu Mudui's old face trembled slightly as he gazed at the seated Lu, feeling more and more the unfathomable power and divinity emanating from him.

"I know why you've come."

Seated in his Thousand-Blade Chair, Lu strolled slowly through the peach blossom grove, twirling a peach petal between his fingers with a faint smile.

"Everything is predestined in the dark. This is an inevitable stage in the development of cultivation. A great heavenly tribulation is both disaster and fortune. Some will perish forever in the calamity, while others will seize the fleeting opportunity and soar to the heavens."

Lu spoke calmly.

Lu Mudui and Mo Tianyu exchanged a glance, feeling slightly relieved.

As expected, Young Master Lu already knew.

There was nothing in the world that Young Master Lu did not know.

The White Jade Capital's Young Master Lu was, after all, the very founder of the path of heavenly secrets.

"Young Master Lu, once this tribulation begins, heaven and earth will suffer. Countless cultivators will die, rivers of blood will flow... Is there any way to avert it?"

Mo Tianyu bowed deeply.

Lu shook his head, gently stroking the peach petal.

Ning Zhao stood behind him, quietly pushing the Thousand-Blade Chair.

"This is a great heavenly tribulation. It will encompass Heaven, the mortal world, and the Netherworld—the Three Realms. No one can escape it. Not even Golden Immortals will be spared, because this tribulation stirs the destiny of all Three Realms."

"There is no hiding, no running... The only way to overcome the tribulation is to enter it—to seek that single thread of survival within the disaster."

Lu's voice was steady.

Mo Tianyu and Lu Mudui fell into thought.

Lu's words seemed to have enlightened them.

He smiled again.

Then he slowly scattered the peach petal in his hand, letting it fall to the ground.

"A butterfly flaps its wings on the Western Continent... and it may cause a tsunami to rage across the Eastern Sea."

"That is what it means to pull one hair and move the whole body."

"The tribulation arises from this."

With those words, Lu had Ning Zhao push him back to the pavilion.

Hearing this, Lu Mudui and Mo Tianyu felt a jolt of realization.

Then the two left the Central Island.

“Young Master Lu seems to have been giving us a hint...”

“A butterfly on the Western Continent... could he mean the Witch Race, who are currently at war with the Demon Race?”

“Is the Witch-Demon War the starting point of this great tribulation?”

“To preserve ourselves in the tribulation, we must enter it and seek that thread of survival... Is Young Master Lu suggesting that we choose a side between the Witch and Demon Races?”

The two looked at each other, understanding dawning.

The next day, when the brilliant Morning Star rose above the sea,

Mo Tianyu and Lu Mudui cupped their hands, gave each other a faint smile, and parted ways.

Neither told the other which side they would choose. They left with tacit understanding.

If they chose the same side, they could face the tribulation together.

If they chose differently...

Then they would become enemies.

...

The opening of this great heavenly tribulation did not attract much attention at first.

But the Golden Immortals all felt it keenly. Their sensitivity to destiny was too sharp—they could clearly sense that the destiny of heaven and earth was being scorched by invisible flames, gradually coming to a rolling boil.

On Mount Buzhou,

Zhu Long sat cross-legged on a green stone, eyes closed, pondering what kind of Emperor Weapon she should forge.

Father had said that only one she forged herself, one that suited her perfectly, would be the best.

So what should her Emperor Weapon be?

Suddenly, she seemed to realize something. She patted the green stone beneath her.

This stone had accompanied her for a very long time. From the day she first arrived on Mount Buzhou, it had been here.

Now it possessed superb spirituality and had become top-grade material.

Influenced by Zhu Long's aura over the years, it contained immense power.

Zhu Long's eyelashes trembled lightly. She finally knew what her Emperor Weapon should be.

BOOM!

Her aura surged, transforming her into a Candle Dragon that coiled around Mount Buzhou.

Her eyes opened, and innate Yin-Yang qi poured forth.

The qi poured into the green stone, which began to glow with azure light. Soon, under the tempering of innate Yin-Yang qi, the stone was reshaped into a massive grinding disc.

Within the disc, Yin-Yang qi swirled, greatly enhancing its power.

Combined with the stone's already top-tier material quality, now tempered by Zhu Long's growth, it was truly supreme.

Zhu Long returned to human form, grabbed the disc, and swung it.

Each swing seemed capable of shattering the void.

Zhu Long grinned with satisfaction, cute dimples appearing on her cheeks.

Her Emperor Weapon was complete!

The moment Zhu Long's Emperor Weapon was finished, Lu naturally sensed it.

"Using a grinding disc as an Emperor Weapon... tsk. Every fight she'll just swing a giant millstone. Where's the elegance in that?"

Lu couldn't help but laugh.

But if it suited Zhu Long, then it was the best choice. He didn't object.

With a thought, he placed a piece on the chessboard.

He summoned heavenly lightning to temper Zhu Long's Emperor Weapon, completing the final step to turn it into an Innate Spiritual Treasure.

The tribulation was effortless for Zhu Long.

Once the lightning tempering was complete, the "Yin-Yang Grinding Disc"—forged from a single green stone—became her true Innate Spiritual Treasure.

...

In the Netherworld,

When the prelude to the great heavenly tribulation began, Tantai Xuan immediately sensed it.

It felt as though a colossal calamity was enveloping the entire world—even the Netherworld was included.

Tantai Xuan's expression was extremely grave.

He couldn't understand: what kind of disaster could possibly involve even the Netherworld?

He arrived before the half-page of the ancient scripture that had fallen into the Netherworld.

The scripture recorded the lower volume of the Nine Revolutions Golden Immortal Scripture.

"Is this great tribulation somehow related to this scripture?"

Tantai Xuan frowned.

After a long silence, he made his decision.

Hands behind his back, he issued an order with the will of the Nether Emperor: the Netherworld was to be sealed.

Except for the reincarnation of souls, no living being was permitted to enter or leave until the tribulation ended.

The Netherworld governed the reincarnation cycle of the Three Realms. If anything happened to it, order would collapse, and the entire Five Phoenix Continent would be affected.

Thus, Tantai Xuan decisively ordered the seal without hesitation.

He knew sealing the Netherworld would cause dissatisfaction—after all, the lower volume of the Nine Revolutions Golden Immortal Scripture was still here.

But Tantai Xuan no longer cared.

If other Golden Immortals came knocking, then he would fight them.

Moreover, Tantai Xuan believed that the other Golden Immortals must have already sensed the impending tribulation.

After issuing the order,

Tantai Xuan walked across the lands of the Netherworld.

Whether to face the coming great tribulation or to prepare for the ancient Great Emperors in the void rifts...

Tantai Xuan felt it was time for him to begin forging an Emperor Weapon of his own.