

Chapter 451 : Gaining the Sword Dao, the World-Honored One Casts Down His Gaze

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"Got him!"

Watching as the soul of the 【True Lord Cheng Tian Zheng De】 was completely restrained, Lü Yang grinned and directly threw it into the 【Yama Palace】 .

"Ancestor, this counts as me avenging the predecessors of the Witch Ghost Path!"

Inside the 【Yama Palace】 , Ancestor Ting You's expression grew complex upon hearing this, his gaze fixed intently on 【True Lord Cheng Tian Zheng De】 .

Once upon a time, this seemingly powerless True Lord had been someone he could only look up to with resentment in his heart and helplessness in his bones.

Now, that same man had fallen into his hands.

All thanks to Lü Yang's changes.

"You have your day now too!" Ancestor Ting You ground his teeth and formed a hand seal.

【Yama Palace】 activated!

"Aaaaah—!!!"

In an instant, the soul of 【True Lord Cheng Tian Zheng De】 began to violently convulse, his wretched screams sounding exceptionally melodious to Ancestor Ting You's ears.

Meanwhile, Lü Yang exhaled deeply. The 【Golden Nature of Great Fortune】 had been entirely burned away, and the 【Golden Nature of Upright Virtue】 immediately flowed in to fill the void, continuing to maintain Lü Yang's positional rank. At the same time, the attributes of the 【Yama Palace】 also began to shift—becoming grander and more majestic.

【Wall Earth】 !

This was the Fruit Position that Ancestor Ting You originally intended the 【Yama Palace】 to align with. Tying it to 【Overturning Lamp Fire】 had always felt awkward and obstructed.

【Wall Earth】 was the perfect match!

Especially now that Ancestor Ting You had finally avenged his great hatred, and Lü Yang's peerless intellect surged like a spring, pushing the operation of the 【Yama Palace】 to its absolute peak!

“Whew.”

At that moment, Lü Yang deeply exhaled, the breath sharp as an arrow shooting through the sky, spreading far before gradually dissipating.

Within that breath, vague illusions of palace chambers could be seen shattering—these were remnants of the injuries 【True Lord Cheng Tian Zheng De】 had inflicted upon him. Difficult to resolve under normal circumstances, yet now that he aligned with 【Wall Earth】 , he found a chance to dissolve them.

With one breath expelled.

Lü Yang opened his eyes. The fine cracks covering his body had healed considerably—though some wounds left by the 【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 still remained.

But they no longer hindered his combat strength.

At that thought, Lü Yang glanced in the direction of the Pure Land in Jiangxi. A cold smile lifted his lips: ‘I said long ago, I would return.’

Returning like lightning!

With a single thought, the Fruit Position imagery of 【Wall Earth】 wrapped around Lü Yang's body, concealing his aura and severing karmic ties, rendering him undetectable.

In an instant, he had returned to Jiangxi.

At that very moment, the 【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 was still entangled in battle with 【Ang Xiao】 , her full attention devoted, unwittingly ignoring other senses.

‘ 【Obstruction of Knowledge and View】 .’

Lü Yang immediately understood—he'd been struck by that move too many times. With a single glance, he saw that something was off with the Bodhisattva's current state!

Seeing this, Lü Yang rubbed his fists together eagerly.

‘My turn.’

Sneak attack!

Lü Yang took a deep breath. A Dharma Sword appeared in his hand—it was none other than the 【Contemplative Sword of Profound Elevation from Heaven-Bearing Mysterious Realm】 . Now that 【True Lord Cheng Tian Zheng De】 was dead, and Lü Yang, falsely holding a golden position, had

become the master of 【Wall Earth】 , the treasure offered itself willingly without even needing refinement!

The next second, sword light erupted!

Almost simultaneously, the previously dazed 【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 suddenly stirred, her intuition warning her of imminent danger.

But 【Ang Xiao】 made his move.

"An illusion! Just an illusion—no one's trying to kill you."

An invisible mirage descended like a breeze, instantly blowing away her sense of danger. She couldn't help but think:

'What was I just thinking?'

'Someone's trying to kill me? Impossible. Upright Virtue is dead, Great Fortune is out—today, I stand supreme. Who can kill me? It must be a hallucination.'

'No—someone's influencing me!'

'Wait—what was I thinking again?'

Thoughts like these surged endlessly, wave after wave, rendering 【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 frozen in place, motionless.

"Puchi!"

Lü Yang's blade had already pierced her flesh, driving deep within, with the sealing Fruit Position imagery resonating violently inside her body!

Just as the Bodhisattva tried to react, another layer of illusion descended.

'What was I just thinking?'

'No! No! Damn it, what am I thinking—I've been stabbed! If this goes on, I'll die. No need to think—strike back first!'

'What was I just thinking?'

This barrage of illusions—never mind the Bodhisattva—even Lü Yang felt a shiver down his spine. The damn 【Great Forest Wood】 was truly sinister!

He wanted it badly!

So this was the Wood Element Supreme? Ridiculously overpowered! And this was still 【Ang Xiao】 while burdened by 【Boundless Heaven】 and the Underworld.

If 【Ang Xiao】 were unrestrained, how powerful would he be?

Perfect in the Five Elements, late Golden Core stage—he could easily be called the strongest under Nascent Soul today! Lü Yang couldn't think of anyone stronger.

Unreal!

Lü Yang marveled inwardly, but his hands didn't pause. He fluently executed the combo once wielded by 【True Lord Cheng Tian Zheng De】 , sealing spiritual power with Fruit Position, and simultaneously cast the 【Sun-Bearing Heavenly Cloud Sublime Mantra】 directly into her Sea of Consciousness.

【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 tried to resist.

“False—just your illusion.”

【Ang Xiao's】 voice came again. The 【Obstruction of Knowledge and View】 erased her will to fight. Her beautiful eyes now held only pure bewilderment.

‘What was I just thinking?’

“Boom!”

Under 【Ang Xiao's】 full suppression, the Bodhisattva took Lü Yang's sword in full. Her graceful Dharma body exploded on the spot!

“Aaaaaaaah—!!!”

A heartrending scream pierced the skies. Only then did 【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 finally break free from the illusions as thick as fortress walls.

Or more accurately, 【Ang Xiao】 had released his hold.

Watching the scattered blood-light that was once the Bodhisattva, 【Ang Xiao】 shook his head. Had it been five thousand years ago, she'd have died by his hands already!

That's how Great Fortune died back then!

‘Alas, I'm too restricted now.’

To achieve even this, he'd drained every drop of power from his 【Outlaw Body for the Sake of the World】 . Now he could no longer intervene in the mortal realm.

That said, 【Ang Xiao】 was not concerned.

Because his goal had been achieved.

“Clang clang!”

Above the Pure Land, as the Bodhisattva was struck down by Lü Yang's sword, her suppression of the 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 vanished entirely.

In that moment, only one sound filled the heavens—a sword cry!

“Success!”

Lü Yang beckoned, and the 【Sword of No Killing】 left behind by the Demon-Suppressing True Person flew into his hand. A Dao imagery instantly enveloped it.

【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 !

From today onward, the Pure Land's Buddhist cultivators would become the foundation of the 【Sword Dao】 . As long as the Sword Dao endured, the unity of the Pure Land could no longer exist!

“Rumble—!”

At the same time, the 【Buddha Kingdom on Earth】 collapsed. Many Fruit Positions were freed, soaring back to the heavens, vanishing into obscurity.

“Heh.”

Seeing this, 【Ang Xiao】 finally felt satisfied, then, as if remembering something, quickly dispersed his form.

On the other side, 【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 reformed her Dharma body, her expression dark as she stared at the shattered 【Buddha Kingdom】 , grinding her silver teeth nearly to dust.

‘...Amitabha Amitabha!!!’

Suddenly, her face froze.

One by one, emotions vanished from her expression, as if an invisible hand had wiped them clean. In her eyes emerged a tyrannical gaze of sole supremacy under heaven.

“.”

In that instant, all things fell silent.

The 【Buddha Kingdom on Earth】 collapsed. 【Wall Earth】 fled. Unity was severed. Blow after devastating blow finally triggered a forbidden line.

The World-Honored One—looked down!

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 452: Fixed Fate

The heavens and earth across the Four Realms fell into utter silence.

Lü Yang froze completely in place, his face turning ashen as he stared toward the spot where 【Ang Xiao】 had just vanished. Inwardly, he was already cursing furiously:

‘That beast!’

No wonder that guy could reach the late stage of Golden Core and even petition the 【Underworld】—that reaction speed was absurd! The World-Honored One hadn’t even fully descended before the man had decisively fled.

What should he do now?

‘Activate the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】?’

Lü Yang took a deep breath, quickly calming his mind. The panel of the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】 beside him was his greatest confidence—no one could stop him from restarting!

After all, even though he currently held a False Golden Fruition, his position was already standing at the pinnacle of this heaven and earth. If the World-Honored One knew of the existence of the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】 and had arranged something against it, then perhaps even immortals couldn’t save him.

But since the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】 had not been exposed, who could imagine that he could commit suicide to restart?

However, Lü Yang soon realized something was wrong.

The World-Honored One wasn’t looking at him.

Those eyes, overflowing with Buddha Light, swept across the surroundings in calm indifference. Wherever His gaze passed, ghosts wailed and gods sobbed, blood rain fell from the heavens—it was as though the very world itself trembled in fear!

‘He’s not looking at me.’

In that instant, Lü Yang was enlightened—it was like a mortal staring at an anthill.

Who would care about what the ants inside looked like?

Golden Core? Foundation Establishment?

Merely the sizes of ants—utterly beneath notice!

What truly drew His gaze was the entire anthill itself—this heaven and earth.

As for everything else, they had never been within His concern from the beginning!

“Boom—!”

The entire Jiangxi region quaked violently. The World-Honored One stood with His hands clasped behind His back, surveying the surroundings, as if reminiscing about the glory of bygone ages.

The next second, He spoke.

“Come back.”

Just two calm words—spoken even with the voice of the 【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 — yet in that instant, they drew the response and resonance of the entire heaven and earth!

However, that resonance was clearly unwilling. The phenomena throughout the heavens showed contradiction—on one side, blood rain fell; on the other, golden lotuses blossomed from the ground. Disaster and auspice coexisted, a scene both bizarre and terrifying.

After a moment, all those strange signs faded simultaneously.

In their place appeared a beam of golden light.

This golden light had already hidden itself between heaven and earth, yet was now forcibly drawn forth. Within that light, endless visions unfolded—

Dragons coiled around golden cities, Tianjing Jade Ramparts stood tall.

Hundred officials paid homage; ten thousand households shone with light.

At a glance, it was not a mere ray of light, but an entire nation condensed a billionfold—vast and weighty beyond words.

【Chengtou Soil】 !

Because the 【Buddha Kingdom on Earth】 had perished, and the “Unity of All Beings” had been severed, the escaping 【Chengtou Soil】 from the Pure Land had now been pulled back by a single word from the World-Honored One!

‘That’s shameless...!’

Lü Yang's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets, but he immediately restrained himself, not daring to reveal even the slightest emotion—this was no mere Buddha Child.

This was the Dao Lord Himself descending!

'Holy Sect, Sword Pavilion, Dao Court... what are you all even doing?! How could you let the World-Honored One act personally?! Is there no rule of law left?!

None of the mighty ones in this damned realm had a shred of immortal virtue!

Though his heart was filled with curses, Lü Yang, in reality, didn't hesitate to use **【Wall Earth】** to seal his qi, desperately diminishing his presence.

Of course, it was useless.

He was only comforting himself.

"Boom—!"

The next instant, the **【Chengtou Soil】** was seen trembling in the palm of the World-Honored One—one loose grip, and it would vanish into nothingness.

Yet soon, the World-Honored One extended His other hand, pointing downward lightly. In that moment, the entire Pure Land of Jiangxi shimmered with hazy, illusory radiance.

Immediately after, Lü Yang saw the entire Jiangxi—the monks, birds, beasts, even heaven and earth itself—being stripped of a mysterious layer of light and shadow.

A new "Pure Land" was born.

This had already surpassed Lü Yang's comprehension. It was like reading a heavenly tome.

Yet, holding the **【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】**, he could clearly sense it—

'The **【Sword Dao】** is now anchored upon that!'

Logically speaking, under the control of the Demon-Suppressing True Person, the **【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】** had already rooted itself into the Pure Land, bound to the "Unity of All Beings."

If the **【Sword Dao】** perished, the Unity would cease.

But now, the World-Honored One had peeled away that very concept—as though a snake shedding its skin—separating the **【Sword Dao】** from the Pure Land!

'No—more precisely, He severed the portion of the Pure Land that had been rooted by the **【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】** from that which hadn't. The former was sent away; the latter preserved—thus, without damaging the **【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】**, He restored the Unity of All Beings!'

Causality? Time? Concept?

Lü Yang could understand the change, but not how it was achieved. As he pondered, the World-Honored One suddenly shifted His gaze.

‘Hiss!!!’

Lü Yang drew a sharp breath.

He’s looking at me? No... not me—He’s looking at the 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 !

The World-Honored One remained silent. Those eyes, brimming with Buddha Light, calmly fixed upon the sword rank in Lü Yang’s hand, and He extended a single finger to tap lightly.

“Boom—!”

In the next moment, the “Pure Land” He had personally stripped out—composed entirely of light and shadow—began collapsing.

All its myriad phenomena merged into the 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 , making it ever more complete and independent.

Meanwhile, on the other side, the monks of the Pure Land showed expressions of compassion.

“Amitābha!”

The unified chant of Buddha resounded once more. Every monk’s appearance became solemn and dignified, sensing the restoration of their unity. Their faces no longer showed joy or sorrow—

Only purity and peace.

When all was done, the World-Honored One withdrew His gaze. The restored Unity suppressed the rampaging 【Chengtou Soil】 and returned it deep into the Pure Land.

Everything returned to its former state.

The Demon-Suppressing True Person’s intricate schemes—turning the Sword Pavilion and the Pure Land into mortal enemies—had all turned to dust before the World-Honored One’s descent!

Then, the World-Honored One slowly closed His eyes.

When He opened them again, the overwhelming Buddha Light had faded. The consciousness of the 【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 returned, only to dissolve like a dream or illusion.

She had once again gone into seclusion.

After all, the constraints of the 【Boundless Heaven】 still remained.

The 【Bodhisattva of Vase and Water Moon】 had descended only by burning her Cave Heaven. Now that all matters were concluded, there was no reason for her to continue exhausting it.

From beginning to end, the World-Honored One had not spoken a single word to anyone else.

‘That’s... it?’

Lü Yang’s expression was dazed. He hadn’t imagined that the descent of the World-Honored One would end so anticlimactically.

Yet soon, he sorted out the logic within:

‘Right. The Pure Land’s repeated misfortunes had already strayed from the Dao Lords’ ordained path, so it required correction. Hence, the World-Honored One intervened.

However, since the 【Sword Dao】 concerned the Sword Pavilion’s grand design, He couldn’t destroy it. That’s why, after descending, the World-Honored One refrained from further excessive actions.’

In an instant, divine insight dawned on Lü Yang.

The descent of the World-Honored One was by no means without limitation!

‘Strictly speaking, He represented the will of the four Dao Lords—the World-Honored One was but the executor of their compromise, sent to tidy up the loose ends!’

The Pure Land’s 【Chengtou Soil】 must be reclaimed.

The 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 , belonging to the Sword Pavilion, must remain intact.

As for the 【Buddha Kingdom on Earth】 —that was left to fate. The other Dao Lords had given the World-Honored One a chance, but since He had failed, He could only accept the loss.

“This really is...”

Even after understanding the logic behind the World-Honored One’s descent, Lü Yang felt no relief—only a cold dread rising in his chest.

The reason was simple:

‘Each of the four Dao Lords has a red line for this realm. Touch any one of them, and it will draw their direct intervention!’

That was why the Holy Sect’s Patriarch had pitied Mu Changsheng to death.

That was why the World-Honored One Himself had descended to set things right.

In other words, from the very beginning, the future of this world had already been sealed by the hands of the four Dao Lords!

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 453: Counting the Spoils of War

The World-Honored One had departed.

The Pure Land once again returned to its former appearance. Immediately after, an elderly monk with snow-white hair and beard walked up to Lü Yang, bowed deeply with utmost respect, and said,

“Amitābha.”

“Senior Hongyun, in this great tribulation, my Pure Land has lost countless lives. A few days hence, we shall close our borders to the outside world. I must ask the donor not to linger in Jiangxi any longer.”

His tone was calm and steady. Though still carrying the humility befitting one of lower cultivation, the confidence within his words could not be concealed. Clearly, now that the united will of the Pure Land cultivators had been restored, their confidence too had returned.

By contrast, Lü Yang—though still maintaining his False Golden Fruition state—felt a chill run through his heart.

‘This damned place... truly allows no room for arrogance.’

He reminded himself sternly.

Just then, however, a sword light came streaking from the distance, tearing through the sky and plunging directly into the Pure Land. From within it emerged a man.

He wore a white robe, with a longsword hanging from his waist.

Lü Yang looked toward him, his brows arching slightly. Although the man had restrained his qi flow well and hid his divine powers, such tricks could not fool Lü Yang’s eyes at this moment.

‘【Sword-Edge Metal】.’

This man too possessed the cultivation of Foundation Establishment Perfection, with five divine abilities hidden within—one slightly weaker than the rest, clearly a newly condensed one.

With a mental calculation, Lü Yang instantly discerned the man's identity.

'True Person Demon-Subduer.'

Among the Sword Pavilion's three generational Dao titles—Demon-Suppressing, Evil-Banishing, and Demon-Subduing—this Demon-Subduing True Person had never once appeared throughout the recent chaos!

'I heard before that he was at late Foundation Establishment, yet now he has reached Perfection. It seems he secluded himself for a breakthrough. Of the three, the Demon-Suppressing True Person exhausted himself attaining the 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 , while the Evil-Banishing True Person's White Wax Metal path was hopeless. This Demon-Subduing True Person may well be the Sword Pavilion's true heir.'

The proof lay in the 【Sword-Edge Metal】 !

After all, that Fruitional Rank was the supreme of the Metal element. For him to have remained so low-profile from start to finish meant the Sword Pavilion had guarded him carefully.

Thinking of this, Lü Yang grew wary.

'Someone like that could have stayed hidden in seclusion forever... yet he chose to emerge now. That can't bode well.'

Indeed, events unfolded just as Lü Yang expected.

"Lord Minghe."

The newly arrived True Person cupped his hands respectfully toward Lü Yang and said, "By decree of the 【True Lord of Rigid Form Dao-Preaching】 , I have come to request Lord Minghe's return to the sect."

Lü Yang raised an eyebrow. That name—Minghe—was the Dao title of his Sword Dao clone in the Sword Pavilion. Yet now, the Demon-Subduing True Person had uttered it to his face. Clearly, his clone's identity had been exposed. It was no surprise; by the end, Lü Yang had scarcely bothered to keep up the pretense.

Before he could reply, another streak of light flew in.

Lü Yang turned to see yet another unexpected figure—Jun Tong, the Foundation Establishment True Person under the True Lord of Brocade Radiance and Colored Silks of the Holy Sect!

And like the Demon-Subduing True Person, Jun Tong too had advanced to Foundation Establishment Perfection. Upon landing, she saluted Lü Yang respectfully and said,

"By decree of the 【True Lord of Clear Snow and Flying Purity】 , I have come to invite Lord Hongyun back to the sect."

At that, Lü Yang was momentarily speechless.

Minghe he could understand—after all, that was his own clone. But Hongyun? Heaven and Earth bore witness; that was merely a name others had imposed upon him! He had simply never denied it.

‘So they’re forcing me to choose, huh...’

He looked to his left and right—on one side stood the Demon-Subduing True Person representing the Sword Pavilion; on the other, Jun Tong representing the Holy Sect. Both carried the will of their respective True Lords.

Lü Yang understood perfectly well that neither sect truly valued him as a person—they only coveted the treasure he now held: the 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 .

‘The more they want it, the less I can give it!’

He had to bait them.

Once he handed it over, his value would vanish. Keeping it in his grasp, however, forced others to tread carefully around him.

‘Besides, the 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 is something I intend to carry with me when I restart my cultivation. There’s no way I’d hand it over.’

With that thought, Lü Yang smiled faintly and said, “This seat intends to rest overseas for a while. There’s no rush in this matter. You two may come seek me again after a few days.”

With those words, Lü Yang didn’t give either of them a chance to speak further. He took one step forward and vanished from sight. After all, he was still a True Lord—speaking with two Foundation Establishment cultivators was only for the sake of their sects’ backgrounds. He would not truly allow them to pressure him.

—

Overseas, within the Seaheart Furnace of Earthfire.

Using 【Wall Earth】 to conceal his qi, Lü Yang, while still within his temporary False Golden state, finally began to examine his spoils of war.

‘Aside from the World-Honored One, everything went just as I foresaw.’

Even the World-Honored One’s final intervention had not affected Lü Yang’s harvest—if anything, it had removed a potential great hidden danger for him.

The 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 !

‘Originally, this thing was bound to the Pure Land’s united will. I wasn’t sure if, after I restarted, that connection would be severed.’

If severed, the Fruitional Rank might regress.

If not, he feared it would plunge the Pure Land into chaos, drawing the World-Honored One's attention—and then he'd truly lose everything.

But now, there was no need to worry.

The World-Honored One had personally acted to make the 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 independent. In this case, carrying it away through the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】 would pose no problem.

'Beyond that, there's also the 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 !'

At that thought, Lü Yang directed his consciousness into the Myriad Spirits Banner, retrieving a radiant, multicolored orb, within which vast images ebbed and flowed.

【Everflowing Water】 !

The power of Everflowing Water extorted from Ang Xiao—sufficient to nourish and mature the embryonic 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 into a complete Fruitional Rank!

In the next instant, Lü Yang summoned the 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 and tossed the orb into it. The orb shattered, releasing boundless imagery that surged out like a flood, letting the 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 devour and drink deeply, growing ever more complete and powerful in the process!

'Now that's a profit!'

A flicker of excitement flashed through Lü Yang's eyes, though he quickly calmed himself.

'Two complete Fruitional Ranks... Such a tough choice. Which should I attest to?'

To him, each had its merits.

The 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 was easier to attain—he could even attempt it immediately if he wished.

The 【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】 , on the other hand, required more time, for his Sword Intent had yet to reach the near-ultimate realm once achieved by the Demon-Suppressing True Person.

Still, its potential far exceeded that of the Seven Luminaries Heaven.

'A pity one can only attain a single Fruitional Rank—unless... I can somehow merge the two into one!'

Could it be done?

Lü Yang pondered and felt... it might be possible.

'The Qi-Harvesting Method... With my current False Golden cultivation and my peerless intellect, I should be able to deduce a second-rank cultivation art!'

At that thought, Lü Yang immediately focused his mind.

“Ancestor, assist me!”

The next moment, the figure of Ancestor Ting You appeared, swiftly entering the state of comprehension.

At once, Lü Yang handed over control of the 【Yama Palace】 to Ancestor Ting You as well, ensuring that his unparalleled intelligence could operate at full capacity.

As for himself—he had something even more important to handle.

Aside from the two complete Fruitional Ranks, he possessed another immensely valuable trophy this time.

Evil-Banishing True Person, Wu Taian, the Buddha Child’s Dharma Aspect, Xiang Ye, Immortal Ling, Shang Zhang...

During this False Golden state, he had gathered five Foundation Establishment Golden Natures!

Once the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】 settled the results—he would gain five Golden Talents!

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 454: Five Golden Talents!

【Settling the experience for ‘Evil-Banishing True Person’.】

【You were the favored child of heaven in the Sword Pavilion, yet your brilliance was overshadowed by others, forced to hide in the darkness, known by none. Your heart was filled with jealousy.】

On the interface of the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】 , lines of text floated into view.

The first was Evil-Banishing True Person. Speaking of this Sword Pavilion’s True Person who had achieved perfection in Foundation Establishment, his life could only be described by two words—utterly tragic.

“Evil-Banishing True Person and Demon-Suppressing True Person were of the same generation. Naturally, he was suppressed from childhood. Only when Demon-Suppressing True Person switched to the Sword Dao did his heart regain a bit of balance, for it meant the latter’s path to immortality had ended. Yet when 【Ang Xiao】 appeared, he turned into a clown instead.”

Because he cultivated 【White Wax Gold】 !

At that time, Evil-Banishing True Person completely broke down. “I was just mocking Demon-Suppressing True Person for reaching a dead end in his Dao path—and now I have no path myself!”

Who could bear that?

【You have obtained the Golden Talent · Man of the Bucket!】

【Man of the Bucket: You can actively diminish your own presence. The more people there are in a place, the harder it becomes for others to notice your existence.】

“A bit similar to 【Obstruction of Knowledge and View】 .”

Though not as omnipotent as the original 【Obstruction of Knowledge and View】 , and much more limited, it was still a formidable ability. Used well, it might yield miraculous results.

【Settling the experience for ‘Wu Taian’ .】

【You were the King of Southern Suppression in the Dao Court, a collateral branch of the Tian Wu Royal House. As the younger brother of the Dao Court’s Heavenly Son, you always hid within your heart an ambition—to become the Heavenly Son yourself.】

The second Golden Nature settlement was complete.

As he gazed upon the dense life trajectory records belonging to “Wu Taian” on the panel, Lü Yang’s eyes revealed a glint of interest.

“The Dao Court... truly mysterious.”

Even amidst the chaos of the world this time, the Dao Court had never intervened. The entire Jiangdong region remained closed to the outside world, leaving outsiders unable to learn its internal structure.

Now, the settlement of Wu Taian’s experience conveniently filled Lü Yang’s gap in understanding. After all, he had never underestimated the Dao Court. A simple example was proof enough—after the great chaos, looking across the world, the Dao Court had likely become the strongest of all powers!

It must be known—the True Lords had yet to emerge!

Yet aside from the Dao Court, all other factions capable of seeking Golden Fruition were gone. Jun Tong and True Person Fuyao had only just perfected Foundation Establishment; it was still too early for them to seek gold.

Only the Dao Court had suffered little loss.

“To say nothing else, at least the Dao Court’s crown prince, the one of the highest rank, surely has the qualifications to seek gold! I just don’t know why he hasn’t yet.”

Just then, lines of text abruptly appeared upon the interface of the **【Book of a Hundred Lives】** :

【You have obtained the Golden Talent · Never Beneath Another!】

【Never Beneath Another: The more outstanding you appear in the eyes of your superior, the more favor you gain; the greater the power you receive when you betray that superior.】

“This—”

Lü Yang’s expression turned a bit strange. The ‘betrayal bonus’ of this Golden Talent applied to all aspects—from divine abilities to mana, even to fortune itself.

The maximum could reach double!

In other words, if he could elevate this bonus to its peak when betraying someone, his strength could instantly surge to twice its original level!

It might only seem like “double.”

But considering the suddenness of a backstab, this doubling effect could easily enable a one-hit kill—leaving no room for retaliation!

“What a fine talent for a rebel.”

Lü Yang rubbed his chin and continued studying the **【Book of a Hundred Lives】** .

Next was the Golden Nature of the Buddha Child’s Dharma Manifestation. Unlike the previous two, this one had few complex experiences—only a few lines, then it was done.

【You have obtained the Golden Talent · Reincarnated Spirit Child!】

【Reincarnated Spirit Child: You may transform yourself into a ‘Primordial Spirit’ and, without being noticed, parasitize another being—hiding your true self within their body.】

“ **【String-Pulled Puppet】** —the youthful version?”

Lü Yang frowned slightly, but quickly realized—“No, their focus differs. **【String-Pulled Puppet】** excels in number and range.”

“By contrast, **【Reincarnated Spirit Child】** can only possess one body, yet allows perfect concealment. The host won’t even realize it. It’s tantamount to hiding oneself flawlessly in the shadows. If used together with **【String-Pulled Puppet】** , it would make me the perfect unseen manipulator behind the scenes...”

The more Lü Yang thought, the stranger he felt.

Why did it seem that, with each new talent, he was becoming more like a storybook villain? And yet, he had always aspired to be a good man.

Then, the **【Book of a Hundred Lives】** once again trembled.

This time, it settled the Golden Natures of Xiang Ye and Immortal Ling Shang Zhang.

【You have obtained the Golden Talent · I Shall Be First to Ascend!】

【I Shall Be First to Ascend: When you do something no one else around you dares to do, you gain the blessing of fortune—the greater the challenge, the greater the fortune.】

【You have obtained the Golden Talent · Fortune Not Filling the Eyes!】

【Fortune Not Filling the Eyes: You can accumulate your own fortune, converting it into “misfortune” or “good fortune,” and then allocate it to yourself or to others.】

“So many... far too many.”

Lü Yang’s nose twitched; he couldn’t suppress a satisfied groan, feeling his entire spirit filled to the brim with the talents bestowed by the **【Book of a Hundred Lives】** .

At this point, his panel was dazzling enough to frighten anyone.

【Name: Lü Yang】

【Cultivation: Foundation Establishment Perfection】

【Talents: Dual-Cultivation Prodigy (White), Has Some Tricks (Purple), Born Immortal Spirit (Gold), String-Pulled Puppet (Gold), Divining Fortune Drawing Lots (Gold), True Dragon Bloodline (Gold), Dragon-Playing Platform (Gold), Seizing the Nest of Another (Gold), Man of the Bucket (Gold), Never Beneath Another (Gold), Reincarnated Spirit Child (Gold), I Shall Be First to Ascend (Gold), Fortune Not Filling the Eyes (Gold)】

【Blessed Lands: Heaven-Graced Geng Metal Blessed Land, Xuandu Blessed Land】

【Divine Abilities: Exquisite Heart, Containing True Qi, Returning Origin Art, Heaven-Bearing Net, Same as the World, Lord of Armament and Warfare, Duke of Stubborn Metal, Solemn Profound Frost, Resounding Heavenly Bell, Authority of Heaven and Earth’s Killing.】

【Treasure: Qiantian Myriad Phenomena Governor (Grade Two)】

【Book of a Hundred Lives Pages: 91】

Look! Just look at what I’ve gained in this lifetime!

“The talents—needless to say—are practically doubled.”

“As for the divine abilities, aside from those I acquired from the 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 , the rest I reclaimed from Immortal Ling Shang Zhang using 【Seizing the Nest of Another】 .”

At this thought, Lü Yang couldn't help but feel exhilarated.

“In this life, I've reached the end of the road. There's nothing left worth lingering for.”

He glanced down at his body. The Heavenly Lord had nourished Immortal Ling Shang Zhang well—divine abilities complete, Golden Natures refined. He could almost attempt to seek the Golden Fruition immediately.

“...Why not give it a try?”

He would have to restart anyway—so why not charge for the Golden Position before he did!

“Up till now, I've only ever watched others seek gold. I've never truly experienced it myself—never understood where the real dangers lie.”

Lü Yang was never one to fight unprepared battles.

According to his plan, in his next life he would aim for True Lordship. Since this life was nearing its end, he might as well make use of it—to pave the way for the next!

“If I succeed, that's best—carry the Cave Heaven to my next life and begin as a True Lord.”

“Even if I fail, I'll have discovered potential pitfalls. Whatever traps lie within the process of seeking gold, I'll be ready for them next time.”

At that thought, Lü Yang no longer hesitated.

Seek the Gold!

Attain the Fruition of [Pomegranate Wood]!

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 455: True Lord Difficult to Attain, Try Again!

The duration of the False Golden Fruition had finally come to an end.

However, before it ended, Lü Yang still used the authority of a True Lord's rank to completely enclose the area where the Earthfire Sea Heart Furnace was located with a third-grade formation.

And the formation he used was one of Hong Yun's.

【Seven Luminaries World-Stabilizing True Preservation Grand Formation】

‘With this formation set up, and the Patriarch protecting my Dharma, unless a True Lord descends upon the world, there's no need to worry about anyone interrupting my Golden Fruition attempt.’

That was already the very limit of what Lü Yang could achieve.

If a True Lord were to descend by burning their cave heaven, or if a Dao Lord personally acted just to stop his Golden Fruition, then that would simply be his bad luck — at worst, he would just have to give it up this time.

Thinking this, Lü Yang wasted no time. He immediately sat cross-legged and entered meditation. Yet, when he truly arrived at that final step before success, an uncontrollable wave of fear and unease surged within him. Countless past images flashed before his eyes one after another.

Chong Guang, Suohuan, Xiang Ye...

‘Failure in seeking Golden Fruition means certain death. Uncle-Master Chong Guang's end was already considered a good one; Xiang Ye was the truly unfortunate one — he died in failure without even leaving a ripple behind.’

Oh right, there was also Suohuan.

Having already acquired the power of **【Long Flowing Water】**, his task for this lifetime was complete. He was currently resting within the Myriad Spirits Banner; his true opportunity would come in his next life.

‘...Right. What do I have to be afraid of?’

It was merely trial and error!

Others only had a single chance at seeking Golden Fruition, yet he still had dozens. If even with so many chances he could not succeed, then no one in this world could ever become a True Lord!

Lü Yang calmed his heart and sharpened his mind. With a single slash of the Sword of Wisdom, he cut off all stray thoughts. Then, furrowing his brow, a palm-sized stone glimmering with golden light appeared before his eyes — it was the blessed land condensed by the Celestial Spirit Shang Zhang before his death: **【Heaven's Grace and Earth's Favor Geng Metal Blessed Land】** !

After all, this time, what he sought was **【Pomegranate Wood】** .

His other blessed land, **【Xuandu Blessed Land】** , was his true Dao foundation and could not be damaged. The Celestial Spirit Shang Zhang's blessed land, however, he could afford to lose.

“Begin!”

In that instant, Lü Yang activated the Mending Heaven True Scripture, directly commencing his dual cultivation with Heaven and Earth, invoking the attention of the Fruition Position through the Dharma of “Surpassing Heaven and Earth.”

“Rumble—!”

At this moment, Lü Yang felt his consciousness elevate rapidly. It soon reached the Foundation Establishment realm and continued to ascend further.

Blessed Land Ascension!

Lü Yang’s gaze grew faintly hazy. In his vision appeared two overlapping scenes — two sides of one reality, opposing yet complementing one another.

One of them was a scene he had once glimpsed through the 【Xuandu Blessed Land】 : a world like a honeycomb, each Fruition Position a hole boring through existence, leaving the world riddled with gaps. The other scene, drawn from Chong Guang’s memories, was an endless boundless sea of suffering covering heaven and earth.

‘A boundless sea of suffering, and the Fruition Positions are boats upon it.’

Which of these two was real? Or... were both real — simply different perspectives of the same truth, thus presenting entirely opposite images?

While Lü Yang pondered, the process of elevating his blessed land did not halt for even a breath.

‘Being a Celestial Spirit... does have its advantages.’

According to Chong Guang’s memory, this stage of Ascending the Blessed Land consumed immense energy — he had even burned an entire kingdom, Qing State, to complete the process.

Yet for Lü Yang, things were far simpler.

‘Because I am now a Celestial Spirit?’

‘It feels as though Heaven and Earth not only aren’t resisting me but are actively pushing me forward — greatly saving my mana. This is far easier than what Chong Guang went through.’

This made Lü Yang a little uneasy. After all, he was not Heavenly Lord’s cultivated Celestial Spirit Shang Zhang. By reason, Heaven should be his enemy. So why was the world supporting him? Could it be that, in the eyes of Heaven, the identity of who the Celestial Spirit was did not matter — it simply needed one to attain Fruition?

‘No... impossible!’

If that were true, the Heavenly Lord wouldn't have targeted him so specifically in the past. Instead, it would have just created another Celestial Spirit Shang Zhang. Clearly, Heaven placed immense importance on the identity of the Celestial Spirit.

'Unless...'

Lü Yang glanced around, suddenly feeling a chill down his spine: '...Unless the one pushing me forward right now isn't Heaven, but a Dao Lord!'

He hadn't forgotten —

Just as Foundation Establishment True Persons faced various tribulations with contradictory inner logic, anything the Heavenly Lord could do, so too could a Dao Lord!

'Who is it?'

The World-Honored One of the Pure Land? Unlikely — the World-Honored One always acted with grand display. This subtle, silent manipulation was more in line with the Founding Patriarch of the Holy Sect.

'Forget it...'

Lü Yang shook his head slightly. No matter what, "Heaven and Earth" were supporting him at this moment, and he couldn't change that. Since that was the case, he might as well relax and enjoy it.

Because the path ahead was unobstructed, Lü Yang soon arrived before the 【Pomegranate Wood】, finally beholding that Fruition Position up close. At first glance, it appeared as a faint, hazy radiance, but upon closer inspection, it resembled a vast and boundless ocean.

'So, to attain Fruition means to merge oneself with the Fruition Position.'

When one's Blessed Land merged with the Fruition Position and their qi resonated as one, transformation into a Cave Heaven could be achieved... Yet this resonance of qi, though seemingly simple, was harder than ascending to the heavens.

For the qi of the Fruition Position was ever-changing.

Just like the sea before him — turbulent and restless — the qi flow was the cresting wave. Only by aligning oneself at the very peak of that wave could resonance be achieved.

Otherwise, one would be instantly struck down by the tide.

'Uncle-Master Chong Guang reached this very point but failed because of his issue with 【Star-Earth】 — his qi could not resonate with the Fruition Position, leading to his death in failure...'

At that moment, new images flickered within Lü Yang's eyes.

Each was different — scenes of him approaching the Fruition Position, moments of aligning his qi flow. Every one of them looked successful.

Among them, two stood out most clearly; Lü Yang knew well they were derived from the memories of 【Hong Yun】 and 【Zheng De】 . Since predecessors had paved the path, all obstacles seemed revealed, appearing perfectly safe.

‘No... wrong!’

Lü Yang abruptly stopped, withdrawing his half-raised foot: ‘They sought different Fruition Positions – not 【Pomegranate Wood】 ! How could I simply copy their experience?’

The instant that thought arose, both visions vanished.

“Hiss—!”

Seeing this, Lü Yang drew in a sharp breath, realizing: ‘These weren’t illusions of inner demons – but true glimpses of future possibilities!’

Reading these potential futures was the very act of aligning his qi with the Fruition Position. Whichever future he chose would manifest as reality. Yet only one of them led to success – all others were false. Choose wrongly, and he would immediately fail and perish!

‘This is a test of Dao cultivation.’

If one’s Dao attainment was insufficient to discern the true path among countless futures, then no matter how great their power, Fruition could never be achieved!

Lü Yang took a deep breath and pressed onward.

Soon, he chose one future scene – the imagery perfectly matched his understanding of 【Pomegranate Wood】 , without a single flaw to be seen.

However, the moment he made his choice—

Lü Yang’s divine sense wavered, and countless failure scenes surged forth once more, as if trying to halt his advance.

‘Retreat? Reconsider?’

The thought flickered through his mind for an instant, but he immediately erased it. The time for Ascending the Blessed Land was limited – he couldn’t afford endless trial and error.

‘These failure visions are but illusions to shake my heart.’

‘No... perhaps not mere illusions – perhaps some are true. They exist precisely to make me doubt myself, to paralyze me with hesitation.’

Lü Yang sighed inwardly.

In the next instant, his gaze turned resolute. Ignoring all obstructions, he aligned his qi with the chosen future scene and took a firm step forward!

“BOOM—!”

With a deafening roar, everything before Lü Yang shattered — even the 【Heaven’s Grace and Earth’s Favor Geng Metal Blessed Land】 he had seized from the Celestial Spirit Shang Zhang disintegrated completely.

‘...Failed?’ Lü Yang remained calm, unsurprised.

‘My Dao attainment isn’t enough... No — it’s Shang Zhang’s Dao attainment that’s lacking. Of course! Power bestowed directly by Heaven carries no true cultivation of the Dao.’

Realization dawned upon him.

‘The final step of Golden Fruition requires profound Dao attainment — this must be a trap laid by some Dao Lord, meant specifically to kill off any growing Celestial Spirits!’

No wonder no Celestial Spirit had ever succeeded in achieving Golden Fruition!

There had long been a sly old hand tampering with the very origin of Fruition itself... Who did it? Could it be that damn Holy Sect Patriarch again? Too insidious!

Lü Yang’s consciousness rapidly scattered.

Failure in seeking Golden Fruition meant soul annihilation — not even reincarnation would be possible.

Fortunately, he had a cheat.

‘Book of a Hundred Lives!!!’

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 456: Life Needs a Bit of Spice

In the boundless darkness, Lü Yang’s consciousness floated on the surface of the abyss.

"Another restart, huh."

Lü Yang sighed and began to reflect on the failures of his previous life: "Dao attainment... this hurdle might be even more outrageous than I imagined."

Seeking the Golden Core left no room for shortcuts!

"If it hadn't been for the interference of the Heavenly Lord, and I had steadily cultivated step by step with the Immortal Spirit body, perhaps my Dao attainment in 【Pomegranate Wood】 could have met the standard for Golden Core."

However, due to that interference, he had been forced to abandon cultivation in 【Pomegranate Wood】 and seek other paths. As a result, his Golden Core pursuit ended up relying entirely on the insights of Immortal Ling Shang Zhang, which led to deviation. Otherwise, with his state back then, he had a good chance of attaining Fruitional Rank.

"The key lies in divine abilities."

"Original Divine Abilities, Innate Divine Abilities—each and every one of them must be honed personally. Borrowing external power may appear strong, but the foundation is hollow."

In comparison, external Fruitional Ranks didn't have such harsh requirements.

【Exquisite Heart】 , 【Containing True Qi】 , 【Returning Origin Art】 , 【Heaven-Bearing Net】 , 【Same as the World】 ... not a single one of them had been cultivated step-by-step by Lü Yang.

All were quick achievements.

Yet if he had gone to seek 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 , success was almost guaranteed. This clearly showed that Dao attainment was a rigid requirement unique to Fruitional Ranks in this world.

"But perhaps that's also one of the reasons why external Fruitional Ranks are inferior to local ones. Though less restricted, they also inherently lack potential."

While Lü Yang pondered, the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】 stirred.

【Would you like to activate the 'Golden Talent: Innate Immortal Spirit'?】

"...Do not activate."

Seeing this, Lü Yang immediately cursed. Trash talent—it completely screwed him over in the last life! If not for his quick wit, he'd have had to restart again already!

Of course, the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】 paid no heed to Lü Yang's complaints. New text rapidly appeared:

【Please select your restart anchor point.】

"First anchor point."

Lü Yang sighed. At the second anchor point, he had already forged a Dao Foundation aligned with 【City Wall Earth】 . It had been too hasty back then, and now it was a dead file.

He had been too young then, unaware of just how treacherous this damn place really was. He even entertained the thought of snatching fire from the Pure Land's hands to attain 【City Wall Earth】. In hindsight, it was all utter nonsense— 【City Wall Earth】 was enough to make even the World-Honored One act personally!

‘Shameless...’

Lü Yang shook his head, but as soon as he confirmed his choice, the darkness before his eyes began to ripple like pages turning in a book, and a fine white light surged forth—

Like sunlight piercing through night.

And just like opening one's eyes as usual, when Lü Yang regained his senses, what lay before him was a scene he had nearly forgotten.

【You failed in seeking 'Pomegranate Wood', leaving a certain Dao Lord—who had high hopes for you—stunned. They spent ten days and still couldn't figure out why you attempted the Fruitional Rank despite lacking certainty or Dao attainment, and ended up giving up on communicating with you.】

【Remaining pages in the Book of a Hundred Lives: 90】

【Upon restarting a life, you may choose one of the following gains from your past life:

One: Treasures.

Two: Cultivation.

Three: Lifespan.

Four: Abandon all gains and randomly awaken a new talent based on past experiences.】

"Those whose names are called, step forward."

Familiar people, familiar scenes—on the stage, Liu Xin's voice, which had once felt chilling to Lü Yang, now made him feel a strange daze.

‘How many years has it been?’

Lü Yang looked down at his hands. The drastic drop in position was like falling from a mountain peak to the ground—he couldn't quite adjust in that instant.

After all, at the first anchor point, he hadn't even established a foundation yet—at most, he had cultivated a few Great Divine Abilities. The long-lost sense of weakness instead helped Lü Yang rediscover his initial aspirations—no longer needing to ponder the secrets of the heavens or the schemes of Dao Lords, but instead focusing on the mundane affairs before him.

‘Ignorance truly is bliss.’

Thinking thus, Lü Yang calmed his thoughts. After hearing Liu Xin call his name, he quickly stepped onto the stage, and then heard that all-too-familiar announcement:

"Hall of Joy!"

Lü Yang was already well-versed in this whole process.

And so, while going through the motions, he still sighed inwardly: 'With each restart, my heart grows colder and more ruthless.'

Back then, he might've still harbored thoughts of revenge against Liu Xin.

But now? He no longer cared. Even if he did get revenge, so what? They would just be revived in the next life. In the end, they were just disposable tools.

Not even people.

'When did I become like this? If this continues, will I become the very type of person I never wanted to be?'

In that instant, Lü Yang snapped out of it.

Absolutely not!

His cultivation was for longevity, for freedom, for the power to control his own destiny. If he lost himself, what meaning would there be in cultivating?

'I must find a way to temper this mindset!'

Half an hour later.

Inside Yu Suzhen's cave dwelling, Lü Yang pushed aside the flawless, jade-like body beside him, exhaled deeply, and felt the coldness in his heart much warmer now.

'I was just overthinking earlier.'

Lü Yang shook his head, unable to resist marveling:

'The world is so beautiful, yet I was so irritable. That's not good. Not good at all. Mhm, I'm still me—haven't changed a bit!'

After an intense session with Yu Suzhen, Lü Yang deeply realized that cultivation required both tension and relaxation. Life needed a bit of spice. His previously taut mood relaxed considerably, and with ease, he turned his gaze to the 【Book of a Hundred Lives】 and decisively chose the 【Treasure】 option.

【Qián Heaven Governs All Phenomena】 !

This Dharmic body contained all of Lü Yang's gains from the previous life and was now brought over entirely. As for cultivation, it was irrelevant at this point.

'If I wanted, I could restore Foundation Establishment at any time.'

All he had to do was reconnect with the 【Xuandu Blessed Land】 and absorb the 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 again. But it was pointless. This life, he aimed for the future!

'External Fruitional Ranks might be great, but they're not what I seek.'

Lü Yang suspected that if he achieved 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 , he might never be able to attain a native Fruitional Rank again. A short-term gain with long-term consequences.

Of course, that didn't mean 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 was useless.

'The best use would be pseudo-attainment!'

Pseudo-attainment of an external Fruitional Rank!

'As long as I use my astonishing intellect to modify the 【Yama Palace】 so that it can pseudo-hold an external Fruitional Rank, then last life wasn't wasted.'

Sure, pseudo-attaining a Golden Fruitional Rank was already subpar—and this one would be pseudo-holding an external one. Even if successful, it would likely be the weakest Golden Core in history—worse than even an external Dao True Lord! But still, a Golden Core was a Golden Core. It'd crush Foundation Establishment with ease!

Just like pseudo-Foundation Establishment back in the day.

Pseudo-holding an external rank would let Lü Yang achieve a qualitative gap at the Foundation level, helping him better pursue a local Fruitional Rank.

As for which one?

He already had a plan.

'In terms of Dao attainment, 【Overturning Lamp Fire】 and 【Wall Earth】 are actually the best. Pity they're death traps at this point in time.'

Seeking them would be asking for death.

And you'd have to re-hunt the Heavenly Gang and Earth Fiend stars from scratch—far too troublesome.

'【Pomegranate Wood】 is the same.'

Though he had the experience now and high odds of succeeding this time, Lü Yang was no longer content with just an ordinary Fruitional Rank.

‘Since I can pseudo-hold an external rank, my advantage is nearly infinite—it’s like a True Lord competing with Foundation Establishment cultivators. In that case, going after 【Pomegranate Wood】 may work, but it isn’t ambitious enough. If I’m going to attain Fruition, it must be the best one!’

Lü Yang’s benchmark was 【Ang Xiao】 .

If he was going to attain a Fruitional Rank, it had to be a supreme one!

Of course, he was self-aware enough to know that 【City Wall Earth】 and 【Sword Edge Metal】 were off the table, and 【Great Forest Wood】 had already been taken by Ang Xiao.

So his target was—

‘ 【Heavenly Fire Above】 !’

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 457: Plotting to Seize 【Heavenly Fire Above】 !

Seeking 【Heavenly Fire Above】 was not some sudden whim of Lü Yang.

In fact, as early as when he looted the Dragon Palace and obtained that third-grade true art deduced by the Dragon Monarch, the 『Dragon Chapter of Heavenly Speech and Radiant Flame』 , he had already had this idea.

『Dragon Chapter of Heavenly Speech and Radiant Flame』 corresponded directly to 【Heavenly Fire Above】 .

At the time, he had suspected that this technique might contain some hidden trap left behind by the Dragon Monarch, so he chose to set it aside temporarily—but that didn’t mean he had ignored it.

In his previous life, when he falsely held the Golden Fruition, he had swept his divine perception over it using the great power of 【Overturning Lamp Fire】 .

【Overturning Lamp Fire】 could illuminate sun and moon yet leave them unseen, clarify heaven and earth yet remain obscured—it held great advantage in piercing illusions, even capable of breaking through the 【Obstruction of Knowledge and View】 . So a mere third-grade true art was naturally nothing difficult.

Then Lü Yang was shocked.

‘There was actually no problem.’

Yes, no traps! The only restriction in the entire technique was that it must be cultivated by one who possessed pure dragon blood. Other than that, there were no flaws or pitfalls.

‘The Dragon Monarch... truly an honest dragon.’ Lü Yang couldn’t help but sigh.

No wonder the True Dragon Clan had been driven overseas!

In a place like this, if your heart wasn’t ruthless, you wouldn’t stand firm!

‘But that made sense too. After all, the Dragon Monarch was already a True Lord and couldn’t change his Fruition Rank. The purpose of this technique was clearly to cultivate another True Lord.’

Since that was the case, why leave traps?

Even if there had been one, if the other party truly attained 【Heavenly Fire Above】 , with the power of a Supreme Fruition Rank and the status of a Golden Core True Lord, what trap couldn’t be resolved?

It would be meaningless and would only create enemies.

To the Dragon Monarch, as long as the cultivator of this third-grade true art was a true dragon and would stand on the side of the True Dragon Clan, then there would be no issue.

‘I can be a True Dragon too. I can contribute to the Dragon Clan too!’

Lü Yang’s eyes gleamed brightly.

More importantly, back then in the Dragon Clan’s treasury, the Dragon Monarch had even prepared for him the Heavenly Gang and Earthly Fiends required to cultivate 【Heavenly Fire Above】 !

No need to find them himself!

‘The only issue is that the Heavenly Gang and Earthly Fiends were obtained too easily. I don’t have sufficient Dao attainment. Instant refinement might not be possible.’

Thinking this, Lü Yang once again examined the four Heavenly Gang and Earthly Fiend forces corresponding to 【Heavenly Fire Above】 : 【Wu Earth】 , 【Wu Fire】 , 【Ji Earth】 , and 【Wei Earth】 . Of these, only 【Wu Earth】 was one he considered himself experienced enough in—this Heavenly Gang was the same as 【City Head Earth】 , which he had cultivated before.

The other three, he knew nothing about.

Aside from that, there was also the ritual required to draw the attention of 【Heavenly Fire Above】—a detail the Dragon Monarch had also explained in the 『Dragon Chapter of Heavenly Speech and Radiant Flame』 .

The ritual was actually quite simple.

‘ 【Heavenly Fire Above】 warms the mountains and rivers, radiates across the cosmos. So to attract its attention, the only way—is to rule the world!’

Seeing this, Lü Yang understood why no one had attained 【Heavenly Fire Above】 until now.

Of course it wasn’t due to lack of desire.

But because this “world” referred to Jiangdong, Jiangxi, Jiangnan, Jiangbei, and overseas—all regions included within it!

Who the hell could accomplish that?

Of course, there were shortcuts.

If one only ruled Jiangdong alone, with the structure of the Dao Court, one could still attract the gaze of 【Heavenly Fire Above】—just not as strongly.

Though still capable of seeking the Golden Core, the odds would decrease by at least thirty percent.

“No wonder the Dragon Monarch only treated it as a backup plan, storing it in the Dragon Palace treasury without ever using it. He probably wasn’t very confident himself.”

The same applied to the Dao Court.

【Heavenly Fire Above】 was undoubtedly compatible with the Dao Court system, yet no one from the Dao Court had ever sought it. Most likely, they too considered the difficulty.

‘By comparison, it was actually 【City Head Earth】 that didn’t require one to rule the world. Its imagery was closer to the hearts of the people, to rites and regulations. In a way, it was human-centered... and in this world, there was no shortage of people. What a pity, amidst great chaos, 【City Head Earth】 was seized by the Pure Land.’

Come to think of it, how odd.

As one of the Supreme Fruition Ranks, how had 【City Head Earth】 been taken by Pure Land? Did the Dao Court’s Dao Lord lose to the Pure Land’s World-Honored One?

Or had there been a deal?

‘Eh, I’m overthinking again. Not good, not good.’

Lü Yang sighed, quickly pulled the still half-dazed Yu Suzhen into his arms, and exchanged a few more moments of “deep communion” to relieve his tension.

This time, Lü Yang didn't kill Yu Suzhen. Instead, he used **【String-Pulled Puppet】** to hypnotize her.

This way, he could control her progress and use her as a tool—at the right time, sending her overseas to reawaken **【Boundless Heaven】** .

At this thought, a plan had already formed in Lü Yang's mind.

'Ruling the world... might not be impossible! If all the True Lords go into hiding, wouldn't a false Fruition outsider like me be able to rule the world with ease?'

Of course, to rule meant more than just being the number one person under heaven. One had to form a hierarchical structure of power, rise to the apex of that structure, rule the Four Regions under Heaven, and leave none disobedient—only then could one hope to gain the approval of **【Heavenly Fire Above】** . The difficulty was utterly absurd.

'No wonder one must begin with the Dao Court.'

After all, across the Four Regions, both the Holy Sect and Sword Pavilion were loosely organized and belonged to the typical sect type, while Pure Land's unity excluded them directly.

Only the Dao Court... was a nation.

Thus, to fulfill the conditions for **【Heavenly Fire Above】** , the operational logic of the Dao Court's system was clearly the most suitable and efficient.

'This life... let it be my goal.'

Lü Yang took a deep breath. Using others as a mirror, one could discern gains and losses—and when it came to cultivation, he always had one ideal target to learn from.

【Ang Xiao】 !

This late-Golden Core True Lord had chosen to prove the Dao with **【Great Forest Wood】** , and later sought out **【Underworld】** . Whether that path was correct or not, he would set aside.

At the very least, **【Ang Xiao】** 's achievements now were undeniable. Especially without knowing how the World-Honored One had originally attained Nascent Soul, **【Ang Xiao】** 's path remained the most reliable—so following in his footsteps would certainly help avoid many detours.

'Proving a void Fruition Rank must be left until last.'

' **【Seven Luminaries Heaven】** was just a transitional step; **【Sword Dao Fruitional Rank】** was my true hope for the future. But during this process, a Supreme Fruition Rank was the cornerstone!'

First prove **【Heavenly Fire Above】** .

Then slowly seek out a method to cultivate **【Sword Dao】** . If he could develop **【Sword Dao】** to the level of **【Underworld】** , he too would have hope of reaching Nascent Soul!

That was 【Ang Xiao】's path.

But what gave him the edge over 【Ang Xiao】 was that 【Sword Dao】 had been washed by the 『Book of a Hundred Lives』 —unlike 【Underworld】 , it wasn't exposed in plain sight.

‘Of course, in this life, it must no longer be called 【Sword Dao】 . It's best to blend it with 【Seven Luminaries Heaven】 —call it something like my void-proven 【Indomitable Fruition Rank】 that just happens to resemble Sword Dao a bit. Then conceal it using the Myriad Spirits Banner, and no one will be able to see through my background!’

With the thought came action. Lü Yang moved at once.

‘First step: go to the Dao Court!’

The next moment, Lü Yang's figure began to turn transparent. A golden light emerged from his body, making him appear increasingly ethereal, as if he had become a formless shadow.

Golden Talent: Reincarnated Spirit Child !

【Reincarnated Spirit Child: You may transform yourself into a ‘Primordial Spirit’, parasitize another without being detected, and hide your true self within their body.】

A flash of golden light.

The “Primordial Spirit” Lü Yang dove directly into Yu Suzhen's body, making her—still unconscious—twitch slightly before letting out a long breath.

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 458: Entering the Dao Court!

Although he planned to head for the Dao Court, Lü Yang would not foolishly rush over in a hurry.

After all, the Dao Court practiced closed-door isolation and extreme xenophobia—ordinary cultivators couldn't even get close, and trespassers in Jiangdong would be killed on the spot as invaders.

Especially Foundation Establishment cultivators.

‘According to Wu Taian's memories, the Dao Court is suppressed by the 【Immortal Nation Dao Law】 . Any Foundation Establishment cultivator entering its borders would be instantly locked onto by the Dao Court.’

Therefore, Lü Yang did not rush to restore his Foundation Establishment cultivation.

Since the Myriad Spirits Banner had no shortage of Foundation Establishment cultivators to guard him, there was nothing to worry about. After entering Yu Suzhen's body via the 【Reincarnated Spirit Child】 , he simply waited patiently.

Very soon, Yu Suzhen awoke.

“What is this...”

Yu Suzhen looked around, her beautiful eyes filled with confusion, but as Lü Yang activated 【String-Pulled Puppet】 , she quickly “remembered” the past.

“That poor new disciple has already been eliminated by me, and I’ve smoothly broken through to the first layer of Qi Refinement.”

“This makes perfect sense.”

Stepping down from the bed, Yu Suzhen changed her clothes, and just then a knock came from outside the door. Upon opening it, it was none other than Liu Xin, who had been waiting for a long time.

What followed was something Lü Yang was already very familiar with.

Liu Xin wanted to refine Yu Suzhen, but she sensed something wrong in advance, used her beauty to deceive him, and eventually poisoned him to death.

Then came Yu Suzhen's series of ‘Sea King’ maneuvers.

During this process, Lü Yang quietly switched the host of the 【Reincarnated Spirit Child】 and transferred into Zhao Xuhe.

‘Yu Suzhen is quite the talent, but sadly lacks any background. She can only develop slowly within the Holy Sect. I’ll just monitor her progress using 【String-Pulled Puppet】 . Since I’m going to the Dao Court, I need someone among the Holy Sect disciples with a certain status, someone who can leave the sect at any time.’

Zhao Xuhe was a perfect fit for that condition.

Lü Yang executed his maneuver smoothly: possession through 【Reincarnated Spirit Child】 , manipulation via 【String-Pulled Puppet】 —until one morning, Zhao Xuhe suddenly realized:

“Yi! I must go to Jiangdong.”

Jiangdong held great opportunity!

Driven by this powerful thought, Zhao Xuhe, who was originally headed for the Northern Frontier, turned around and charged straight towards Jiangdong.

Northern Jiang, 【Qing Nation】 .

This place lay at the easternmost tip of Northern Jiang. Beyond 【Qing Nation】 was the 【Great Dragon River】 —a place that even Qi Refinement cultivators could not approach.

Although the Four Realms of the world—East, West, South, and North—were technically non-interfering, in reality there was secret trade going on. Back in the Sword Pavilion, Lü Yang recalled that the Sea-Chasing Li Clan had built their massive fortune through smuggling across Northern Jiang, even producing a Foundation Establishment True Person.

Naturally, Jiangdong and Northern Jiang were no exception.

【Qing Nation】 was the transit hub for both sides.

Especially now, as Chong Guang had not yet targeted 【Qing Nation】 for golden core pursuits, 【Qing Nation】 still maintained friendly relations with Northern Jiang.

“Demonic Sect disciple, you're defecting to Jiangdong.”

Faced with Zhao Xuhe's blunt declaration, the cultivators of 【Qing Nation】 were not surprised. After all, every year, a batch of talents from the Holy Sect tried to defect.

“Go queue over there.”

Lü Yang: “.”

Looking at the bustling crowd indicated by the cultivator of 【Qing Nation】 , Lü Yang felt heartbroken. Was the Holy Sect truly so unloved?

What? Qi Refinement doesn't count as a person?

Then never mind!

Under Lü Yang's manipulation, Zhao Xuhe stood in line without hesitation, and after filling out forms and passing screening, he stepped onto the teleportation array of 【Qing Nation】 .

In the next second, a flash of white light erupted.

When Lü Yang looked again, the scene before his eyes had completely changed—he and a group of Northern Jiang cultivators had arrived in a vast and majestic square.

At the center of the square stood a middle-aged man in official robes, handsome as jade, holding a register in hand with a solemn expression. A radiant light burst from his crown, coalescing into an official rank above his head, forming a canopy that enshrouded him.

【Dutian Division Thousand-Household Commander】

Fifth-rank official, equivalent to Foundation Establishment!

Lü Yang secretly calculated and learned that this official was surnamed Liu. Years ago, due to his remarkable talents, he gained the favor of the Dutian Division Suppression Commissioner and was recruited into the division.

In just a few years, he had been promoted to Thousand-Household Commander.

Consider that the Dao Court had existed for so many years, with countless examination candidates annually, yet so few official posts—bureaucratic bloat and redundancy were rampant. Yet this Liu rose so swiftly that many suspected he was the illegitimate son of the Suppression Commissioner.

Next, Liu Thousand-Household spoke:

“You all possess cultivation and have turned to the light. You should be valued. I am here under imperial decree to recruit talent for the Immortal Nation. Today, I shall bestow upon you the rank of 力士.”

As his words fell—

The official aura of the 【Dutian Division Thousand-Household Commander】 above his head flared brilliantly, then split into countless strands and descended upon everyone present.

Immediately after, official titles appeared above everyone's heads:

【Dutian Division Strongman】

Hidden within Zhao Xuhe, Lü Yang raised his eyebrows. These people once held their own cultivation, and all divine powers should have resided in them.

But now it was different.

Bound by the official post, Lü Yang could clearly feel Zhao Xuhe's cultivation being stripped away bit by bit by the position above his head!

For now, it might still be fine, but within ten days to half a month, Zhao Xuhe would become a full Dao Court cultivator—his entire mana entrusted to the official post above him. With just a single thought, Liu Thousand-Household could render him a powerless mortal!

‘How insidious...’

Although the Dao Court wasn't as collective-minded as the Pure Land, its control over its cultivators was utterly stifling—offering no escape.

‘And this "Strongman" post... Others may not know, but I certainly do.’

If one were a bona fide Dao Court cultivator, the title bestowed should have been “Child Scholar” or “Xiucai”—positions within the regular Dao Court system.

But the Dutian Division?

‘According to Wu Taian’s memory, the Dutian Division is directly subordinate to the Dao Court Emperor. Despite its high standing, entering the Dutian Division meant the end of one’s official career.’

The standard official path could go up to First Rank, even the Three Dukes, equal to a True Lord.

But in the Dutian Division, even the highest Commander was only Third Rank—late-stage Foundation Establishment, not even a damn Grand True Person.

What future was there?

‘And the 【Strongman】 position is the lowest rank within the Dutian Division—not even a banner officer. Frankly, it’s just cannon fodder they recruit externally.’

Clearly, the Dao Court didn’t value these Northern Jiang cultivators at all.

The rhetoric sounded noble—recruiting talents for the nation. But in truth, it was just “recruiting material,” expecting them to die for the country and feel grateful!

At this thought, Lü Yang suddenly felt a resonance.

He looked up at the sky.

Though he had no cultivation in this life, the 【Xuandu Blessed Land】 still existed. Borrowing its special vision, Lü Yang quickly observed the scenery of Jiangdong.

‘It’s unlike any other place...’

It was a vast net.

A sky-covering, boundless, omnipresent web enveloped all of Jiangdong, linking every blade of grass, every living being.

‘The heavens here... are different from the outside!’

Among the Four Realms of the world, only the Dao Court did not require refining Heavenly Gang and Earth Fiend, nor the mastery of divine abilities. Its cultivation system was fundamentally different.

The reason lay precisely here.

The entire cultivation system of the Dao Court—the ranks, positions, mana, divine abilities—all originated from this vast net: the 【Immortal Nation Dao Law】 !

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 459: Dao Court Cultivators Are Too Competitive!

Lü Yang quickly left Zhao Xuhe.

‘Farewell, Senior Brother Zhao. We’re not suited for each other. After all, you’ll be cannon fodder in the Dutian Division in the future, unworthy of me anymore. Let’s break up.’

‘You owed me contribution points in your sixth life. I won’t ask for them in this one.’

‘I’m really so magnanimous.’

As for his new possession target, Lü Yang first cast a divination to deduce the karma, then selected one person from among the Dutian Division’s Banner Officers present.

“Finally over.”

Watching this new batch of 【Strongmen】 enlist, Dutian Division’s Junior Banner Officer Xu An couldn’t help but sigh, “How many of them do you think will survive?”

“You still have the mind to worry about others?”

Another Junior Banner Officer laughed at his words: “We’re about to be deployed to Lake Dongting. Who knows, we might not live longer than these Strongmen!”

“Not necessarily.”

Xu An shook his head: “I heard that batch of True Dragons has already received warnings from high-ranking court figures. They’ll behave and help govern Lake Dongting. We’re just there for show—it looks dangerous, but it’s actually a cushy post. Otherwise, why would Lord Liu personally volunteer to go?”

Though a low-ranked officer, Xu An was not foolish.

If Lake Dongting were truly a death trap, Liu Qianhu would have avoided it like the plague. How could he have possibly volunteered to be reassigned there?

Thinking of this, he was about to say more—

But at that moment, a radiant beam descended from the 【Dutian Division Banner Officer】 insignia above his head, and a line of golden script instantly appeared in his eyes:

【Warning: Junior Banner Officer Xu An, it is currently “Drill” time. Please report to the drill ground immediately.】

【Failure to arrive at the drill ground within the allotted time for the scheduled “Drill” will result in preliminary lightning punishment as per the Immortal Nation Dao Law.】

“Crap.”

Seeing this, Xu An’s expression changed drastically. He no longer dared to chat and bid a quick farewell before flying off in a streak of escape light.

Junior Banner Officer of Dutian Division was a Seventh Rank official, equivalent to late-stage Qi Refinement. He could already fly with escape light. However, Xu An wasn’t skilled at flying and ended up being slightly late. Just steps from the drill ground, he looked on in despair as he missed the time limit.

“Boom!”

The next second, a bolt of lightning struck down from the heavens, causing intense pain that made Xu An collapse on the ground, convulsing and steaming at the mouth.

Lü Yang, attached to his body, was stunned.

‘What the hell is this?’

A daily task... and if you don’t finish it, you get electrocuted?

Lü Yang once again searched Wu Taian’s memories and finally found the relevant intel buried in the corners—it was an innate restriction of the Dao Court official system.

‘Official position is power, but also responsibility.’

‘Every Dao Court official post comes with corresponding 【Duties】 —tasks that must be completed daily, or else the 【Immortal Nation Dao Law】 will punish you.’

Take Xu An, for example. As a Junior Banner Officer of the Dutian Division, his three mandatory daily duties were 【Drill】 , 【Patrol】 , and 【Reporting】 .

These duties practically filled up all his time.

This was also the Dao Court’s method of governance: keep people busy. When they’re tired, all they care about is eating and sleeping, making it hard for any trouble to brew.

Moreover, all 【Negligence】 penalties for Dao Court officials were recorded by their position. Every nine years, the Dao Court would conduct an “Official Evaluation” to assess these records—poor performance led to demotion or dismissal, while excellent records earned promotion.

“Ha ha ha, Xu An, late again?”

“At this rate, I bet you’ll fail the next official evaluation in a few years. Forget being a Junior Banner Officer, you might get demoted to a Strongman!”

“Shut it, stop jinxing me!”

Facing his colleagues’ mockery, Xu An, who had just recovered from the lightning strike, stood up and snapped: “I’ve got a bright future ahead!”

If his guess was right, this trip to Lake Dongting was sure to earn him some merit.

Though major merits would surely go to Liu Qianhu, just getting some scraps would be enough to wipe clean the few demerits from being late to drills.

Soon, the drill ended.

Next came 【Patrol】. Xu An didn’t dare slack off. He gathered a few Strongmen under his command and left the yamen to begin patrolling the entire city.

Lü Yang, still attached to him, finally got a proper look at the Dao Court environment.

Xu An flew with his escape light over the “commoner district” in the outer city, making a quick round to ensure there were no major bloodshed incidents before passing through.

There were many such “commoner districts.”

As the name implied, they housed powerless mortals—plebeians—whose only purpose was to be ruled by the Dao Court officials.

Flying past these “commoner districts,” Lü Yang soon felt a surge of spiritual energy rush at him—he had entered the inner city. The environment here was utterly different: miniature worlds, mountains and rivers, pavilions and towers, and dense cave abodes—like a true mortal paradise.

This was the “cultivator district.”

Every time Xu An saw this scene, he felt an unspeakable pride, because his cave abode lay at the heart of this very district.

Not only was the spiritual energy abundant, but it also received special attention from the 【Immortal Nation Dao Law】.

With that boost, not only was cultivation far more efficient here than in backwaters, even one’s innate comprehension ability was enhanced!

Back then, buying this cave abode had taken a lot of effort.

Though he was still paying off a hundred-year mortgage, it was worth it—thanks to it, the female cultivator he was dating had already started discussing marriage.

As long as he could scrape together a dowry, they'd officially become Dao Companions.

In time, once they had children, they wouldn't have to suffer like he had. With some luck, they might even found a small family line.

Good days were still ahead!

Thinking this, Xu An became even more excited about the upcoming deployment to Lake Dongting. Whether he could gather enough for the dowry all depended on this mission!

However, Lü Yang remained silent.

'This really is...'

A strange feeling churned in his heart.

The Dao Court's system was thoroughly established. All of Jiangdong was unified under one order. Its efficiency in utilizing human resources was nearly absolute.

In short—hyper-competitive.

After all, **【Negligence】** meant getting struck by lightning. Failing your future evaluations could even lead to a reduction in cultivation, forcing all Dao Court cultivators to scramble forward instinctively.

'...I underestimated the Dao Court!'

In that moment, Lü Yang felt deep awe. As expected, none of the Four Great Powers were weak. The Dao Court cultivators may be individually lacking, but they excelled in stability and structure.

Because official positions were the foundation!

One-on-one wasn't enough? Then it'd be three-on-one, five-on-one, ten-on-one! Death didn't matter—as long as the position remained, there were always more willing to climb up.

'From this angle, the Dao Court actually has the strongest war potential among the Four Powers. It's just that the **【Immortal Nation Dao Law】** only covers Jiangdong, so they haven't yet shown it. But by the same token, it's nearly impossible for outsiders to stir trouble here—it's practically an iron fortress!'

Unless... one integrates into it.

Only by embedding oneself into the Dao Court's system and working from within could one hope to shake it. Otherwise, any attack would be like smashing eggs against a rock.

That was precisely why Lü Yang chose Xu An.

'Lake Dongting, True Dragon Clan... unless I'm mistaken, this is the dragon lineage secretly sent into Jiangdong after the Dragon Monarch allied with the Dao Court.'

This was his opportunity!

A way to acquire a clean identity, join the Dao Court openly, seize authority—and prepare to verify the 【Heavenly Fire Above】 !

Struggling to Survive with Regression Power in the Primordial Saint Sect

Chapter 460: 【Law of the Immortal Nation】

Late at night, inside Xu An’s cave dwelling.

At this moment, Xu An was still sitting in meditation, but he failed to notice that within his Sea of Consciousness, there unexpectedly existed a completely foreign anomaly.

“ 【Law of the Immortal Nation】 .”

Lü Yang looked up, eyes brimming with curiosity as he observed the sky. In his mind, he was still recalling the memories he had extracted from the Dao Court’s King of Southern Suppression, Wu Taian.

Of the four realms under heaven, the Dao Court was by far the most unique.

【Law of the Immortal Nation】 connected to every person—not through a forcibly unified will like the Pure Land, but instead by deliberately constructing the current order.

And the Nine-Rank Official Hierarchy was the foundational logic of the 【Law of the Immortal Nation】 . The Six Ministries born from it directly participated in the everyday lives of the people of Jiangdong, and countless official positions then sprouted from the Six Ministries. These positions collectively clustered around and encircled the four Fruit Positions of Heaven and Earth.

【Flatland Wood】 , 【Roadside Earth】

【Gold Leaf Gold】 , 【Great Relay Earth】

These four Fruit Positions were divided among the Dao Court’s Heavenly Prince and the Three Dukes. Among them, the Tian Wu royal lineage held a hereditary claim, while the Three Dukes’ positions circulated among three great factions.

‘Looks a lot like 【Cityhead Earth】 .’

Lü Yang realized—the means of tethering Fruit Positions here was similar to the unified will of the Pure Land. The difference was that the Pure Land used people, while the Dao Court used official positions.

The Dao Court had studied the World-Honored One.

No—more accurately, the World-Honored One had imitated the Dao Court!

‘Moreover, the Dao Court held two Earth-aligned Fruit Positions. If we count the former dynasty’s 【Cityhead Earth】 as well, that makes a total of three Earth Fruit Positions.’

Not to mention, 【Cityhead Earth】 was the Supreme Fruit of Earth.

‘Unbelievable.’ Lü Yang’s thoughts spiraled into a horrifying realization.

In comparison, the Dao Court was truly powerful in the past, and it was only the rise of the Pure Land and the ascension of the World-Honored One that weakened the Dao Court’s strength to some extent.

“.Hss!”

At that thought, Lü Yang suddenly sucked in a cold breath—could this all be related to the rise of the World-Honored One, and his defiance of the heavens in achieving the Fruitional Rank of Nascent Soul Dao Lord?

Had the Dao Court’s Dao Lord been schemed against?

As a capable True Person of the Holy Sect, Lü Yang never shied away from conspiracy theories:

‘The world is a place where monks are many and meat is scarce. If someone rises, someone else must yield. Perhaps the World-Honored One’s rise back then was precisely at the Dao Court’s expense!’

Yet the Dao Lord of the Dao Court would never willingly be butchered.

That being the case, then there must have been a scheme by the Founding Patriarch of the Holy Sect and the Founding Ancestor of the Sword Pavilion—perhaps it was one of them who supported the rise of the World-Honored One!

But who was it?

‘The Founding Patriarch of the Holy Sect?’

Lü Yang had reasonable suspicion. After all, the Pure Land had once been called a heretical sect—both were demonic paths. It wasn’t impossible for the Founding Patriarch of the Holy Sect to lend the World-Honored One a helping hand.

But soon Lü Yang sensed something was amiss. After his rise, the World-Honored One had swiftly cleansed his name. Not only did the Pure Land refrain from joining the ranks of the demonic path, it even transformed into a righteous sect, joining the Sword Pavilion and Dao Court in combating the Holy Sect... From this angle, could it be that even the Holy Sect's Patriarch had miscalculated?

'No—that's not it either.'

'The World-Honored One caused such a loss to the Dao Court's Dao Lord—there's no way such enmity would be so easily forgiven. The rift must still exist.'

'And the World-Honored One is a fence-sitter.'

'Originally, the situation under heaven was likely the Sword Pavilion Ancestor and the Dao Court's Dao Lord jointly opposing the Holy Sect Patriarch. But after the World-Honored One ascended, everything changed.'

'On the surface, it seemed like the righteous side gained the Pure Land, but in truth, everyone knew the World-Honored One played both sides. Add to that his estrangement with the Dao Court, and neither side could truly cooperate with him. On the contrary... the World-Honored One likely desired above all else for the powers to remain balanced.'

Yes—balance!

The more Lü Yang thought, the more convinced he became that the World-Honored One had been secretly supported by the Holy Sect Patriarch back then—turning the tables in one move!

From a one-against-two, it became a four-way standoff!

The Holy Sect Patriarch had carved meat off the Dao Court, not only fostering the Pure Land, but also weakening the righteous side. Meanwhile, he himself remained firmly seated atop the fishing platform.

'This cannot be merely the Holy Sect Patriarch's plot.'

'It's even possible that the World-Honored One approached the Holy Sect Patriarch himself—acting in alignment with the Holy Sect's interests, carving out a Nascent Soul path from the cracks for himself!'

At that, Lü Yang couldn't help but sigh:

'Back then... when the World-Honored One attained the Dao, it must have shaken the entire world!'

What a magnificent age that must have been—just imagining it made Lü Yang's blood surge. So many forces scheming, only to witness one person attain the Dao amidst universal attention.

Right after, Lü Yang couldn't help but stroke his chin.

Was his deduction correct? The general direction was likely right, but the details were uncertain—after all, the intel he currently possessed was too limited.

‘However... if my speculation is right, then it explains why the World-Honored One was the last Nascent Soul Dao Lord of this era—why 【Ang Xiao】 didn’t try to replicate his path, but instead turned to seek the 【Underworld】 . Because the World-Honored One’s rise had already blocked off the path for all successors!’

A four-way standoff—no more balanced than that.

But should a fifth Dao Lord emerge, the situation would surely collapse once more, and benefits would have to be redistributed... This, perhaps, was something no Dao Lord wanted to see.

Thus, 【Ang Xiao】 turned to the 【Underworld】 .

‘That move was quite similar to how I once fled to the 【Heaven of the Seven Luminaries】 —both were about stepping off the existing chessboard, a temporary withdrawal, to seek a future.’

Only, in Lü Yang’s eyes, 【Ang Xiao】 ’s escape didn’t seem complete enough.

If he truly wished to flee, he should have soared far away and vanished entirely from this rotten land. Yet 【Ang Xiao】 lingered, and the 【Underworld】 was too conspicuous.

‘Maybe he has other plans. Or perhaps he knows something I don’t...’

Lü Yang took a deep breath and stopped dwelling on it.

‘The current priority is still the Dao cultivation needed to verify 【Heavenly Fire Above】 —in this regard, the Dao Court has provided me with a remarkable inspiration.’

【Law of the Immortal Nation】 !

‘This net that covers all of Jiangdong can directly grant cultivators knowledge through official positions. Once digested, this knowledge becomes Dao cultivation.’

This was a shortcut!

Originally, Dao cultivation required long and arduous comprehension to improve. But the existence of the 【Law of the Immortal Nation】 gave him a path to fast-track advancement.

‘The premise is to rise high within the Dao Court!’

The higher your official rank in the 【Law of the Immortal Nation】 , the greater your access and permissions. The more knowledge you receive, the higher your Dao cultivation!

—

One month later, Lake Dongting.

This place lay within the Jiangdong interior. As the name suggested, it was a massive inland lake. Though called a “lake,” to describe it as an “inland sea” would not be an exaggeration.

“Everyone, prepare yourselves.”

At the forefront, Liu Qianhu spoke in a deep voice: “I will soon meet with the Dragon King of Lake Dongting and proclaim His Majesty’s edict. Do not disgrace the imperial court!”

“Yes!”

Xu An swallowed hard, suppressing his nervousness. He followed cautiously behind Liu Qianhu as the group flew deep into Lake Dongting.

Before long, a towering island appeared in their sight.

What met their eyes were bones like ridges, skeletons like forests, decayed flesh turned to dust and mud, tendons and bones hanging from the trees—a single glance revealed blood Qi soaring into the heavens!

The True Dragon Clan—it sounded noble, but at heart, they were still demons. Bestial nature ran in their blood. Consuming blood-flesh was only natural. Big fish ate small fish, small fish ate shrimp. At least the inland human cultivators still cared for appearances, but overseas demons? They cared for no such thing.

It was only because they were in Jiangdong that they dared not eat humans—settling for eating their own kind.

Otherwise, in the overseas regions, Lü Yang had seen it in Tian Jiao’s memories—among the Four Sea Sects, nearly all major demon clans had at least one or two human livestock farms.

‘Pity. This kind of behavior will never integrate with the Dao Court...’

Seeing this, Lü Yang smiled indifferently. Evidently, this branch of the True Dragon lineage, sent into Jiangdong by the Dragon Monarch, had not yet realized their current situation.

Looks like I’ll have to step forward!