

Starlit Path 100

Chapter 100: A Lake of Serenity and a Capital Drenched in Blood

On Beiluo Lake, a gentle willow breeze caressed the face like a maiden's ribbon, carrying a refreshing fragrance. The boat glided, stirring ripples across the water. Sunlight, like shattered gold, danced on the lake's surface, casting a flickering glow. Inside the boat, Lü Mu sat rigidly, clutching a polished tortoiseshell, his heart uneasy. Beside him, the young girl with a pipa on her back looked nervous, her youthful face betraying her unease.

Ni Yu, holding her cloth pouch, eyed the girl curiously before slipping her chubby thumb and forefinger inside, pulling out a sugar-coated Qi Gathering Pill and popping it into her mouth. Lü Mu glanced outside restlessly, then turned to Ni Yu, who was munching happily. "Little girl, how about a candy to calm the nerves?" he asked, a hint of envy in his voice.

Ni Yu froze mid-chew, squinting at him. "Old man, where's your shame? This is like stealing a candied haw from a toddler!" She dangled a pill before him, its sugary coating gleaming like a bubble in the sunlight. "Take a good look—is this a candy?" Before Lü Mu could respond, she tossed it into her mouth, leaving him speechless. Isn't that just a fancy candy?

The Young Lord sat in his wheelchair, the lake breeze ruffling his hair. He tossed handfuls of crushed rice into the water, drawing fish to swarm and compete. "The Tianji School, among the Hundred Schools, knows its place," he said lightly.

Behind him, Lü Dongxuan's wrinkled face creased further, his gold chain glinting as he smiled. "When the Young Lord speaks, how could I refuse? It's an honor for the Tianji School to join White Jade Pavilion!"

Lü Dongxuan's heart raced. This was his first meeting with the Young Lord, though he had divined him many times using the Tianji School's Divination Technique. Each attempt left him shaken, as if an

indescribable terror loomed. The deeper he probed, the stronger the dread, until it felt like unseen eyes watched him from the heavens. This cemented his understanding of the Young Lord's fearsome power. When he learned of the Young Lord's intent to absorb the Tianji School, he had packed up and come without hesitation, bringing his entire household. His divinations showed only benefits in joining White Jade Pavilion.

The school's traditions had hit a bottleneck, and Lü Dongxuan struggled to break through. White Jade Pavilion offered hope. "You see things clearly," the Young Lord said, scattering the last of the rice.

Lü Dongxuan's smile widened. "I value your Tianji Pigeons," the Young Lord continued, turning to face him. "That's why I'm taking you in. I expect you to spread White Jade Pavilion's messages across the world."

Lü Dongxuan's expression faltered. The pigeons?

The Tianji School's worth lay in its messenger birds? But he quickly recovered, grinning. Value was value—joining White Jade Pavilion wouldn't be a loss. "It's an honor to be chosen," he said.

The boat parted the mist, revealing Lakeheart Island, wreathed in spiritual energy, ethereal as an immortal's abode. Lü Dongxuan's pupils constricted at the sight. They disembarked, and Ni Yu, sneaking another pill, pushed the Young Lord's wheelchair toward the White Jade Pavilion. Jing Yue, idly tending to the skyward chrysanthemums, snapped to attention at their return.

"The Tianji School, joining White Jade Pavilion, will henceforth be called the Tianji Pavilion," the Young Lord declared.

Lü Dongxuan hesitated briefly before nodding. "As the Young Lord decrees." The island stunned him—its air vibrated with invisible spiritual currents, and the ten chrysanthemums swayed as if alive. Wise

flowers? Preposterous. The pipa girl, viewing the island through mortal eyes, was simply enchanted by its beauty.

Ni Yu wheeled the Young Lord into the pavilion, with Lü Dongxuan trailing. Lü Mu hesitated before warning, "Be careful." As Lü Dongxuan climbed the pavilion's steps, his gaze fell on the plaques flanking the entrance. A vast, overwhelming aura hit him, freezing him in place.

Ten miles from Beiluo, a black steed galloped across the plains, its mane streaming. The rider pulled the reins, the horse rearing and shattering the earth with its hooves. The towering figure atop it squinted at Beiluo's distant walls, a smile of anticipation spreading across his face.

Outside the capital, ten horses thundered, their hooves like frantic rain. Jiang Li, escorted by nine envoys, approached the capital's towering gates. "Why are they closed?" he frowned. The envoys exchanged confused glances, shouting for entry, but no one responded.

Inside the city, killing intent choked the air. As a storm of arrows rained down, Luo Cheng's eyes narrowed. His horse whinnied, and he roared, drawing his sword to deflect the onslaught. Nie Changqing, atop the carriage, smirked. "We haven't even acted, yet they strike first. Bolder than Beiluo's nobles, I'll give them that."

The five hundred Beiluo cavalry were engulfed in the arrow storm, its density meant to slaughter them instantly. Luo Cheng's heart chilled. This was the capital, the emperor's seat, yet someone dared deploy

such a force against them, defying the emperor himself. No wonder Lu Changkong said the capital was in chaos—without Kong Xiu, treacherous ministers ran rampant.

The arrows fell like a dark cloud. The cavalry's horses stamped nervously. Nie Changqing, unperturbed, grasped his butcher's knife, wiping it with a white cloth as if facing a gentle rain. Suddenly, a surge of spiritual energy rippled from the carriage, its curtains fluttering. The arrows froze midair, as if caught by an invisible barrier.

"Tch." A soft sound came from within. The oppressive force made the arrows clatter to the cobblestones, their metal tips striking like a symphony. The archers on the walls gaped. Even a seventh- or eighth-resonance grandmaster would struggle against such a barrage, yet this defied comprehension.

"The world lacks reverence for cultivators," a gentle voice echoed from the carriage. "The Young Lord's words ring true."

A slender hand lifted the curtain. Ning Zhao, in a white dress, her hair flowing in the wind, stepped out, followed by Yi Yue, her fox-like face cold with killing intent. Nie Changqing rose, his white robes billowing. His butcher's knife trembled faintly.

Ning Zhao's stunning face lifted, scanning the capital. "You're lucky the Young Lord isn't here himself."

"Why waste words?" Yi Yue snapped, her brows furrowed. "The Young Lord said to handle it as we did Beiluo's nobles—kill them." She leaped from the carriage, her whip snapping up arrows from the ground and hurling them back like a tornado. The archers on the walls were struck, tumbling to their deaths.

Nie Changqing moved. Though just a coachman wielding a butcher's knife, when he stood, an overwhelming saber intent flooded the air. The knife floated, a faint illusory blade aura forming around it. With a flick, it shot out as a black streak, slicing through the air. Blood sprayed three feet, the archers cleaved in half before they could scream.

Using the Saber Control Technique, Nie Changqing wielded the blade remotely, felling foes from afar. Three swings, three devastating cuts, and most of the archers perished. The survivors, terrified, fled, abandoning their gear. Blood streamed down the walls, the stench thick.

Nie Changqing caught the returning knife, wiping it calmly. Ning Zhao lowered the carriage's curtain, her gaze locking onto Wangxiang Tower. She raised a delicate finger. "To that building."

Nie Changqing's lips curled. Stowing the knife, he seized the reins, his white robes pristine. The real show was just beginning. With a crack of the whip, the horses surged forward. Luo Cheng, face flushed with excitement, led the five hundred cavalry in a thundering charge.

At Wangxiang Tower, the atmosphere turned heavy. The ministers trembled, and He Shou, pale, dropped his wine cup, shattering it. The troops he'd summoned from the Prime Minister's mansion had collapsed instantly, chilling his heart.

"Lord He, we must flee!" the other ministers urged, panicked.

He Shou snapped out of it, rushing for the stairs. But rapid footsteps echoed below. A servant, breathless and terrified, scrambled up. "My lord, disaster!" he gasped.

