

Starlit Path 106

Chapter 106: A Lesson in Strength and a Rebellion in the Palace

The terrifying spiritual pressure seemed to shake the entire island. In the White Jade Pavilion, the Overlord felt as if mountains pressed down on him, his bones creaking under the strain. The Young Lord's words echoed in his mind: As a cultivator, that's your greatest advantage. Before absolute strength, all schemes are mere clouds. A spark of realization lit Xiang Shaoyun's eyes.

The Young Lord, his white robes billowing, hair fluttering, gazed at him calmly. Releasing the chess piece, the oppressive spiritual pressure vanished as if it had never existed. "Old Lü, see our guest out," he said, sipping plum wine and leaning back in his wheelchair.

Xiang Shaoyun rose, giving the Young Lord a deep look before bowing. "Thank you for your guidance, Young Lord."

The Young Lord nodded slightly. Lü Dongxuan, sweat beading on his forehead, marveled at the clash of titans. Both the Overlord and the Young Master exuded an unyielding aura. As Xiang Shaoyun reached the stairs, he paused. "Young Lord, will the next immortal secret realm hold the Body Zang realm's cultivation method?"

The Young Lord raised his cup. "Most likely."

Xiang Shaoyun's eyes sharpened, and he bowed again before descending. Lü Dongxuan glanced at the Young Lord and followed. Ni Yu continued brewing plum wine, its tart aroma filling the air. The Young Lord leaned against the railing, gazing at the misty lake, a faint smile on his lips. He held high hopes for the Overlord, who might break the low-martial-world's limits and step into a mid-martial realm. He didn't want Xiang Shaoyun to stray down the path of worldly conquest when cultivation was the true foundation.

At the lakeside, Lü Dongxuan, gold chain glinting, grinned at Xiang Shaoyun. “The Tianji School, one of the Hundred Schools, really joined White Jade Pavilion?”

“Of course,” Lü Dongxuan said, chuckling. “Joining White Jade Pavilion is a blessing. A golden carp isn’t meant for a pond—given the right storm, it becomes a dragon. White Jade Pavilion is that carp, destined to soar above the world.”

Xiang Shaoyun’s eyes narrowed. The Tianji School’s master, who could divine the world’s affairs, spoke with such certainty. “Why not join White Jade Pavilion, Overlord? You won’t lose out!” Lü Dongxuan said, his chain rattling.

Xiang Shaoyun paused, then laughed. “White Jade Pavilion is splendid, but it’s not my path. I am the Overlord of Western Liang, leader of ten thousand cavalry who look to me. How could I retreat to this island and betray their hopes? Besides, I have unfinished promises to Mingsang.”

His rugged hair swayed in the breeze. “Old Lü, may I request a divination?” he asked suddenly.

Lü Dongxuan blinked, surprised. “A divination for a thousand gold?”

Xiang Shaoyun smiled. “Name your price.”

Lü Dongxuan waved dismissively, grinning. “I never charge for divinations, but if you insist, I can’t refuse such goodwill.” His demeanor shifted, the jovial smile fading. He ran his palms over his gold chain, its hollow beads spinning rapidly, emitting a sharp sound. The beads stopped, revealing engraved

hexagrams. Lü Dongxuan's fingers traced them, calculating. He glanced at Xiang Shaoyun, his brow furrowing.

The Overlord departed, stepping onto a lone boat, not treading waves as he had arrived. The boat glided through the sunset's glow, shattering the lake's shimmering surface, his silhouette tinged with solitude. On the island, Lü Dongxuan stood with hands clasped. Lü Mu approached, cane in hand, Mingyue clutching her pipa beside him. She gazed at the Overlord's fading figure, her eyes shimmering with emotion.

In the capital's Purple Gold Palace, the sunset bathed the glazed tiles in a blood-red hue. Chaos gripped the palace. Zhao Kuo's elite army, a mix of private recruits and bribed palace guards, rebelled. As the street battle against Beiluo's five hundred cavalry raged, the palace guards loyal to Zhao Kuo clashed with the few still defending the emperor, their blades flashing, blood staining the palace.

This was a calculated coup. Zhao Kuo walked slowly, his shadow long in the fading light, flanked by grandmaster martial artists. In the imperial gardens, by a jade-green pool, Yuwen Xiu stood on a stone bridge, clad in his dragon robe, his back to the chaos. He held a bucket of bloody raw meat, tossing a piece into the pool, where it vanished instantly.

"Majesty," Zhao Kuo's voice rang out amid the turmoil.

The old eunuch, face contorted with fury, pointed a trembling finger. "Zhao Kuo! Treason is a crime that dooms your entire clan!"

Zhao Kuo smiled faintly, stepping forward. "The emperor trusts the traitor Kong Xiu, who slew the late emperor. How can Your Majesty name your father's killer Grand Preceptor? You're too young to rule alone, so I must aid you in governing Great Zhou."

His voice drowned out the garden's gentle waters. He aimed to make Yuwen Xiu a puppet emperor. The garden fell silent. Yuwen Xiu, still facing away, said nothing. Zhao Kuo chuckled. "What does Your Majesty hope for now? Only by trusting me can Great Zhou find a sliver of hope in this crisis."

Yuwen Xiu laughed, tossing another piece of meat into the pool, where it sank. The old eunuch, resolute, gripped his whisk, standing before the emperor. "You'll have to step over my corpse to harm His Majesty!" he rasped.

Zhao Kuo glanced at him, waving. Two grandmasters, as strong as the eunuch, stepped forward, their blood and energy surging, resonating through the garden. "Let Zhao approach," Yuwen Xiu said calmly.

The eunuch froze, turning in disbelief. "Majesty..."

Yuwen Xiu ignored him, tossing more meat. The eunuch, face flushed, stepped aside. Zhao Kuo, squinting, approached, stopping five paces from the pool. "Does Your Majesty accept my proposal?" he asked.

Yuwen Xiu laughed, setting down the bucket and flicking blood from his hands. Turning, he faced Zhao Kuo with a mocking smile. "You speak well, but what gives you such confidence? You think you can save

Great Zhou? Compared to Mo Beike, you're lacking. Compared to Kong Xiu, you're lacking. Compared to Beiluo's Lu Ping'an, you're utterly lacking. So, old man, where does your confidence come from?"

His words charged the air with tension. Zhao Kuo's kindly smile vanished, his face darkening. His hunched frame straightened, blood and energy erupting, his frail appearance replaced by a robust, grandmaster-level aura. The elderly Prime Minister was a hidden martial master.

"Your Majesty, you've gone too far," Zhao Kuo said coldly, lunging like a tiger. The eunuch reacted too late. Zhao Kuo's claw reached for Yuwen Xiu, who stood by the pool, his smile tinged with madness.

The green pool bubbled and burst. A black shadow shot out, coiling around Yuwen Xiu. Like black lightning, it struck Zhao Kuo's arm. Blood sprayed three feet. Zhao Kuo's eyes widened in shock, pain searing through him as his arm was torn off.