

Starlit Path 107

Chapter 107: A Tyrant's Wrath and the Cultivators' Might

The strike was too swift for reaction. Though Zhao Kuo was a grandmaster martial artist, his aging body and waning vitality slowed him. The black shadow, like dark lightning, tore off his arm in an instant. Blood sprayed, and Zhao Kuo's face blanched in agony. The scene shocked everyone.

The old eunuch sprang into action, his whisk whipping through the air as if to shatter it. The grandmasters guarding Zhao Kuo surged with blood and energy, intercepting him. In the garden, battle erupted—blood and energy clashed, whisk meeting sword and blade. The eunuch, the palace's top expert, overpowered the two grandmasters.

Zhao Kuo, clutching his severed arm, eyes bloodshot, stared at Yuwen Xiu, who laughed maniacally. A black, serpentine creature clung to the emperor's waist, its neck fringed with coral-like scales, four claws gripping his waist and shoulders. A dragon? Zhao Kuo's pupils shrank as he gasped.

A black dragon entwined the emperor.

Zhao Kuo stepped back, staring at the dragon, its eyes glinting with excitement. Yuwen Xiu, gazing at Zhao Kuo's bleeding stump, looked exhilarated. As emperor, he'd been toyed with by his ministers. They bribed palace guards, mobilized armies, even stole his decrees, stripping him of dignity. Outside, Northern and Western County armies loomed; within, treacherous ministers sowed chaos, defying his will with memorials and slanders.

He didn't blame Kong Xiu for retreating—rather, he was grateful. The Grand Preceptor's absence exposed the court's darkness. The black dragon, pulsing with spiritual energy, stirred the pool's waters. It was a spiritual creature, its nature intertwined with Yuwen Xiu's, each influencing the other.

“Old dog, do you see it?” Yuwen Xiu pointed at the dragon, laughing wildly. “This is a true dragon!”

Zhao Kuo, sweating, retreated, panting heavily. “Lu Ping’an was right—strength is everything,” Yuwen Xiu roared. “You bully me because I’m young and weak. You fear Kong Xiu for his Confucian mastery, the Overlord for his unmatched might. But me? You dare to bully me!”

His voice cracked with pent-up rage, his face red as blood under the sunset, his ferocity shaking Zhao Kuo. This was not the frail, refined emperor he knew. “If I had Lu Ping’an’s world-crushing power, who would dare cross me? You’re all cowards who prey on the weak!”

Pointing a trembling finger at Zhao Kuo, he bellowed, “Kill! Slaughter them! If the world calls me unjust, I’ll be a tyrant for life!” The dragon, its eyes rolling, absorbed a wisp of Yuwen Xiu’s dark aura, baring its fangs. Like black lightning, it struck again. Zhao Kuo, like a startled bird, retreated, shouting, “I control the palace guards! Eight thousand elite soldiers besiege Beiluo’s cavalry! You have no hope!”

The dragon bit into his shoulder, eliciting a scream. “Protect me!” he cried. The grandmasters broke from the eunuch, rushing to his aid. One, blood surging, slashed at the dragon’s vital point. The dragon’s neck scales flared, and it roared, its gaze radiating a strange power. The grandmaster froze, dazed, then was pounced upon, torn apart as the dragon devoured his flesh.

Zhao Kuo, blood-soaked, trembled. “The emperor is unjust, raising demons! The world will fall to chaos!” he roared.

Yuwen Xiu advanced, drawing a jeweled sword from his waist, a wisp of spiritual energy surging. “Unjust? Then let me be unjust!” The sword flashed, and Zhao Kuo’s head soared, blood drenching the emperor’s robe.

On Lakeheart Island, the Young Lord's eyes flickered with patterns, the breeze stirring his hair and robes. Ni Yu poured warm wine, its thick aroma trailing into his bronze cup. The patterns in his eyes faded as he sighed. He'd seen the capital's events, including the black dragon's transformation. Through his [Preaching Platform], he'd created eight dragon cultivation methods, and the black dragon had inherited one. Its path depended on its fate. If it strayed too far, he could always reforge it.

In the capital's streets, blood pooled, corpses stacked, swords and shields strewn about. Five hundred against eight thousand—a hopeless battle, yet its outcome defied all expectations. Beiluo's cavalry stood firm, their eyes blazing with fervor. The fight was a one-sided massacre.

Nie Changqing's butcher knife cleaved through two thousand armored soldiers in a single aerial strike. Ning Zhao, her white dress flowing, released spiritual pressure, forcing soldiers to kneel as her Cicada Wing Sword swept, leaving bodies in her wake. Yi Yue's whip lashed out, its shadows drawing screams.

Against trained soldiers, cultivators were unstoppable. The green-robed scholar, pale, watched the slaughter, recalling tales of the Overlord's Wolong Ridge battle—killing five thousand, blood flowing like rivers. He'd dismissed it as rumor, but now he saw the terrifying truth of cultivators, understanding why Zhao Kuo valued Du Tao.

Du Tao, in his sedan, paled. These were true cultivators, far beyond his half-baked skills. “Surround them! Exhaust their spiritual energy!” he roared, knowing that depleting their energy would reduce them to ordinary martial artists.

But as the sun set, blood-red, Nie Changqing’s knife continued its rampage, cutting through thousands more. The eight thousand dwindled, soldiers fleeing in terror, abandoning armor. The scholar’s curses couldn’t stop the rout. Eight thousand, broken by two cultivators. He turned to Du Tao. “Master Du, you’re our only hope. If we fail, the Prime Minister’s plan collapses!”

Du Tao, panicked, roared, “Stop them? With what?” Leaping from his sedan, he fled into the crowd like a fish. The scholar, enraged by his vulgarity, was cut down by Nie Changqing’s knife, blood blurring his vision as he fell.

Du Tao, sensing Nie Changqing’s depleted energy, rejoiced—his chance! But Nie Changqing popped a sugar-coated pill, and spiritual energy surged anew. Du Tao froze, realizing the futility of his tactics against White Jade Pavilion. He turned to flee, but a wave of spiritual pressure pinned him to the ground.

“You dared provoke White Jade Pavilion?” Ning Zhao, in her white dress, gazed at him coldly.

Du Tao, terrified, raised his head to beg, but the Cicada Wing Sword flashed like a snowflake. His words stopped, blood pooling. Luo Cheng’s hand trembled on his sword, the scene unforgettable. Three cultivators repelled eight thousand, standing like proud lotuses amidst a sea of blood, untouchable and aloof.