

Starlit Path 112

Chapter 112: A World Stirred and a Mission Assigned

The latest Tianji pigeon message set the world ablaze. Eight Dragon-Rearing Grounds, each holding immortal fates rivaling Wolong Ridge, stunned the realm. Yet, the blood-red signature—White Jade Pavilion’s Tianji Pavilion—shocked even more. The Tianji School, a centuries-old member of the Hundred Schools, had become a subordinate of White Jade Pavilion. Though not the strongest among the Hundred Schools, its legacy was undeniable, and its absorption sent ripples through the world.

In the capital, Yuwen Xiu sat on the dragon throne, clutching the letter. The old eunuch stood bowed beside him. “The Tianji School, which Great Zhou failed to subdue for years, was effortlessly taken by White Jade Pavilion,” Yuwen Xiu mused. “A Hundred Schools faction under their wing—what does Lu Ping’an intend? Will he absorb others next? Uniting the Hundred Schools, how terrifying would White Jade Pavilion become?”

He glanced at the eunuch. “Old thing, what do you think?” The eunuch trembled, kneeling. “Forgive me, Your Majesty—I dare not speculate.” Yuwen Xiu leaned back, sighing. “Killing those noisy ministers has quieted things nicely. Lu Ping’an dares what I cannot. If I slaughtered them, I’d bear eternal infamy, but for him, it’s a mere autumn breeze.” The eunuch remained silent, prostrate. Yuwen Xiu, bored, gazed at the dawn sky, eyes glinting. “The Dragon-Rearing Grounds hold immortal fates, and I’ve claimed one, ahead of all—except Lu Ping’an. Beiluo Lake is another, and his black carp became a dragon through it.” His eyes narrowed. “Old thing, go to the library and summon the Grand Preceptor. The capital needs him to lead its restoration.” The eunuch nodded, “Yes, Your Majesty.” Yuwen Xiu rose, his dragon robe swirling, and headed to the gardens.

In Northern County’s camp, a heavy silence hung, like death’s chill. The Overlord’s raid—one man against fifty thousand, unchallenged, reaching Tantai Xuan’s front with axe raised in defiance—left them reeling. No army could stop him. Tantai Xuan, aged by the ordeal, rubbed his brow. Mo Beike and Mo Ju sat quietly until a soldier delivered a letter. Reading it, their eyes sharpened. “The Tianji School is now

White Jade Pavilion's Tianji Pavilion," Mo Beike said, a Hundred Schools leader himself. "A faction's end marks an era's close. A vast hand reaches for Great Zhou's Hundred Schools."

Tantai Xuan focused on the Dragon-Rearing Grounds. Standing, he paced. "The capital's one, and Yuwen Xiu's black dragon slew Zhao Kuo. A dragon grants legitimacy to claim the throne. This immortal fate—I won't miss it again!" His eyes bloodshot, he clenched his fists. The Overlord's dominance showed him strength ruled this new era of cultivators. "Summon all generals. We search for the Dragon-Rearing Grounds!" Mo Beike nodded, admiring Tantai Xuan's resilience and clarity in defeat.

In Southern County, a secret letter reached the Tang Mansion, the region's dominant clan. Tang Xiansheng, in Confucian robes, sat at a table laden with a hundred dishes. After reading, he smiled, folded the letter, and picked up jade chopsticks, placing a piece of translucent fish in Tang Yimo's bowl. "Eat up, Yimo," he said warmly. Tang Yimo, silently eating rice, didn't respond. Since killing Tang Baichen, Tang Xiansheng's attitude had shifted from distant to doting, unsettling Yimo. His mother and sister, once confined, now lived in a fine courtyard with many maids, second only to the main wife. He knew why—his value elevated them. His mother, fearful, urged caution, but seeing her and his sister in fine clothes, eating well, Yimo accepted Tang Xiansheng's kindness. It fulfilled his goal of securing their safety.

"Look at this," Tang Xiansheng said, sliding the letter to Yimo, who wiped his hands and read it. "Dragon-Rearing Grounds? Eight in Great Zhou, with immortal fates?" he said, stunned. "From White Jade Pavilion's Tianji Pavilion, it's true," Tang Xiansheng said, stroking his beard. "I missed Wolong Ridge's fate, but not this. The future belongs to cultivators—whoever has the strongest wins the world. Yimo, will you help your father?" Yimo glanced at his oil-smearing sister, his gaze softening. "Tell me what you need, Father." Tang Xiansheng, ever shrewd, smiled wider, noting Yimo's glance.

The news swept the world, igniting both major factions and the martial world. Eight Dragon-Rearing Grounds, each a chance for immortal fate, promised ascension for those favored by a dragon. The martial world and Hundred Schools—Sword Sect, Daoist Sect, and others—took notice, alarmed by the Tianji School’s renaming. If White Jade Pavilion could claim them, would it target the Sword Sect or Daoists next? Some sensed Lu Ping’an’s ambition to dominate the Hundred Schools and martial world, making White Jade Pavilion Great Zhou’s supreme power. Factions and martial artists frantically sought the grounds to become cultivators and counter White Jade Pavilion’s rise, now a fearsome colossus.

On Beiluo’s Lakeheart Island, dawn’s golden light pierced the clouds, gilding the lake. The five hundred cavalry returned from the capital, Nie Changqing driving the carriage to the dock. Crossing the lake, Ning Zhao, Nie Changqing, and Yi Yue disembarked. Ni Yu, refining pills, waved excitedly. On the pavilion, the Young Lord, leaning against the carved railing, smiled. “Mission accomplished, Young Master,” the three said, bowing. “Well done,” he replied. They bowed again. “Ning and Yi Yue, go cultivate. I need to speak with Old Nie.” They left, and the Young Lord gestured to a cushion. Nie Changqing sat, sensing the purpose.

“Old Nie, I said once the capital was settled, you could pursue your heart’s desire,” the Young Lord said. Nie Changqing opened his mouth, but the Young Lord continued, “Go. Family reunions are sweet. Who doesn’t seek happiness in life? Fetch your wife, Xiao Shuang’s mother, from the Daoist Sect.” Nie Changqing’s face flickered, fists clenching. “Also...” the Young Lord added, wind tossing his hair, “I have one small request.” Nie Changqing looked up. “Name it, Young Master.” Smiling, the Young Lord said, “Take over the Daoist Sect.”