

Starlit Path 121

Chapter 121: As Long as North Luo Stands, I'll Protect Your Peace Forever

Daoist Sect, Tianhuang Mountain

Beneath the ancient pine, the elder roared, his blood and qi surging with explosive force. He swatted the arrow aside with a palm. Miao Renyu, still holding his bow, pupils constricted, blood trickling from a cut on his cheek. Though he'd anticipated Nie Changqing's strength, witnessing it crushed him. As the sect's third disciple, surpassed only by Li Sansi and Li Sansui, his gentle nature hid a fierce pride. Yet Nie Changqing had effortlessly deflected his arrow—and could have killed him in that moment.

Nie advanced, his spiritual pressure radiating. Miao Renyu buckled, collapsing to the ground. Nie stepped past him, white robe billowing, butcher's knife in hand, bypassing the sect's six finest disciples. Once the tenth disciple, he now stood as if atop them all.

The plaza's Daoists gaped in shock. This cultivator was terrifying! The six top disciples, all master martial artists, were immobilized by his aura. Even Miao Renyu, who'd loosed an arrow, seemed as frail as a child.

"Suppress this traitor!" the elder bellowed, leaping from the pine, robe fluttering. Light as a swallow, he landed, joined by other aged Daoists. They stepped into formation, unleashing their blood and qi. Aware of cultivators' might—warned by the sect's Master and awed by the Star-Picking Peak's Dragonland—they'd refined their array to merge blood and qi against such foes.

Their energy flowed into the elder, his withered hair whipping, his wrinkled face trembling. With a long cry, he charged, wielding a whisk that cracked the plaza's tiles with a whip of force.

Nie Changqing stood firm, eyebrow raised. Shifting his stance, his pressure surged, flinging the six disciples aside. His butcher's knife met the elder's whisk, sparking like clashing steel.

"Traitor! The Master trained you, yet you're an ungrateful cur!" the elder spat. "You broke our laws and deserve this punishment! Think White Jade Capital makes you untouchable?"

His attacks, fueled by the other Daoists' qi, carried the might of a grandmaster. Nie Changqing endured silently. Then, he released his knife.

"Finished?" he asked.

"I just want my wife back. A family reunited—is that too much?"

His words fell. The butcher's knife spun before him, cloaked in pale blue spiritual energy, a faint blade shadow forming. With a roar, Nie swept his hand upward. "Blade Control!"

The knife slashed, severing the elder's whisk and arm in a spray of blood. The elder's scream echoed across the plaza as he collapsed, robe soaked red.

The other aged Daoists recoiled, stunned. Sealed off from the world, they knew cultivators were strong, but this was beyond imagination. Nie's knife hovered, the sight of him controlling it from afar like an immortal god silencing the disciples.

Clutching his severed arm, the elder writhed, snarling, "Fetch Li Sansui! Now! The sect's honor cannot be trampled!"

Glaring venomously, he urged a hesitant Daoist, who ran toward Star-Picking Peak. Nie glanced at him but didn't stop him, turning back to the elder coldly. "The sect's honor? I only want my wife. What's my crime? Out of respect for my time as a disciple, I've shown mercy. Tell me where Ru'er is in five counts, or Nie the Butcher will slaughter all."

His words shook the plaza. "If Li Sansi and Sansui were here, you wouldn't dare!" the elder roared, blood draining his face.

Nie leaned on his knife. "Five."

The disciples stirred, some retreating in fear. Sealed within the sect, most knew only sparring, not bloodshed. Nie's killing intent terrified them. "Four," he continued, feeling the mountain breeze.

The elder, now silent, glanced at Miao Renyu. "Get me out!" he pleaded, fear creeping in. Miao hesitated, approaching to help. But the butcher's knife plunged, pinning the elder with a sickening squelch. He screamed, eyes bulging. Tearing the letter had been satisfying; now, his cries were desperate. Karma.

"Longqing..." Miao Renyu stammered, trembling.

Nie ignored him, still gazing upward. "Three."

Miao's face shifted, torn by the stranger before him. Abandoning the elder, he fled. The elder, impaled, grew frantic, feeling forsaken.

*North Luo, Lakeheart Island

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Lu chuckled, leaning back in his wheelchair. Nie Changqing's temper mirrored his own—a true White Jade Capital disciple. “The Daoist Sect has some tricks,” he mused, sipping wine. “A blood-and-qi array... If they tapped spiritual energy, they could work miracles.”

This world brimmed with talent, unsurprising to Lu. Rubbing a chess piece, he pondered, “The Dragon Gates are open, and the dragon seeds should soon form. Whether this makes White Jade Capital a transcendent force remains to be seen. The world knows we're strong, but curiosity outweighs fear. After this, that may change.”

Heavy footsteps approached. Lu Changkong ascended the pavilion, startling Lu. “Father?”

“Fan'er, Ni Yu says you haven't slept in days,” Lu Changkong said, setting a purple lunchbox on the sandalwood table. “Cultivation's fine, but rest and eat properly.”

He opened the box, scooping a bowl of eight-treasure porridge. “The cook made your favorite. Try it.”

Lu stared at the bowl, heart jolted. In this world, he'd felt alone, driven only by his mission to elevate it. His body's lingering inferiority and isolation made him cold to bonds. Yet, deep down, he craved them—envying Ni Yu's carefree antics or Jing Yue's play with Nie Shuang.

He took a spoonful. Sweetness warmed his heart. "Thank you, Father," he said.

"Eat up," Lu Changkong grinned, wrinkles creasing. "I'm heading to the city walls. Don't overwork. Rest. Being the world's best means nothing if you're unwell. As long as North Luo stands, I'll protect your peace forever."

Lu sipped another spoonful. "Father, have Uncle Luo Yue lead some elite troops into the Dragon Gate. The eight realms will shift the world's balance. North Luo must adapt."

Lu Changkong nodded solemnly and left. Lu continued eating, noticing Ni Yu peeking from behind the railing. "Come eat," he said, unfazed. "I can't finish this alone."

Ni Yu bounded over, drooling, beaming with joy.

Daoist Sect

“Two,” Nie Changqing’s voice echoed across the plaza, the only sound amid the silent disciples. He glanced at the potent aura from Star-Picking Peak and sighed, drawing his knife from the elder, who gasped in pain.

“Trai—” the elder began, face twisted. Before he could finish, Nie’s knife slid across his throat. His head rolled, eyes wide with disbelief, blood soaking the plaza.

“One,” Nie exhaled, standing resolute.