

Starlit Path 123

Chapter 123: You Are the Young Master's Favorite Prodigy

Tianhuang Mountain, Star-Picking Peak

Nie Changqing gazed at the Daoist nun before the Dragon Gate, his eyes flickering with emotion for the first time. Was there such a thing as a heaven-sent genius? If so, Li Sansui was undoubtedly one, surpassing even her brother Li Sansi in prodigious talent. The Daoist Sect's Dragon Gate had only just opened, yet the spiritual fluctuations emanating from her stunned Nie Changqing.

Nine-stage Qi Reservoir! How had she cultivated so swiftly? Her talent for refining qi was unmatched, perhaps second only to Young Master Lu himself. Even the Overlord paled in comparison.

Standing before the Dragon Gate, Li Sansui's long lashes trembled as she looked at Nie Changqing. "Brother Nie, long time no see," she said softly.

Nie nodded. "Indeed." His mind stirred, the butcher's knife settling into his grip. The once carefree girl now carried a melancholic air. Love, it seemed, was the world's cruelest wound.

"Sansui, stop him!" a Daoist shouted from the peak, voice hoarse with urgency.

Li Sansui glanced at him, brows furrowing, but ignored the command. Nie's eyes flicked to the Daoist. His butcher's knife shot out like black lightning, severing the man's arms in a flash. The Daoist collapsed, screaming, as the knife spun back to Nie, shedding blood.

“Noisy,” Nie muttered coldly.

Li Sansui remained impassive. “Brother Nie, leave. I don’t want to fight you. You and Sister Ru are my cherished memories. I don’t want them shattered.”

Nie’s eyes narrowed, gripping his knife. “Sansui, even you would block me?”

She sighed, shaking her head. “If my soft-hearted brother were here, he’d risk his life to stop you too. Sometimes, not meeting is better.”

“I just want to take Ru’er back, to give Shuang’er a mother, a complete family. Why is that so hard?” Nie’s gaze fell to the plaza’s bluestone, his white robe fluttering in the wind. “I promised Shuang’er I’d bring her mother home. Whoever stands in my way, I’ll cut down. Even if it means razing the Daoist Sect.”

His words shook the peak, the disciples paling in fear. His ruthlessness and the blood-soaked plaza overwhelmed the secluded sect members.

Li Sansui watched him quietly, their eyes locking—his white robe billowing like a scholar’s, her green robe swaying like a nun’s. After a long silence, she spoke, her voice like a clear spring echoing across the peak. “If you’re determined, Brother Nie, let’s make a deal. Block one move from me, and I won’t stop you.”

Nie gripped his knife, pausing, then nodded. “Agreed.”

The air turned heavy with killing intent. Clouds churned above, and Li Sansui's hairband unraveled, her dark tresses cascading in the sunlight. "Cloud," she murmured.

A translucent dragon roared from the Dragon Gate, swirling clouds into a vortex. A massive cloud dragon formed, not lifelike but radiating oppressive pressure. The disciples gaped, awestruck by the peerless nun. Even Nie felt the weight, a rare sensation since reaching the Qi Reservoir's peak. Only Young Master Lu, the Overlord, and Ning Zhao could match it—now, Li Sansui joined their ranks.

Yet Nie didn't falter. He stepped forward, arms spread, his knife hovering before his brow. Spiritual energy surged, enveloping him. Above, the cloud dragon roared; below, Nie wielded his blade.

Li Sansui, eyes closed, pointed at him. Nie's face hardened. His knife spun, unleashing a five-zhang blade shadow that slashed toward the dragon. The disciples watched, mesmerized by the clash of cultivators.

North Luo, Lakeheart Island

Lu, sipping eight-treasure porridge, raised an eyebrow as his vision flickered with spiritual lines. Ni Yu, munching happily with her black wok, met his gaze and choked, spraying porridge. Lu shot her a look of disgust. "Can't even eat properly?"

Ni Yu pounded her chest, silently crying. Lu ignored her, stunned by the scene. “Li Sansui... nine-stage Qi Reservoir on her first refinement? No wonder she bonded with the cloud dragon instantly.”

Like her brother Li Sansi, who’d charmed the candle dragon with his flute, Li Sansui’s talent was monstrous. Though the cloud dragon paled beside the candle dragon, it was still a dragon seed, underscoring her genius. Her cloud-forming technique was a novel use of spiritual energy—a Daoist art.

“Pity her refinement time’s so short,” Lu mused, scooping a half-lotus seed from his porridge.

Ning Zhao, wielding her Cicada Wing Sword, approached the Dragon Gate. The small yellow dragon atop it yawned. She stepped through, followed later by Jing Yue, sword case on his back. Entering the realm, Jing Yue gaped at the lifelike clay statues, the iron bridge, and the floating island—a mythical sight.

As he marveled, the statues’ eyes opened, startling him. Drawing his sword, he parried a clay blade, leaping back. Halfway out the gate, he hesitated. He’d come to grow stronger, to escape faster. Fleeing now would gain him nothing. “I can fight one statue,” he muttered. “No running this time, Jing Yue! You can do this! You’re the Young Master’s favorite prodigy!”

Slapping his cheeks, he charged back, sword drawn. Knocking the ground, he vaulted over a statue’s swing, striking it repeatedly until he severed its head. It crumbled, spiritual energy flooding him. “I did it!” he shouted, fists clenched. “No more running for Jing Yue!”

His triumph faded as the remaining statues' eyes locked on him, their blades flashing. Scrambling, he fled the gate. Ning Zhao, already past the statue area, glanced back at his retreat, unsurprised. Taking a deep breath, she gripped her sword and stepped onto the iron bridge.

The world hushed, sounds fading. Sensing something, she looked across, glimpsing a figure fighting on another bridge. "The Overlord?" she murmured, eyes sharpening with competitive fire. "The Young Master said I'd be the first Hidden Body Realm cultivator. I won't fail him."

Tiptoeing on the bridge's planks, she glided forward. Purple smoke rose from the island's bronze tripod, forming a man and woman. Their immense strength raised goosebumps on her skin. "So strong... but the stronger they are, the greater my drive to break through!" Gripping her sword, she charged. The figures met her, swords clashing in a symphony of steel.

East Yan River Dragon Gate Realm

Amidst the booming clash, the Overlord sensed another presence on a distant bridge. "Someone else is challenging the floating island?" he growled. "Trying to outpace me, Xiang Shaoyun? Never!"

Demonic qi surged, his eyes blazing red. The purple-smoke figures struck, a sword piercing his shoulder. He staggered but grinned fiercely, seizing the blade in his flesh. With a headbutt, he sent the male figure reeling, then swung his axe three times, cleaving it in two.