

Starlit Path 125

Chapter 125: At First, Li Sansi Was Reluctant

North Luo, Lakeheart Island

Lu leaned against the carved wooden railing, a breeze lifting a strand of hair as a system prompt flashed before his eyes: “Congratulations, Host, for creating the secret realm and nurturing the first ‘Hidden Body Realm’ cultivator, achieving a breakthrough in realms. Reward: 20 assignable attribute points, one copy of Artifact Refining Manual.”

Lu froze. “Someone broke through to the Hidden Body Realm?” Surprise mixed with delight. “The Overlord? Or Ning Zhao?”

In his mind, only those two were likely candidates. Ning Zhao had lingered at the peak of the Qi Reservoir Realm for ages, while the Overlord, fueled by demonic qi since his transformation, relentlessly sought the pressure needed to cross into the Hidden Body Realm. They were the frontrunners.

Ignoring the prompt, Lu’s white robe fluttered as his eyes flickered with spiritual lines. But his vision soon brought astonishment. In the East Yan River realm, the Overlord stood on the floating island, bloodied and gazing afar, his aura turbulent but showing no signs of a breakthrough. Not him.

Lu’s brow arched. If not the Overlord, then Ning Zhao? His gaze shifted to the North Luo Lake Dragon Gate. There, Ning Zhao fought fiercely, her white dress stained red, teetering on the edge of a breakthrough but still falling short. Not her either.

If neither, then who? Curiosity gripped Lu. Sitting upright, his mind surged into the spiritual pressure board, tracing the pulsing aura of the Hidden Body breakthrough. It led to Buzhou Peak's Dragon Gate.

Lu blinked. "Buzhou Peak... Li Sansi?!"

Buzhou Peak, Dragon Gate Realm

Li Sansi was dumbfounded. This breakthrough wasn't what he'd planned. The Daoist Sect's top disciple, who once rode an azure ox with a wooden sword, single-handedly breaching city gates to reclaim territories from barbarian soldiers, wasn't supposed to advance like this.

On Buzhou Peak, he'd fought Tantai Xuan's thirty thousand troops with just his sword, exhausting his qi reservoir and stamina. As defeat loomed, he braced for death. But then, a girl with black-and-white eyes opened them, and countless soldiers withered into bones before her gaze. Li Sansi survived—and was promptly tossed into the Dragon Gate by the girl, Zhu Long.

Inside, he faced an surreal ordeal. Dropped among lifelike clay statues, their eerie presence chilled him. When their eyes snapped open and one drew a clay blade, Li Sansi, drained of spiritual energy and strength, faced mortal danger. A scaly tail swept through, cracking the statue before him. It lashed again, shattering all ninety-nine statues into fragments.

The girl, Zhu Long, emerged from the darkness, eyes closed, gesturing for him to finish the statues with his wooden sword. Li Sansi, exhausted, wanted to collapse. But her trembling lashes hinted at opening

her deadly eyes, and he complied. Striking a statue, it shattered, flooding him with spiritual energy. His parched qi reservoir devoured it like a starved beast.

One strike led to many. He smashed all ninety-nine, absorbing their energy, sitting cross-legged to refine it. His qi reservoir swelled to sixteen strands, reaching perfection. But Zhu Long wasn't done. She kept shattering statues, leaving them for him to finish. "Enough!" he protested, but her silent threat—eyes nearly opening—silenced him. He swung his sword numbly, wave after wave, his body nearly bursting with energy.

Then Zhu Long dragged him to the iron bridge. Purple smoke from the bronze tripod formed a sword-wielding man and woman, their blades overwhelming him. Yet his abundant energy let him hold his own. In battle, the energy fused into his muscles and limbs. Just as he found his rhythm, Zhu Long yanked him back to smash more statues. The cycle repeated—statues, bridge, statues—until even she deemed the smoke figures too weak.

Transforming into her candle dragon form, she whipped him with her scaly tail. Under this relentless pressure, Li Sansi either had to erupt or break. Roaring, he tore his robe, his soul seeming to transcend. He could now sense his body internally, his qi reservoir overflowing into his organs and limbs.

Zhu Long, reverting to her girl form, clapped happily as he broke through. A vortex of spiritual energy swirled above him on the bridge, funneling into his glowing body. With a dragon's cry, she transformed again, absorbing the feedback energy, evolving as her own pressure intensified.

Li Sansi had stumbled into the Hidden Body Realm, riding Zhu Long's coattails. At first, he was reluctant.

*North Luo, Lakeheart Island

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Lu was speechless. “That’s an option?” The candle dragon, the most unique of the eight dragon seeds, was beyond even his full control. He saw it as Zhu Long using Li Sansi to evolve into a true dragon, his breakthrough a mere byproduct. “Luck is a kind of strength,” Lu sighed. The Overlord and Ning Zhao hadn’t lost unfairly—Li Sansi had won the candle dragon’s favor with a flute tune and wine.

Another prompt appeared: “Congratulations on completing the side quest: The Phoenix Has Appeared, Are Heavenly Dragons Far Behind? Successfully created a ‘Dragonland’ and nurtured the first heavenly dragon, the Candle Dragon. Reward: 10 assignable attribute points, one copy of Dragon Blood Pill Refining Manual.”

Lu squinted. The Dragonland’s purpose was fulfilled. The candle dragon’s ascension was just the start; the others needed to follow. The rewards were bountiful: 30 attribute points—equivalent to 300 strands of spiritual energy—and two manuals, Artifact Refining and Dragon Blood Pill Refining. Unexpected treasures.

He didn’t inspect them yet. Picking a chess piece, he rubbed it thoughtfully. His white robe billowed as his spiritual pressure surged. He placed the piece on the board.

Buzhou Peak, Dragon Gate Realm

Li Sansi's breakthrough opened a new world. His soul felt stronger, capable of controlling his wooden sword with intent, hovering it midair. His movements carried explosive power. "A new realm above Qi Reservoir!" he gasped, marveling at his strength.

Glancing at Zhu Long, he froze. The girl had transformed. Her scaly body coiled, and from its center emerged a stunning woman with crimson hair, her beauty breathtaking, like a lotus rising from water. From Ni Yu to Ning Zhao, in simpler terms. Li Sansi stared, heart racing.

She smiled purely, stirring his pulse. Then, behind her, the shattered statues rose, manipulated by an unseen force, forming a massive, eerie face in the sky. One glance burned his newly strengthened soul, blood trickling from his nose and mouth. The pressure nearly forced him to his knees, but he stood firm, spine straight, refusing to bow as a Hidden Body cultivator.

Zhu Long reverted to her dragon form, eyes closed, her expression anxious, like a child awaiting punishment. "F-Father!" she called.

Li Sansi, straining against the pressure, faltered at her voice, his resolve crumbling. His legs buckled, and he knelt.