

## Starlit Path 126

Chapter 126: Does Young Master Lu Like Chicken Soup?

\*Buzhou Peak, Dragon Gate Realm\*

“An immortal?!” Li Sansi stared at the colossal stone face formed from shattered statue fragments floating in the void, his heart trembling. The creator of the Dragonland? The oppressive pressure was like a thick mire, immobilizing him.

Zhu Long, in her dragon form, coiled on the ground, radiating fear and guilt, like a child caught misbehaving. Lu’s consciousness, infused in the stone face, gazed at her and the kneeling Li Sansi. While luck played a part, Li Sansi’s Hidden Body breakthrough wasn’t pure chance. Another might have collapsed mentally under Zhu Long’s relentless pressure, the agony of spiritual energy bloating the body like an overinflated balloon unbearable to most.

Ignoring Li Sansi, Lu’s gaze shifted to Zhu Long. Li Sansi exhaled in relief as the “immortal’s” attention moved, feeling like an ant before such power. Indeed, to the “immortal,” he was insignificant.

The stone face loomed closer to Zhu Long, who quivered with growing dread. She knew exploiting Li Sansi to evolve into a true dragon broke Lu’s rules, fearing he might reclaim or remake her. Lu, however, observed calmly. Zhu Long was key to elevating the Five Phoenixes Continent to high martial or even ultra-fantasy status. A mature candle dragon was terrifying, and her actions, though rule-breaking, hastened his task’s completion.

Unique beings had unique autonomy. Lu didn’t suppress it. Whether Zhu Long or the increasingly ferocious black dragon, all bore an innate reverence and fear of him, etched into their souls. This was why he dared scatter the eight dragons across the world. His goal wasn’t to cage their nature but to sow seeds of transformation, letting them take root.

Still, Zhu Long needed a lesson—not just her, but Li Sansi too. Cultivation was one thing; exploiting loopholes was another. “Let this be the last time,” the stone face intoned, its voice booming through the realm.

Zhu Long let out a plaintive dragon cry, trembling. Li Sansi, drenched in cold sweat, felt the words crush him. Lu glanced at him, then dispersed his will. The stones collapsed, melting like snow, and new statues rose from the ground. The pressure vanished.

Li Sansi straightened, looking at Zhu Long. Her scaly tail swept, coiling him despite his Hidden Body strength. Dizzy, he was flung from the Dragon Gate, tumbling out of the cave. Steadying himself, he gripped his wooden sword, stepping toward the cave, but Zhu Long’s black-and-white eyes emerged, radiating death. He froze, retreating.

Surveying the skeletal remains on Buzhou Peak, he sighed, wiping blood from a bluestone. Sitting with his sword, he gazed at the blazing sun, hair swaying in the breeze.

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\*Daoist Sect, Back Mountain Bamboo Hut\*

Li Sansui pushed open the door, stepping aside for Nie Changqing. Each step he took felt heavier than a mountain, his earlier bravado—splitting the sect’s gate—gone, replaced by trepidation. The hut was sparse: a bamboo table, a mat, nothing more. On the mat sat a Daoist nun in a robe, hair bound, serene as a wilted autumn leaf.

“Ru’er,” Nie called, voice trembling with hope and nerves.

No response. Li Sansui, at the door, pursed her lips, eyes dim. Nie approached, finding the nun’s head tilted, her gaze vacant and lifeless. On the mat, bamboo shavings bore two carved words: “Qing” and “Shuang.” His turbulent gaze softened. Calling her name again, she only looked up blankly, confusion in her hollow eyes, then tilted her head again.

“Brother Nie...” Li Sansui began, but Nie waved her off.

“No need to explain.” His voice was gentle, hand resting on the nun’s head. “Ru’er, let’s go home. Shuang’er’s waiting.”

Li Sansui froze. “An ending, even like this, is better than none,” Nie said, calm yet burning with suppressed fire. He lifted the nun onto his back; she didn’t resist, playing with his hair. Stepping out, sunlight filtered through the bamboo, making him squint.

He paused, not turning. “Sansui, the Daoist Sect doesn’t suit you. Go to North Luo.” His second urging. Li Sansui’s emotions swirled, complex.

Drawing his butcher’s knife, he pointed at the other hut. “Master of the Daoist Sect, I came not only for Ru’er but on Young Master’s orders: to bring her home and claim the Daoist Sect.”

His words startled the bamboo grove, scattering birds. Li Sansui’s eyes widened. From the long-closed hut, a raspy voice emerged. “I have an array. If Young Master Lu of North Luo can break it, the Daoist Sect will submit like the Tianji School. Why not?”

A hunched figure stepped out. Nie, carrying the nun, met the figure's gaze, his stubbled face expressionless. "No need for the Young Master. I'll break it."

His words rang firm. With his heart's knot resolved, his spirit transformed. Spiritual energy surged from his qi reservoir, and fallen bamboo leaves rose without wind.

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\*North Luo City, Inn\*

Chi Lian pushed open a creaky wooden window, propping it with a stick. Sunlight poured in, dust dancing in its rays. "Sister Chi Lian, when's Uncle Jiang coming to North Luo?" a lazy voice called. Bai Qingniao squatted by a basket of chicks, teasing them.

"It's been days, and he still hasn't come," Chi Lian said, gazing at North Luo's bustling streets, her eyes flickering. Leaning against the window, she turned to Bai Qingniao. "Pack up. We're visiting Young Master Lu on Lakeheart Island."

Bai Qingniao looked up, startled, as Little Phoenix One peeked from her collar, panting. "Not waiting for Uncle Jiang?"

Chi Lian shook her head. "He's taken a post in the capital, commanding the army to guard it. He won't come soon, but I'll fulfill his task."

Bai Qingniao's eyes dimmed with disappointment. "Fine, visiting Young Master Lu... what should I bring? Does he like chicken soup? I could make some." She paused. "They say his temper's bad. Can I really join White Jade Capital? If I do, will I never see Uncle Jiang again?"

Her chatter continued. Chi Lian, responding once, ignored her, gazing out. Young Master Lu was enigmatic, his temper unpredictable. How to win him over? Her eyes fell on Bai Qingniao's chest, where Little Phoenix One nestled.

Bai Qingniao, catching her gaze, clutched her chest warily. Chi Lian's eyes twinkled. "Qingniao, that chick of yours... it's special. It might impress Young Master Lu."

Relieved, Bai Qingniao pulled out Little Phoenix One. "Make soup with it? I can't bear to!" The chick, listless before, shivered, tucking its rear as if chilled.

Chi Lian's face darkened. Was this girl obsessed with chicken soup? Did she think Young Master Lu cared for a mere bowl of it? The chick's value far exceeded that.