

STARLIT PATH OF THE MYSTIC FORGE

Chapter 13: I Am Here, Thus Immortals Exist

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Yuwen Xiu and Xiang Shaoyun were stunned, reeling from the audacity. They were men of immense stature—the Great Zhou Emperor and the Western Prefecture Governor, above thousands. Yet here they were, flicked on the forehead like children.

Lu floated in the air, spiritual energy swirling around him, cloaking his form in an ethereal, elusive mist. “What do you mean by this?” Xiang Shaoyun growled, barely containing his fury, while Yuwen Xiu frowned, silent but indignant.

“You sought immortal fate, did you not? I grant it to you,” Lu said coolly. “Since you refuse to share your cultivation methods for refinement, I won’t force you. Don’t regret it later. The fate is yours—believe it or not. As spiritual energy revives and the immortal realm returns, the continent will transform. To receive this fate is a blessing earned over three lifetimes. Squander it, and you’ll be pitiable.”

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His voice, laced with an otherworldly echo, seemed to drift from the heavens. “Depart. As chosen ones, I’ll grant you another chance. In three days, you may return to this Land of Immortality.”

With a wave of his sleeve, spiritual energy surged like a hurricane. Yuwen Xiu and Xiang Shaoyun tried to speak, but their energy-formed bodies shattered, ejecting them from the Preaching Platform. The grand immortal pavilion was left with only Nie Changqing, the butcher shop owner, standing in the distance.

Lu, wreathed in misty energy, fixed his gaze on Nie, his look profound. “Will you leave as well?” he asked, voice indifferent.

Nie took a deep breath. The surreal scene felt too vivid for a dream. “Is there truly an immortal in this world?” he asked.

Lu didn’t answer immediately, meeting Nie’s gaze. “The world had no immortals,” he said flatly. “I am here, thus immortals exist.”

The simple words struck Nie like a thunderbolt, his body trembling as if jolted by a revelation. Closing his eyes, he stood still for three breaths before opening them, resolute. “I... don’t believe in immortals,” he declared, staring at Lu.

Lu’s expression remained unmoved. “Believe or not, immortals are there.”

Nie laughed, a bitter edge in his eyes. “But even if I don’t believe, I’ll give you my cultivation method. It’s useless to me now. I’m just a butcher.” His voice carried a trace of sorrow.

Lu, perched atop swirling energy in the pavilion, stayed impassive. Nie might have a story, but Lu had no wine to hear it. “Recite your method. I’ll listen,” he said.

Nie’s eyes softened with nostalgia as he began chanting the *Daoist Blood Circulation Technique* and *Knife Derivation Art*. As he spoke, spiritual energy formed glowing words, spilling from his mouth like a river, aligning neatly in the air. Startled, he paused but resumed, finishing after a long recitation. Above, thousands of words hung in a grand chapter.

“Cultivation Method: Daoist Blood Circulation Technique. Combat Art: Knife Derivation Art.”

Lu was surprised. This unassuming butcher was a Daoist disciple? In the Five Phoenixes Continent, beyond the Great Zhou court and regional warlords, martial sects and the Hundred Schools of Philosophy thrived. The Daoist School, shrouded in mystique, was one such school, alongside Confucianism, Mohism, Military Strategists, Sword Sects, Yin-Yang School, and Heavenly

Secret Sect. The term “Hundred Schools” was a broad label, not a literal count. The Great Zhou’s Grand Preceptor, Yuwen Xiu’s teacher, hailed from the Confucian School.

A Daoist disciple reduced to a butcher? Hiding his identity or a deeper tale? Lu’s curiosity stirred, but he pressed it down. “This method is useless to me now, a broken man. Take it, immortal,” Nie said, waving dismissively. “Can I go? Twelve pigs await slaughter.”

Lu, half-hidden in the pavilion’s mist, replied, “No rush. This low-grade method, ignorant of spiritual energy, won’t take long to refine.”

Nie stiffened. *Low-grade? That’s a top-tier Daoist technique!* he thought, indignant.

“Activate [Preaching Platform] permission... Refine *Daoist Blood Circulation Technique* and *Knife Derivation Art*,” Lu commanded silently.

Eight-trigram runes materialized, arrayed like keys on a keyboard. Lu rubbed his hands, grinning faintly. His fingers danced over the runes—Qian, Dui, Li, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Gen, Kun—each carrying unique meaning. Arranging them like code, he wove a program to execute his intent. The [Preaching Platform]

could optimize techniques and craft treasures, but it required his input, like a mystical coding tool.

“Congratulations, Host, for creating the technique modifier [Ten Thousand Methods Furnace (LV1)]. Transformation Reward: 5 attribute points.”

Lu froze, then grinned wildly. A hidden task? Five attribute points—equivalent to 50 strands of spiritual energy! A windfall! He summoned the panel:

Host: Lu

Title: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

Qi Refinement Level: 1 (Progress to Level 2: 10/100 Strands)

Soul Strength: 1.5

Physical Strength: 0.5

Spiritual Energy: 6 Strands

Transformation Reward: *Mystical Qi Refining Manual*

World Rating: Five Phoenixes Continent [Low-Martial]

Permissions: [Missions], [Preaching Platform], [Spiritual Energy Deployment]

Sub-Permission: [Ten Thousand Methods Furnace (LV1)]

Assignable Attribute Points: 5

A new sub-permission appeared. “Ten Thousand Methods Furnace, LV1? It has levels,” Lu mused, smiling.

Focusing on the sub-permission, a resonant boom filled the platform. Nie Changqing, awestruck by the sound, felt his dormant blood stir. Lu, unfazed, held a palm-sized furnace, exuding the calm of one accustomed to grand spectacles. Maintaining his immortal poise, he flicked his pinky with a flourish,

lifting the furnace's lid. The floating text of Nie's techniques leaped into the furnace like living entities.

*“Consume 5 strands of spiritual energy to refine *Daoist Blood Circulation Technique* and *Knife Derivation Art?”*

Lu's face twitched, his heart aching. Five strands for a refinement? *I'm being fleeced!* But he'd committed to the act. “Refine,” he gritted out.

His spiritual energy dropped to a lonely single strand. The furnace whirred, then: *“Refinement complete. *Daoist Spirit Channeling Technique* and *Knife Control Art* derived successfully. Grade: High Yellow Rank.”*

Below, Nie's blood surged at the cosmic sound, his awe deepening. *Is there truly an immortal?* Lu, standing on misty clouds, opened his eyes. “Your methods are refined. Take them,” he said, waving a sleeve.

Nie felt knowledge flood his mind as his energy-body shattered, fading from the platform.