

Starlit Path 130

Chapter 130: Who Dared to Harm My Black Dragon?

Imperial Capital

Deep in the night, thick clouds veiled the moon. The black dragon lounged atop the Dragon Gate, basking in the nourishing spiritual energy flowing from below. It was content, sensing it was close to becoming a true heavenly dragon—a leap toward ascension. Though far from maturity, this was progress. With meat to eat and the promise of dragonhood, life was good.

Suddenly, its black scales bristled like human goosebumps. Unease coiled around it, a premonition of something dreadful. It opened its mouth to roar, but a silver gleam erupted from the Dragon Gate, radiating a terrifying aura that froze it in place, its cry stuck in its throat.

The gleam was a hiltless blade, floating silently like a straightened feather. Behind it, a flawless silver bowl emerged, carved as if from crystal. Why a bowl? The dragon's eyes flickered with confusion.

Then it understood. The blade descended, piercing its tail. Its sturdy scales, like thin paper, offered no resistance. Blood sprayed. The dragon clamped its mouth shut, not daring to roar or question. In the presence of this aura, it could only endure the pain. The silver bowl hovered beneath the wound, collecting the gushing blood. The dragon watched in terror as the bowl filled.

The blade and bowl vanished into the Dragon Gate under the bleak night sky. Only when the oppressive aura faded did the dragon unleash a pained, furious roar, shaking the imperial city. The night erupted into chaos—patrols rushed in, Jiang Li in silver armor arrived with a grave expression, and Emperor Yuwen Xiu, draped in his dragon robe, hurried over with eunuchs and maids.

“What’s wrong with my black dragon? Why such a pained cry?” Yuwen Xiu demanded, fists clenched in fury. His attendants paled, trembling. The black dragon was his hope, his treasure.

Jiang Li bowed. “Your Majesty, I observed the dragon. Its tail is wounded, cut by a sharp blade.”

Yuwen Xiu’s eyes narrowed, spotting the slashed scales and oozing blood. “Who did this?!” he roared. Jiang Li, silent, felt the sting of failure—he’d patrolled the city yet missed an intruder who’d struck the dragon.

The emperor’s rage wasn’t just for the dragon; if it could be attacked, what of the emperor himself? As his anger swelled, a figure stumbled from the Dragon Gate. All eyes turned to the old eunuch, sent by Yuwen Xiu to the realm.

Jiang Li frowned, noting the eunuch’s shaken state. “M-Majesty...” the eunuch stammered, face ashen, eyes wide with lingering fear. Seeing the furious emperor, he found odd comfort compared to the terrifying white-robed figure he’d glimpsed.

“What did you see? Who harmed my dragon?” Yuwen Xiu demanded.

The guards and Jiang Li stayed silent, their failure evident. The eunuch steadied himself, lips trembling, before speaking softly. “Your Majesty... I... I think I saw... North Luo’s Lu Ping’an.”

The words stunned the crowd. Yuwen Xiu froze, his roar cut short. Jiang Li’s head snapped up, eyes wide. Silence fell, broken only by the flowing water and the dragon’s pained cries.

*East Yan River

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In his tent, the Overlord snapped awake, sensing a terrifying aura from the Dragon Gate—fleeting, yet unmistakable. Had it come from the central palace? Had someone bypassed the floating island to challenge it? He rushed out, axe and shield on his back, plunging into the realm. A statue blocked him; he shattered it with one swing.

The iron bridge's purple-smoke figures, defeated once, didn't reform. He crossed, standing at the floating island's edge, peering at the mist-shrouded central palace. Squinting, he glimpsed a white figure, silver light trailing, moving unhurriedly through the palace. Someone was there!

Who? Inhaling deeply, he stepped onto the chain toward the central palace, sprinting. Meanwhile, Lu, with the blood-filled silver bowl hovering above, glided through the palace, one hand on his chin, the other on his blanket. The palace's dormant master dared not stir.

Lu reached the chain to North Luo's gate, glancing toward East Yan's realm with a half-smile before gliding away. The Overlord, racing across the chain, saw the figure depart into the mist. As it vanished, the palace boiled to life, a terrifying aura crashing like a waterfall, pressing against him.

His face paled. Halting, he stomped, shaking the chain. The palace's ancient doors creaked open, and a massive black shadow charged out, too fast to track, rushing him. Magma-like demonic qi erupted as he raised his shield. A deafening clash sent blood spraying from his nose and mouth, the force sliding him back along the chain to the floating island. He staggered, stopping after three steps.

“This is the central palace’s master? Far stronger than Wolong Ridge’s ancient cultivator,” he muttered, wiping blood. Undeterred, he wondered about the white figure. The palace’s entity had stayed dormant until it left, clearly fearing it. Who could inspire such dread?

North Luo Lake, Dragon Gate Realm

Lu returned to the floating island, amused by the Overlord’s recklessness. “Got himself beaten for nothing,” he thought. Glancing at the iron bridge, he saw Ning Zhao’s battle nearing its end. He didn’t linger, gliding back across without interfering, unnoticed by her or the smoke figures.

Exiting the realm, he emerged by the lake. The yellow dragon atop the Dragon Gate buzzed excitedly, wings flapping like a restless bee. Spiritual energy surged from the realm, fueling its growth, its heavenly dragon aura spreading. A robust roar rippled the lake.

Lu Dongxuan, Lu Mu Dui, Yi Yue, Nie Shuang, and Ni Yu, busy with their tasks, looked up in awe. From the Dragon Gate stepped Ning Zhao, her white dress now blood-red, moving under starlight with the dragon’s cry.

Lu, in his wheelchair, night breeze stirring his hair and robe, watched her stubborn figure. His usually impassive face softened with a warm, gratified smile.