

Starlit Path 131

Chapter 131: Even Ni Yu Shines So Radiantly

The night sky bloomed with stars, like vibrant flowers vying for brilliance. The thick clouds parted, revealing moonlight that draped the world like a shy maiden's veil, casting a stunning, serene glow. Emerging from the Dragon Gate, Ning Zhao, like a blood-red autumn chrysanthemum, exuded cold pride.

Her heart surged with excitement, but her face remained aloof. Even after breaking through to the Hidden Body Realm, she retained her icy elegance. Stepping across the lake, her blood-stained skirt fluttered in the night breeze. The surrounding air grew heavy with the pressure of her new realm.

Lu Dongxuan's white robe billowed, his gold chain glinting uniquely under the moonlight. Ning Zhao's aura stifled him. The first realm: Qi Reservoir. The second: Hidden Body. She had reached it.

Lu Mu Dui, leaning on his bamboo staff, his beard swaying, flushed with shock, his gap-toothed mouth agape. Her presence stirred his spiritual energy uncontrollably, as if she were an insurmountable mountain. "This pressure... the weight of a cultivator's realm?" he gasped.

Ning Zhao's steps, unsteady from her fresh breakthrough, sent lake water surging meters high with each stride. "Young Master," she said, suppressing her excitement before Lu.

Lu smiled, flicking a wisp of spiritual energy into her. Her volatile energy stabilized. "The path is arduous, and cultivation harder still," he said. "Talent isn't everything. A resolute, unwavering heart is key. Without it, even a godlike genius will be surpassed by one with steadfast determination."

His hair and robe swayed in the breeze. Ning Zhao, blood streaking her face, smiled. “Yes.”

Lu raised his hand, blue spiritual energy gathering in his palm. With a gentle sweep, it entered her brow, imparting the Hidden Body Realm’s cultivation method. “This realm refines the five organs, unlocking human potential. The organs are the five treasures, a critical step in shedding mortality. At its peak, you’ll manifest attribute energy—heart for fire, lungs for metal, spleen for earth—elevating combat strength. It won’t overturn seas, but it’s extraordinary for mortals.”

Ning Zhao immersed herself in the method, entranced. Lu let her absorb it; a solid foundation was vital for the Hidden Body Realm, lest future progress falter.

Atop the Dragon Gate, the little yellow dragon, having absorbed the spiritual storm of Ning Zhao’s breakthrough, completed its transformation into a heavenly dragon. Lu nodded approvingly. Its sleek, elongated form and flapping wings could whip up storms. Sensing his gaze, it stood tall, wings beating as if to please him. Lu chuckled—such an obedient dragon.

His mind shifted, and the silver bowl of black dragon blood hovered before him. The yellow dragon froze, sensing the blood’s aura, covering its face with its wings. Lu beckoned to Ni Yu. “Bring the wok.”

The black wok floated over. Fortunately, Ni Yu’s pill-refining stocked ample herbs, sparing Lu a trip. Plucking chrysanthemum petals, he tossed them and other herbs into the wok with the dragon blood. A flick of his finger ignited spiritual fire beneath, heating the wok red-hot.

“Young Master, refining pills?” Ni Yu asked, wiping drool.

Lu glanced at her, hair and robe fluttering. Asking the obvious? Ignoring her, he focused. Dragon Blood Pills were far more complex than Qi-Gathering Pills. Ni Yu, watching from afar, popped a warm Qi-Gathering Pill into her mouth, chewing it like candy. Lu Mu Dui and Lu Dongxuan twitched—only she could treat precious pills so casually, but as their refiner, she could eat them with sauce for all they cared.

The dragon blood soon evaporated, black mist rising, laced with the black dragon's resentment. Who wouldn't be bitter after losing a bowl of blood? The wok thundered like rain pelting flesh. Ni Yu, intrigued, sniffed a scent like duck blood noodle soup. Her eyes gleamed.

The wok quieted. Lu swept his sleeve, and it crashed to the ground. "Ni Yu, retrieve the Dragon Blood Pills."

"Yes!" She scurried over, blowing on her hands to handle the hot wok, scooping the blood-red pills into a cloth sack. "Young Master, eighteen pills! A great yield!" Her flushed face beamed as she handed him the sack. She hadn't dared sneak one—Lu's wrath was too fearsome.

Lu weighed the sack, inspecting a pill. Blood-red with three dragon-like veins, it was a first-grade, three-vein pill. Black dragon blood limited it to first-grade; heavenly dragon blood with top herbs could yield second-grade or higher, depending on the dragon's level. Still, this was excellent.

"One to Tianji Pavilion, one to Nie Shuang, the rest to my father," Lu instructed.

Ni Yu blinked. "That's it? None for Sister Ning? She just broke through. Or Sister Yi Yue, who trains so hard? Or me, slaving over pills?"

Lu leaned back. “Take one if you want. Ning Zhao and Yi Yue don’t need them—high qi reserves lessen the pill’s benefits, wasting it.”

His wheelchair turned, silver blades gleaming like a moon, his robe fluttering as he glided toward White Jade Capital’s second floor, vanishing into the night. Ni Yu, eyes crescent with glee, took a pill, tossed one to Lu Dongxuan, who caught it reverently, wiping it on his robe. She ran to Nie Shuang, practicing under the chrysanthemum, giving him one.

Boarding a small boat, Ni Yu eagerly bit into a Dragon Blood Pill. It crunched, but she frowned. “Needs sugar coating,” she muttered. The pill dissolved into a fiery surge, her qi reservoir’s energy catalyzed into a frenzy. Eyes gleaming, she clenched her lips, and a dragon-like roar erupted from her rear, propelling the boat like a meteor through the lake, her screams echoing.

From the pavilion, Lu shook his head at her cries. Dragon Blood Pills suited those with minimal qi; Ni Yu’s pill-stuffed reservoir amplified the reaction. “Worthy of my favored protege,” he mused, tapping the railing.

Converting his 30 attribute points to spiritual energy, a system prompt appeared: “Spiritual energy reserve has reached Refining Qi Layer 2 limit of 1000 strands. Upgrade?”

Lu’s tapping paused, a smile curling his lips.

North Luo Lake

Lu Changkong strolled by the lake, hands clasped, breeze ruffling his robe, gazing at the mist-shrouded Lakeheart Island. Luo Yue, sword sheathed, followed. “Old Luo, how did Luo Cheng’s Dragon Gate expedition fare?” Lu Changkong asked.

“Of eight hundred men, nearly three hundred died or were injured. Only eleven or twelve condensed qi,” Luo Yue sighed. “Becoming a cultivator isn’t as simple as we thought. It takes talent.”

Lu Changkong nodded. “Even martial arts requires talent, let alone cultivation.”

Suddenly, he turned, spotting white waves churning like a dragon. A boat sped forward, Ni Yu at its bow, hair flying, clothes fluttering as energy surged behind her. Luo Yue marveled, “No wonder she’s the Young Master’s maid—even Ni Yu shines so radiantly.”

Lu Changkong’s brow twitched. Something felt... off.