

Starlit Path 136

Chapter 136: Newcomers to the Preaching Platform

System prompts flashed before Lu's eyes:

- Li Sansi (Identity: Daoist Sect Disciple) enters the Preaching Platform.

- Mo Ju (Identity: Confucian Sect Disciple) enters the Preaching Platform.

- Sima Qingshan (Identity: Poor Painter from South Jin City) enters the Preaching Platform.

Lu watched calmly, accustomed to the process. The Preaching Platform hadn't stirred since its last intake, but his breakthrough to Refining Qi Layer 3 seemed to trigger this new batch. Was each advancement tied to new entrants, or was it mere coincidence? He leaned toward the former but kept an open mind.

Two names were familiar. "Li Sansi, the Daoist girl?" he mused. "Mo Ju... a Confucian disciple? Not a Mo School strategist under Tantai Xuan?" Li Sansi's inclusion surprised him—she already had immortal fate and notable cultivation. Mo Ju's Confucian label was even odder. "Not forthright," Lu thought, suspecting Mo Ju was a hidden piece placed by the capital's National Teacher. Smirking, he let it go and entered the Preaching Platform.

Spiritual energy swirled, forming three blurred figures at the platform's center. Li Sansi frowned, inspecting her indistinct form—real yet not. Beside her, a scholarly figure stood poised, one hand behind his back, the other hovering near his abdomen. Another, visibly terrified, crouched in fear. "Where is this?" Li Sansi wondered. The dense spiritual energy surpassed any Dragon Gate realm.

At the platform's heart, an eight-trigram array floated, mist coalescing into Lu's ethereal, immortal-like figure. "Newcomers again..." he said, his voice echoing. Li Sansi and Mo Ju stirred, while Sima Qingshan, the poor painter, trembled in panic. Lu inwardly chuckled—each batch brought oddities, though this one was tame. Why highlight "poor" for Sima Qingshan, though? A painter was a painter.

"This is the Preaching Realm, where all may gain immortal fate. Do not reveal your identities, lest heavenly backlash cast you into eternal purgatory," Lu recited smoothly, the warning's effect as potent as ever. Li Sansi and Mo Ju tensed; Sima Qingshan, pale, knelt and kowtowed. "Immortal, let me go! I'm just a poor painter with nothing—please!"

Li Sansi ignored him—his reaction was typical. Mo Ju, curious, studied Lu atop the platform. Unlike Bai Qingniao's deference, this group was bolder. Li Sansi, a cultivator, gazed fearlessly. Lu smiled faintly, sweeping his sleeve. A terrifying pressure erupted, forcing Li Sansi and Mo Ju to their knees, spiritual energy rippling outward. Behind Lu, visions of pavilions, waterfalls, and five-clawed dragons materialized.

Wasting no time, Lu sent a white light into Li Sansi's brow, her mind reeling as she vanished. For Mo Ju, the Confucian disciple, Lu crafted a method for cultivating Righteous Confucian Qi and sent it to him. Mo Ju's face twisted oddly as he absorbed it, but Lu dismissed him before he could speak. Only Sima Qingshan remained, quaking. "All who enter may seek one immortal fate. What do you desire?" Lu's voice reverberated.

Sima Qingshan, too frightened to speak, froze. Lu, impatient, sent a cultivation method and a wisp of spiritual energy into his brow. Sima Qingshan shattered and vanished. "Done," Lu said, smirking, exiting the platform.

In the pavilion, incense curled. Lu sipped cooled wine, unfazed, as rain poured outside, graying the sky. He resumed his chess game on the spiritual pressure board, rubbing a white piece. "Heavenly Strategy

has nine games. I've played the Mountain and River Game. With Refining Qi Layer 3, I can try the next." He set a piece. "Storm Game." Focused, he placed pieces, his soul strength condensing with each move, marveling at the game's intricacy.

*Daoist Sect, Bamboo Pavilion

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Li Sansi awoke, the bamboo grove's chill cutting through sunlight filtering past leaves. "Immortal fate..." she murmured, stunned, her small mouth agape. Pacing, she pondered Lu's gift—not a cultivation method but unique Daoist techniques. Her battle with Nie Changqing had revealed her innate sensitivity to such arts, conjuring a cloud dragon from a Dragon Gate. Lu had given her a foundation to explore further.

Stepping out, she saw fallen leaves piling, reeking of decay. Like a child with a new toy, she formed a hand seal. "Qian Seal," she whispered, her qi reservoir draining as leaves swirled, forming a small leaf figure. It moved at her will, performing martial techniques clumsily—her first attempt. "Daoist arts..." she beamed.

Across the grove, Xie Yunling emerged, aged and weary. Seeing her leaf figure, he froze. "Immortal technique?" he coughed.

Li Sansi nodded. "A gift from an immortal... called Daoist arts."

Xie Yunling smiled warmly. “Sansi—Mo Chou,” he corrected as she glared. “I’m leaving. If I don’t return, you’ll lead the Daoist Sect.”

“Why me? What about Brother?” she frowned.

“Your brother’s too carefree for leadership, off to the frontier. You’re better suited,” Xie said, waving her off. “Where are you going?” she pressed.

Xie smiled deeply. “White Jade Capital’s ambitions are vast. I’ll see if they can bear them.”

Li Sansi blinked. “North Luo? To die?”

Xie nearly choked, waving her off irritably and leaving.

North County, Military Tent

Mo Ju awoke, fan in hand, eyes strange. “Immortal fate... unlike Wolong Ridge or the Dragon Gates. A direct gift from an immortal. The Overlord, North Luo’s Young Master— their fates came this way.” He analyzed, awed by Lu Ping’an’s defiance of such a lofty immortal. “But why... Righteous Confucian Qi for me? Does the immortal know all?”

