

## Starlit Path 140

Chapter 140: One Strike, One Chance

The rain poured harder, blurring the line between heaven and earth. Droplets crashed to the ground, shattering and sending up a misty veil that shrouded the world.

Outside Beiluo City, a carriage endured the relentless drumming of the rain.

Inside, silence reigned.

The carriages of the Mohist leader and the Confucian Grandmaster faced each other from a distance. Both parties acknowledged the other's presence but made no move to engage.

A green ox splashed through puddles, its rider holding an umbrella. A wooden sword hung at the rider's waist as they swayed with the beast's steps. Another carriage thundered past, kicking up rainwater. The rider glanced at it, recognizing the figure urging the horses.

"Old Ten," the rider called out.

The voice was swallowed by the rain, but the driver heard it. Nie Changqing turned, meeting Li Sansi's gaze with a slight nod. He understood why Li Sansi had come.

Xie Yunling had rallied Hua Dongliu, the sword saint of the Sword Sect, and Gongshu Yu of the Mechanism School to head to Beiluo—a move Nie Changqing hadn't anticipated. He recalled Xie Yunling

once asking about the young master's strength. Nie had told him the young master was formidable, fearless even against the entire world.

Yet Xie Yunling had come anyway.

Was this the final defiance of the Hundred Schools?

Nie Changqing sighed softly, slowing his carriage to match the pace of Li Sansi's ox. Li Sansi glanced at the carriage, his gaze piercing through to the silent woman inside. Neither spoke. One rode the ox, the other drove the carriage, moving through the misty rain toward Beiluo's outskirts.

They spotted the Mohist leader's carriage and the Confucian Grandmaster's. Li Sansi chuckled. The Mohist giant, the Confucian Grandmaster—and with Lü Dongxuan of the Tianji School already in Beiluo, the Hundred Schools were nearly all present.

Mo Ju saw Li Sansi and Nie Changqing. Mo Tianyu saw them too. No words passed between them.

Li Sansi's laugh carried through the rain. "Old Ten, when you stormed the Daoist Sect alone, I wasn't there. As the Daoist Sect's top disciple, Li Sansi, I failed you that day. Today, fate brings us together. Let's settle this for the Daoist Sect."

Nie Changqing froze, glancing at Li Sansi with surprise and confusion. "You've changed," he said. "I sense a resolve in you to grow stronger."

His voice, calm and steady, cut through the rain's roar, matching Li Sansi's intensity. The old Li Sansi would've dodged a fight.

Mo Ju and Mo Tianyu stayed silent—it wasn't their place to speak.

"Is that so?" Li Sansi replied. "Life's taught me a few things. Without strength, you can't even protect what matters. That's the harsh truth."

Rain cascaded off his umbrella like a curtain. "Come on, Old Ten. If you can't beat me, I'm taking Sister Ru back."

He grinned, teasing, knowing exactly how to provoke Nie Changqing into a fight.

Nie's expression didn't shift, though his stubbled lips twitched slightly. "Back then, you were first, I was tenth. I didn't even have the right to challenge you. I carried that regret from the Daoist Sect. Now, I can make up for it. No need to use Ru'er to goad me."

As he spoke, the butcher's knife resting on the carriage frame trembled, then shot forward in a streak of black light.

Boom!

Spiritual energy surged from Nie Changqing, scattering the rain into a hollowed-out curtain.

“Well, well, above the Qi Core realm?” Li Sansi chuckled.

His own aura erupted, dispersing the rain around him. Folding his umbrella and placing it on the ox’s back, Li Sansi’s face grew serious. He drew his wooden sword, tapping the ox’s head lightly. “What a coincidence... so am I.”

Bang!

The rainwater before Li Sansi sharpened into arrows, hurtling toward Nie Changqing. Nie’s own scattered raindrops shot back in response. The rain between them exploded, like countless beads dancing across a frozen lake.

The overwhelming spiritual pressure sent a chill through Mo Ju and Mo Tianyu, watching from afar. Inside their carriages, the Mohist leader and the Confucian Grandmaster narrowed their eyes.

A grand spectacle unfolded, both within and beyond the city walls.

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The lake’s surface rippled under the relentless rain. A lone boat stood still in the water. Xie Yunling gazed at the island, where a young man in white stood atop a pavilion. His eyes narrowed. Was this the legendary Lu Ping’an of Beiluo? The peerless Young Master Lu?

Rain soaked Xie's robes, his hand clenching within his wide sleeves. "Old Lü, your Tianji School has joined White Jade Capital. Are you still fighting in this battle?" he asked Lü Dongxuan.

Hua Dongliu and Gongshu Yu turned to Lü, whose white robes stood out in the gray haze, his gaudy gold chain glinting ostentatiously. Lü's weathered face twitched, a smile creeping across it as he recalled a moment from earlier.

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Under a gloomy sky, Lü Dongxuan had climbed to the second floor of White Jade Capital's pavilion, standing behind the young master seated in his silver wheelchair, facing away.

"Young Master..." Lü began, kneeling and shaking out his white robes.

But the young master cut him off. "Go. If you wish to fight, then fight. Let me witness the strength of the Hundred Schools that once shook the world."

The young master's calm voice sent a tremor through Lü. "Nostalgia has its place. Today, you are Lü Dongxuan of the Tianji School, not the master of White Jade Capital's Tianji Pavilion."

Lü's heart stirred, his lips trembling. He bowed deeply. "Thank you, Young Master, for granting this."

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The memory faded. Lü looked at Xie Yunling, grinning as he jangled his gold chain. “Count me in for this fight.”

His words made Xie, Hua, and Gongshu pause, then burst into laughter, their voices echoing across the lake, drowning out the rain and startling the fish below.

Bang!

The laughter stopped abruptly. Hua Dongliu, the sword saint, moved first. With no underestimation, he drew his decades-old sword, its light slicing through the rain like a bolt of silk, carving a void in the downpour. The sword’s hum roared like a dragon.

His sword intent surged, rain unable to dampen his billowing robes. He struck the lake with his blade, sending up a spray of water, then dashed across the surface toward the island.

Xie Yunling followed, crouching low and plunging two fingers into the lake. With a sharp pull, twin water pillars erupted with a boom. Standing on his boat, he wove the water around him, faint array patterns forming. With a push, the array sank into the lake, and Xie shot toward the island atop it.

Gongshu Yu watched them go, his eyes flickering. The Mechanism School excelled at mechanical beasts, but their true mastery lay in hidden weapons. Knowing beasts were useless against the young master,

Gongshu chose his deadliest tool. He seized the boat's pole, hurling it forward, and rode it toward the shore.

His metallic arm clenched, emitting a grating clank. Rubbing his hands, the screech of metal on metal rippled the lake. With meticulous focus, he crafted a metal flower bud, its intricate patterns like the world's deadliest poison, captivating in its beauty.

"The Mechanism School's ultimate hidden weapon... Storm Pear Blossom," Gongshu rasped, voice thick with excitement.

On the boat, Lü Dongxuan sat cross-legged, his white robes drenched, white hair plastered to his forehead. His face held a smile tinged with nostalgia. He saw them—decades ago, the four of them. Back then, he was just a brash kid, Xie a timid Taoist, Hua a young swordsman fresh from Zhongnan with three sword cases. They'd fought side by side, shaking the martial world with their legend.

Now, decades later, the leaders of the Hundred Schools reunited for one final stand as their era drew to a close.

Lü's gaze sharpened, his usual nouveau-riche grin gone. "Young Master... forgive me," he murmured.

His hand grasped the gold chain at his neck. It snapped free, splitting into seven golden cylinders. With a surge of blood and spiritual energy, they floated in the air.

"With my calculations, we fight!" Lü roared.

He thrust his palms forward, and the cylinders spun wildly, their hum piercing the air. Xie, Hua, and Gongshu felt the call of his words.

“Old Xie, northeast, thirty degrees!”

“Hua, straight ahead!”

“Gongshu, southwest, thirty-six degrees!”

“I’ll hold the spiritual pressure—you have one strike!”

Lü’s shout echoed. His palms spread wide, the cylinders’ hum growing deafening.

On the island, Lü Mu’s emotions churned. Jing Yue watched the approaching figures, lips pursed. Ni Yu, Yi Yue, and Bai Qingniao showed curiosity but no excitement. Ming Yue sat on a stone, playing her pipa, its notes like pearls on a jade plate, crisp amid the rain.

None of them acted. Even Ning Zhao, at the Body Zang realm, merely held an umbrella for the young master.

On the second floor of White Jade Capital's pavilion, the young master leaned back in his silver wheelchair, a black chess piece in hand. He watched the three approaching figures, his expression calm, and placed the piece.

Click.

A terrifying spiritual pressure erupted, radiating from him like a storm. He used only the pressure of a second-layer Qi Refiner, not the third, wanting to test the Hundred Schools' true strength.

Then, his brow twitched. His spiritual pressure spread, but there were weak points—imperceptible to most, impossible to exploit. Yet Lü Dongxuan had found them. The positions he'd called out were the pressure's vulnerabilities. He couldn't negate it entirely, but he could pierce it at those points, giving Xie, Hua, and Gongshu their chance.

The trio, feeling the pressure lift, seized the moment. They landed on the island, blood boiling, their fighting spirit fiercer than any youth's.

Boom!

"Young Master Lu, I, Xie Yunling of the Daoist Sect, request your guidance!" Xie shouted, rain pelting his face. His water array spun, a serpent of water surging toward the pavilion.

"Young Master Lu, I, Gongshu Yu of the Mechanism School, request your guidance!" came Gongshu's gravelly voice. He spun the metal flower like a propeller, its petals blooming as countless silver needles shot toward the young master, mingling with the rain.

A sharp sword cry rang out. Hua Dongliu's blade flashed, splitting into two, then three, then five, then ten. Ten swords arced through the air like a cascading waterfall.

"Young Master Lu, I, Hua Dongliu of the Sword Sect, request your guidance!"

In that moment, the three masters of the Hundred Schools shed their age and weariness, their brilliance blazing at its peak.