

Starlit Path 141

Chapter 141: The Twilight of an Era

The spiritual pressure shifted, redirected onto Lü Dongxuan. It caught the young master off guard—this ostentatious man, dripping with gold chains like a nouveau-riche, had tricks up his sleeve. He'd clearly studied the spiritual pressure of cultivators, finding a flaw that wasn't quite a flaw. By diverting the pressure, Lü bore the brunt of it, far more than Xie Yunling, Hua Dongliu, or Gongshu Yu.

His body shuddered. Blood sprayed from his mouth, staining his white beard and robes. The seven golden cylinders spinning around him faltered under the strain, and his palms nearly clapped together. If they did, he'd fail to withstand the pressure, leaving Xie and the others to face the young master's overwhelming force, their strength reduced to a fraction.

Lü had to hold on. That's why he'd said they had only one chance to strike.

"The young master's pressure... it's truly formidable!" Lü gritted his teeth, blood seeping through them, his white beard trembling. Pain racked him, but he didn't yield. Some things, if done, might bring regret—but not doing them would guarantee it.

Clink, clink, clink...

The seven cylinders held, buying Xie, Hua, and Gongshu their fleeting window to attack.

Gongshu Yu's "Storm Pear Blossom," the Mechanism School's deadliest hidden weapon, topped the hidden weapons list. From youth to old age, Gongshu had poured his life into crafting it, even after becoming a master of the school. The weapon held 9,999 silver needles, each painstakingly placed,

sometimes taking hours for a single one. He'd completed it the day the Mohist Mechanism City fell, but he hadn't used it against the Overlord—he deemed him unworthy of his life's work.

Today, on Beiluo Lake, Gongshu unleashed it. His life's masterpiece bloomed for this moment, against the world's greatest cultivator, Lu Ping'an. He had no regrets; the young master was worthy.

Boom!

A metallic clang echoed. The metal flower bud unfurled, and the torrential rain seemed to freeze. Brilliant silver light erupted, dazzling Ni Yu, Lü Mu, and the others. The Mechanism School's pinnacle was on full display.

Gongshu collapsed, his spirit drained, steam and smoke rising from his metallic arms in the rain. He stared, entranced, at the silver glow in the sky.

Swish, swish, swish!

Countless needle-thin silver streaks blended into the rain. The storm amplified the weapon's menace, each raindrop carrying a needle, its beauty masking lethal danger.

Ning Zhao, holding an umbrella for the young master, frowned and raised a hand, spiritual energy stirring in her Qi Core.

“No need. I’ll handle it,” the young master said.

Ning Zhao nodded. “Yes, sir.” She understood—he was granting these four masters the respect they deserved.

The deadly rain poured down. Gongshu’s eyes locked on the second floor of White Jade Capital’s pavilion.

Sparks flew, a crisp chime ringing out. The young master raised a hand, and every raindrop around him froze in midair. Each suspended drop reflected a silver needle, sparkling like a starry river.

“This weapon’s impressive,” he remarked.

He clenched his fist. The raindrops shattered, and with a sweep of his index and middle fingers, the needles reversed course.

Whoosh!

The 9,999 needles shot back, embedding around Gongshu in a circle of cold, gleaming silver. His body trembled, eyes wide.

In that instant, Xie Yunling's water serpent lunged, its spiraling torrent roaring with force. The young master leaned back in his wheelchair. Xie's technique hinted at Taoist arts, though only marginally better than Li Sansi's.

With a flick on his wheelchair's armrest, a silver blade detached, spinning like a meteor in the night, whirling before him like a windmill. The serpent struck it and was shredded into bursts of water.

Xie's eyes narrowed. His spirit depleted, he summoned two more serpents from his array, but the array collapsed. He stumbled, blood spilling from his mouth, yet he stared skyward at his creations, hope flickering.

That hope died quickly. Two more silver blades peeled from the wheelchair, slicing the serpents apart with ease.

As the water serpents attacked, Hua Dongliu's swordplay surged forward, like a river racing east. Ten swords, each radiating sharpness, struck with relentless force. In his youth, Hua's blade had spilled countless lives—unbreakable, unstoppable. In middle age, his one-sword-to-five technique earned him the title of Zhongnan Sword Saint. In old age, as a Sword Sect master, he'd secluded himself for decades, his sword unseen—until today.

His art hadn't dulled; it had grown sharper, now one sword splitting into ten, a relentless cascade, unstoppable as a river.

Ning Zhao, umbrella in hand, watched in awe. Without cultivators, these three masters would be peerless. Xie used spiritual energy for his water array, but Hua and Gongshu, without it, still matched the peak of the Qi Core realm. Against anyone but a Body Zang cultivator like herself, they'd likely win. Even she'd find their "Storm Pear Blossom" and "East Flow Sword" daunting.

Their brilliance was undeniable.

But their opponent was the young master—unfathomable, even to her.

“This sword’s impressive too,” the young master said, admiring the martial pinnacle of a pre-spiritual era Great Zhou. Without spiritual energy, even the Overlord, untainted by demonic influence, would fall instantly to these three.

No flashy exchanges—just lethal, decisive strikes.

“One Sword Flows East,” the young master murmured. “Very well... I’ll answer with a sword of my own.”

Rain streaked across Hua Dongliu’s eyes, his pupils widening. He witnessed a sword he’d never forget—a sword that reduced his mastery to nothing.

The young master flicked the right armrest, as if playing a zither. A phoenix’s cry erupted, the rain evaporating into white mist. A crimson streak shot from the armrest, forming a fiery red sword.

Hua’s ten sword lights shattered. He stared, mesmerized. A lifelong bachelor, wedded only to his sword, he’d reached the pinnacle of swordsmanship—or so he thought. Now, he saw his peak was merely the beginning.

To grasp the truth at dawn, I could die content at dusk.

Hua fell, collapsing to the ground, his old sword embedded in the earth, trembling. Blood trickled from his nose and mouth. "What... is that sword?" he asked, dazed.

"Its name is Phoenix Feather," the young master replied.

He raised a hand, his white sleeves billowing. The Phoenix Feather sword blazed, circling the air. The rain evaporated before it could fall. Below, Bai Qingniao's chick, Little Phoenix, trembled with fear and excitement.

Boom!

The sword light faded, and the Phoenix Feather returned to the wheelchair's armrest. Ning Zhao, sweating slightly, held the umbrella steady.

The rain, paused for a moment, resumed its torrent.

On the lone boat, Lü Dongxuan's strength gave out. His palms clapped together, the seven cylinders crashing to the deck. He collapsed, staring at the raindrops falling, each growing larger in his vision. He sighed, mourning the end of an era—or perhaps his lack of regret for shining one last time.

"Those old foxes, Mo Beike and Kong Xiu, must be kicking themselves," Lü chuckled softly.

The island fell silent, save for the rain's roar. Lü Mu leaned on his staff, shaking his head. Jing Yue gazed at the dazed Hua Dongliu, emotions tangled. Xie Yunling sat, soaked, on the ground.

"We lost," Xie said. He'd held a sliver of hope—maybe they could win. But reality was brutal. They hadn't touched the young master's robes or let a single drop of rain stain his white shirt.

Yet Xie felt no regret.

"The Hundred Schools live up to their name," the young master said from the pavilion. "Though you tread not the path of cultivation, you rival the peak of the Qi Core realm. You came to Beiluo to shine one last time before your era's end, to leave no regrets. You've done it. To strive is to be free of regret. With the sun breaking through after the rain and peach blossoms blooming on the island, I honor your era's close."

His voice echoed across the island and White Jade Capital. He released his full third-layer Qi Refiner pressure.

Boom!

The terrifying force swept outward like a storm, shattering the rain into mist, as if immortal energy swirled around. Xie, Hua, and Gongshu's clothes clung to them, their bodies trembling in disbelief. This was the young master's true power.

On the boat, Lü gave a bitter smile. The young master hadn't even used his full strength—Lü couldn't have withstood it otherwise.

The young master raised a hand, his spiritual pressure forming a massive palm. He slapped upward, shattering the thick clouds. Golden sunlight poured through, warming Lü's face as he lay on the boat.

On the island, the Biluo peach trees' buds bloomed under the sunlight and pressure, one after another.

Peach blossoms covered the island, signaling the battle's end—and the Hundred Schools' era fading into history.