

Starlit Path 153

Chapter 153: Lu Changkong Storms the Capital with a Corpse

A massive spiritual hand, like a sky-obscuring cloud, spanned dozens of miles, descending upon the black-robed figure. The barbarian's face twisted in horror. "Spiritual sense?!" he gasped. He hadn't anticipated that Lu Ping'an possessed spiritual sense, tracking him through the spiritual thread and striking from afar. Such a feat was beyond peak foundation building—only a golden core cultivator could manage it. This Lu Ping'an might be a golden core master! His face trembled. With only a spiritual clone, not his true body, he stood no chance.

Boom! The ground exploded into a ten-meter crater as the barbarian's figure shot upward, fleeing as a dark blur. "This world is a scam!" he cursed, sweat beading on his forehead. A low-martial world with a foundation-building cultivator was rare enough, but a golden core master with spiritual sense? Unthinkable. "I thought I'd found a weak world to devour its origin and elevate mine. Now? I just want to escape!" His borrowed barbarian body crumbled under the strain of his full speed.

Yet the giant hand pursued relentlessly. A piercing phoenix cry rang out as a fiery streak slashed across the sky, landing before him. Waves of searing heat rolled forth. "A spiritual weapon?!" he shrieked, sensing its unfathomable tier. Low-martial? I was a fool to believe that! Trapped, he turned, his orchid fingers glowing with golden light. Forming seals, he thrust upward, spiritual energy surging to meet the hand. But his energy was like droplets in a river, swallowed without a ripple.

Boom! The hand struck, shaking the earth. Beiluo City felt the tremor, as if the ground had collapsed. Guards on the city walls gaped at the distant plain, where dust billowed from a massive hand-shaped crater. "Terrifying!" one whispered. "An immortal's battle?" No city wall could withstand such a blow.

As the dust settled, a kneeling corpse remained in the crater's center, unscathed but lifeless, its face frozen in terror. The Phoenix Feather Sword hovered above, a silent flame. The world fell quiet, save for the sound of shifting sand.

On Lake Island, Lu leaned back in his wheelchair as the silver blades returned to form its guards. Xie Yunling collapsed, pale from being puppeted, his body drained. Gongshu Yu pinched his philtrum to revive him. Lu, stroking the wheelchair's guard, murmured, "Still trying to escape?" His eyes, deep as a starry river, flickered with lines. He plucked a chess piece, dropping it with a clack. A storm brewed.

On the plain, an invisible pressure crashed down, cracking the earth. A golden light, like a panicked fish, darted from the ground, desperate to flee but trapped in an unseen cage. Lu hooked a finger, and the Phoenix Feather Sword shot forth, piercing the light with a sonic boom. The light morphed into a beautiful, tormented face—fearful, unwilling, screaming as it streaked over Beiluo's skies. The lake's mist parted, and the sword, carrying the golden light, hovered above the water.

Luo Yue, still on the boat, was stunned by the swift events. Xie lay unconscious, the sword pinning a golden glow. "Spiritual sense?" Lu mused, as the sword returned to his wheelchair, now unremarkable. He studied the golden light with curiosity—the first spiritual sense he'd encountered besides his own. With a gesture, it floated to the pavilion's second floor.

The islanders, puzzled by the light, were silenced by Lu's voice: "Back to your tasks." They dispersed, understanding their level wasn't high enough to know. Gongshu Yu released Xie, who woke coughing. "A barbarian... targeting Young Master Lu!" he gasped, only to realize he was on the island, his words trailing off. Gongshu explained his puppeted state.

Lu, gazing at the golden light, stroked the blanket on his lap and pinched the light, lost in thought.

Lu Changkong abandoned his cultivation, joining Luo Yue to leave the island for Beiluo City. The city buzzed about the giant hand, awed by its immortal-like power. "Check the plain. Find out what happened," Lu Changkong ordered, his voice heavy. Someone had tried to kill his son using a sinister

technique to control a Hundred Schools scholar—the strongest enemy he'd faced. Though Lu had dispatched them effortlessly, fear lingered.

Luo Yue, guilt-ridden for bringing the possessed Xie to the lake, galloped to the crater. Its hand-shaped form stunned him, deepening his awe of Lu Ping'an. Two hundred of me wouldn't stand a chance, he thought. At the crater's center, he found the kneeling barbarian corpse, its flesh cracked but bloodless, a testament to Lu's precise control. "Dead for days?" Luo Yue's heart chilled. A corpse active in Beiluo? "A barbarian!" Memories of the Five Barbarians' invasion, a dark chapter of suffering, fueled his anger. He hoisted the corpse and rode back.

In the city, Lu Changkong examined the body, his face cold. "South Command guards against barbarians. How did this one reach here?" Digging through the corpse, he found a wooden token with a ferocious carving. "The Five Barbarians are Great Zhou's scourge. We can't forget their devastation. Yesterday, Tang Xiansheng was turned away; today, a barbarian attacks my son. What is Tang up to?" His voice was icy with fury. "Prepare horses and three hundred cavalry. We ride to the capital!"

Luo Yue bowed. "Yes!" Whether Tang was responsible or not, this incident fell on him as South Command's governor. Beiluo's gates opened, hooves thundering as Lu Changkong, in scholar's robes, led the cavalry toward the capital. Scouts spread the news.

In the capital's imperial study, Yuwen Xiu's face darkened at the report. Slamming the desk, he roared, "A barbarian outside Beiluo?! Is Tang Xiansheng an idiot?" The old eunuch shrank back. Great Zhou's governors were tasked with protecting the realm from the Five Barbarians, yet a southern barbarian had reached the heartland—an outrageous failure. "And of all places, Beiluo! Lu Changkong's marching here with three hundred cavalry to demand answers!" Yuwen Xiu fumed. "I just approved Jiang Li to lead South Command's army against North Command, and now this?"

“Fetch Tang Xiansheng!” he snapped. The eunuch hurried off.

The capital stirred. Jiang Li, under imperial orders, donned his war robe and led five hundred elite soldiers to join South Command’s army, already marching north. As he departed, Beiluo’s iron cavalry, infamous for bloodily purging the capital, arrived, silencing the city. Citizens and officials froze, recalling their terror. Lu Changkong, face stern, rode through the streets, followed by Luo Yue, dragging the barbarian corpse.

In the Purple Gold Palace, Yuwen Xiu sat high, Tang Xiansheng at his side. The air was tense. The old eunuch returned, reporting, “The Imperial Preceptor refused to come, saying he can’t intervene.” Yuwen Xiu’s lips tightened. He’d hoped for a mediator, but Kong Nanfei stayed out. Glancing at Tang, dozing again, Yuwen Xiu’s anger flared. They were allies, yet Tang was useless now.

“City Lord Lu seeks an audience!” a eunuch announced.

“Admit him,” Yuwen Xiu sighed.

Lu Changkong entered, his scholar’s robe stark against the hall’s opulence. Luo Yue, in armor, dragged the corpse, tossing it onto the floor with a thud. The hall gasped. Yuwen Xiu’s eyes narrowed at the body, Tang’s lips twitching as he woke, feigning surprise. This is unjust, he thought, but he knew the trouble this spelled.

Lu Changkong bowed to Yuwen Xiu, then fixed Tang with a cold stare. “Tang Xiansheng, this barbarian crossed your South Command and used sorcery to attack my son in Beiluo. What do you have to say?”

The hall fell silent, officials holding their breath. A barbarian attacking Lu Ping'an right after Tang's rejection? Suspicious. Tang Yimo, behind his father, frowned. Tang's face trembled. Stepping forward, he smiled at Lu Changkong. "City Lord Lu, I failed to stop this barbarian's incursion. The fault is mine!" To everyone's shock, he knelt before Lu Changkong. "I beg forgiveness."

The hall was deathly still, the sound of his knees hitting the floor echoing.