

Starlit Path 156

Chapter 156: It Provoked the Young Master to Act?!

A lone horse galloped across the plain outside Beiluo City, Li Sansui's Taoist robe fluttering. That night, sensing something amiss, she discovered Xie Yunling had vanished silently from the mountain. Despite her pursuit at breakneck speed, she couldn't catch him. Only a report of Xie's appearance in Beiluo gave her a lead. Reining in her horse, she dismounted at the city gate, leading the animal inside.

Luo Cheng, clad in armor with a saber at his waist, intercepted her. "Li Mochou of the Daoist Sect," he said, introducing himself as Beiluo's commander. Fresh from Dragon Gate training, his blood surged, his Qi Core brimming with spiritual energy, exuding pressure. Li Sansui, startled by the use of her alias, returned his bow, feeling his aura's weight. "You're here for Elder Xie, right?" Luo Cheng asked.

Her eyes lit up, nodding. "The master left the sect that night. I pursued but lost him."

Luo Cheng smiled, withholding details of Xie's possession and assassination attempt on Lu. He led her to Lake Island, her first visit to Beiluo and its heart. The island's dense spiritual energy, surpassing the Dragon Gate, and its diligent cultivators struck her deeply. She spotted Xie, sitting motionless by the shore, as if in meditation.

Curious, she glanced at the pavilion, an inexplicable pressure gripping her heart. "Sansui, you're here," Xie said, opening his eyes with a complex expression. "I was possessed by an evil entity. Thanks to the Young Master, I survived, but my soul's damaged. I'll recover here. Return to Tiandang Mountain and take over as Pavilion Master."

Li Sansui's face paled. Xie was passing the Daoist Pavilion's leadership to her? Before she could protest, he waved her off. "The spiritual resurgence brings opportunities and dangers. The pavilion bears a heavy responsibility. Seal the gates, take no disciples, and focus on nurturing cultivators. Observing the Young

Master's array, I gained insights and created the 'Demon-Sealing Array.' Take it, study it, and have the disciples master it. It'll be vital."

He handed her a paper dense with his insights. One glance, and Li Sansui was captivated by its profound array, far surpassing Xie's previous work. Inspired by Lu's array? "Go," Xie urged. "I'll return once healed." Sensing his resolve, she bowed, boarded a boat, and glanced back at the misty, immortal-like island. A fleeting glimpse caught a white-robed youth on the pavilion, smiling and nodding like a celestial.

On shore, Luo Cheng escorted her out of the city. She secured the array diagram, mounted her horse, and galloped off, dust trailing. Luo Cheng watched from the ramparts until she vanished.

On the island, Lu tapped his wheelchair. With the eight Dragon Gates open, the Five Phoenixes faced a critical upgrade assessment. He chose not to create more secret realms. The mid-martial lord's words revealed a world's cultivation limits: low-martial worlds capped at Body Treasury with fully tempered organs, unable to manifest elemental spiritual energy. This explained why Lu's Preaching Platform couldn't create ancient cultivators with such attributes—the world's bottleneck.

"Progressed too fast," Lu mused. "Need to refine combat techniques. Rapid advancement neglects precision." His gaze shifted to the Dragon Gate, where the battle neared its end.

In the Dragon Gate's central palace, the Overlord was flung back for the eighteenth time, a master at drawing aggro. Ning Zhao and Li Sansi panted, their stamina and Qi Core energy nearly spent after a day and night of combat. Though Body Treasury cultivators recovered spiritual energy faster, the relentless fight drained them. Ning Zhao's Gathering Qi Pills from Ni Yu sustained them.

The ancient Body Treasury cultivator, despite his age, remained formidable. “His heart vortex is unbroken. Shatter it, and we can kill him!” Nie Changqing called, his butcher knife spinning, air trembling with his peak strike. Li Sansi and Ning Zhao attacked, their wooden and Cicada Wing swords striking the heart vortex, clanging like metal. The wooden sword shattered, but the vortex collapsed.

Nie’s eyes blazed. His knife, infused with his full spirit, slashed upward, slicing through the cultivator’s unprotected body. Black spiritual energy erupted, shaking the palace. Wall paintings cracked, the cultivator’s chains rattling.

On the pavilion, Lu smiled. “Finally worn down.” Though Ning Zhao and others were novice Body Treasury cultivators, grinding a day and night showed their techniques lagged behind their realm. He dropped a chess piece, a crisp clack sending spiritual energy surging into the Dragon Gate.

The palace’s murals shattered, their scenes coming alive. Nie and the others were drawn into a vivid, tragic vision: a blood-red sky, a torn heavens spewing terrifying beings. Below, grand immortal palaces and towering pagodas stood, cultivators of Qi Core and Body Treasury clashing with invaders. Unrecorded, the battle was catastrophic—palaces fell, fires raged unquenched, and mighty cultivators bled out in the sky.

The vision faded, tears streaking their faces. The chains trembled, and shrieking black shadows poured from the corridor, passing intangibly through the group, fleeing with liberated cries. Nie and the others looked up, sensing Lu’s spiritual hand crush most shadows, though weaker ones slipped away like fish.

“It’s the Young Master!” Ning Zhao gasped. “What did we do to make him act?” Nie murmured, shaken.

“Collect your spoils and leave,” Lu’s voice echoed. They approached the corridor’s end, finding the cultivator’s corpse with crystalline gems—spirit stones, as Lu had described, attainable only by the final

striker. Nie picked them up, the others unable to touch them. Envious but helpless, they entered a vast stone chamber, its walls lined with thousands of chained skeletons linked to the cultivator's body.

"Those shadows..." Li Sansi paled, connecting them to the vision. The group, heavy-hearted, found a stone platform with four jade slips and dusty spirit stones. Dividing them without joy, they left, burdened by the ancient secret they'd uncovered.

The Overlord exited, frustrated at not breaking through to Body Treasury. Li Sansi returned to the Daoist Sect. Under the cold moon, Nie Changqing and Ning Zhao, exhausted, climbed to the pavilion's second floor. Xie Yunling sat quietly in a corner, plum wine warming on the table. "Young Master," they bowed, ignoring Xie.

Bathed in moonlight, Lu faced the lake, his back radiating suffocating pressure.