

Starlit Path 165

Chapter 165: He Comes from Baiyujing

Nanjiang City

Sima Qingshan's legs trembled, icy rain pelting his face, its chill seeping into his bones. Nanjiang City had fallen, barbarians flooding in. The city's general, pierced by spears, knelt dead but still clutched his sword, as if vowing to slay barbarians even in death. Sima's fists clenched. Living here, he knew the barbarians' savagery—frequent skirmishes were common, but never an assault this massive. The city, unprepared, couldn't summon aid from Nanjiang City in time.

"Poor painter?" The white-robed man chuckled. "First time I've heard someone prefix their title with 'poor.'"

Sima, wiping rain from his face, stared. Rain twisted away before touching the man, an eerie sight. "You..." Sima's eyes widened.

"Poor painter, meet a humble butcher," the man said, his scruffy beard curling into a smile. Sima froze. Barbarians charged, their grass shoes splashing on stone, a muscled warrior hurling a spear through the rain at them. Excited roars echoed—they craved the city's wealth, food, and women.

Sima stumbled back, weak-kneed. The white-robed man smiled. "You're new to cultivation, aren't you? Not enlightened by the Young Master, nor shaped by Dragon Gate soldiers or Wolong Ridge's aura. You've been to the Immortal Land."

Sima gaped, incredulous. “You’re right,” the man said, grinning. Raising a hand, spiritual energy surged from his Qi Core, grounding the hurled spears as if they bowed to him. “The Young Master said: three months of ceasefire, but invaders? Kill without mercy.”

He gripped his butcher’s knife, glancing at the fallen guards and the speared general, sighing. His breath, initially gentle, turned murderous. Barbarians charged, knives drawn, victory within reach. The man turned to Sima. “Watch. True cultivators don’t stand idly by. We can turn the tide.”

He drew his knife, its black blade arcing through the rain. An invisible blade aura sliced through the barbarians, cleaving them in half, blood spraying. The knife hovered, trembling with excitement, then shot forward, cutting down dozens like pigs. Sima watched, awestruck.

A barbarian warrior, adorned with nine bird feathers, roared, blocking the knife with bloodied hands. “Barbarian Nine-Feather Warrior, like a Great Zhou Nine-Resonance Master?” the man mused, flicking a finger. The knife pierced the warrior’s heart. “Blade Control,” he said, as a massive blade shadow slashed, splitting the ground and dozens more barbarians.

One man held the city gate, unbreakable. The barbarians, terrified, fled under their leader’s orders. Sima, mesmerized, felt a fire ignite within—this was a cultivator’s power. Shadows darted from the city’s other end—nearly a hundred lightly armored figures landed. The man, wiping his knife, glanced at them and turned to Sima. “You’ve gained great fortune. Don’t waste it.”

A figure, Tang Yimo, landed, splashing rain, and bowed solemnly. “Thank you.” Without him, Nanjiang City would’ve been hell. The South Command Army saluted. The man waved dismissively. “No thanks needed. North Command’s lord said, ‘Not of our kind, their hearts differ.’ My Young Master said invaders die.”

Laughing, he vanished into the rain. Sima, snapping back, chased after. “Senior, who are you?” No answer came. Tang Yimo approached. “I’m Tang Yimo, South Command Army leader.” Sima nodded, familiar with their reputation. “That was Nie Changqing, Baiyujing disciple, a great cultivator who can face armies alone.”

Sima trembled. Nie Changqing, the butcher from Baiyujing? Tang Yimo, ignoring Sima’s shock, led his army after the retreating barbarians, leaving a thousand corpses. Sima, retrieving his soaked paintings, sighed—their charm lost. At home, wringing out his robe, he spread rice paper and painted Nie Changqing in the rainy alley. The figure seemed alive, smiling at him. Sima, staring at his inked hands, felt a revelation.

Beiluo, Lake Island

In the pavilion, Lu’s robe fluttered as his mind wove into the lake’s golden glow, now half a fist in size, pulsing with vast energy. It was the suppressed consciousness of another plane’s lord, fueling Lu’s siphoning of its origin. “This is the origin... immense power,” Lu murmured, sensing life, destruction, and creation within. Untamed, it was a wild stallion, freed from its world’s constraints.

“The origin is the Heavenly Dao,” Lu mused. “For a low-martial world to become mid or high-martial, it needs this.” Taming it was his goal for seclusion. His soul surged, and he reappeared in his chair at the lake’s bottom, before the origin. Heartbeat-like thumps echoed, a suppressive array overhead. Touching the warm origin, it expanded before him into a kilometer-wide sphere, radiating terrifying energy.

“The other side of the origin?” Lu wondered, eyeing the plane lord’s world. Storms raged, flames roared, thunder cracked, seas churned—elemental forces absent in the Five Phoenixes. Lu sought these powers. Commanding wind, fire, earth, and wood, he reshaped the landscape, then declared light, parting clouds

to bathe the world in radiance. "Elemental spiritual energy," he realized. Perfecting the origin would break the Five Phoenixes' limits, enabling such powers and mid-martial ascension.

But he had to tame it. A massive face formed in the clouds, glaring. "You suppress my consciousness and dare enter my origin world? Audacious!" A giant palm struck. Lu flicked his chair's armrest, silver blades forming a shield, unscathed. The face vanished, but a golden light revealed a red-robed figure, high-hatted, face powdered, wielding a flying sword with an effeminate air.

Lu, unfazed, faced the plane lord. He'd expected this encounter, though not so soon.