

Starlit Path 178

Chapter 178: The Curse of the Buddha

On Beiluo Lake, the spiritual storm began to subside. Lu, seated in his wheelchair, floated calmly above the water. With a thought, he summoned the system panel:

Host: Lu

Title: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

Qi Refining Level: 3 (Progress to Level 4: 1156/10000 strands)

Soul Strength: 100 (Convertible: 13)

Physical Strength: 10 (Convertible: 10)

Spiritual Energy: 86 strands

Assignable Attributes: 1083 points

The progress toward Qi Refining Level 4 surged, gaining four or five strands with each blink. The spiritual storm had been lucrative, a windfall of energy. It felt like watching a bank account swell by hundreds with every glance—a refreshing thrill, like eating a chilled popsicle in summer. His nearly depleted spiritual energy was rapidly replenishing.

Though the world's origin had sparked a global spiritual tide, not everyone could condense energy into their Qi Core due to varying talents. Still, Lu's gains were substantial. In moments, he amassed nearly two to three thousand strands, indicating over a thousand new cultivators in Zhou, plus discounted energy from the Overlord, Nie Changqing, and others. The growth was impressive.

Lu dismissed the panel, uninterested in watching numbers climb. His eyes, threaded with insight, peered across distances to the border battles. He'd spared the wanderers to hone Nie Changqing, the Overlord, and others. Without pressure, there was no progress. The Five Phoenixes, still low-martial, needed a cultivator beyond Body Zang to ascend to mid-martial. These wanderers were the catalyst. Lu wasn't worried—his strength ensured they couldn't stir trouble.

In South County, the clay-formed burly man lowered his gaze from the sky. Unlike the Buddha or golden-haired youth, he sensed the world's new attribute energies, teetering on ascension. He chose not to flee; this was merely a clay clone. Fingers crossed elegantly, he remained cautious—a failed wanderer refusing another defeat.

On Nanjin City's ramparts, Sima Qingshan smiled, his Qi Core's energy surging. Unfurling his blank scroll, he painted with rainwater as ink, his Body Zang breakthrough enhancing his art. The burly man was pulled into a serene, flowing landscape. Though beautiful, it unnerved him.

"Kill the enemy," Sima Qingshan commanded, robes billowing.

Tang Yimo, healed by the spiritual tide, cracked his neck. “Nice work,” he grinned at Sima Qingshan. Opening his second meridian, hair bristling and veins bulging, he charged, his blood-fueled energy smashing the clay figure like a boulder. The man awoke, raising a hand to summon earth, but Jing Yue’s sword energy sliced through, severing his arm cleanly.

Jing Yue smiled—his sword grew stronger. Tang Yimo’s relentless assault shattered the clay figure into mud. Landing, charred and steaming in the rain, Tang Yimo raised a veined fist. “Kill!” he roared. South County’s army, inspired, charged with deafening cries, their blades tearing through the rain. The Nanman, leaderless, collapsed, fleeing with heavy losses, their tribes crippled for years.

Xie Yunling and the Dao Pavilion ceased their spells, joining Tang Yimo. Sima Qingshan and Hua Dongliu descended, the latter patting Jing Yue’s shoulder. Tang Yimo bowed deeply. “On behalf of South County, I thank you all.”

Xie Yunling smiled. “South County is our home. How could we stand by?” Jing Yue, a White Jade Capital disciple and Zhou native, nodded. He couldn’t ignore a national crisis. Sima Qingshan, scroll on his back, cautioned, “The man isn’t dead. The crisis lingers.” His painting path, akin to Lu’s chess, heightened his soul’s intuition.

Tang Yimo nodded, unperturbed. Surveying the barbarian corpses, he said, “The Nanman are broken. Even if he returns, he’s no threat. I’d rather hunt him in their lands, but caution prevails. The Nanman are no longer a concern.” He paused, recalling the world’s transformation. “What was that change?”

Xie Yunling, gazing toward Beiluo, mused, “Young Master’s three-month ceasefire... was it for this spiritual surge?” Silence fell, breaths heavy. Tang Yimo, remembering the fearsome aura by Beiluo Lake, shuddered. Perhaps Xie was right—White Jade Capital’s lord had orchestrated this.

In the Chilian Tribe's altar, the burly man removed his hood, pained by his clone's destruction. "This plane's lord is too mysterious, condensing an origin. What's his strength?" Wiping rain from his face, he pondered hiding or attacking. Unable to gauge Lu, he hesitated but decided, "I must probe his strength. I'll enter Zhou from the east, using the Dongyi."

In West County, outside Hu Rao Pass, snow blanketed corpses. Nie Changqing, clad in spiritual armor, advanced on the golden-haired youth, snowflakes disintegrating around him. "Demons from beyond must be slain," he said calmly. No words were needed—battle sufficed.

The youth, wary of Nie Changqing's near-peak Foundation Establishment strength, glowed, wielding a radiant light sword. Scanning for Lu, he feared a hidden strike. Nie Changqing's butcher knife soared, its energy slashing the ground. Their clash—knife versus sword—created a field of cutting force, repelling snow and grinding stones.

The youth, enraged at being used as a whetstone, fought fiercely. Nie Changqing's armor bore sword marks, but his refined organs held firm. Xiliang's cavalry and Xiang Family Army, empowered, overwhelmed the Guifang and Peacock Kingdom forces.

The Overlord, demonic energy surging, swung his axe with titanic force at the evil Buddha, who blocked with his blood-weeping golden statue. "Using us as stepping stones? You'll die!" the Buddha snarled, snapping his prayer beads. The beads shot at the Overlord, who raised his shield, each impact exploding with force.

The Buddha closed in, mocking, "I'm peak Foundation Establishment; you're a novice. What fuels your arrogance?" His thunderous shout dazed the Overlord, his fists pummeling the shield, carving furrows in

the earth. "I'm Buddha, you're demon. Buddha subdues demons—it's heaven's law!" he roared, blood lotuses blooming from his words.

But the Overlord was fiercer. His clockwise energy vortexes reversed. Dropping his shield, he took a punch to the chest, unmoved, grinning coldly. Trading blows, he smashed an elbow into the Buddha's head, sending him flying. Absorbing a palm strike, he hacked the Buddha's chest, blood spraying.

The Buddha, stunned by the Overlord's reckless style, felt dread. The Overlord laughed, blood dripping. "Subdue me? Try it!" Trading blow for blow, he outmatched the Buddha, whose peak strength faltered against such ferocity. Beaten and swollen, the Buddha's chants failed, his hands trembling.

Pitying his fate as a wanderer, the Buddha stood, headless, as the Overlord's axe severed his head. To ensure no revival, the Overlord leaped, shattering the head in a burst of red snow. The Buddha's corpse stood, palms pressed, unmoving.

Suddenly, a twisted soul rose, cursing venomously, "Blasphemous demon, one day you'll be headless, wandering in torment!" The Overlord's eyes narrowed.

On Beiluo Lake, Lu, one hand on his chin, frowned. Raising a claw-like hand, he reached into the void. At Hu Rao Pass, the Buddha's cursing soul froze as a spiritual hand descended, silencing him.