

## Starlit Path 179

Chapter 179: A Qi Refining Realm Big Shot?!

A ferocious gust swept through, the dispersed spiritual energy coalescing into a palm, its lines vivid as if real. The overwhelming aura made the Overlord's breath catch. Despite his Body Zang breakthrough, he felt no fighting spirit against this force, his hairs standing on end.

"This is..." The Overlord forgot the Buddha's cursed soul, dismissing it as irrelevant. "Young Master Lu?" he murmured. A palm conjured from miles away could only belong to White Jade Capital's lord.

The palm descended, the Buddha's twisted soul screaming in terror. It tried to flee, but the palm pinned it, slamming it into the earth. The ground quaked as the palm struck repeatedly, like swatting a fly, until the soul's wails turned numb, resembling the Overlord's own beaten-down youth. Finally, the palm grabbed the soul like a chick and vanished.

A breeze of spiritual energy scattered the Buddha's headless corpse into ash, dissolving in the snow. The golden-haired youth, battling Nie Changqing, froze as the Buddha's presence vanished. Deflecting Nie Changqing's knife, he stared, horrified, at the ashen remains. Annihilation. Who did this? The plane's elusive lord?

"You're stronger, but who gave you the gall to lose focus in battle?" Nie Changqing's voice cut through. The youth's heart jolted. Nie Changqing spread his arms like a roc, his butcher knife spinning before him, sharp with cutting force. Spiritual energy poured from his Qi Core, forming a solidifying blade shadow.

"Blade Control," Nie Changqing said calmly, gripping an invisible hilt and slashing. A ten-meter phantom blade descended, locking the youth in place with an inescapable force—blade intent, faint but potent. In a low-martial world, such intent was rare.

Unable to dodge, the youth raised his light sword. The blade's energy cleaved the air, parting snow and splitting the ground. The light sword snapped, golden hair fell, and blood sprayed as a gash tore from the youth's waist, nearly bisecting him. Blade intent ravaged his vitality.

Gasping, sweat beading, the youth collapsed, staring at Nie Changqing's hovering knife. With a bitter smile, he brushed his hair. "Can I at least die handsomely?" he asked, hoping to avoid the Buddha's fate.

Nie Changqing, expressionless, recalled ancient visions from the dragon gate—cultivators dying against demons, an emperor defending his land to death. "No," he said. His knife flashed, severing the youth's head. Wiping the blood with a cloth, he stood elegantly amid falling snow.

The youth's soul rose, grinning eerily. "One day, stronger invaders will come. You'll feel your weakness, beheaded like me." Nie Changqing, unfazed, sheathed his knife. "I know. This land has faced your kind before, its soil steeped in tragedy. But we'll grow stronger, preventing past regrets." The youth's soul blinked, confused. Not the first invaders?

A spiritual palm descended, silencing the youth's screams. Beaten into submission, it was seized like the Buddha's soul. Nie Changqing, sensing Lu's aura, smiled respectfully. "With Young Master here, our world is safe," he said, watching the youth's body turn to ash.

---

At Lakeheart Island, Lu, busy wrangling souls, sighed. "These wanderers are weak." The system's task—keeping White Jade Capital intact—seemed too easy. He'd hoped they'd challenge Nie Changqing and the Overlord, but they fell disappointingly fast.

A spiritual storm churned the lake, startling fish and birds. Two translucent souls appeared, dazed from their beating. Lu, in his Thousand Blades Chair, eyed them calmly. Body Zang equated to Foundation Establishment; their souls, strengthened by refined organs, lingered post-death.

The Buddha and youth, regaining clarity, froze upon seeing Lu—a youthful figure in white, radiating otherworldly calm. “The plane’s lord?!” they gasped. Lu nodded, distracted by a system prompt:

\*Assessment Task: Repel four wanderers from beyond and a mid-martial plane lord’s spiritual clone (Progress: 3/5)\*

“Two left,” Lu mused, tapping his armrest. The souls, recovering, exchanged shocked glances, then erupted in fury. They’d been deceived. Lu wasn’t a Golden Core elder—no oppressive aura, not even Foundation Establishment. In their perception, he was mere Qi Condensation.

“Qi Condensation!” the youth laughed bitterly, torn between tears and rage. They’d gambled right but died to natives. The despair was like winning a lottery only to find the ticket shredded.

“Done lamenting?” Lu asked. The youth raged, “You didn’t act because you couldn’t! Had we known your weakness, we’d have stormed White Jade Capital!” The Buddha’s soul, turning malevolent, lunged. “Seize his soul, and we replace him!”

Lu smirked. He’d detained them to study their cultivation methods, not expecting their delusion. Did they forget their beating? “Qi Condensation can’t be a big shot?” he thought. Wait till I reach a hundred layers—I’ll crush heavens and gods.

With a flick, a silver blade pierced the Buddha's soul, pinning it. Lu's spiritual energy surged, a lion awakening, a sun rising. The youth's soul collapsed, kneeling. The Buddha's screams ceased under the crushing pressure. "Golden... Golden Core!" the youth stammered. Lu's aura was a blazing sun to their ghostly shadows.

They'd gambled wrong. Lu hadn't spared them out of weakness but disdain, using them as whetstones. Ignoring them, Lu parted the lake, revealing a golden glow—a despairing face within. "Almost complete," he said. The souls, sensing another Golden Core presence, despaired further. Another Golden Core suppressed in the lake?!