

STARLIT PATH OF THE MYSTIC FORGE

Chapter 19: Cultivator's Spiritual Pressure

The rain poured relentlessly, cloaking the world in a misty veil. In the narrow alley, water splashed against the stone tiles, leaping high. Yi Yue, holding an umbrella, stared in shock. Ni Yu's eyes widened, her mouth agape, gawking at the raincoat-clad, hat-wearing man. *How dare he speak like that?* With Young Master's pettiness, this man was doomed.

Lu squinted, rainwater cascading off the umbrella's edge like beaded curtains, blurring Han Lianxiao's smiling face. Lu chuckled, clapping lightly. "Fair enough. I'm just a frail scholar with bad legs, good for poetry and chasing skirts. Asking for your respect is a bit much."

Han raised a brow. Rumors painted Lu Changkong's son as tempestuous due to his disability, but this self-deprecating wit suggested otherwise. *Quite the temperament.* "Since Young Master Lu knows his place, step aside," Han said, waving his flute, his gentle tone turning cold and menacing.

Nie Changqing struggled to his feet, blood dripping from his mouth, his face pale from the rain. "Young Master Lu, thank you for coming to my aid, but this

is my grudge. Getting involved does you no good. Please, take my son—he's just a child, innocent," he pleaded, voice trembling.

Lu leaned back in his wheelchair, one hand propping his chin, the other flicking the damp wool blanket. The alley, cramped and gloomy, mirrored the overcast sky. "Junior Brother Nie, you're putting Young Master Lu in a tough spot," Han said, flicking raindrops from his flute. "The Master's orders are clear: bring you and Shuang'er back, especially Shuang'er. The Master misses him dearly." His gentle words carried undeniable dominance.

Nie's face flushed with rage, glaring at Han. *So that's why Han's here—for Shuang'er.*

Slap! Lu's hand struck the wheelchair's armrest, the sound like thunder in the alley. Ni Yu jumped, Yi Yue tensed, and Ning Zhao raised her cicada-wing sword, vital energy and spiritual energy surging, her silk dress and hair fluttering.

Lu rubbed his eyes. "Fatherly love, so moving it shakes the heavens. I, Lu Ping'an, can't stand such heartfelt displays—it reminds me of my kind father waiting for me to come home for dinner. The tree seeks stillness, but the wind won't stop; the son wishes to care for his parents, but they may not wait."

His head bowed, eyes misty with emotion. Then he looked at Han. “By the way, which faction are you from, daring to dismiss me in Beiluo City?”

Han frowned, sensing a shift in the alley’s atmosphere, a sudden chill gripping him. Lu’s gaze unnerved him, though he gripped his flute, banishing the unease. “One song, *Tide Ballad*. Han Lianxiao, Ninth of the Daoist School, from the Hundred Schools,” he declared.

Slap! Lu smacked the armrest again. “Damn it! Why didn’t you say so? I thought you were some golden Confucian guard sent by the Grand Preceptor, here to attack Old Nie. Gave me a scare. The Daoist School? What’s that? In Beiluo City, you think you can disrespect me?”

The air stilled. Nie stared, unsure if Lu genuinely didn’t know Han’s origins or was feigning ignorance. Either way, his shift from bravado to deference was jarringly authentic. Yi Yue smirked, Ni Yu rolled her eyes—*Young Master’s still Young Master*. Ning Zhao pointed her sword at Han, raindrops trailing from its tip.

Han’s warm smile faded. He couldn’t fathom Lu’s arrogance. *What gives him this confidence? A novice Grandmaster maid?* “Young Master Lu, what’s your game?” he asked, voice icy.

“Enough chatter,” Lu said, waving. “Ning, take him.”

A sword's cry pierced the air. Ning Zhao moved, her two strands of spiritual energy blazing like a furnace, slicing through the rain. Her sword flashed like lightning, aiming for Han.

Han, ignoring her, stared at Lu. "A Grandmaster as a maid—Lu Changkong's touch is impressive. This maid has skill, suppressing four Grandmasters under Beiluo's walls." His scowl turned to a spring-like smile. Raising his flute, he said, "Young Master, you're no Grandmaster. You misunderstand our strength and know nothing of the Hundred Schools' mysteries. Your maid's odd vital energy isn't enough to justify your arrogance."

Crack. His flute snapped forward, meeting Ning Zhao's sword. Her heart jolted, pupils shrinking. The flute split, wooden tendrils snaking along the blade, binding her joints. Her umbrella fell, rain soaking her as she stood immobilized.

"Compared to battle experience, your one-ring Grandmaster maid is far behind," Han said coolly. The mechanism, crafted by the Mohist School, locked her in place. He stepped forward, ignoring her, his gaze fixed on Lu. Nie raised his cleaver, but Han's vital energy flared, a casual palm sending the weapon flying. *A former Grandmaster, now less than a First-Rate fighter—beneath my notice.*

Han advanced, smiling. “Rain, narrow alley, a night for killing. Perfect timing, terrain, and harmony. Not killing you would be a disservice to the heavens.” His tone grew murderous. “Let me reintroduce myself: Han Lianxiao, Ninth of the Daoist School, five-ring Grandmaster.”

Boom! He stomped, water exploding seven feet high. Yi Yue, face paling, drew her whip to shield Lu. Han’s palm struck, raindrops pummeling her, sending her flying, blood spraying.

Having chosen to kill Lu, a temple lord’s son, Han committed fully. With the Confucian Grand Preceptor’s influence lingering, he’d leave no trace. “Die!” he roared, palm slicing through rain, fingers like blades aimed at Lu’s neck.

Lu frowned, rain stinging his face, soaking his clothes. Ni Yu clung to the umbrella, trembling but standing firm. Facing Han’s ferocious approach, Lu exhaled and closed his eyes. Ning Zhao’s defeat surprised him, but he wasn’t without options. He could deploy more spiritual energy to her, but this time, he chose otherwise.

Converting 5 points of his 6.5 soul strength, Lu’s spiritual energy surged from 0 to 50 strands. His eyes snapped open, meeting Han’s charge with cold indifference. His dantian roared like a furnace, channeling the *Daoist Spirit Channeling Technique* he’d crafted for Nie.

On the wheelchair, Lu sat calmly, 50 strands of blue spiritual energy weaving around him. *Boom!* A majestic pressure erupted, slamming Han to the ground, kneeling in the flooded alley. Struggling, he lifted his head, cheek pressed to the cold, splashing stone, unable to move.

“What... is this?!” Han gasped, pupils shrinking, as if seeing a ghost.

Lu brushed water from his blanket, glancing at the prostrate Han. Leaning back, he smirked lazily. “A cultivator’s spiritual pressure. A mere parlor trick.”