

STARLIT PATH OF THE MYSTIC FORGE

Chapter 20: He Spun a Colossal Lie

The rain softened from a torrent to a fine drizzle, like delicate tea buds floating in the night sky. In the narrow alley, the scene was surreal.

A pale-lipped youth sat calmly in his wheelchair, one hand propping his chin, exuding leisurely ease. Around him, faint blue streams of spiritual energy swirled, weaving a celestial orbit. The drizzle disintegrated before reaching him, torn apart by the energy.

Everyone stood frozen, even Ning Zhao, Yi Yue, and Ni Yu, who knew Lu well. At this moment, their Young Master felt alien—untouchably lofty. They'd never seen him like this.

Lu gazed indifferently at Han Lianxiao, pinned to the ground before him. Han, a five-ring Grandmaster, could crush a hundred Lus in raw vital energy. But Lu didn't rely on vital energy—he wielded spiritual energy. The high-grade Yellow-tier *Daoist Spirit Channeling Technique* generated a natural oppressive force Lu dubbed “spiritual pressure.” This was a cultivator's dominance over non-cultivators.

The pressure stemmed from Lu's sudden burst of 50 strands of spiritual energy. Without such reserves, no pressure could form. Ning Zhao, with her two strands, could enhance her combat prowess but couldn't generate this force. Even if she could, it would barely affect a Grandmaster.

Han struggled in the puddle-soaked alley, his raincoat drenched. He tried to rise, but the pressure felt like a mountain crushing him, each movement agonizing. *Cultivator's spiritual pressure? A parlor trick?* His mind reeled. The crippled son of Beiluo's lord possessed such power? No martial artist, not even an eight or nine-ring Grandmaster, could do this.

Han forced his face from the water, his once-dashing appearance now wretched, wet hair plastered to his pale cheeks. He strained to see Lu's expression, but only glimpsed the blue energy shrouding him, like an immortal in a painting.

"You..." Han croaked, pupils constricting.

Lu tapped the damp wool blanket, glancing at him. A five-ring Grandmaster was formidable, and given time, Han might adapt to the pressure. But its sudden emergence in this world caught him off guard. *What if it were 100*

strands? A thousand? Ten thousand? Lu sensed a flicker of the mystical world he aimed to create.

In the distance, Ning Zhao broke free of the flute's wooden tendrils, her sword in hand, hair disheveled, skin marked with blood from her struggle. Guilt gnawed at her. Overconfident with her spiritual energy, she'd underestimated a Grandmaster, leaving Lu vulnerable. Had he not unleashed this power, the consequences could've been dire. Han was right—under cover of night, in this secluded alley, he could've killed Lu without a trace, escaping before Lu Changkong could act.

Ning Zhao's sword touched the ground, water splashing as she stepped forward. "Young Master, how shall we deal with him?" she asked, voice icy.

Lu glanced at Han, unflinching. "Kill him."

The calm words stunned Nie Changqing, who trembled, and Nie Shuang, who clung to his father's leg. Han's eyes widened, trying to speak. *Splurch!* Ning Zhao's cicada-wing sword pierced his chest, blood pooling beneath him.

So decisive—no hesitation. Han coughed blood, disbelief and unwillingness in his eyes. *The world was deceived!* Beiluo's young lord wasn't just a bookish

fool. He wielded uncanny powers and a ruthless heart. *He spun a colossal lie! What is he planning?* Han's head slumped into the blood, lifeless.

Nie dropped his cleaver, shocked. Han Lianxiao, the Ninth of the Daoist School, a five-ring Grandmaster—near the pinnacle of the martial world—died quietly in Beiluo. His heart churned with complex emotions. The assassination targeting him had ended, but not with joy—only a chilling dread. Han's death could ignite a storm, drawing more Daoist School elites to Beiluo. With Great Zhou in chaos and the Grand Preceptor preoccupied, the Hundred Schools grew bolder, and Nie knew their ruthlessness better than most.

Lu dispersed his spiritual energy, halting the *Daoist Spirit Channeling Technique*. Refined into a high-grade Yellow-tier method, it could condense spiritual pressure, though Lu couldn't cultivate energy like others. "Thank you, Young Master Lu, for saving us," Nie said, pale, leading Nie Shuang to Lu's side.

Nie Shuang's big eyes darted, filled with awe and fervor. Lu's effortless suppression of the invincible Han had seared into the boy's young mind. Ning Zhao sheathed her blood-wiped sword, standing silently behind Lu. Yi Yue rose, shaken by her inability to protect Lu against a Grandmaster.

Lu glanced at Nie. "You seek peace, but others won't let you have it. The weak don't get to choose stability. Strength is the only truth. With enough power, the world becomes your sanctuary."

Nie trembled, silent. Lu was right—wherever he hid, the Daoist School would find him and Nie Shuang. “Provided you’re truly strong,” Lu added.

Nie inhaled sharply, pain flaring from his soaked wounds, but he ignored it. “My tendons are severed, my vital energy a fraction of what it was...” he said, staring at his trembling hand, voice dim.

“You really treat the immortal fate like nothing,” Lu teased, tapping the blanket, as if chatting with a friend.

Nie froze, struck as if by lightning, staring at Lu. *How does he know about the immortal fate?* He hadn’t told a soul. *Is Lu the Six Paths Immortal?* No—Lu was crippled, and their methods differed. *Perhaps... Lu entered the Land of Immortality too?*

Realization hit. *There are immortals!* Nie’s emotions surged, his mind warring. His expression shifted, then burned with resolve. *Splash!* He knelt before Lu, water splashing. Nie Shuang, eyes gleaming, mimicked his father.

“I, Nie Changqing, swear to follow Young Master Lu!” Nie declared, bowing deeply.

Nie Shuang, fervent, added, “Me too!”