

Starlit Path 200

Chapter 200: Thunderstrike, Divine Demon Blood, and the Fourth Layer of Qi Refinement!

Snowflakes danced like spirited elves or flickering fireflies, cascading from the sky. Lu extended his hand, catching a flake that melted into cool water in his palm. Guiding his Thousand Blades Chair around Lakeheart Island, he held a few peach blossom petals. Without lingering, he returned to the second floor of the White Jade Pavilion.

Reclining in his wheelchair, Lu warmed a pot of wine. Using wooden tongs, he plucked a snow-dusted green plum, shook it clean, and dropped it into the simmering wine along with the freshly picked peach petals. The plum bobbed, and the petals twirled like a maiden's skirt, tinting the wine with a subtle, tart aroma. Spiritual energy infused the liquid, sliding smoothly down his throat, warming his stomach like a gentle furnace.

Lu smacked his lips. On a snowy day, a sip of this warm plum wine was pure comfort. Holding the bronze cup, he gazed over the misty lake. The white-robed girl's reckless assault on the capital, resulting in her injuries, had caught his attention—not only because of her unique Nine Phoenix Art but also because she'd spent enough time on the island to be considered part of White Jade City. Lu, despite his mild temper, was fiercely protective of his own.

His eyes flickered with intricate patterns as visions of the Zijin Palace and the Imperial Garden replayed before him. After a long moment, clarity returned. "Humans have spirits, harboring essence and vitality. Feeding on flesh to cultivate, they turn into demonic evils..." Lu frowned. Yuwen Xiu's practice of nourishing the black dragon with blood and flesh accelerated its growth but awakened its feral nature, tainting it with malevolence.

Lu shook his head, disappointed. "So be it. If it comes to it, it can be reforged." His fingers tapped the railing. With Dantai Xuan founding Great Xuan and the Overlord establishing Xiliang, both forces now marched on Great Zhou. Lu had no interest in meddling in such worldly conflicts. As for the black dragon, once Great Zhou fell, he'd send Nie Changqing to retrieve it.

Sipping the warm plum wine, Lu exhaled a puff of steam and closed his eyes. His mind summoned the system panel. Staring at it, he took out his spiritual pressure chessboard, placing pieces deliberately in a Storm Game. His spirit and energy peaked, and he turned to his 1,083 distributable attribute points—a veritable fortune.

This time, Lu didn't allocate all points to soul strength. With 5,000 strands of spiritual energy already, advancing to the fourth layer of Qi Refinement didn't require all 1,000 points. Instead, he focused on his long-neglected physical strength. Though his permanent title was Qi Refiner, a weak body wasn't inherent. A robust physique was essential to withstand time's erosion and sustain long-term cultivation.

Lu allocated 500 points to physical strength and 500 to soul strength, adding 100 points to each alternately to balance the transformation. The remaining 83 points he left untouched. Sitting calmly in his wheelchair, he awaited the changes.

The 500 points in physical strength triggered a profound shift. His blood surged like boiling rivers, roaring through his veins as if they might burst. Every part of him—bones, skin, vessels, organs—underwent a metamorphosis. His jade hair crown shattered, his hair writhing like living steel, piercing the air and leaving tiny black holes.

On Lakeheart Island, Kong Nanfei, kneeling before the Master's tomb, shuddered under a terrifying pressure. Gasping, he turned toward the White Jade Pavilion, sensing a godlike presence. "So... terrifying..." He'd thought himself formidable in the Organ Tempering Realm, bolstered by the Master's righteous aura and spiritual cultivation. Even against the Overlord, he believed he could escape. But now, he felt like an ant before a towering mountain, unable to muster the courage to move.

"This is the power of White Jade City's master?" Sweat beaded on his forehead despite the snowy chill. Meng Haoran and Mo Tianyu, not yet at Organ Tempering, sensed nothing, too weak to perceive the aura. Only Little Yinglong, also at Organ Tempering, cowered atop the Dragon Gate, wings tucked, frozen in place.

Above the pavilion, dark clouds gathered, thunder rumbling within. Kong Nanfei's hands braced against the ground, sweat dripping into the snow under the oppressive, indescribable force. Meng Haoran and Mo Tianyu, puzzled, watched him. "What's wrong?" Mo Tianyu asked, pulling out his turtle shell and bronze coins. "Shall I divine for you?"

"No!" Kong Nanfei snapped, eyes bloodshot. "Don't... don't divine!" Mo Tianyu fell silent. "I'm fine. It'll pass," Kong Nanfei gasped, staring toward the pavilion.

The pressure confined itself to the island. Cultivators on West Mountain felt nothing, though Nie Changqing and Ning Zhao, with fully tempered organs, sensed a faint disturbance. Jing Yue's sword intent quivered slightly.

On the island, the sky churned. Lu's Thousand Blades Chair morphed, its silver blades orbiting him. The Phoenix Feather Sword hovered, casting a red glow on his face. He studied the system panel:

Host: Lu

Title: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

Qi Refinement Level: 3 (Progress to Layer 4: 5055/10,000 strands)

Soul Strength: 608 (Convertible: 521)

Physical Strength: 510 (Convertible: 510)

*Spiritual Energy

*: 4,790 strands

Distributable Attributes: 83 points

The 500-point surge in physical strength transformed him profoundly. Activating his Indestructible Demon Body, Lu stabilized the imbalance. Within his dantian, black droplets formed, each brimming with immense power. Curious, he moved to activate one, but a prompt appeared: “Exchange 100 physical strength points to use one drop of ‘Divine Demon Blood’?”

Divine Demon Blood? Lu paused, canceling the action. The system offered no explanation, but costing 100 points, it had to be a potent trump card, likely on par with spiritual sense condensed from soul strength. He held off, preserving it.

Looking up at the thunderous clouds, Lu smiled. “A thunder tribulation?” He recalled an unused Heavenly Dao Thunder Punishment reward, distinct from this world’s origin-driven tribulation. Since he’d shaped this world’s origin, its thunder posed no threat—it was merely a reaction to his transcendent power.

With a thought, he converted 500 soul strength points into 5,000 strands of spiritual energy. Added to his 5,055 strands, his total soared past 10,000, breaking into the fourth layer of Qi Refinement. A spiritual energy storm erupted around him, scattering outward.

Above, the brewing thundercloud unleashed a massive bolt. The air crackled with a scorched scent. Meng Haoran, wide-eyed, shouted, "Master! Thunder! It struck Young Master Lu!"

Kong Nanfei, panting, glared and smacked his disciple's head. "Quit panicking!" Compared to Lu's subtle physical transformation, the thunder's spectacle roused all of Beiluo City.

On West Mountain, cultivators gaped as the bolt illuminated the city like daylight, shattering the snow-laden clouds. "Young Master?!" "Heaven's wrath!" "What did Young Master Lu do to provoke this?" they cried.

Nie Changqing and Ning Zhao soared into the air, streaking toward Beiluo Lake. Ni Yu, startled, dropped her sugar-coated Qi Gathering Pills and raced after them. On the pavilion, Lu sat as the thunder descended. His silver blades reformed into the wheelchair. White robes billowing, he looked up, lips curling.

He flicked a chess piece upward. It collided with the thunder, dissolving it into starry sparks. The clouds dispersed.

Yuan Chi City wasn't far from Beiluo. Mo Beike, urging his men to hasten, arrived at Beiluo's gates, where Lu Changkong greeted him. "This time, it's really you, Master Mo?" Lu Changkong teased, recalling Mo Beike's last visit via Wei Luan of the Yin-Yang School, who'd met a peaceful end.

Mo Beike's heavy eye bags twitched, but he smiled. "City Lord Lu jests. I come on behalf of King Beixuan to seek Young Master Lu and White Jade City's stance on Great Xuan's campaign against Great Zhou."

Lu Changkong's eyes narrowed. He'd heard of Dantai Xuan's founding of Great Xuan. "No need for your visit. Beiluo seeks peace with the world. My son's stance is simple: leave us be, and we leave you be."

Mo Beike opened his mouth to respond, but a thunderous boom shook the city. Lu Changkong's face changed, a terrifying Organ Tempering Realm aura bursting forth, silencing Mo Beike. "Excuse me, Master Mo!" Lu Changkong said, racing toward the pavilion, fearing for Lu's safety.

Mo Beike, sensing the lingering aura, trembled. "This is Organ Tempering... So powerful it chills the soul. Did Master Kong defeat such a being in Dongyang County? A mortal besting this... I fall short." Sighing, he shuffled toward Beiluo Lake.