

## Starlit Path 25

### Chapter 25: Ascending to Qi Refining Level 2

The moon hung high, casting a serene glow over the silent night. The air, fresh from the recent rain, carried a damp, refreshing clarity that soothed the soul. Through the crimson carved window, the young master could be seen sitting cross-legged on his bed, the draped curtains rendering his figure a hazy silhouette. His eyes gleamed with clarity and a flicker of excitement as he summoned the system interface and scanned it.

By saving Nie Changqing, he had completed [Side Mission 3] with a Grade A evaluation, earning 5 attribute points. With these, he could finally ascend to Qi Refining Level 2. The prospect filled him with quiet anticipation. At Level 1, his spiritual energy was finite—each strand consumed was gone, only replenishable by converting soul strength. Unlike Ning Zhao, whose two-segment qi core allowed her to regenerate spiritual energy through circulation, his qi core lacked this ability.

“System,” he commanded silently, “allocate 4.5 attribute points to soul strength and 0.5 to physical strength.”

The interface updated instantly. His soul strength reached 6 points, and his physical strength, no longer a pitiful “combat power of five,” rose to 1, placing him within the realm of ordinary men.

“Convert 4 attribute points into spiritual energy,” he continued.

A sudden gust stirred the room. Wall-mounted scrolls swayed, and a brush on the rack quivered. Pale blue streams of energy swirled around him, encircling his body.

“From the ground rises a towering edifice. Congratulations, Host, for reaching Qi Refining Level 2. Spiritual energy capacity: 100 strands. Rewards granted: Spiritual Pressure Chessboard, 10 Random Spiritual Grass Seeds. Host has gained autonomous recovery (spiritual energy, soul strength, physical strength).”

The system’s notifications flashed before him, and his eyes grew brighter. The updated interface read:

**\*\*Host\*\***: [Redacted]

**\*\*Title\*\***: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

**\*\*Qi Refining Level\*\***: 2 (Progress to Level 3: 100/1000 strands)

**\*\*Soul Strength\*\***: 13 (Convertible: 2)

**\*\*Physical Strength\*\***: 1 (Convertible: 1)

**\*\*Spiritual Energy\*\***: 90 strands

**\*\*Transformation Reward\*\***: \*Mystical Qi Refining Manual\*

**\*\*World Rating\*\***: Wuhuang Continent [Low Martial]

**\*\*Permissions\*\***: [Missions], [Preaching Platform], [Spiritual Energy Deployment]

**\*\*Sub-Permission\*\***: [Ten Thousand Methods Furnace (LV1)]

This was his first ascension, from Level 1 to Level 2. The changes were subtle but confirmed his suspicions: Level 2 granted autonomous recovery for spiritual energy, soul strength, and physical strength. The recovery rate was likely slow, given his low level, but even a trickle was acceptable. It meant he no longer had to fear depleting his spiritual energy and losing control.

However, he was slightly disappointed to learn that soul strength used to convert spiritual energy couldn't be reused, even with recovery. Still, his mind felt sharper, his spirit cleansed, as if reborn. His body, too, felt subtly transformed—not the dramatic purging of impurities described in novels, but a tangible shift. In raw combat, he'd still lose to a grandmaster like Ning Zhao or even a second-rate martial artist like Yi Yue. Against Ni Yu, though? He might stand a chance—perhaps an even match.

Beyond the recovery ability, the rewards thrilled him. “Spiritual Pressure Chessboard?” Curiosity lit his face. With a thought, a resonant hum filled his ears, like the echo of the cosmos. The void before him tore open, and an unremarkable, ancient chessboard floated out, settling onto his bed as the rift closed. Two boxes of chess pieces—one black, one white—accompanied it.

**\*\*Spiritual Pressure Chessboard\*\***: Low-grade Mysterious Artifact (Upgradable). Each piece placed consumes 1 soul strength point. Black pieces unleash targeted spiritual pressure with a 5x multiplier; white pieces restore 50% of a designated person's original spiritual energy.

The system's description left him speechless. He was no stranger to spiritual pressure—50 strands had pinned the fifth-rank grandmaster Han Lianxiao to the ground, barely able to move. A 5x multiplier? Han Lianxiao would've been crushed outright, or at least left questioning his existence. With his current 100 strands, amplified fivefold, the young master doubted Han Lianxiao could endure a single second.

"A spiritual artifact, capable of channeling spiritual energy..." he murmured, running his fingers over the chessboard. Previously, his use of spiritual pressure had been imprecise. Now, with this chessboard, his methods would be far more potent and unpredictable.

Glancing at the wheelchair by his bed, he mused that tomorrow he'd have craftsmen modify it—carving hidden compartments in the armrests for the chess piece boxes. The chessboard itself? Ni Yu could carry it. Henceforth, this Spiritual Pressure Chessboard would be his weapon, a fittingly elegant tool for his refined demeanor.

The second reward—ten Random Spiritual Grass Seeds—intrigued him just as much. These seeds, as their name suggested, could produce spiritual energy, much like plants release oxygen through photosynthesis. While he could deploy spiritual energy to enrich an area, that method was crude, yielding raw, unrefined energy. The gentle, balanced energy from these seeds would be far more suitable for cultivation. Their emergence could mark a turning point for the Wuhuang Continent.

He gazed at a dark brown seed in his palm, labeled \*Skyward Spirit Chrysanthemum Seed\*, and smiled faintly before tucking it away. Bathed in the soft moonlight streaming through the crimson window, he stretched languidly, his mood buoyant.

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The next morning, the young master awoke. The bustle outside alerted Ning Zhao and the others, who entered only after his permission. Yi Yue carried a tray of light porridge and side dishes, while Ni Yu,

sleeves rolled up, brought a basin of steaming water, her face flushed from the heat. Ning Zhao approached gracefully, her delicate hands helping him dress and wash.

Squinting, the young master savored the indulgent start to the day. “Young Master,” Ning Zhao said, “the lord left this morning to escort the captured martial grandmasters to the capital. He asked me to give you this transcribed blood-moving technique.” She produced a white silk scroll covered in delicate, flowing script.

Despite Lord Lu Changkong’s rugged grandmaster physique, his handwriting was surprisingly refined, almost dainty—a stark contrast to his image. The young master sipped his porridge, his brow arching as he took the scroll from Ning Zhao.