

Starlit Path 33

Chapter 34: A Young Master Without Peer

The feat was nothing short of otherworldly. Erasing the signboard's inscription from afar and replacing it with a new name—this wasn't sleight of hand but creation from nothingness. Who in the world could achieve such a thing? Nie Changqing drew a deep breath, his worldview reshaped yet again by the young master's methods. Ning Zhao, though initially stunned, quickly regained her composure. After all, the young master's miracles were countless.

Nie Changqing, shouldering his butcher's knife, and Ning Zhao, craning her slender neck, gazed at the newly inscribed name on the pavilion.

"White Jade Capital..." they murmured, savoring the words.

"From this day forward, White Jade Capital is my faction," the young master said, seated in his wheelchair, rubbing his fingers with a light smile. "And you are its members."

"Our gratitude, Young Master," Nie Changqing and Ning Zhao said, their hearts stirring.

The young master propped his chin, nodding slightly, his mood buoyant. "When you walk the world, call yourselves disciples of White Jade Capital."

"Understood," they replied, bowing.

A breeze swept through, scattering fallen peach petals across the ground, lifting the young master's hair in a gentle dance. A man like jade on the road, a young master without peer. Ning Zhao gazed, momentarily entranced. Nie Changqing's eyes glinted with resolve.

White Jade Capital... soon, this name would echo through Great Zhou, perhaps surpassing even the Hundred Schools. He, Nie Changqing, once a discarded Taoist, now bore a new title: Disciple of White Jade Capital. He sensed this name might outshine his past renown. Staring at the scattered petals, a faint smile tugged at his lips. From a fugitive cur to a disciple of White Jade Capital—life was turning beautiful.

The young master sat in his wheelchair, the bold calligraphy of "White Jade Capital" gleaming above. Ning Zhao watched him, lost in thought, while Nie Changqing carried his own reflections. Below the pavilion's stone steps, the courtesans, terrified by the sudden withering of half the island's peach blossoms, sat paralyzed, their faces ghostly. The madam, in particular, was panic-stricken. No one had touched the signboard—how had "Drunken Dust Pavilion" vanished, replaced by "White Jade Capital"? What was this White Jade Capital?

"Ning, disperse the courtesans. Give them silver and ensure they're settled off the island. I want no one here but White Jade Capital," the young master said, propping his chin. "Old Nie, guard the island. Without my permission, no one steps foot here."

"Understood," Ning Zhao replied, bowing and descending the steps toward the trembling courtesans and madam. Nie Changqing nodded, standing sentinel at the entrance, his butcher's knife at the ready.

The young master's mind stirred, a system prompt appearing:

Couplet of Enlightenment: Door Inscription (Mystic-Tier Supreme Treasure, imbued with the Charm of Enlightenment. Observers have a one-in-ten-thousand chance of gaining an epiphany, with higher cultivation increasing the likelihood.)

Mount the couplet?

A Mystic-Tier Supreme Treasure? His Spiritual Pressure Chessboard was only Mystic-Tier Low-Grade, yet this couplet outranked it. He now understood the system's treasure hierarchy: Heaven, Earth, Mystic, and Yellow tiers, each subdivided into Low, Mid, High, and Supreme grades.

"Mount it," he confirmed.

The pavilion's old, romantic couplet vanished, replaced by two vertical black iron plaques:

The sky as a chessboard, stars as pieces.

The earth as a lute, roads as strings.

The young master's brow lifted. Intriguing. The couplet's ethereal aura was palpable, but staring yielded no epiphany. Luck wasn't his forte, or perhaps his cultivation wasn't sufficient. Epiphanies favored those with great wisdom or those teetering on a breakthrough's edge. His unique cultivation path set him apart.

“Old Nie,” he called.

Nie Changqing turned, looking over.

Without a word, the young master pointed to the plaques. Nie Changqing’s gaze shifted, and his reaction was immediate. At first glance, nothing. On the second, his pupils constricted. By the third, it was as if a hammer struck his heart. Blood sprayed from his mouth, his blood energy roaring uncontrollably with six resonant bursts. An immense force seemed to crush him, forcing him back step by step. His eyes bloodshot, he stared at the couplet, as if his eyeballs might burst.

Finally, his legs buckled, and he knelt, cracking the stone beneath him. The young master raised a brow, surprised by the intensity. His wheelchair turned on its own as he observed. Nie Changqing panted heavily, eyes red, his face etched with frustration. In that moment, a deeper understanding of the Blade Control Technique had flashed through his mind, but the insight slipped away too quickly to grasp.

“Pity,” the young master said, leaning back. “Your Qi Core Realm cultivation is still too weak. This couplet holds the Charm of Enlightenment. With sufficient strength, you might gain something special.”

As he spoke, his gaze shifted to the island’s surroundings, astonishment flickering in his eyes. The peach groves had withered completely, their essence drained, crumbling to ash at a breeze. Around the island, ten crystalline, emerald-green plants had sprouted—the Skyward Spirit Chrysanthemums. Their buds pulsed with latent energy, ready to burst forth.

He chuckled, understanding. The chrysanthemum seeds, once planted, ruthlessly siphoned the vitality of ordinary plants to fuel their growth. Plants didn’t reason like humans; they followed primal instincts. The strong devoured the weak. No other flora could survive here unless they were spiritual plants like these chrysanthemums.

Imagining the island awash in swaying chrysanthemums, stirred by lake breezes, evoked a serene image of picking flowers under an eastern fence. With these ten chrysanthemums releasing spiritual energy, amplified by his own, this island could become a misty, immortal haven—a true cultivation ground. Anticipation swelled within him.

Stretching lazily, he propped his chin and toyed with a chess piece. “Time to return to Beiluo City and deal with the noble families and Sword Sect,” he said, his eyes glinting oddly. “I’m good-natured, but I don’t take slights lightly. What my father can’t do, I will. Besides, in Beiluo City, home of my White Jade Capital, no other faction belongs.”