

## Starlit Path 39

### Chapter 39: Swords Storm the City, the Final Struggle

Jingyue was seething with frustration. As one of the Sword Sect's Seven Heroes, this was his second desperate flight. He didn't want to flee—if he could have waited for the other heroes, he'd have fought. But they hadn't arrived. If there were such a thing as a sword heart or sword intent, his would have long since rotted and shattered. Yet he felt no regret. Isn't staying alive worth it?

His feet pounded the rooftops, blood energy surging, his yellow pearwood sword case bouncing as he fled the Chen estate's chaos. As a sixth-rank grandmaster, he could escape unless Lu Ping'an was truly determined to stop him. He'd gambled correctly—Lu let him go, just as before.

After vaulting across seven or eight rooftops, his heart jolted. As a Sword Sect elite, his instincts were sharp. Spinning rapidly, his black robe flared, and he landed heavily, shattering a roof tile. Before him stood a graceful figure, her white dress glowing in the blood-red sunset, her dark hair flowing like an immortal's. Ning Zhao, her expression grave, channeled spiritual energy, her skirt billowing. Though unarmed—her Cicada Wing Sword tucked in Lu's wheelchair—she radiated resolve.

"You came from the Chen estate," she said, her lashes gleaming in the fading light. "You bear a yellow pearwood sword case—a Sword Sect member. The young master wants Beiluo free of the Sword Sect. You cannot leave."

Her lips parted, her voice calm but firm. Having finished clearing Lakeheart Island, she'd heard of Lu's slaughter and rushed over, intercepting Jingyue.

"You're the young master's maid?" Jingyue recognized her, his tone heavy. "You're no match for me. Leave, or my sword shows no mercy."

He didn't want to tangle with her, knowing her status. Twice, Lu had spared him, but harming or killing his maid might provoke a relentless pursuit. Rumor had it, Beiluo's young master was petty.

Ning Zhao smiled, raising her hand, two strands of pale blue spiritual energy swirling in her palm. Her eyes burned with determination. This time, she wouldn't fail her young master. Fight!

Her foot tapped a tile, blood energy roaring with a single burst, her body darting like a phantom in the sunset.

Jingyue's eyes narrowed, six bursts of blood energy erupting. His sword struck mercilessly. He feared Nie Changqing, but a mere first-rank grandmaster like Ning Zhao? He had no reason to hesitate.

---

Outside Beiluo, on the boundless plains, dust billowed as hooves thundered. Four figures in conical hats, yellow pearwood sword cases on their backs, galloped toward the city. Sentinels on the walls spotted them, relaying the alert. Ironclad guards readied crossbows, poised to fire if the riders neared.

The hooves didn't stop, kicking up clouds of dust. As the guards loosed their arrows, a rain of bolts arced through the sky. The four riders slid beneath their horses' bellies, dodging the barrage that turned their mounts into pincushions. Sword clangs rang out, blood energy bursting in unison. Using lightfoot techniques, the four vaulted from their fallen horses, landing beneath Beiluo's weathered walls.

Sparks flew as their swords wedged into wall crevices, bending and springing to propel them upward. They scaled the walls with ease, confronting a burly Beiluo general wielding a heavy blade. The four, unwilling to engage, leaped over the encircling soldiers, stepping lightly on their shoulders to cross the ramparts. Using their swords to slide down the inner wall, they landed in the city.

---

Dozens of li from Beiluo, three hundred cavalry trod steadily, escorting a carriage pulled by five horses, its wheels churning dust. This was the Imperial Preceptor's carriage. Lu Changkong, armored and stern, rode alongside. The carriage curtain parted, revealing Mo Tianyu, the disheveled Confucian, clutching his wine gourd and sitting beside the driver.

"Lord Lu, my divination itch is acting up. Care for a reading?" Mo Tianyu called, swigging wine.

Lu Changkong's piercing gaze met his. "You follow the Preceptor, yet you dabble in divination? Isn't that the Tianji School's nonsense?"

Mo Tianyu grinned, scratching his bare chest. "I learned divination first, then the Preceptor dragged me into Confucianism. A sordid past..." He took another swig, pulled three polished copper coins from his robe, and sprayed wine over them. The coins spun in the mist, landing in his palm. "Well, well... a dire omen, Lord Lu. Your absence will doom your son. The Sword Sect will seize Beiluo, and blood will flow like rivers. A calamity!"

Lu Changkong frowned, displeasure flashing. Before he could retort, hoofbeats approached from Beiluo. A soldier in Beiluo armor galloped up, dismounted, and knelt, kicking up dust. "Report!"

"Speak."

“Beiluo reports: the three noble families rallied a hundred scholars and Sword Sect experts to confront the young master at the lake, hiring thugs and merchants to incite a riot. Four Sword Sect grandmasters breached the walls with lightfoot techniques!”

Lu Changkong’s blood energy surged, his eyes blazing with killing intent. “The Sword Sect dares?!” He didn’t curse the families—without their heads, they were no threat. The Sword Sect was the real danger. He’d known they’d act, but not this swiftly.

Mo Tianyu laughed, climbing back into the carriage. “Looks like my divination was spot-on. One sip, one reading of life and death...” he chanted, disappearing inside.

Lu Changkong’s face darkened. He cracked his whip, his horse rearing as the three hundred cavalry sped toward Beiluo under the blood-red sunset.

---

\*Chen Estate\*

Silence reigned, blood pooling across the ground, staining the pond red. The breeze carried a metallic tang. Lu Ping’an, in pristine white robes, toyed with a chess piece, his jade-like face serene. Having founded White Jade Capital, he wouldn’t tolerate rival factions in Beiluo, its home. Any that existed would be uprooted.

His brow lifted, sensing something. He glanced toward the street beyond the estate. Nie Changqing, sheathing his knife, stood alert. “Young Master, there are experts.”

Lu nodded, his 13-point soul strength detecting four murderous auras like dark clouds. A faint smile curved his lips. "The Sword Sect's final struggle?"

He tossed the chess piece back into its box. "Yi Yue, let's go."

"Understood," she replied, her foxlike face stern as she pushed the wheelchair out. Ni Yu trailed closely, and Nie Changqing, wiping blood from his knife, followed, his eyes sharp.