

## Starlit Path 40

### Chapter 40: Flying Sword Technique? This Qualifies?

The blood on the long street hadn't dried, and the scattered citizens had long fled. Overturned stalls and strewn vegetable leaves painted a desolate scene. At the street's end, four figures in black robes and conical hats, each bearing a yellow pearwood sword case, approached slowly. Unlike the teal-robed Sword Sect disciples, these carried at least three swords, marking them as fifth-rank grandmasters—comparable to the Taoist Sect's Han Lianxiao.

Behind them, ironclad Beiluo soldiers, gripping bloodied blades, gave chase, but the grandmasters' speed outpaced the sprinting guards. Their goal was clear: capture the leader. Beiluo was the Sword Sect's target, and they'd been hiding nearby, summoned by Jingyue, one of the Seven Heroes. Lu Ping'an's ruthless slaughter had broken all conventions, forcing them to abandon subtlety for a desperate gambit. Even for grandmasters, storming the city to kill Lu was perilous—encirclement by the army could mean death. Their plan: strike swiftly, kill Lu, and escape.

The Sword Sect bred assassins, thriving on swift vengeance. Kill in the red dust, escape through the white blade. The setting sun dimmed, casting a somber, lethal air over the street. Yi Yue pushed the wheelchair, its wheels grinding against the bricks. Lu, in pristine white robes, propped his chin, his hair framing his face. Ni Yu, clutching her chessboard, puffed her cheeks, staring ahead nervously. Nie Changqing, gripping his butcher's knife, moved deliberately, each step building momentum for the imminent battle.

Luo Cheng escorted the bound nobles—Liu Ye, Zhu Yishan, and Chen Beixun—whose faces were ashen. Chen Beixun's head hung low, his once-pristine beard filthy, his body trembling. The Chen, Liu, and Zhu families were obliterated, their merchant allies slaughtered. Lu's ruthlessness shattered him. He'd thought Lu Changkong's absence would restrain Lu, but it had unleashed him instead. This was a day of blood. Chen Beixun glanced at the approaching grandmasters, but felt no hope. The Sword Sect had fled twice—once at the lake, once at the Chen estate. His faith in them was dead.

The wind howled, the fading sunset glowing like embers. No lengthy preamble, no wasted words—both sides knew their intent.

“Where’s Jingyue?” the lead grandmaster, with a five-sword case, rasped, frowning.

The others shared his confusion, but he dismissed it. “No matter. Our target is Lu Changkong’s son in the wheelchair. I’ll handle the Taoist outcast, Nie Changqing. You three strike—one sword to the throat, then we flee and regroup outside.”

Their sword tips scraped the bricks, sparks flying as their pace quickened, blood energy surging with resonant bursts. A gust whipped up sand and leaves, toppling vendor stalls. “Kill!” the leader roared. Their sword cases trembled, blades springing forth. Spinning in unison, they kicked the hilts of nine swords, sending them hurtling toward Lu, while each gripped their primary blade.

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“Flying Sword Technique of the Sword Sect’s Seven Heroes,” a low, hoarse voice remarked.

Lu tilted his head, unsurprised to see a hunched figure in black emerge from the shadows—Old Huang, revealing himself for the first time. Lu Changkong had tasked him with protecting Lu, and now, facing a crisis, he appeared. Lu’s enhanced soul strength had long detected him, so his presence was no shock. “A first-rank grandmaster, hiding to protect me...” Lu sighed. Lu Changkong’s care for his son was profound. A grandmaster could have bolstered Beiluo’s defenses, deterring the noble families’ rebellion. But in this fight, a first-rank was insufficient.

Old Huang, surprised by Lu’s calm, tensed, his eyes locked on the flying swords. He could, at best, block one for his young master. Lu, unfazed, smirked at the swords. “Flying Sword Technique? This qualifies?”

Nie Changqing stepped forward, his robe flapping under the swords' pressure. Gripping his butcher's knife, his eyes blazed, hair whipping in the wind. With a roar, spiritual energy from his Qi Core surged, merging with five bursts of blood energy, crackling like thunder. "Blade Control!" he bellowed, hurling his knife, spiritual energy entwining it, aiming to strike down all nine swords.

The grandmasters, faces hidden under their hats, charged Nie Changqing, their swords scraping the ground. Time seemed to slow for Lu. As Nie Changqing clashed with the swords, Lu calmly took the chessboard from Ni Yu. While the grandmasters' blood energy roared, Lu leisurely set the board on his lap, even blowing on it to clean it. Two swords slipped past Nie's knife, hurtling toward him. Old Huang's eyes widened, but Lu, serene as jade, plucked a black piece from the box.

As the last ray of sunlight vanished, light and shadow merged. Lu flicked his sleeve, spiritual energy swirling around his wheelchair. With a soft snap, he placed the black piece. A radiant wave of spiritual energy erupted, an invisible pressure blanketing the street.

The world stilled. The flying swords froze midair. The grandmasters' hats shattered, their pupils contracting, hairpins snapping, locks flying loose. The air seemed to solidify, crushing them like a mountain. With a groan, they drove their swords into the ground, falling to one knee.