

Starlit Path 41

Chapter 41: If You Can Withstand My Three Pieces

The last ray of sunlight vanished, plunging the world into eternal night. Beiluo's long street fell into an eerie silence, as if time itself had frozen.

Nie Changqing ceased his attack, his heavy breathing breaking the stillness. He stepped back, gripping his butcher's knife. The four Sword Sect heroes fought with seamless coordination, their swordsmanship formidable. The leader, a seventh-rank grandmaster with a five-sword case, overwhelmed Nie with the others' support. Without spiritual energy boosting his strength and blood energy, Nie might have been riddled with wounds in three moves.

"I'm still too weak," he gasped, hair falling over his eyes, his gaze wistful. "How can I face the Taoist Sect in the south with this strength?"

The Taoist Sect held no allure for him, but someone there did.

Before Lu, Old Huang stood hunched, his face trembling, sweat beading on his forehead. A flying sword hovered inches from his brow, his blood energy nearly stilled. Had some strange force not halted the blade, he'd be dead. Yi Yue clutched her whip, her foxlike face pale with shock. Ni Yu, however, was thrilled, her cheeks flushed. Luo Cheng and the bound Chen Beixun and others stood dumbfounded.

Chen Beixun, in particular, witnessed it: Lu flicked his sleeve and placed a chess piece, and in that instant, the flying swords froze, the four heroes knelt, and the world fell silent. What kind of power is this? His beard quivered, despair flooding his eyes. He'd thought Lu's strength lay in Nie Changqing's mysterious prowess. He was wrong. The true enigma was Lu himself. No wonder Nie, a Taoist outcast, followed him so loyally. The world had been deceived by Lu's façade. It was over—no hope remained. Chen Beixun's legs gave out, and he collapsed.

The street was deathly still. The swords hung suspended, the four heroes kneeling, their hats shattered, hair disheveled, gasping under crushing pressure. They resisted stubbornly. The seventh-rank leader trembled, struggling to rise against the force.

Lu raised a brow. These four were far stronger than the Taoist Sect's ninth-ranked Han Lianxiao. The spiritual pressure he'd unleashed matched what had subdued Han, yet they endured. Unfazed, he plucked another black piece from the chess box on his wheelchair's armrest. Smiling faintly, he gazed at the kneeling swordsmen. "If you can withstand three of my pieces without fully prostrating, you may live."

His voice, laced with languor, echoed across the street. He raised his wrist, and with a snap, the second piece fell. Spiritual energy surged around him, rippling outward in a volatile wave, the pressure quintupling. The suspended swords crashed to the ground, some weaker ones twisting under the force. Three of the swordsmen spat blood, their organs nearly crushed, collapsing fully, faces pressed to the ground, blood seeping from their mouths.

"What... is this?!" the five-sword leader gasped, eyes red, staring past Nie Changqing at Lu, serene in his wheelchair.

"A trifling trick of a cultivator," Lu replied.

The leader groaned, collapsing under the pressure. Lu's third piece, still in hand, never fell. "Pity," he sighed, shaking his head. "Old Nie, clear the field."

Nie Changqing's eyes sharpened. Raising his butcher's knife, spiritual energy flowed. With the Blade Control Technique

, the knife arced through the air, slicing the necks of the four prone swordsmen before returning, a single drop of blood falling from its edge. Blood pooled beneath the bodies.

Lu's wheelchair turned, his back to the fallen. He leisurely retrieved the two placed pieces, tossing them into the box. "Little Ni, carry it."

Ni Yu hurriedly shouldered the chessboard, standing straight and spirited. Yi Yue's face calmed as she pushed the wheelchair, its wheels grinding against the bricks, breathing life into the dead street. Chen Beixun stared blankly, body cold. Liu Ye and Zhu Yishan lay slumped.

"Young Master!" Luo Cheng, in bloodied armor, swallowed hard. "What of them?" he asked, gesturing to Chen Beixun and the others.

Lu, being pushed toward the Lu Manor, propped his chin, rubbing his nose. "Treason demands its due."

His figure stretched long in the twilight, his voice drifting lightly. Luo Cheng inhaled deeply, saluting the departing wheelchair. "Understood." He removed his bloodied helmet and waved. "Execute them."

The soldiers drew their weapons. This time, the street truly ran red with blood. Chen Beixun sat limply, staring at Lu's vanishing form until a sharp pain at his neck plunged his world into darkness.

Lu closed his eyes, recovering his mind. Using the spiritual pressure chessboard to subdue four grandmasters looked effortless but was taxing, consuming soul strength. Rubbing his nose, he planned to rest—sleep would hasten his soul's recovery. But tonight held greater purpose: the Preaching Platform. He'd told Yuwen Xiu and Xiang Shaoyun it could be accessed every three days, and tonight was the third. The platform was vital for rapidly increasing his spiritual energy, either through attribute points or by cultivating practitioners.

"Yi Yue, I'm tired. Back to the manor," he said.

"Understood," she replied, quickening her pace.

Suddenly, Lu's eyes opened. Yi Yue paused. In the night, at the street's horizon, a graceful figure in a white dress stood under moonlight, her hair flowing, dragging a battered form. Ning Zhao, radiant and peerless, spotted Lu and smiled, her eyes crescent moons, her face blooming like peach blossoms.