

Starlit Path 46

Chapter 46: The Price of Seeking Immortality

“Someone actually refined a second wisp of spiritual energy?”

When the system notification popped up, Lu couldn't help but feel a jolt of astonishment. It had only been three days, and yet someone had already used a single wisp of spiritual energy as a foundation to refine a second.

The human body naturally contains spiritual energy—everything in the world does, to varying degrees. Every living being is born with a single innate wisp of spiritual energy. But as time passes and the body undergoes natural changes, this wisp gradually dissipates, scattering into the limbs and bones, becoming so faint it's nearly undetectable until it vanishes entirely.

In a world devoid of ambient spiritual energy, refining more requires awakening and extracting the innate spiritual energy within the body—a process as difficult as it sounds. Yet this very feat underscored the terrifying talent of Xiang Shaoyun.

The **Preaching Platform**, though described as selecting participants randomly, heavily favored those with exceptional talent. After all, those chosen were almost always martial artists of remarkable ability. Nie Changqing, once the tenth disciple of the Dao Sect, needed no introduction. Even Yuwen Xiu, the Emperor of Great Zhou, was a martial practitioner. As for Xiang Shaoyun, known as the Overlord of Western County, he possessed unparalleled strength and valor. Legends told of him at six years old, wielding iron fists with divine power to defeat a grandmaster martial artist. After dedicating himself to martial training, his ability to channel vitality surged, and his cultivation advanced by leaps and bounds. According to the rumors Lu had heard, Xiang Shaoyun's martial prowess ranked among the top three in Great Zhou, the pinnacle of this low-martial world.

“Confirm extraction.”

Calming their mind, Lu selected the option to extract the wisp of spiritual energy. Instantly, the system panel updated: the spiritual energy column increased by one wisp, bringing the total reserve to 101 wisps. This was a solid first step toward the third stage of Qi Refining.

Lu's eyes narrowed, a spark of thought flickering within. Beyond exchanging soul strength, the primary method of advancing in Qi Refining relied on the Preaching Platform. Reaping a share of the spiritual energy cultivated by others? That was the real thrill.

With this in mind, Lu's gaze sharpened. The original plan to create a secret realm and kickstart the spiritual energy resurgence in this low-martial world needed to be accelerated. Providing resources to these chosen individuals would boost their strength, and the stronger they became, the more spiritual energy they could condense—meaning greater rewards for Lu. However, constructing a secret realm and aligning it with a real-world location required careful planning.

Lu's consciousness returned to the present.

Within the Preaching Platform, spiritual energy swirled like mist. Below the Bagua array, three vague figures had already fully materialized. They had even been conversing for some time, though cautiously, avoiding any mention of their real-world identities as Lu had previously warned.

As spiritual energy churned, the three figures looked up in unison. At the center of the Preaching Platform sat Lu, shrouded in swirling spiritual energy, radiating an otherworldly presence—the being they knew as the *Sixth Immortal*.

“Greetings, Immortal,” Xiang Shaoyun and Yuwen Xiu said, their eyes gleaming with fervor as they clasped their hands in respect. Their demeanor was a far cry from their first encounter, now brimming with reverence.

Nie Changqing’s heart also stirred with excitement.

Atop the array, Lu’s form was veiled in mist, exuding an ethereal aura. With a faint glance at the trio, Lu remained silent. The atmosphere grew heavy, an unsettling quiet that felt like ants crawling across the skin.

Xiang Shaoyun was the first to break the silence. He raised his head, his gaze burning as he fixed it on Lu. “Immortal! I was blind to doubt you before, questioning the existence of immortals. I was wrong and offer my sincerest apologies today.”

He clasped his hands again, his tone earnest. “Please, Immortal, grant us another chance at immortal fate!”

Yuwen Xiu’s face flashed with urgency, his mouth opening to speak, but before he could, Lu’s voice, shrouded in spiritual energy, cut him off.

“Those who enter the Land of Immortals receive one chance at immortal fate. That chance has been given. Ask again, and you will be expelled.”

The words, calm yet resonant, echoed through the space. The expressions of Xiang Shaoyun, Yuwen Xiu, and Nie Changqing shifted subtly.

“Great Immortal!” Xiang Shaoyun pressed, undeterred. “You once said you could help us refine the Blood Movement Technique into a true immortal cultivation method. I beg you...”

He had tasted the benefits of refining a second wisp of spiritual energy and knew Lu wasn’t deceiving them. A true cultivation method was crucial. Though he had managed to condense a second wisp through sheer talent, further progress was nearly impossible without proper guidance. The body’s innate spiritual energy was finite, after all.

But before he could finish, Lu’s gaze swept over him from atop the Bagua array. With a casual flick of a sleeve, a tremendous force descended.

*Boom!

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Xiang Shaoyun’s form blurred under the crushing pressure. His body wavered, legs buckling, nearly forcing him to his knees.

“You want me to kneel?!” Xiang Shaoyun’s eyes blazed with defiance. Staggering, he braced himself, refusing to submit. The Overlord of Western County knelt to no one—not heaven, not earth, not even an immortal. Pride coursed through his veins.

“If you seek immortal fate, show your sincerity,” Lu’s voice drifted from the mist, cold and lofty, as if looking down on mere ants. “Without sincerity, how can you seek immortality?”

The words carried an icy detachment, a supreme indifference that sent chills through Yuwen Xiu and Nie Changqing. For the first time, they truly felt the weight of an immortal's presence—arrogant, aloof, and untouchable.

Yuwen Xiu regretted his earlier hesitation. Had he requested the Blood Movement Technique's refinement during their first encounter, he wouldn't be in this predicament now.

The pressure intensified, bending Xiang Shaoyun's spine as if it might snap. His blurred, spiritual-energy-formed face contorted with strain.

At the center of the Bagua array, Lu smiled faintly. With a thought, the surrounding spiritual energy surged, transforming into an overwhelming force. This time, it wasn't just Xiang Shaoyun—Nie Changqing and Yuwen Xiu felt their legs tremble under the weight.

Yuwen Xiu, the Emperor, was both shocked and furious. He, the Son of Heaven, kneel? Never! Yet within the Preaching Platform, Lu held absolute control. The pressure was even greater than three consecutive moves on the Spirit Pressure Chessboard.

The trio resisted briefly before collapsing to their knees on the mist-covered ground. Xiang Shaoyun's legs nearly shattered under the strain. Both he and Yuwen Xiu were shaken to their core—they had actually knelt?

Nie Changqing, however, was less bothered. Kneeling to an immortal for a chance at immortal fate felt reasonable. If he could learn even a fraction of Lu's techniques, like the "Spirit Pressure from a Single Move," it would be worth it.

Xiang Shaoyun, still defiant, raised his head, his form trembling as if on the verge of breaking. Yuwen Xiu was dazed, grappling with the humiliation.

At the center of the Bagua array, Lu seemed to pause, then let out a faint, melodious laugh that echoed like a nightingale in a quiet valley.

“Since you kneel before an immortal, I shall grant you immortal fate.”

“In Great Zhou’s Wolong Ridge, the resurgence of spiritual energy begins...”

“This is your immortal fate. Whether you seize it depends on you.”

The words shook the trio, their minds racing as they pondered the significance of “Wolong Ridge.” But before they could process it, the immortal at the center of the array flicked a finger. A surge of energy, fierce as a dragon, roared toward them, shattering their forms.

Their vision fragmented, and the scene dissolved into nothingness.