

## Starlit Path 61

Chapter 61: Defiance Broken, the Immortal Gate Unlocks

“Secret Realm Rules: Five Heavenly Qi Tokens, five Earthly Qi Tokens. Only those bearing a Heavenly or Earthly Qi Token may enter.”

“Secret Realm Rules: Beyond the barrier, the guardian spiritual pressure is twenty-five times that of one hundred wisps of spiritual energy.”

These were the rules Lu had set when crafting the Wolong Ridge secret realm, costing 10 points of soul strength. They’d also instructed Lü Mudui to spread the first rule far and wide. Everyone knew: without a Qi Token, entry was impossible. So what were these four doing?

On Lake Island, in the White Jade Capital pavilion, Lu toyed with a chess piece, their expression impassive. The spiritual pressure chessboard outlined Wolong Ridge’s terrain in threads of energy. Four figures advanced within the five-mile barrier.

“Xiang Shaoyun... such a fiery temperament,” Lu remarked, lips twitching. They sipped plum wine, then dropped a black piece. The air shifted, clouds swirled, and the barrier’s pent-up spiritual pressure erupted. “I, Lu Ping’an, am generous enough to let you challenge my rules,” Lu murmured. “But fail, and it’s death.”

They raised their cup. “Little Ni, pour.”

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Outside Wolong Ridge, four figures pressed forward like ships racing a current, faces calm under the crushing heavenly pressure. Mo Shougui, a dashing young man with expressive eyes, stared at Xiang Shaoyun's back, squinting. Beyond the Hundred Schools' sages, only Xiang Shaoyun and Li Sansi caught his attention. Growing up alongside Xiang Shaoyun, backed by the Mohist School, Mo Shougui lived in his shadow until age ten. Then, leaving West County to study the Hundred Schools' strengths, he rose to rival Xiang Shaoyun among the world's heroes.

As Mo Shougui watched, his expression shifted. The immense "eggshell" trembled, pale blue energy surging forth. "What is that?" he gasped, having never seen such a phenomenon despite his travels. Could this truly be the immortal fate the Heavenly Mechanism School spoke of?

Li Sansi, atop his ox, raised a brow, his white robe fluttering, curiosity piqued. Xiang Shaoyun's face lit with wild joy. Spiritual energy! He counted roughly—a thousand wisps at least. Absorbing them could shatter his current limits. Kong Nanfei, wiping sweat from his brow, muttered, "The emperor and Master were right. Spiritual energy exists... it could reshape the world's order."

The four quickened their pace, none wielding a Qi Token, driven by a competitive urge to outdo each other. Xiang Shaoyun stepped into the one-mile radius of the barrier. Mo Shougui and Kong Nanfei followed, enduring the pressure. Li Sansi, ever unconventional, stayed atop his ox, advancing steadily.

A clear snap of a chess piece echoed through the heavens. Ripples of invisible force burst from the barrier. Pfft! Xiang Shaoyun, struck by the wave, roared, eyes blazing. His body thrummed with explosive vital energy, like a river surging, his towering frame godlike. Leaning forward, he stood firm, bloodshot eyes glaring. "Immortal pressure? No one will stop me from seizing this fate!" he growled, beastlike.

A prodigy who crushed masters at six, reached five resonances by ten, and was invincible by fifteen, Xiang Shaoyun chased the pinnacle of martial arts. But as Lu's piece fell, the barrier's pressure—twenty-five times one hundred wisps—unleashed fully, a force no mortal could withstand.

Boom! Xiang Shaoyun's feet sank into the earth, cracking it, yet he held his ground, refusing to be flung back or crushed. Nearby, Mo Shougui faced the same pressure. His sword shot skyward, planting into the ground, but the force bent it nearly to breaking. He hadn't anticipated such terror from the immortal site. Sweating, he glimpsed a shadowy figure within the eggshell, its pale eye pressed against the surface, staring out. Someone inside the immortal site?! His heart clenched.

The pressure surged again. Pfft! Mo Shougui spat blood, collapsing face-down, roaring into the dirt. "Give me the Earthly Qi Token!" Fear overtook him—before this divine might, he yielded.

Whoosh! A black token soared from a Mohist expert, landing beside him. Clutching it, the pressure vanished, replaced by a sense of boundless freedom. Gripping the token, Mo Shougui's eyes burned with fervor as he stared at the eggshell.

Li Sansi fared worse. His ox collapsed instantly under the pressure, throwing him to the ground. The force nearly displaced his organs. Drawing his wooden sword, his vital energy flared, but it wasn't enough. "Token!" he roared, abandoning grace. Outside the five-mile radius, a robed Daoist nun tossed a white jade Heavenly Qi Token. It was Li Sansi's sister, Li Sansui, known as Mo Chou, the Daoist Sect's second disciple.

Kong Nanfei, quickest to react, had shouted for help the moment the pressure hit. Mo Tianyu appeared, tossing a Heavenly Qi Token. The three, now holding tokens, felt the pressure lift, but their hearts churned with awe. This immortal secret realm was no Yin-Yang School fabrication—it was real. The pressure had brought them face-to-face with death.

Only Xiang Shaoyun remained, trembling under the pressure, feet deep in the cracked earth. His waist bent, knees quaking violently. Boom! With a roar, he collapsed, knees smashing into the ground, splitting it further. The world seemed to still, silence reigning beyond the five-mile radius. The Overlord... knelt.

A graceful figure emerged from the crowd, her gauzy skirt fluttering—Luo Mingsang, worry etched on her face. “Shaoyun!” She hurled a Heavenly Qi Token with vital force. He caught it, head bowed, and the pressure melted away. But Xiang Shaoyun stood dazed, lost in thought.

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On Lake Island, Lu leaned back, swirling the bronze wine cup. “Interesting. You loved resisting in the Preaching Platform, didn’t you? Let’s see how long you last.” Another sip, another black piece fell, stirring clouds above the pavilion and ripples across Beiluo Lake.

At Wolong Ridge, pfft! Xiang Shaoyun’s eyes widened, blood streaming from his nose and mouth. The mountain-like pressure threatened to crush him. His spine curved, knees trembling fiercely, until he finally knelt. A graceful figure threw him a token, and the pressure dissolved, leaving him in a trance.

Lu shook their head, sipping wine. “He knelt after all. The appetizer’s done—time for the main course. Don’t disappoint me, heroes of the world.” Setting the cup down, Lu extended a slender finger, gently poking the chessboard’s spiritual pressure barrier. Pop.

At Wolong Ridge, as the crowd reeled from Xiang Shaoyun’s fall, the massive barrier shattered like a rainbow-hued bubble in the sunlight. A fierce wind roared, carrying refreshing energy. Through squinted eyes, the crowd glimpsed a majestic subterranean palace emerging.

The immortal secret realm had opened.