

Starlit Path 62

Chapter 62: The Immortal Palace Unveiled

The immortal secret realm was opening! All hearts trembled with awe. As the bubble-like barrier shattered under the sunlight, vibrant energy swirled chaotically around. The forest swayed in the howling wind, startling birds and crows into flight. Even martial warriors with surging vital energy struggled to keep their eyes open.

Dark clouds gathered, a heavy aura pressing on every heart. Xiang Shaoyun rose, staring at the cracking bubble and the misty, ethereal palace emerging from the pit, his expression growing solemn. Twice now, he'd been humbled by "immortal" pressure, forcing him to admit his current limits. Yet this only fueled his resolve. Having reached the grandmaster level, he'd lacked a goal—now, the immortal path opened a new door. One day, I'll stand equal to an immortal!

Li Sansi, Kong Nanfei, and Mo Shougui fixated on the palace as the bubble dissolved. Pale blue energy threads, like intelligent sprites, danced in the air. "What... is this?" Li Sansi murmured, stunned. Mo Shougui's eyes gleamed with shock and greed. Kong Nanfei, adjusting his bookcase, whispered, "Master said these blue wisps are spiritual energy—the key to breaking martial limits and transcending worldly bonds."

His words deepened the others' awe. The Confucian Preceptor's endorsement meant this palace's immortal inheritance was priceless, even amidst the world's campaign against him. Xiang Shaoyun stayed silent, already familiar with spiritual energy—his body harbored it.

The bubble vanished, sunlight's purple hues bathing the palace in noble, mystical light. Its glazed tiles and crimson walls shimmered with vibrant energy. The crowd stood transfixed. Five miles out, Tantai Xuan trembled, his face flushed. "Immortals... truly exist?" His eyes burned with ambition. "With this fate, I could become an emperor among men!"

Mo Ju, fanning lightly, was equally stunned, his worldview shattered. Others—county lords and Hundred Schools experts—shared their shock. Lü Mudui, leaning on his bamboo staff atop a slope, grinned smugly, glancing at the stunned Qianqian beside him, her lips parted in awe.

As the palace glowed in misty energy, Xiang Shaoyun's eyes narrowed. Clutching his Qi Token, he shot forward, aiming to seize the initiative. Li Sansi and the others snapped to action, following suit. A hum resonated as the palace trembled, an ethereal immortal chant echoing. The Qi Tokens in their hands glowed, flying free.

Other token holders, previously hidden, were exposed as their tokens were drawn by an irresistible force. Ten tokens, radiant, floated before the palace. Words materialized in the air, wreathed in immortal mist:

*“Qi Tokens gathered, the immortal gate opens, the great roc rises with the wind.

In the land of immortal fate, bones pile high, life and death rest in heaven's will.”*

Golden light bathed the crowd. The ten tokens spun rapidly, and with a creaking groan, the palace gate opened. A terrifying suction pulled the ten token holders inside, the gate slamming shut behind them. The tokens flared, scattering like meteors across the world.

The crowd stood dumbfounded. The palace had sealed itself after admitting the token holders. “Why did it close?” Tantai Xuan roared, fists clenched, eyes bloodshot—he lacked a token.

Mo Ju squinted. “The tokens, used once, scatter again. If we collect them, can we reopen the gate?”

Tantai Xuan growled, “Finding them again could take years!” He turned, bellowing, “Assemble the army! Prepare fire crossbows! No token? I’ll force the gate open with lives if I must!”

Mo Ju frowned, fanning. “My lord, no! We should seek the scattered tokens to reopen the gate properly.”

“No time! The first to claim the immortal fate gains the edge to become emperor!” Tantai Xuan snapped, ignoring him, issuing orders. Mo Ju sighed, doubting his choice to serve Tantai Xuan.

Other lords reacted similarly. Some sent scouts for the tokens; others, inspired by Tantai Xuan, rallied armies to breach the palace by force. Could an immortal palace withstand hundreds of thousands of troops?

On Lake Island, Lu lounged in their wheelchair, sipping warm plum wine. Above, clouds churned; wind stirred their white robes and hair. Their eyes, threaded with energy lines, tracked the chessboard. “Ten Qi Tokens to open the gate once, then they scatter. Scarcity drives desire—only thus will the world chase this immortal fate.”

Lu sipped, smiling faintly. Their soul strength surged, and through the chessboard, they saw Wolong Ridge—Tantai Xuan’s roars, the lords’ troop deployments. Shaking their head, Lu’s gaze shifted to the palace interior.

Inside, Xiang Shaoyun, Li Sansi, Mo Shougui, and others stood in a vast, silent space. Unlike the vibrant exterior, the palace was dark, damp, and heavy with death's aura. Rows of white candles burned unceasingly, their flickering light illuminating the gloom. "This... feels like a noble's tomb," Li Sansi said, his voice echoing.

Xiang Shaoyun frowned, scanning the surroundings. The palace held thousands of wisps of spiritual energy—where are they now? "An immortal's tomb? Can immortals die?" Mo Shougui mused, clutching his sword, eyes wary.

Kong Nanfei drew a metal compass from his bookcase, but it spun uselessly. "This palace is too strange..." he muttered. Mo Shougui smirked at him. "Doesn't this feel like a trap? Like someone lured us here? Could it be the Confucian Preceptor and the Yin-Yang School's scheme?"

Kong Nanfei stowed the compass, smiling brightly. "You know too much." Before Mo Shougui could retort, Xiang Shaoyun snapped, "Quiet."

The palace's atmosphere shifted. The candles' flames flickered, turning an eerie green.

On Lake Island, Lu's eyes reflected the ten token holders' positions. "The secret realm was designed as an ancient qi refiner's tomb. An immortal fate shouldn't come easily. Spiritual energy within births spirit beasts—kill them to gain their energy. And... the slumbering dungeon lord should awaken."

Murmuring, Lu sipped wine and chuckled. "Life and death, wealth and honor—fate decides." A white piece fell. In the palace's depths, a pair of eyes, sealed for ages, snapped open.