

## Starlit Path 72

### Chapter 72: Bowing Before the Demon

The scene was gruesome, a blood-soaked nightmare, as if the mortal world had become a battlefield of demons.

Seated in his wheelchair, his brow furrowed, he observed the carnage unfolding a hundred miles away. He saw the man, wielding an axe and shield, his body riddled with wounds, blood pooling at his feet, his once-mighty frame now hunched with exhaustion. Behind him stood a strikingly beautiful woman, her face pale, gazing at him with tender devotion.

“So, it’s love that drives him to the demonic path,” he mused, his gaze piercing the vision. “Even a warlord like him, who bows to neither immortals nor Buddhas, harbors a soft heart. For her, he willingly embraces the demon within.”

The man had been ambushed. His return route had been betrayed, leading another county’s governor to send thousands of soldiers, bolstered by master-level warriors and first- and second-rate fighters, to encircle him. It was a trap designed for certain death.

His fingers tapped lightly on the armrest of his wheelchair. If it were just the warlord facing this peril alone, the conditions for “demonic descent” might not have been met. After all, the Warlord of Xi County feared no death. But for the woman behind him, he was determined to carve a path through blood, shielding her from the slaughter.

“A seed of love becomes a seed of the demonic...” he murmured, shaking his head with a thoughtful expression.

In the land of Wuhuang, the concept of “demons” didn’t exist—not like in the novels he’d read in his past life, with their clear distinctions of demonic sects. Here, there were only the Hundred Schools of Thought, none divided into righteous or demonic.

To become a demon was to be consumed by obsession.

“This... could be interesting,” he said, a spark of intrigue in his eyes. “A demon could be a new kind of path.”

With a faint smile, he made his choice. “Forge the Demonic Path.”

The moment he decided, a powerful force tugged at his consciousness, pulling it across a hundred miles to manifest before the warlord.

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The world fell silent.

Only the warlord’s low growls echoed. His strength to wield his great axe had faded, his body exhausted after slaying nearly two thousand men. His spiritual energy was depleted, his steps faltering.

Yet he did not retreat. He did not fall.

Like a god of war, he cut down the soldiers surrounding the woman, pulling her behind him and shielding her with his towering frame.

Her face deathly pale, she let her sword fall to the ground. Entranced, she gazed at his broad, blood-soaked back. Her trembling, bloodstained hands drew a short flute from her sleeve. Known for her exquisite zither skills, she had often played for him. Today, with no zither at hand, she chose the flute instead, determined to play one final song for him.

Her bloodied lips pressed to the flute, her eyes fixed on him as she blew a soft breath, the mournful notes rising, weaving through the blood-drenched ridge.

His hair matted with blood, he leaned on his axe, the soldiers too terrified to approach. Hearing the flute's melody behind him, his hardened face softened, a faint smile breaking through.

The Pingyang County Governor, watching from a distance, smirked. "Even the Warlord has his twilight. A beauty plays the flute as he marches to the underworld... how touching."

He knew the warlord was spent. In truth, if the warlord chose to flee, thousands might not have stopped him. But love had bound him, and that was their only chance to destroy him.

His expression turned cold. The warlord's strength struck fear into his heart, and he needed him eradicated—torn to pieces—to find peace. "Kill him!" he roared. "A hundred thousand taels for the Warlord's head!"

The shout reignited the soldiers' and generals' fervor, their eyes blazing as they charged with weapons raised.

Coughing blood, the warlord felt his body crumbling from the toll of reversing the Spirit Technique. Yet he laughed defiantly, swinging his axe with weary strength, holding back a hundred foes single-handedly.

Suddenly, his eyes narrowed. A majestic force enveloped him. The world around him vanished—the flute's melody, the cries of battle, all gone. Darkness swallowed everything.

Then, at the edge of the horizon, a blood-red light emerged. A figure appeared, as if stepping from a crimson dawn.

The warlord stared, unyielding.

"What is a demon? A single obsession makes a demon," the blood-red figure intoned, its voice resounding through the heavens. "The immortals have risen, so why should demons slumber? Your obsession has awakened the demonic. Do you seek to become one?"

His body wavered, but he fixed his gaze on the figure. Demons were synonymous with evil.

"If I become a demon, can she live?" he asked.

The figure gave a faint smile. "She can."

"Then I choose to become a demon!" he declared, his eyes burning with resolve.

But the figure laughed. "Why should I grant you the demonic path?"

The warlord took a deep breath. Without hesitation, he dropped to his knees before the figure cloaked in crimson light, bowing three times, each thud echoing through the silent void.

The figure, now a demonic incarnation, felt a stir of complex emotions. The warlord, who knelt to no immortal or Buddha, bowed before a demon to save her life without a moment's pause.

Three thousand years of bowing before the demon, yet turning back from immortality.

"You embrace the demonic for her, but she will become your greatest weakness. Are you willing?" the demon asked.

"I am," he replied, bowing again.

"You seek the demonic, but it will cost you a piece of your soul. Are you willing?"

"I am," he said, bowing once more.

The demon laughed, and the crimson dawn blazed brighter, enveloping him. Blood-red streams of energy poured into him, slicing through his soul like a blade.

A hum filled the air. He opened his eyes, the flute's melody returning, the cries of battle still ringing in the distance. His body, once on the brink of collapse, surged with newfound strength, power coursing from his dantian to every limb.

"The power of the demon..." he muttered, his gaze complex.

In his dantian, a vortex swirled, radiating immense suction, like a seed absorbing the blood pooling on the ridge. The blood on the ground slithered toward him like serpents, clinging to his body. His skin turned crimson, etched with dark patterns. The blood evaporated into black mist, cloaking him in an eerie, sinister aura.

The flute's song faltered. Her eyes widened in shock as she stared at him.

Reinvigorated, he swung his axe, the black mist trailing him as he charged. Wherever he went, soldiers were flung aside like leaves in a storm. Three master warriors and seven or eight first-rate fighters rushed him, but he roared, the sound bursting their eardrums and drawing blood from their faces. His axe swept through, severing heads from bodies.

The battlefield froze in awe.

The Pingyang Governor, clad in silver armor, trembled violently. "This... how is he still so strong?!"

"Retreat!" his advisor cried in panic.

But as they turned to flee, the blood on the ground seemed to come alive, forming hands that clutched at their bodies, dragging them toward the warlord.

The governor shed his armor, face pale with terror. "No..."

The mist parted slightly, revealing the warlord's cold, demonic visage, like a god of death. He seized the governor by the throat, lifting him off the ground.

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\*Beiluo, Lakeheart Island.\*

His consciousness returned, and he exhaled slowly. A system prompt appeared before him.

“Congratulations, Host, for successfully forging the Demonic Path and nurturing the first demonic cultivator. Reward: 10 assignable attribute points, transformation reward: Indestructible Demon Body (Beginner)..”