

Starlit Path 87

Chapter 87: The Withered Blood-Red Mandala

“Congratulations on the birth of the world’s first divine beast species, enriching the diversity of life.
Reward: 10 assignable attribute points.”

Beiluo, Lakeheart Island.

Lu, leaning against the railing, sipped plum wine, his white robes fluttering. The system’s reward prompt flashed before him. “A divine beast species? The first phoenix... though still a hatchling,” he murmured, swirling the wine in his bronze cup, a faint smile on his lips.

The transformation wasn’t overly complex, so the reward was only attribute points, not a transformation bonus, which disappointed him slightly. For Bai Qingniao to raise a true phoenix, her path would be long. A phoenix, a mythical harbinger of fortune, would draw the world’s envy if known—even as a hatchling. Whether she could protect it was uncertain.

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Chilian, Jiang Li's subordinate, impressed Lu with her ruthlessness, revealing the world's hidden talents. As for Mo Shougui's death—losing to a chicken—what could Lu say? He stirred, accessing the system panel:

****Host****: Lu

****Title****: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

****Qi Refining Level****: 2 (Progress to Level 3: 445/1000 strands)

****Soul Strength****: 52 (Convertible: 0)

****Physical Strength****: 6 (Convertible: 1)

****Spiritual Energy****: 389 strands

****Transformation Rewards****: *Mysterious Qi Refining Manual*, *Spirit Endowment Technique*, *Indestructible Demon Body (Beginner)*

****World Rating****: Wuhuang Continent [Low Martial]

****Permissions****: [Missions], [Preaching Platform], [Spiritual Energy Deployment]

****Branch Permission****: [Ten Thousand Methods Furnace (LV1)]

****Spiritual Tool****: Spiritual Pressure Chessboard (Mysterious Rank, Low Grade)

****Technique****: *Heavenly Momentum* (Mysterious Rank, Low Grade)

****Assignable Attributes****: 10

Sipping wine, Lu studied the panel. The [Missions] tab flickered faintly. He focused, and the prompt revealed:

“Mission Description: A world’s progress isn’t just about increasing spiritual energy density; biological diversity is equally vital.”

“Side Mission: The phoenix has emerged; is the heavenly dragon far behind? Establish a ‘Dragon Breeding Ground’ and cultivate the first heavenly dragon species.”

Lu frowned, deep in thought. “Phoenix, heavenly dragon... laying the foundation for a high martial world?” he murmured, leaning back against the breeze. Heavenly dragons and phoenixes, divine beasts capable of cataclysmic power, would fit a high martial world. Bai Qingniao’s phoenix hatchling was far from a true phoenix.

“Dragon Breeding Ground...” The idea gave him a headache. To raise dragons, he needed creatures capable of becoming dragons. “A water serpent becomes a flood dragon in five hundred years, a flood dragon becomes a dragon in a thousand, a horned dragon in another five hundred, and a winged dragon in a thousand more.” Serpents could evolve into dragons, as could fish leaping through a dragon gate.

Lu pondered, forming a plan. The Dragon Breeding Ground could tie to the next secret realm. “Ning, more wine,” he said, smiling.

Ning Zhao, sleeves rolled, poured warm plum wine, its fragrance wafting. Lu’s gaze deepened, piercing hundreds of miles to witness another spectacle.

****East Lake, Mechanism City.****

The world’s top assassin, Mo Yihen, failed to kill the Warlord, his sword shattered by a single blow, his body plummeting into the abyss. The Mohist rangers showed no emotion—death was an assassin’s

norm. They crossed the iron chains, aiming to slay the Warlord. One Mo Yihen fell, but thousands more stood ready. Kill the Warlord, and the Xi Liang army would retreat.

Xiang Shaoyun's hair danced in the rain, his steel-like frame unmoved by the storm, his armor glinting coldly. He glanced at Mo Yihen's falling form, noting the odd calm and sense of release in his death. Dismissing the thought, he raised his axe, as if to cleave the rain itself. His warriors roared, their fervor unquenched, brandishing spears in response.

On the chains, black-robed Mohist rangers charged, swords drawn. Azhu, her red robes like spilled ink, ran steadily, crossbow bolts whistling overhead. Xiang Shaoyun's eyes blazed, his axe and shield smashing bolts aside, advancing like a demon. The eighteen-segment mechanical centipede lunged, its blades slicing. His blood qi surged, dispersing rain and creating a void. Demonic qi from his qi core formed a crushing pressure, making the massive centipede falter.

His roar echoed, matched by frantic war drums. He swung his axe, cleaving the centipede in two, charging through its wreckage as it fell into the abyss. Wrapped in demonic qi, he was unstoppable. Grandmasters fell to thousands, but he could slaughter armies. Wolong Ridge had transformed him—ironically, thanks to the Mohist Leader's miscalculation.

The Mohists retreated, and under Xiang Shaoyun's lead, the Xi Liang warriors scaled the city walls. The Mechanism City fell.

Panting heavily, Mo Liuqi abandoned his slow donkey, sprinting through the rain, mud splashing three feet. Corpses tumbled through the waterfall as he raced up the winding path, fearing he'd miss even Azhu's body. Emerging from the forest, he reached the iron chains, teeming with Xi Liang warriors. The city's crossbows lay broken, its walls breached.

Rain streaming down his face, Mo Liuqi looked up. Atop the city, the Warlord stood, unmoved by the storm, more oppressive than the dark clouds. Mo Liuqi's heart clenched as he saw Xiang Shaoyun, axe and shield on his back, gripping a red-robed figure by the throat—Azhu, her robes like a blood-red mandala.

Mo Liuqi clutched a hairpin engraved with “Azhu” in crooked characters. As warriors swung at him, he dodged with spiritual energy, leaping onto their shoulders to race across the chain toward the city.

Xiang Shaoyun, about to toss Azhu off the wall, heard a hoarse cry and paused, turning. He saw Mo Liuqi, wreathed in spiritual energy, and his eyes narrowed. “The Mohists have cultivators too?”

Mo Liuqi's mind reeled, fear surpassing even the terror of facing Lu's spiritual pressure. Azhu, blood trickling from her mouth, heard his cry. In her fall, she glimpsed him on the chain. “You're called Zhu? That's dull—how about Azhu?” “Azhu, take off your mask just once.” “When I surpass Mo Yihen as the top assassin, let me unmask you, okay?” Memories flooded her. Her lips curved faintly. He lived—good. But he'd never remove her mask.

On the chain, Mo Liuqi hurled his silver scissors, guiding them with intent to pierce Azhu's robes and pin her to the cliff. But a few meters out, he lost control. He watched, helpless, as Azhu fell into the misty abyss, a red stain fading like blood from his heart, shattered.

The hairpin pierced his skin, blood staining his palm. Such was an assassin's fate. Rain poured, the world silent. Mo Liuqi's head snapped up, eyes icy, glaring at the Warlord. His scissors, slicing raindrops, hovered before him. A furious, anguished roar erupted, echoing through the cliffs: “Warlord!”