

Starlit Path 92

Chapter 92: Dragons of Destiny and an Emperor's Unexpected Journey

Lü Mu departed, his mind reeling. For the Young Lord of Beiluo, incorporating the Tianji School into his fold was a mere whim. To establish White Jade Pavilion as a transcendent force, absorbing one of the Hundred Schools of Philosophy—was that too much? To the Young Lord, it was not. Even if the world quaked in response, it mattered little to him.

Rather than summoning his spiritual pressure chessboard, the Young Lord remained seated in his wheelchair, lost in thought about constructing the “Dragon-Rearing Grounds.” After a night of contemplation, a preliminary plan had taken shape. The system-assigned task came with a grading system, and the quality of his work would determine the richness of the rewards. Thus, he devoted meticulous care to the creation of these grounds.

Candle Dragon, Winged Dragon, Azure Dragon, Black Dragon, Crimson Dragon, Mirage Dragon, Coiled Dragon, and Cloud Dragon—these were the eight celestial dragons he envisioned. His plan, the Eightfold Dragon-Rearing Method, would establish eight such grounds across the Great Zhou's territory. Sipping plum wine, the Young Lord frowned slightly, his eyes narrowing as if the world had dissolved into dancing lines within his pupils. He had already chosen the locations for these eight sites.

Setting down his bronze cup, he entered the [Preaching Platform] with a thought. At the center of the Eight Trigrams array, he sat, his robes flowing like an exiled immortal. Golden runes swirled around him, shimmering with power. His gaze burned as he reflected on the nature of dragons, drawing on the [Myriad Methods Furnace] to craft unique cultivation techniques for each. Every dragon would have its own distinct character, and thus, each method was tailored accordingly.

The Eight Trigrams runes pulsed, and his soul's intensity seemed to boil. The Eightfold Celestial Dragon Cultivation Techniques were soon complete, each named for its respective dragon. Within the Preaching Platform, the Young Lord grew ever more ethereal. Beyond the Dragon-Rearing Grounds, he began designing a second secret realm, one vital for imparting the Body-Tempering Cultivation Method. His mind buzzed with activity, his eyes blazing as the grounds and the realm merged into a grand, cohesive vision taking shape under his careful orchestration.

In the Imperial Capital, the city gates swung wide. Six magnificent steeds of varied breeds pulled a luxurious carriage, thundering out of the capital at breakneck speed. The entire city buzzed with shock. The emperor, leaving at such a sensitive time? Whispers spread as people sought to uncover his destination. When word reached them that he was not heading to Yuan Chi but to Beiluo City, jaws dropped. The emperor's move caught many off guard. Beiluo City was a place of profound significance, and the capital descended into an eerie quiet as secret missives flew from its walls.

Thirty miles from Yuan Chi City, within a military tent, Mo Beike clutched a letter, his brow deeply furrowed. Tantai Xuan sat in the high seat, his expression grave. "Master, does the emperor's move carry deeper meaning?" he asked, his voice heavy. Beiluo City was a wound he could never erase.

Mo Ju, gently fanning himself, drew a deep breath. "His Majesty... likely acts on the Grand Preceptor's counsel."

Mo Beike glanced at Mo Ju. The young man was exceptional, a pity he wasn't of the Mohist school. "Indeed," Mo Beike said, his voice hoarse and weathered. "The emperor's decision likely stems from Kong Xiu's guidance. The world today is divided into four major factions, apart from Great Zhou itself."

Tantai Xuan leaned forward, nodding slightly as Mo Beike continued. "The first faction is the Northern County, led by the Tantai clan."

Mo Ju fanned himself, listening intently.

“The second is the Western Liang cavalry, under the Overlord’s command,” Mo Beike went on. “The third, the Southern County’s Tang family, a low-profile but formidable force. These three factions, led by regional lords, are poised to carve up Great Zhou.”

Mo Ju nodded. This was the state of the realm, a landscape every strategist had to navigate.

“And the fourth faction?” Tantai Xuan pressed.

“Beiluo City... White Jade Pavilion,” Mo Beike replied.

Tantai Xuan’s eyes narrowed, unconvinced. A single city as a faction? “Beiluo lacks an army of a hundred thousand. How can it stand as the fourth faction?” Though he’d suffered losses in Beiluo, he scoffed at equating it to his Northern County’s might. White Jade Pavilion had only a handful of people—could they rival his tens of thousands of troops?

Mo Beike’s heavy eyelids twitched. Mo Ju’s fan slowed, the tent’s atmosphere growing tense.

“Cultivators are wild cards,” Mo Beike said. “White Jade Pavilion, as the world’s foremost cultivator force, is the wildest of them all.”

Mo Ju’s fan fluttered again. “My lord, the rapid shifts in the current situation stem from the rise of cultivators. Do not underestimate them. Perhaps... the Young Lord of Beiluo alone is worth a hundred thousand soldiers.”

His words were grave. Tantai Xuan inhaled deeply, falling silent as memories of the Wolong Ridge secret realm resurfaced—nightmares of immortal-like power that haunted him for days. He nodded faintly.

“I’ll have our agents in the capital stir the storm of rumors further,” Mo Beike said. “For now, we hold our ground. If the emperor persuades Lu Ping’an to leave Beiluo, our army will retreat another five hundred miles.”

He was cautious. The Yin-Yang School’s master, Wei Luan, had ventured into Beiluo and met a cold end. A sorcerer so enigmatic that even grandmasters might fall to him unknowingly, yet in Beiluo, he hadn’t made a ripple. The Young Lord’s methods grew more terrifying the more one dwelled on them.

At the Scholar’s Pavilion, Mo Tianyu bowed, relaying the news of Yuwen Xiu’s departure for Beiluo to Grand Preceptor Kong Xiu. The old man’s eyes opened, his weathered face twitching. “Why Beiluo City? I hope His Majesty can withstand Lu Ping’an’s unpredictable temperament...”

In Yuan Chi, Jiang Li received word of the emperor’s six-steed carriage racing toward Beiluo. He’d braced for a barrage of nine imperial edicts, but the emperor had taken an unexpected path. “Beiluo... the Young Lord?” Jiang Li mused, squinting. He knew little of the man but had heard of his name, a figure shrouded in the terror of immortal fate.

Speaking of immortal fate, Jiang Li felt a headache coming on. His adopted daughter, the chicken-raising girl, had inexplicably gained such a fate. Her chick had transformed into a blazing phoenix, killing the Mohist master Mo Shougui in a single clash. He'd wanted her to live a safe, simple life, far from war. But immortal fate had turned the ordinary girl extraordinary. Her debut had felled a top-tier grandmaster, yet it was that same fate that saved her life. Jiang Li's heart was a tangle of emotions. That chicken soup... should he still drink it?

In Beiluo City, Lu Changkong's face shifted when he heard the emperor was coming. It wasn't entirely surprising—likely the Grand Preceptor's doing. On the city walls, clad in armor, Lu Changkong stood with Luo Yue, whose expression was equally solemn.

“Old Luo, deploy all elite troops to ensure His Majesty's safety,” Lu Changkong ordered. “No harm must come to him in Beiluo.”

He knew, with the Yin-Yang School's Wei Luan dead, Beiluo was likely the safest place in the realm. Still, better safe than sorry. Luo Yue saluted and left to carry out the command.

Lu Changkong headed to Lakeheart Island to consult his son. Upon arriving, he sensed an odd, tense atmosphere. Dark clouds gathered above White Jade Pavilion, heavy with an almost divine wrath. His heart skipped a beat.

Before the pavilion, Nie Changqing stood with his saber, a sharp, restrained killing intent radiating from him. Ning Zhao glided over like a feather, appearing before Lu Changkong in an instant. “What's happened? Where's Fan'er?” he asked.

Ning Zhao, her white dress fluttering, replied, "The Young Lord is in seclusion. Before he entered, he forbade anyone but White Jade Pavilion disciples from setting foot on the island or meeting him."

Lu Changkong froze, his expression shifting. The emperor was coming to see his son, yet the Young Lord had chosen this moment to seclude himself, barring all visitors. Was it deliberate or coincidental? He said nothing, glancing at the pavilion shrouded in ominous pressure, then boarded his boat and left.

At dusk, on the vast plains outside Beiluo City, the setting sun glowed like a shy maiden's blush, half-hidden below the horizon. A luxurious carriage emerged, pulled by six magnificent steeds, crushing the fiery sunset's embers as it sped toward Beiluo from the Imperial Capital.