

Re: God of Formation.

#Chapter 11: The Black Box - Read Re: God of Formation. Chapter 11: The Black Box

Chapter 11: The Black Box

In a grass field, one kilometer from Bright Pearl Village, the space trembled and a silhouette appeared out of thin air, collapsing to the ground.

Jiang Yawen groaned, struggling to get back on her feet as she turned to look in the direction of Bright Pearl Village.

"I don't know who you are, but I promise you'll pay with your life," Jiang Yawen vowed, her eyes filled with bitterness and hatred.

The thought of losing her four juniors made her gnash her teeth, a thirst for revenge threatening to consume her. She exhaled deeply, attempting to control her erratic emotions.

"As for that snake, his fate will be worse. He'll beg me for death, but I won't grant it."

With her emotions under control, she turned and departed from the field.

...

Jun Wu returned to his mansion, where his two retainers stared at him with wide eyes. Zhang Wei opened his mouth several times as if to speak, only to close it each time.

"What?!" Jun Wu asked, growing tired of his charade.

"Ah..." Zhang Wei rubbed the back of his head and laughed awkwardly. "Young Master, did you... kill..."

Both he and Mao Yun had explored many ruins in the past, and they knew how fierce battles in ruins could be. It was a lawless place where anyone could turn on another over something valuable.

"Yes." Jun Wu nodded and quickly recounted his experience in the ruins.

When Mao Yun and Zhang Wei heard his story, their jaws dropped as they stared at their young master in disbelief.

Finally, Mao Yun recovered from his shock and said proudly, "When your father learns of this, he'll be proud."

"Where is he? Why hasn't he tried to reach me?" Jun Wu asked as he opened the black box.

Mao Yun was ready to respond, but when he saw the contents of the box, the words stuck in his throat.

"This..." Zhang Wei and Mao Yun murmured in unison.

They could count the times they had seen such shiny stones, usually given to them by Jun Wu's father.

Ordinary people like them didn't have the means to possess Spirit Stones, so seeing so many at once left them breathless.

"Young Master, you found this in the ruins?" Mao Yun asked incredulously.

Who would have expected such a common ruin to contain the coveted Spirit Stones?

Bright Pearl Village would become a battlefield if news of the Spirit Stones got out.

"Yes, I was lucky to find it," Jun Wu responded calmly. "Have you sorted through the weapons?"

A sigh escaped Mao Yun as he answered, "Yes, everything's been sorted."

Previously, he'd been stunned when he found many Low Mortal Grade weapons from the ruins, but now he realized the greatest gain lay in the black box.

"Each of you should pick a weapon of your choice. We'll sell two at the auction house, while the rest will be kept for emergencies."

"Yes, Young Master," Zhang Wei replied with a bright smile.

They had been using ordinary weapons, and obtaining a Mortal Grade weapon was rare and costly. Now, they didn't have to worry about that.

"Young Master, thank you," Mao Yun said with a deep bow.

"There's no need to thank me. You serve and protect me—how could I let you use ordinary weapons?" Jun Wu replied casually.

"You may go now. I don't wish to be disturbed."

Once his retainers left, Jun Wu took out the manuals from the box. They were old, but the materials used in their creation were of excellent quality.

The first manual was a martial technique: **Mountain Destroying Fist.**

As soon as he opened it, a notification sounded in his mind:

[Deduce the Mountain Destroying Fist technique?]

[Cost: 10 Silver Coins.]

Seeing the notification, Jun Wu decided not to deduce it immediately and continued to study the manual.

The Mountain Destroying Fist was a Peak Mortal Grade technique, which surprised him.

He asked Mao Yun about the martial techniques they used in battle and learned that they were incomplete low-grade techniques.

However, this Peak Mortal Grade technique meant little to him; the memories of the ancient being contained many powerful cultivation and martial techniques.

Still, he decided to take things slowly, knowing he could copy powerful techniques for his close allies over time.

"This should be reserved for my father," he murmured, placing Mountain Destroying Fist to the side and picking up the second technique.

Contrary to the first manual, this wasn't a martial technique but a forging technique—and not just any technique, but a Spirit Grade one:

The One Hundred Folding Technique.

Filled with anticipation, he began reading the forging manual. The more he read, the more shocked he became.

Since his path differed from everyone else's, he knew he needed to stand out.

As a Grade-1 Formation Master, he anticipated needing many array flags to create powerful formations.

If he could forge these flags without relying on a blacksmith, it would be advantageous and allow him to keep his abilities hidden.

With this in mind, he realized he had to become a blacksmith.

[Deduce One Hundred Folding Technique?]

[Cost: 50 Silver Coins.]

Seeing the notification, a bright smile appeared on Jun Wu's face as he took 50 silver coins from his pouch.

"Deduce..." he commanded in his mind.

[Deducing...]

[Deducing Complete.]

...

In the Liang Clan mansion, the Liang Patriarch, the city lord, looked at his second son, his expression unchanging.

"The Jun family's luck is truly terrifying," he murmured.

News of Jun Wu finding many Mortal-Grade weapons had reached him.

Previously, he had shown goodwill by ignoring the ruins in Bright Pearl Village. However, he hadn't anticipated Jun Wu would find such valuable Mortal-Grade weapons.

"Father, what should we do? With many Mortal Grade weapons in their hands, who knows what they might attempt?" Liang Chun asked impatiently.

"I think it's time we met him," the Liang Patriarch replied in a low voice, tapping his armrest in anticipation.

Chapter 12: Breakthrough: The City Lord Threat

"Have you found the bastard who did this to my son?" the Gu Patriarch demanded from one of his men.

The guard captain lowered his head in shame and replied, "My Lord, we're trying to find him, but I assure you, we will find him soon. He can't escape."

"He'd better not, or else... I'll have your head hanged on the gallows," the Gu Patriarch responded calmly, staring at the guard captain.

"Yes, My Lord." The captain responded, his back drenched in cold sweat as he quickly departed from the Patriarch's presence.

The Patriarch tapped his armrest calmly, though he was filled with rage. "No matter where you run or hide, I'll find you," he muttered, his voice dripping with killing intent.

...

Under a tree, Jun Wu sat in a lotus position, cultivating. The air around him swirled gently, and the breeze blew through his long hair.

Suddenly, a sound came from within him as his blood Qi erupted with strong vitality. The tree shook violently, and the gentle breeze turned into a fierce wind.

Jun Wu was undisturbed by this phenomenon and focused on stabilizing his breakthrough. Since he had returned and sorted his loot from the ruins, he had been cultivating, trying to advance to a Second-Rated Martial Artist.

And now, he had succeeded, becoming an Initial Second-Rated Martial Artist.

When he started his cultivation less than a month ago, he had already moved from an Unrated Martial Artist to an Initial Second-Rated Martial Artist—a speed that left people speechless.

This was beyond mere talent; he was becoming a monster.

In the distance, Mao Yun waited patiently for Jun Wu to complete his training before approaching him.

"Congratulations, Young Master," he said with a light smile.

"Thank you. Have you found the best blacksmith in the city?" Jun Wu asked.

"Yes... He's waiting for you."

In the main hall, an elderly man with sparse white hair and well-built muscles stood straight. His physique was sturdy and more proportional than that of many young men.

When he heard footsteps at the entrance, he turned and looked Jun Wu over from head to toe.

"Are you the one who wants to become a blacksmith?" the man demanded arrogantly.

"Is there a problem with that?" Jun Wu shot back.

"As long as you don't quit halfway, I'm fine with it."

To him, the art of smithing transcended everything else. It was his love, his passion, and anyone who disrespected it was his enemy.

"I'm not someone who quits. Whatever I start, I finish," Jun Wu responded calmly, his voice filled with unyielding resolve.

"Good, good. I like that. Follow me; I've wasted enough time already," the man said impatiently.

"Alright."

Jun Wu wasn't disturbed by the man's impatience but rather appreciated it. Just as he was about to follow, Mao Yun stopped him.

"Elder, my Young Master won't be able to start immediately. He'll begin his training tomorrow," Mao Yun apologized.

"No problem." The elder nodded and departed with large strides.

"What's the issue?" Jun Wu demanded, frowning.

"The City Lord has summoned you," Mao Yun said gravely.

"About time..." Jun Wu clicked his tongue, unsurprised by the summons.

...

A luxurious carriage stopped in front of the City Lord's mansion, drawing attention from people on the street. Curious, many slowed their pace, trying to see who was inside.

Jun Wu, dressed in a long black robe and holding a hand fan with flower patterns, emerged from the carriage. His charm captivated the young women on the street.

"Who is that?"

"Do you know him?"

"What clan is he from?"

"I don't think he's from our city..."

People whispered, their eyes locked on Jun Wu's back. Amidst the crowd, an ordinary young man spotted Jun Wu and widened his eyes. He quickly left, striding away before breaking into a sprint.

Unbothered by the stares, Jun Wu entered the City Lord's mansion and made his way calmly toward the main hall.

Liang Chun emerged from the main hall to greet him.

"It is an honor to have you in our mansion, Young Master," Liang Chun said respectfully.

Seeing their young master acting respectfully toward an outsider, the servants and guards were surprised.

Who is this young man? They all wondered.

Once seated inside the main hall, maids came in to serve them tea. Jun Wu glanced at the warm tea but didn't touch it as he asked, "Where is your father?"

"Ah... My father is cultivating and will be here shortly," Liang Chun replied quickly, surprised at Jun Wu's impatience.

From the corner of his eye, he observed Jun Wu, feeling something was different about him, though he couldn't quite place it.

"Young Master Jun, sorry for keeping you waiting," a boisterous voice called out from the entrance. The City Lord entered with a light smile.

"It's fine, now that you're here," Jun Wu responded calmly.

However, the City Lord and his son couldn't understand where Jun Wu got his pride. As a man considered a fool since birth and an outcast by his clan, what gave him the courage to be so self-assured?

Still, they maintained friendly smiles. After a few pleasantries, the City Lord cleared his throat.

"Young Master Jun, are you aware that your clan has placed a bounty on your head?" the City Lord asked, smiling knowingly.

Jun Wu froze momentarily, then recovered and replied calmly, "I'm not surprised..."

The father and son were taken aback by how quickly he composed himself, but the City Lord continued without letting it bother him.

"Five hundred gold coins is a significant amount. Young Master, what do you think I should do? I wouldn't want to be at odds with your clan," he said with a fake look of conflict, clearly enjoying Jun Wu's predicament.

"What do you want from me?" Jun Wu asked bluntly.

"Hahaha. Young Master, I want nothing. But if you could assist the city, that would be best." The City Lord smiled.

Jun Wu didn't respond, waiting for the City Lord to continue.

"I heard you were fortunate enough to find many Mortal Grade weapons in the ruins. How about this? Give half of them to the city, and I'll turn a blind eye to the bounty."

A single Mortal Grade weapon would fetch no less than a thousand gold coins, and now, the City Lord wanted half of his loot. Was he taking Jun Wu for a fool?

'So you have spied on me. Good. Very good,' Jun Wu thought, seething with rage.

'You dare to covet my loot and threaten me... Now, I know where you stand,' he clenched his fist under the table.

"Before you respond, Young Master, remember that the Gong Clan has a branch in this city. Adding them to your problems wouldn't be good for your situation," the City Lord added with a sly smile.

"Are you threatening me?" Jun Wu asked calmly.

"I wouldn't dare! I'm merely reminding you," the City Lord replied, shaking his head with a smirk.

"Good," Jun Wu nodded and stood up.

He looked at the smirking City Lord and his son for a moment before leaving the main hall. Watching him retreat, Liang Chun looked worried.

"Father, is it wise to threaten a Jun?"

"What could that bastard do? He's nothing but a dead man walking," the City Lord sneered.

"Send someone to inform the Gong Clan. Let's see how long his pride lasts." He laughed wickedly.

Chapter 13: Ambush.

Inside an ordinary house, the relentless sound of hammers reverberated through the air. Behind an anvil stood an elderly man and a young man, each holding a hammer.

They were shirtless, sweat dripping from their bodies like a broken dam as they struck the glowing red iron ore.

"Huh!"

One hour later, Jun Wu exhaled deeply, wiping the beads of sweat from his forehead. He stretched his muscles to ease his nerves.

"You're a born blacksmith," Elder Peng commended, genuine appreciation on his face.

Elder Peng loved smithing and had never wanted an apprentice, but Mao Yun had a way of making people bend to his will.

Reluctantly, he decided to give Jun Wu a chance, though he'd already prepared to dismiss him at the first sign of a mistake.

However, instead of being disappointed, Elder Peng found himself increasingly impressed by Jun Wu's skill and dedication with each moment they spent together.

"Elder Peng, you flatter me," Jun Wu responded modestly.

"Being too humble is a form of pride... Don't let the pride of being talented in blacksmithing get to your head. This is only the beginning; you still have a long way to go," Elder Peng advised seriously.

Jun Wu opened his mouth, unsure of what to say, and could only nod. 'What a strange old man.'

"You've grasped the intricacies of hammering the ingot. Next, we'll work on shaping it into whatever you wish," Elder Peng said, staring intently at Jun Wu.

It had only been three days since Jun Wu began his apprenticeship, yet he had already mastered the hammering technique and was ready to move on.

As for fire control and other skills, they came easily to him. These steps would normally take an average youth six months to a year to learn, but not for Jun Wu.

It was as though he'd been born with a hammer in his hand.

A light sigh escaped Elder Peng's mouth. 'If only I'd had this talent, I could have forged a Mortal Grade weapon.'

Shaking his head, he pushed aside the depressing thought. "Go back and come early tomorrow."

"Yes, Elder Peng," Jun Wu replied with a light bow, grabbing his shirt from the wall. Just as he was about to leave the smithing room, he halted and asked curiously, "Elder Peng, aren't you interested in Mortal Grade weapons?"

Hmm?

Elder Peng furrowed his brow and turned to look at Jun Wu, his eyes widening in disbelief. "What did you say?"

His voice rose. "Did you say Mortal Grade weapons?!"

Closing the distance between them, he gripped Jun Wu's shoulders tightly. "Tell me quickly!" He shook him impatiently.

Jun Wu squinted. He hadn't expected his teacher to react so strongly. "The auction house is going to sell two Mortal Grade weapons."

"Really! When?"

From Elder Peng's expression, he looked ready to bolt to the auction immediately. It had always been his dream to forge a Mortal-Grade weapon.

As a blacksmith, creating powerful weapons was the ultimate goal, but without special materials and guidance, overcoming that mountain was nearly impossible.

Now, with the appearance of Mortal Grade weapons in the city, Elder Peng hoped to gain inspiration and perhaps achieve a breakthrough in his craft.

After managing to escape his teacher's excited grip, Jun Wu left Elder Peng's secluded smithing shop and headed home.

As he left the quiet street and joined the bustling main road, he noticed the crowd seemed more animated than usual, and he caught snatches of their conversations.

'As expected of a Mortal Grade weapon.'

With the influence of the Silver Moon auction house, he knew the city would soon be brimming with people hoping to acquire the Mortal Grade weapons.

As he moved through the crowd, a sudden feeling of unease washed over him. 'What is this feeling?' He scanned his surroundings for anything suspicious but found nothing. Frowning, he quickened his pace, heading home.

Reaching the final alley leading to his mansion, a voice sounded behind him.

"Where do you think you're going?"

Jun Wu halted and turned to see a burly man with a bushy beard glaring at him.

"What do you want from me?" Jun Wu demanded.

"What do you think? Your life."

At the other end of the alley, ten men armed with various weapons approached, looking at Jun Wu as if he were already dead.

"You dared to offend the Gu clan, and you thought you could get away?" a thin man among them sneered.

"Oh, the Gu clan..."

Instantly, Jun Wu understood who his enemies were. "Do you know who I am?" A light chuckle escaped his lips.

The ambushers consisted of Third-Rated Martial Artists, with a few Second-Rated among them. The burly man and the thin one, who seemed to be the leaders, were Peak Second-Rated Martial Artists.

"Do you think we care who you are?" the burly man scoffed and shouted, "Kill him!"

"Good. Let's see who kills whom." A smirk played on Jun Wu's lips as he looked at the men charging toward him.

The air stirred around him, and an array formation appeared before him. "I'll use you to test my new strength," he mused as four powerful wind strikes shot from the formation toward the men.

Whoosh!

The advancing men were caught off guard, unable to react in time, and the wind strikes sliced through them. In an instant, the quiet alley descended into chaos.

Before, in the Ruins, he had been a Peak Third-Rated Martial Artist, but now he had broken through, his power increasing enough to cast far more potent wind attacks.

In less than a minute, bodies littered the ground, the air heavy with the stench of blood. A few feet away from Jun Wu, the two Peak Second-Rated Martial Artists stood trembling.

"W-Who are you?" the burly man stammered, fear gripping his heart.

Aside from powerful clans, he couldn't think of anyone who could produce such a formidable young man.

"I thought you didn't care," Jun Wu sneered, casting two more powerful wind strikes.

Whoosh!

"No!" the two leaders screamed, attempting to flee.

Ahhh!

But they couldn't outrun the deadly wind strikes, and their heads were severed from their bodies, their corpses staining the ground red.

From beginning to end, his enemies hadn't come close to touching him. To Jun Wu, defeating two Peak Second-Rated Martial Artists was nothing.

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Inside the Gu clan, the patriarch sat calmly, sipping his tea.

"Father, do you think those thugs can kill him?" Gu Cheng, wrapped in bandages, looked at his father.

"What do you expect? A Third-Rated Martial Artist killing two Peak Second-Rated Martial Artists along with ten Third-Rated Martial Artists?" The patriarch glanced at his son and shook his head.

"Don't be delusional. He's dead. We'll hear back from them soon. Now, don't disturb me. I need to prepare for the auction."

Unbeknownst to them, they had just added their family to Jun Wu's killing list.

Chapter 14: Becoming an Half-Step Mortal Grade Blacksmith

As the auction day approached, Silver Star City became overpopulated. Many powerful clans arrived in the city, including the Jun aristocrat clan.

With their influence, such news could not escape them. Apart from the Jun clan, the Gong aristocrat clan also sent a representative.

The atmosphere in Silver Star City was tense under the oppressive force of the Jun aristocrats and the weaker Gong clan. Powerful martial artists appeared on the streets with an intimidating presence.

The City Lord was sweating bullets as he tried to keep the city calm without offending the formidable Jun aristocrat clan.

As for the city's inhabitants, they were shocked and scared by the powerful martial artists roaming their streets.

"This is the first time I've seen so many powerful martial artists in my life."

"Not just you. It's like the city is going to war."

"Who knows where these martial artists came from?"

"Who cares? I want to know who put such powerful weapons up for auction."

"Right. Right. I'd like to know, but the Silver Moon Auction House hasn't disclosed the person."

"Anyway, this auction has allowed us to see many powerful martial artists."

While the Jun aristocrat clan entered Silver Star City with a strong presence, they failed to realize that one of their kin was already living in the city.

As for the Gong clan, they dared not throw their weight around in the presence of the Jun clan. Their presence was minimal compared to that of the Jun's.

To maximize his profit, the City Lord leaked the news only to the Gong aristocrats.

Although there were internal disputes among the Jun's, they wouldn't kill a clansman outside. Besides, Jun Wu's father was a force to be reckoned with.

However, the Gong aristocrats held no such reservations. As long as they could kill Jun Wu discreetly, it would be a win for them.

Since learning about Jun Wu's presence, they had been keeping tabs on him, monitoring his every move.

As for Jun Wu, he continued his usual routine, going to Elder Peng's house to learn smithing.

But as the auction day drew closer, Elder Peng grew restless, thinking of ways to get his hands on the Mortal Grade weapon.

So, he asked Jun Wu to come after the auction, which Jun Wu happily obliged.

In his courtyard, a new smithing house had been constructed, and hammering echoed continuously.

Jun Wu had been working tirelessly to understand the initial stage of the One Hundred Folding Technique.

With his high comprehension, he was getting closer to mastering the first stage. After working for another two hours, a bright smile appeared on his face.

"Finally," he muttered, his face filled with joy.

Why was a Mortal Grade weapon different from common weapons? Simply put, Mortal Grade weapons were not solely made of metal but contained inscriptions.

As a Grade-1 array formation master, Jun Wu could create inscriptions, as they were derived from formations. Thus, it was easy for him to understand and comprehend inscriptions.

Apart from that, his primordial heaven meridian shocked him regarding inscription engraving.

The meridian influenced his engraving process, making it easier for him to inscribe.

He had many inscriptions at his disposal, not only from the ancient memories he inherited but also from the One Hundred Folding Technique manual.

Looking at the heated dagger on the anvil, Jun Wu could hardly contain his excitement. He quickly plunged the dagger into cold water to cool it.

After wiping the sweat from his forehead, he picked up the cooled dagger and prepared to engrave an inscription.

Taking a deep breath, he cleared his mind and visualized the Sharpening Inscription he intended to engrave on the dagger.

Not every weapon could hold an inscription. The weapon had to be forged with minimal impurities, impossible without a powerful forging technique.

Fortunately, the One Hundred Folding Technique could remove up to eighty percent of the ore's impurities.

While Elder Peng's forging technique could only remove ten to twenty percent of impurities, Jun Wu didn't have to worry.

He held the engraving knife and began to inscribe the dagger. The process was slow, but after twenty minutes, he finished engraving the weapon.

Holding the dagger, it didn't look particularly different, but Jun Wu knew otherwise.

Whoosh!

He swung the dagger against a nearby log, and it sliced through without resistance. Jun Wu's jaw dropped as he stared at the clean cut.

It took him a moment to recover from his shock. Now he understood why Elder Peng and the clans were so obsessed with Mortal Grade weapons.

A weapon needed at least two inscriptions to become a Mortal Grade weapon. Yet, this dagger had only one inscription, and the results were already astonishing.

"Now, I can be considered a Half-Step Mortal Grade Blacksmith."

The Half-Step title was because the dagger wasn't quite a full Mortal-Grade weapon.

"Now, I should try to engrave the second inscription on the dagger," he mused, eyeing it thoughtfully.

Without hesitation, he began the second engraving. But as he worked, cracks began to appear on the dagger.

"Damn it!" he cursed, quickly halting his work.

The dagger couldn't withstand the second inscription. 'What went wrong?' he thought, trying to figure out why the cracks had formed.

Before he could find a solution, the protective formation he'd set around the mansion was triggered.

Anticipating an attack from the City Lord, he had installed the Silent Echo Formation, costing him ten Spirit Stones. When triggered, it sent a mental pulse to alert anyone inside the building of intruders.

Quickly, he left the smithing room and rushed to the courtyard, where he found Zhang Wei and Mao Yun hurrying toward him.

"I know..." he said quickly, his face serious.

"Young Master, be careful..." Mao Yun warned.

"I know. Let's proceed with the plan."

Since their identities had been compromised, they had already devised strategies to deal with any attacks. And tonight, they would put one of those plans into action.

Swiftly, they went to their positions and hid, waiting for the intruders to fall into their trap.

Outside, ten men dressed in black robes moved silently toward the mansion, their eyes gleaming with deadly intent. For this mission, failure was not an option.

Creak.

They opened the main door and slipped inside, only to be met with two piercing eyes.

Chapter 15: Hell!

At the center of the main hall, Jun Wu sat calmly, staring at the three intruders who had just entered. His enemies thought they could catch him off guard, but little did they know he had been waiting for their arrival.

Huh!

Upon sensing Jun Wu's gaze, the three intruders halted and stared at him for a moment before their faces twisted into evil grins.

They straightened their backs and walked confidently toward him.

"Young Master Wu, you seem to have been expecting us," the stoic man in the center said, dragging his long sword across the tiled floor.

The piercing sound of the sword against the tiles echoed through the hall, and a thick, tense atmosphere filled the room.

Although the three men didn't know how Jun Wu had detected them, they didn't care. As long as they completed their mission, everything would be fine.

"Who sent you?" Jun Wu asked calmly.

His father had many enemies, and Jun Wu couldn't be certain which clan the intruders came from. Before beginning his counterattack, he needed to know who was behind this.

"Why should we tell you?" one of them taunted with a chuckle.

Jun Wu shrugged. "Just curious. One way or another, I'll find out who sent you."

"Hahaha! I'm terrified! Young Master Wu is going to find out who sent us and kill us all!" the man at the center mocked, his face filled with ridicule.

"Enough nonsense! Get over here and hand your life over to us!" the stoic man shouted, his face radiating killing intent.

"Get him!"

Two of the men immediately rushed forward, baring their fangs and looking at Jun Wu as though he were already dead.

It was no secret that Jun Wu was once a retarded fool incapable of cultivating. Because of this, the men didn't see him as a threat. And that... was their first mistake.

Before the men could reach him, Jun Wu rose to his feet, his expression turning serious. *Many of my enemies underestimate me, thinking I'm still my old self*, he thought.

The corners of his lips curled upward into a cruel smile.

"Die!" he shouted, stomping his foot on the ground to activate the formation.

Whoosh!

A sudden gust of wind appeared out of thin air, followed by a blinding blue light.

The men stopped in their tracks, shocked by the sudden light.

"What's this?!" they exclaimed, their faces filled with confusion as they looked around at the bluish glow.

"What trick are you playing?" the stoic man demanded, apprehension creeping into his voice.

Since the appearance of the blue light, his instincts had been screaming of impending danger—but from where? Apart from the blue light surrounding them, there seemed to be nothing else.

"Trick?" Jun Wu shook his head. Since discovering the Spirit Stone in the box, he had already planned how to use it.

Previously, when he activated formations, he used himself as the central node, providing the energy for them. But now, he no longer needed to worry about that.

A single Spirit Stone could power two to three formations for an hour or two.

The moment these men entered the hall, they had already fallen into his trap. As a formation master, Jun Wu didn't need to fight his enemies head-on. That would be a waste of his talent and advantage.

Thus, he had set up two formations to welcome his enemies: the Trapping Array Formation and the Burning Furnace Array Formation.

Looking at their overconfident grins, he chuckled. He couldn't wait to hear their miserable screams when he activated the Burning Furnace Array.

"You're in my formation now. Your fate is in my hands," he said slowly. "I know you don't believe me, and that's exactly what I want."

The stoic man grew upset at Jun Wu's calm demeanor. Formation? What's that? Could a mere formation stop them?

Scoffing internally, he shouted, "Kill him quickly!"

Bang! Bang!

The two men charged into the formation and were violently pushed back.

"What is this?!" they exclaimed, disbelief etched on their faces.

Fear crept into their minds. *Is he telling the truth?* They wondered.

The stoic man shook his head, dispelling their doubts. "Attack the barrier and destroy it! I don't believe it can withstand our combined strength!" he shouted, joining the other two in attacking the formation.

Bang!

The Trapping Array trembled violently but didn't break.

Seeing this, a bright smile spread across Jun Wu's face. Everything was going according to his plan. He was using these men to test the strength of his formation, and the results weren't bad.

With a Spirit Stone as the energy source, his Trapping Array could hold more than two First-Rated Martial Artists.

The three men were all First-Rated Martial Artists, with the stoic man at the Intermediate stage.

"I don't believe this! Attack again!"

Bang! Bang!

The formation trembled, and slight cracks appeared in it. Upon seeing this, a sinister grin spread across the stoic man's face.

"I'll destroy your toy and make you beg for death," he growled, his voice dripping with anger and frustration.

But his joy was short-lived.

The temperature inside the formation suddenly spiked, shocking the men. Before they could understand what was happening, they began to burn.

"Ahhh! Ahhh! Ahhh!"

Their miserable screams filled the hall as they tried to escape the brutal flames. Unfortunately, there was no escape.

Within seconds, their skin charred, and smoke rose from their bodies.

"Release us now, and we won't kill anyone else! Ahhh!" the stoic man shouted.

Jun Wu stared at him coldly, as if looking at a fool. These men had fallen into his trap; why would he release them? Did they take him for an idiot?

"Tell me who sent you," Jun Wu demanded, ignoring their screams.

"Release us first!"

"Let's see how long you last," Jun Wu replied with a shrug, returning to his seat.

Terrified, the stoic man hesitated. He glanced at the two men writhing on the floor in pain. They were barely clinging to life, their vitality completely drained.

They now resembled charred logs; their bodies ruined beyond recognition. Only their Martial Artist constitution had delayed their deaths.

Still, they couldn't escape the flames.

Before the stoic man could decide, the two men succumbed to the fire. Their clothes turned to ash, and their flesh burned away, leaving only bones.

Terrified, the stoic man swallowed hard and shouted, "The Gong clan sent us! Please, release me! I don't want to die like this!"

His previous arrogance and pride had vanished into thin air. All he could think about was escaping this hell.

Unfortunately for him, there was no escape from hell.

Chapter 16: A meeting with Jun Jiahao.

Outside the main hall, the sound of battle echoed in the air for a brief moment before it came to a stop.

From the courtyard to the left, Mao Yun dragged a middle-aged man, covered in blood, toward the main hall.

From the last courtyard, Zhang Wei emerged with a satisfied grin on his face. "Now I understand why everyone's crazy about a Mortal-Grade weapon," he muttered, still in shock.

"Indeed, a Mortal-Grade weapon is entirely different from an ordinary one," Mao Yun nodded in agreement.

Creak!

The door to the main hall was pushed open, and Jun Wu stepped out.

"Young Master," Mao Yun and Zhang Wei greeted respectfully when they saw him.

Looking at their calm young master, the two were inwardly shocked. From Jun Wu's composed demeanor, they knew he had successfully handled his part of the task.

A couple of weeks ago, their young master had been a weak, helpless young man. But now, he could deal with three First-Rated Martial Artists as if it were nothing.

The two retainers exchanged subtle glances as they walked toward him. Though they had initially been forced to serve him, they now willingly decided to follow such a monstrous talent and see where his limits lay.

"Young Master, what should we do now that the Gong clan has noticed our arrival?" Mao Yun asked with a slight frown.

They had come to Silver Star City to start fresh, but who could have expected things to go so awry?

"We do nothing..." Jun Wu said with a sigh. The situation was direr than he had imagined. "We need to prepare for the clan's arrival."

From his encounter with the city lord, he could infer that the Jun aristocratic clan would come for the Mortal-Grade weapons. Now, it was too late to regret.

If he had known the trouble it would cause, he wouldn't have auctioned the two Mortal-Grade weapons.

Neither he nor his retainers had expected such weapons to create such a commotion. Now that things had escalated, they could only go with the flow.

Mao Yun sighed. He hadn't expected their problems to escalate to this degree either. Now, they could only take it one step at a time.

...

In front of an ordinary-looking mansion, three young masters stood imposingly with their entourage at the gate. Their mere presence commanded power and respect.

All the commoners in the vicinity scurried off to save their lives. In a matter of minutes, the street was quiet and empty, save for the Jun's entourage.

"What else should I expect? That bastard will live in such a slum," Jun Hui spat, his voice dripping with disdain.

"This filthy slum makes me want to puke," Jun Wuhan added.

"Let's go in," Jun Jiahao commanded, leading his entourage into the mansion.

The group entered the mansion, their faces riddled with scorn and disdain. Even the guards and maids wore expressions of contempt.

"Welcome, Young Master Jiahao," Zhang Wei greeted them, forcing a smile.

Even the heavens knew how much he hated proud, pretentious bastards. Unfortunately for him, they were the Jun clan, and he didn't dare show any displeasure.

Jun Jiahao looked at Zhang Wei from head to toe before demanding, "I heard my little brother has mysteriously recovered from his sickness. Take me to him—I want to see for myself."

Apart from the Mortal-Grade weapons, his other mission was to confirm the rumors about Jun Wu's recovery.

Many in the clan didn't believe it. For the past eighteen years, Jun Wu's father had sought many famous doctors to find a cure for him, all to no avail.

Suddenly, Jun Wu recovered out of the blue. Something was definitely amiss, and Jiahao had been sent to confirm the rumors.

Still forcing his smile, Zhang Wei led Jun Jiahao into the main hall. Upon entering, they saw Jun Wu seated calmly in the central seat of the hall.

Seeing him, Jun Jiahao and his entourage were stunned. His mere presence exuded an aura of mystery and nobility that was impossible to fake.

Huh?! How is this possible? Jun Jiahao exclaimed inwardly.

The Jun aristocratic clan was a noble clan, and all its descendants carried a noble aura. But compared to the aura radiating from Jun Wu, they all paled in comparison—even those both inside and outside the clan.

Only the elders of the clan came close to matching it.

Noticing their dumbfounded expressions, Jun Wu chuckled inwardly. *I suppose the memories and experiences of the ancient being haven't gone to waste after all.*

"Senior Brother, what brings you to my humble abode?" Jun Wu asked calmly from his seat.

Jun Jiahao snapped out of his thoughts, regaining his prideful demeanor. "Why are you seated? Don't you know you should come and welcome your Senior Brother?"

To him, Jun Wu was an ignorant brat who could easily be taught a lesson and disposed of. He just needed to show him who held the real power.

Without any change in his expression, Jun Wu replied, "I've lacked manners since I was young, as Senior Brother surely knows. Please, take a seat."

"Shut up and come down to welcome us!" Jun Wuhan shouted angrily. He couldn't tolerate Jun Wu addressing them while seated, as if he were superior.

Jun Wu didn't even bat an eye at Jun Wuhan, continuing as though nothing had happened. "If you insist on standing, please be my guest. Now, what brings you here?"

Seeing this, Jun Jiahao's eyes narrowed in rage. *How dare this bastard look down on me? I am the pride of the Jun clan!*

He clenched his fists, taking a deep breath to calm himself.

"Junior Brother, pride precedes a downfall. Watch yourself—you might not be able to stand back up next time," he said in an icy tone.

It was a blatant threat, but Jun Jiahao didn't care. Jun Wu had crossed the line, and he would deal with him mercilessly.

"Thank you for the advice, Senior Brother. If you have nothing else to say, you may leave. I need to rest," Jun Wu responded, waving a hand dismissively.

"You!" Jun Hui growled, gritting his teeth in fury. He wanted nothing more than to rush at Jun Wu and beat him to a pulp. However, he restrained himself, knowing the plan.

As they departed, Mao Yun emerged from his hiding spot and muttered, "Let's see how the clan responds to the Young Master's recovery."

Chapter 17: His First Creation.

Jun Jiahao and his entourage's departure from the ordinary mansion caught the attention of everyone in the city.

The Jun aristocrat clan was a name to be reckoned with, and the people closely monitored every move of the clan.

The sudden visit of Jun Jiahao made it known to all that the so-called trash of the Jun aristocrat clan was living in such an ordinary mansion.

Quickly, news and gossip spread throughout the city, and many began to wonder what was happening.

Meanwhile, in the largest trading pavilion in the city, a middle-aged man was furiously banging on a table.

"What do you mean your men failed?!" he bellowed angrily.

This was their chance to get back at the Juns, but they missed such an obvious opportunity.

Gong Chun had been desperately trying to climb the ranks within his clan, and when the chance to impress the clan dropped into his lap, he thought the heavens had answered his prayers.

Unfortunately, his idiotic subordinates failed the mission.

"Do you know what this means? Hmm?" he shouted, pointing an accusatory finger at one of his men. "If the clan blames me for missing this rare opportunity, I'll have you hanged in the gallows!"

The young man shivered and fell to his knees. "My Lord, please give me another chance. I'll execute the mission personally!"

"Idiots! Do you think the Juns will give us another chance?" Gong Chun scoffed and commanded angrily, "Get out before I change my mind."

....

Meanwhile, the news had also reached the Gu clan.

"So, he's the retarded fool of the Jun aristocrat clan," the Gu Patriarch muttered, rubbing his temple.

"Father, what should we do?" Gu Cheng asked, still furious and eager to exact vengeance on that bastard. Though Jun Wu was a Jun, to them, he was insignificant compared to the rest of the clan.

"Don't worry. How could I allow some trash to look down on us? We just need to wait for the right time to deal with him," his father responded with a sinister grin.

"But first, let's try to get our hands on the Mortal Grade weapon."

Apart from the news of Jun Wu, the most anticipated event in Silver Star City was the auction at the Silver Moon Auction House. All eyes were on the event.

"Father, with all our resources, I don't believe we can't get at least one of the two weapons," Gu Cheng said confidently.

His father looked at him, pride shining on his face. "It's time. Let's go to the auction house."

He was impatient and couldn't wait to claim a Mortal-Grade weapon for himself.

As the Gu clan made their way to the Silver Moon Auction House, every other major clan in the city was doing the same.

For those who had come from other cities, they were already waiting impatiently at the entrance.

The crowd surged in eagerly when the auction house opened its doors. It wasn't every day that one could witness a Mortal-grade weapon.

Even the city lord attended the auction—an event of such importance couldn't be missed.

Among those rushing into the Silver Moon Auction House was the renowned Elder Peng.

Seeing him, many in the crowd knew this auction would be a battle of the strongest.

Soon, the Gao aristocrat clan arrived with their entourage, welcomed by representatives from the auction house.

Shortly after, Jun Jiahao and his entourage arrived. The crowd at the entrance parted respectfully, allowing them to saunter into the auction house with the Silver Moon manager leading the way.

An hour later, the auction finally began. The atmosphere was calm for the first thirty minutes as the auctioneer sold rare pills and talismans.

Then, in the final hour, the first Mortal Grade weapon was brought forward.

When the weapon was unveiled, the previously quiet room erupted in chaos.

For many, this was the first time they had seen a Mortal-grade weapon.

Blacksmiths like Elder Peng stared at the weapon, their eyes shining with awe.

The bidding war began instantly, fierce and unrelenting.

While chaos unfolded at the auction house, Jun Wu was in his smithing room, engrossed in forging an item. Over time, the item began to take shape—a pair of boots.

This was no ordinary forging. Crafting such an item requires complex techniques.

He wouldn't have dared attempt this without the One Hundred Forging Technique.

After two hours, the forging was complete, and his body was covered in sweat.

Before him lay sleek, shiny black boots. Without wasting time, he began inscribing the runes.

He planned to inscribe two crucial runes: **Speed Inscription** and **Wind Inscription**.

Drawing upon his experience with the half-step Mortal Grade dagger, he felt confident in his abilities.

An hour later, he finished the final inscription. The boots glowed with a bluish light for a moment before the light faded.

"Young Master, did you succeed?" Zhang Wei asked nervously, his voice tinged with anticipation.

Jun Wu raised his head, flashing them a proud smile.

"What do you think?" he grinned, picking up the boots and putting them on.

"Young Master, you succeeded!" Mao Yun shouted excitedly.

The two rushed forward to inspect the boots. Staring at the sleek, shiny footwear, they were filled with awe and pride.

Who dared call their Young Master trash now?

"What's special about these boots, Young Master?" Zhang Wei asked curiously.

"Let me show you," Jun Wu responded, moving to the training field.

"Let's spar."

"Alright," Zhang Wei agreed, taking a fighting stance.

Filled with anticipation, Zhang Wei dashed forward, throwing a powerful punch.

Before, Jun Wu would have relied on defensive formations, which Zhang Wei expected. But this time, things were different.

Whoosh!

Jun Wu disappeared, leaving behind only a gust of wind. Zhang Wei's punch hit thin air.

Stunned.

"What speed?!" Zhang Wei and Mao Yun could hardly believe their eyes. This was a speed comparable to a First-Rated Martial Artist.

Though shocked, Zhang Wei was a veteran fighter and recovered quickly.

Turning to face Jun Wu, he was met with two deadly wind strikes.

Without hesitation, Zhang Wei shattered one strike and evaded the other, but Jun Wu had already moved.

Appearing behind Zhang Wei, Jun Wu unleashed four more wind strikes.

"Young Master, are you trying to kill me?!" Zhang Wei shouted as he barely avoided three strikes. The last one grazed his waist.

"Sorry," Jun Wu said, ceasing his attacks and help him up.

He hadn't anticipated the boots would amplify his battle power so significantly.

"Young Master, this is..." Mao Yun trailed off, speechless.

"Swift Wind Boots," Jun Wu replied, then sighed.

"What's wrong, Young Master?" Mao Yun and Zhang Wei were confused.

Despite his success, their Young Master seemed dissatisfied.

"There's a flaw. During forging, I needed Feathersteel Alloy to perfect the boots, but I couldn't find any. So, they're incomplete."

Hearing this, the two retainers shook their heads in exasperation.

With such power, their Young Master was still unsatisfied.

What a monster.

They rolled their eyes and ignored him.

"Young Master, congratulations. With these, you won't be passive in battle anymore," Mao Yun said.

"I can't wait to see the shock on the clan elders' faces when they learn you forged something this powerful," Zhang Wei added with a grin.

"I don't care about those bastards. I'm only waiting for your father's return. I can't predict how happy he'll be," Mao Yun said, his face filled with anticipation.

"I can't wait either," Jun Wu replied, gazing at the horizon.

In his mind, he was already planning his next creation.

The Swift Wind Boots were only the beginning.

He might not be a fighter like others, but he wouldn't lose to anyone.

Chapter 18: Realization.

The following day, news of the auction spread throughout the city.

Gossip and rumors flew around. What astounded everyone was the exorbitant price of the Mortal Grade weapons.

The first Mortal Grade weapon, a spear, was sold for five thousand gold coins, while the second, a saber, fetched ten thousand gold coins.

The Jun aristocrat clan and the Gao aristocrat clan acquired both weapons.

Yesterday was a day the Silver Star City would remember.

While the people talked about the sky-high prices, the City Lord's mansion had a different atmosphere.

Seated on his throne, the City Lord was furious, clenching the armrest of his chair.

"Jun Wu, since you did not heed my warning, I'll make you regret it," he growled.

He couldn't bear the thought of missing such a rare Mortal Grade weapon, especially since Jun Wu refused to sell it to him.

Now, the two powerful aristocratic clans had acquired the weapons and grown even stronger.

As the leader of the medium-sized Liang clan, the City Lord was doing everything in his power to escape the suppression of the two ruling aristocratic clans in the region.

Obtaining a Mortal Grade weapon was critical for their survival.

On the surface, the Silver Star City might appear neutral, but only a fool would believe that.

"Who's there?" he called out.

Creak!

The large doors opened, and a guard rushed in.

"My Lord," the guard said, bowing deeply.

"Relay my command: no store in the city is to sell anything to Jun Wu," the City Lord ordered, his voice laced with malice.

"Yes, My Lord," the guard replied and quickly left.

Watching the guard's retreating figure, a sinister smile spread across the City Lord's face.

"Since Jun Wu decided to sell the Mortal Grade weapon, let's see how he'll spend the money now," he muttered.

Meanwhile, in the Gu clan, Patriarch Gu was seething with rage over the Juns' overbearing behavior at the auction.

However, since he couldn't confront Jun Jiahao and his entourage, he redirected his anger toward an easier target — Jun Wu.

"Keep an eye on him. I want him dead by any means necessary," he commanded ruthlessly.

...

"Jun Wu, my brother has pleaded on your behalf with the clan elders. Return to the clan, and you won't face any punishment," Jun Wuhan said arrogantly.

Seated in the main chair, Jun Wu looked at Jun Wuhan as if he were an idiot.

"Are you done? Then get out," Jun Wu said lazily, too disinterested to argue with the fool.

"You... humph!" Jun Wuhan fumed, but when he remembered his brother's plan, a sinister smile crept across his face.

'Keep acting high and mighty. This time, you won't survive,' he thought, chuckling inwardly.

He left the hall with a triumphant grin. An hour later, the Jun aristocrat clan released shocking news.

Anyone who associated with Jun Wu would be considered an enemy of the Jun aristocrat clan.

The announcement stunned the entire city, and many wondered who Jun Wu was to provoke such action.

The Jun clan soon released his image, plastering it on walls throughout the city.

Gao Chun stood by the window inside the largest trading pavilion, grinning maliciously.

"Since you've acted this way, how could I not help fan the flames?" he said.

"Spread the news: the Gong trading pavilion has banned Jun Wu, and anyone who associates with him will be considered an enemy of the Gong clan," Gao Chun ordered.

"Yes, My Lord," a man said from the shadows before vanishing.

With the Gong aristocrat clan joining the fray, it became clear that Jun Wu had become the city's common enemy.

When the City Lord heard the news, he was pleased. He couldn't wait for Jun Wu to come crawling to him for help.

"Young Master, what are we going to do?" Zhang Wei asked, his voice filled with concern.

Jun Wu, dressed in a black robe, didn't respond. He stared at the horizon, lost in thought.

They were trying to bully him, to force him into submission.

Mao Yun sighed and suggested, "Young Master, why don't we leave the city for another one?"

"And then what?" Jun Wu turned to him, his gaze sharp.

"Those bastards are hell-bent on killing me. If I leave the city under their suppression, I'll fall right into their trap."

Hearing this, Mao Yun and Zhang Wei were left speechless. The situation was too complicated, giving them both headaches.

"Those bastards! Why don't we fight it out with them and teach them the lesson of their lives?" Zhang Wei shouted in frustration.

Jun Wu shook his head and looked at the bright sun hanging overhead. His voice was low as he muttered, "What if I became the sun..."

"Hmm? Young Master, what did you say?" Mao Yun asked, frowning in confusion.

"I want to become the sun," Jun Wu repeated, a rare smile spreading across his face.

That was it.

If he became so bright that no one could overshadow his brilliance, who would dare to bully him?

And if he became too hot, he would burn his enemies to ashes.

The thought ignited a lightbulb in his mind. He didn't have to fight this battle alone.

What he needed was a powerful force that would make his enemies tremble.

"Hahaha!" Jun Wu laughed loudly, startling Mao Yun and Zhang Wei.

The two exchanged uncertain looks.

"Young Master, are you alright?" Zhang Wei asked hesitantly.

"I've never been better. This is the greatest day of my life," Jun Wu declared, his smile radiant.

Unbeknownst to the city, their attempt to suppress Jun Wu had instead paved the way for his rise to greatness.

And now, this marked the beginning of a new era in the martial world.

AN: Please support this book with your golden tickets and power stones.

Chapter 19: Recruiting Elder Peng.

Jun Wu and his retainers did not leave the mansion for the next three days.

Everyone was busy trying to grow stronger. Jun Wu delved into his study of arrays and forging.

On the fourth day, a visitor came to their mansion. It was Elder Peng.

"Why haven't you been attending your apprenticeship?" Elder Peng asked with a deep frown.

Looking at the furious elder, Jun Wu didn't know whether to laugh or cry. While everyone else was avoiding him, Elder Peng was furious at him for neglecting his blacksmith training.

From this, Jun Wu realized that Elder Peng genuinely wanted to teach him how to become a blacksmith.

Taking a deep breath to organize his thoughts, he handed Elder Peng a dagger.

"Elder Peng, what do you think of this dagger? I forged it myself."

Taking the dagger, Elder Peng didn't expect anything extraordinary from Jun Wu.

After all, Jun Wu had only been learning blacksmithing for a few days. How could he possibly forge anything decent?

But as Elder Peng inspected the dagger, his expression changed.

The more he examined it, the more shocked he became. His breathing grew erratic.

"Y-You... You forged this?" he exclaimed in disbelief.

"Kid, don't play games with me," he said, shaking his head. He couldn't believe Jun Wu had forged such an exquisite weapon.

Jun Wu laughed, having anticipated this reaction. "Elder Peng, why would I lie to you? You're my teacher. There's no benefit in deceiving you."

"Besides, there's more if you'd like to see them."

Still reeling from the shock, Elder Peng quickly responded, "Yes. Show me."

Without hesitation, Jun Wu led him to his forging room.

When Elder Peng saw the ten Half-Step Mortal Grade weapons displayed inside, his jaw nearly hit the floor.

In his entire career as a blacksmith, this was the first time he had seen someone learn blacksmithing in a matter of days and create Half-Step Mortal Grade weapons.

What about him? He had toiled away for decades and still couldn't achieve what this young man had accomplished in mere days.

A deep sigh escaped Elder Peng, his face etched with sorrow. His lifelong dream was to forge a Mortal Grade weapon, but he had never succeeded.

Seeing Elder Peng wallowing in despair, Jun Wu understood what was going through his mind and spoke confidently.

"Elder Peng, I can teach you how to forge a Mortal Grade weapon."

Elder Peng raised his head, his face expressionless, but deep down, a flicker of hope burned brightly.

"The greatest difference between an ordinary weapon and a Mortal Grade weapon lies in the runic inscriptions," Jun Wu explained.

"Runic inscriptions?" Elder Peng exclaimed, astonished.

This was the first time he had heard of such a concept.

Jun Wu wasn't surprised. Such knowledge had been lost to time and could only occasionally be found in ancient ruins—if one was lucky.

Without holding back, Jun Wu explained the concept of runes to him.

By the time he finished, Elder Peng's face was a mix of amazement and excitement.

"So that's why I've never been able to forge a Mortal Grade weapon!" he muttered.

"Exactly."

"I can teach you some simple runes, and you'll be able to forge a Mortal Grade weapon. But there's one condition: you must join me."

"Join you?" Elder Peng repeated, realization dawning on him.

Elder Peng was aware of Jun Wu's situation but didn't care. His only passion was blacksmithing.

"Yes. If you join me, you will become a Mortal Grade blacksmith and have the chance to become a Spirit Grade blacksmith," Jun Wu said confidently.

"A Spirit Grade blacksmith?" Elder Peng's eyes sparkled with excitement.

"After Mortal Grade comes Spirit Grade," Jun Wu explained.

"Really?"

"Yes. So, what do you think?"

"I agree! As long as I can become a Mortal Grade blacksmith," Elder Peng responded decisively.

"Really?" Jun Wu was surprised. He hadn't expected Elder Peng to agree so readily.

"What's with that look? A man needs to be decisive! Do I need to sign a contract or something?"

"No, that's not necessary for now," Jun Wu replied, delighted.

...

Back in the main hall, Elder Peng, Jun Wu, and his retainers sat discussing their next steps.

"So, you're trying to create your own force," Elder Peng said, realization dawning.

"Yes. I can't remain passive while my enemies attack from all sides," Jun Wu replied.

"Then what's your plan? Building your own force is easier said than done. Moreover, your enemies won't give you the chance," Elder Peng pointed out.

"I know, and I'm working on it," Jun Wu said, his brow furrowed in thought.

"But I have a shortcut," Elder Peng announced.

Instantly, everyone turned to him with anticipation.

"Join the Blacksmith Association. Your fame will spread throughout the region," Elder Peng suggested.

"Ha! How could I forget about the association?!" Mao Yun exclaimed.

Joining the association would undoubtedly boost Jun Wu's reputation.

"Young Master, I think you should consider it. The associations are powerful enough that even your clan elders would think twice before acting against you," Mao Yun advised.

"With the association's backing, many would hesitate to attack you. No one wants to offend a future Mortal Grade blacksmith," Elder Peng added.

"That's a good idea, but I won't join the Blacksmith Association," Jun Wu said with a knowing smile.

"Then... which association?"

"The Formation Association," Jun Wu declared, a bright smile lighting up his face.

Chapter 20: The Formation Association.

Jun Wu arrived at the Formation Association building the following day. Standing before the magnificent three-story structure, he didn't hesitate and walked inside.

Since he had decided to create his personal force, he would stop at nothing to achieve his goal.

A grand lobby greeted him, with a beautiful lady seated behind the counter. Most of the people in the lobby were elderly men and women.

His youthful appearance immediately caught everyone's attention. Feeling their gazes on him, Jun Wu paid them no mind and walked toward the counter.

"What is such a young kid doing in the association?"

"Who knows? Perhaps he's a disciple of one of the association elders."

"Whatever the case, it has nothing to do with us. Let's focus on breaking through to become Grade-1 Formation Masters."

Most of them were half-step Grade-1 Formation Masters, struggling to find an opportunity to advance.

Finding a complete inheritance on array formations was extremely difficult. Those who possessed one were typically from powerful aristocratic clans.

Standing before the beautiful lady behind the counter, Jun Wu said calmly, "I want to take the exam for a Grade-1 Array Formation Master."

"Hmm?" The lady blinked, looking at Jun Wu with shock and confusion.

"Did you just say you want to take the exam for a Grade-1 Array Formation Master?" she asked, astonished.

It was the first time she had seen someone as young as Jun Wu come to the association for such an exam.

Most candidates were middle-aged men and women, and even they rarely passed.

Before Jun Wu could respond, the people in the lobby rose to their feet and stared at him in disbelief.

"What did you just say?"

"You want to take the exam for a Grade-1 Array Formation Master?"

"How is that possible?"

"I don't believe it!"

"This boy must be here to cause trouble."

In no time, a crowd had gathered around Jun Wu, eyeing him with a mix of disbelief and curiosity. The previously quiet lobby was now buzzing with loud chatter.

"What's going on here? Why is everyone shouting?" A thick and domineering voice cut through the noise.

"Elder Shi!"

The crowd exclaimed and immediately fell silent.

Standing behind Elder Shi were a young man in his early twenties and a beautiful girl, both wearing expressions of pride.

One of the half-step Formation Masters quickly explained the situation to Elder Shi.

Disdain filled Elder Shi's face as he turned to Jun Wu. "Boy, who are you, and why have you come to cause trouble in the association?"

To him, it was impossible for someone so young to be a Grade-1 Array Formation Master. Jun Wu must have come to stir up trouble.

Even Elder Shi's two exceptional disciples, both in their twenties, were still far from achieving Grade-1 mastery. How could a boy under twenty claim such a feat?

"I'm Jun Wu, and I haven't come to cause any trouble. I just want to take the Grade-1 Array Formation exam. Is that too much to ask?" Jun Wu's voice was cold, and his frustration was evident.

Just because they couldn't achieve something didn't mean others couldn't either.

"So, you're the bastard from the Jun aristocratic clan," Elder Shi sneered. His disdain deepened. "If you're not here to cause trouble, how could a bastard like you learn to become a Grade-1 Array Formation Master?"

Jun Wu wasn't fazed by being called a bastard. He stared at Elder Shi and demanded coldly, "What does how I learned array formation have to do with you? Just administer the damn exam, and you'll see for yourself."

His irritation was palpable. Instead of allowing him to take the exam, they were accusing him of causing trouble.

"Why should we, when we know you're lying? Leave now before I lose my patience and attack you!" Elder Shi barked.

"Why don't you try forcing me?" Jun Wu retorted, folding his arms across his chest. "I came here for the exam. Let's see who stops me."

The bold statement caused murmurs among the half-step Formation Masters.

"Could he actually be here for the exam?"

"Maybe. Why would he go to such lengths if he wasn't serious?"

"That's true. It doesn't make sense to cause trouble here. We should let him take the exam, and if he's lying, we can punish him afterward."

Hearing the whispers, Elder Shi frowned. He was affiliated with the Gong aristocratic clan and couldn't allow the Jun clan's influence to grow.

Whether Jun Wu was lying or not, he didn't care. He had to stop him.

"There are no other elders in the association to conduct the exam, and as the only elder here, I say you can't take it. Let's see what you'll do now," Elder Shi declared firmly, his disdain unwavering.

"Elder Shi, why don't you let him take the exam? We're all curious to see if he's telling the truth. If he's lying, you can punish him however you like," an old half-step Formation Master suggested.

Elder Shi's face darkened as he snapped, "I said no."

The entire lobby gasped in surprise. Why was Elder Shi so insistent on not letting Jun Wu take the exam?

Realizing Elder Shi's bias, the crowd sighed and returned to their seats.

Jun Wu clenched his fists in anger. Would he have to leave without taking the exam?

He was frustrated.

With Elder Shi targeting him, it was clear he wouldn't be able to take the exam in Silver Star City. He'd have to travel to another city, which would disrupt his plans.

He needed the fame of becoming an Array Formation Master to attract people to his cause. Without it, his plans would be delayed.

Just as he was about to lose hope, the old half-step Formation Master spoke again.

"Perhaps you could go to Mystic City and participate in the Array Formation Competition starting in half a month," he suggested out of pity, though he doubted Jun Wu had what it took to join.

"Hah! How could he join the competition? It's meant for the best of the best, not some trash relying on his clan's name," the young man behind Elder Shi scoffed disdainfully.

Jun Wu didn't even spare him a glance. Instead, he thanked the old man and left the association hall.

Where better to gain fame than through competition?

"I must join the competition," Jun Wu resolved firmly.