

## Little Girl 271

Chapter 271: Gathering of Heroes

Gui Hu's voice drifted over.

Woman?

Xin Lin's eyes shifted and he looked towards the young girl among the four men and one woman.

The girl was about fifteen or sixteen years old, not very tall, half a head shorter than Murong Ziyue who was also fifteen.

She had a round face and always smiled amiably when she saw people.

If it weren't for Gui Hu's reminder, Xin Lin wouldn't have paid too much attention to her.

Memories of the top ten candidates' names and information from the written and martial arts examinations flashed through Xin Lin's mind.

Among the top ten, there were only her, Murong Ziyue, and one ranked ninth named Zhang Zhiqing.

Ranked sixth in the Martial Arts Examination, Dark Martial Artist Second Rank, top-grade talent, twelfth place in the Written Examination; with such performance, being neither here nor there, it's easy to overlook her.

In Xin Lin's view, the other six or seven candidates were all focusing on the top three, especially on Murong Ziyue.

As for Xin Lin and Little Xinzhuo, they were also the focus of attention, both being Spirit Masters.

With so many people, why did Gui Hu specifically ask him to pay attention to Zhang Zhiqing?

Xin Lin was puzzled and was just about to ask more.

"Grandmaster Jin, Grand Doctor Chu, and Lord Zuo have arrived."

After the candidates, the first to enter were several high-ranking officials from Longteng.

Sitting in the front row, needless to say, were the most favored ones.

It was normal for Grandmaster Jin and General Zuo; one represented the literary achievements and the other the military governance of Longteng.

As soon as they entered the North Square, many court officials followed.

These court officials were largely divided into two factions, each supporting Grandmaster Jin and General Zuo.

The two were like water and fire.

Events yesterday concerning Jin Chen had intensified the contradictions between the two.

Neither Grandmaster Jin nor General Zuo greeted each other, both wearing faces of displeasure towards one another.

Among the court officials, one person was somewhat peculiar, that was Chu Tianyi, who didn't look well today.

Yesterday, Chu Miaoyun's True Qi was crippled, and he, as the Imperial Physician, could not discern the crux of the issue.

He had intended to confront Ping'an Refining Hall, but they completely ignored Chu Tianyi, and he didn't even meet the Hall Master of the Alchemy Hall.

Chu Tianyi, filled with anger, looking at these top ten candidates today only fueled his irritation, hardly sparing them a glance.

Those court officials, seeing that the Dragon Ascending Empress hadn't arrived yet, couldn't help discussing.

"That's Murong Ziyue, rumored to be in the Sixth Realm of Xuanwu Practitioner. She should be the favorite of this Imperial Examination."

"I don't think she's much stronger than Young Master Jin, it appears that the results of the Martial Arts Examination might not be entirely reliable either."

"There are also two Spirit Masters this year..."

A few court officials looked at the candidates' lineup, initially full of expectation, but all were shocked to find that the two Spirit Masters were just kids, disbelief intensifying in their eyes.

No wonder Grandmaster Jin and Grand Doctor Chu both had said earlier that there was a problem with this year's Martial Arts Examination, it really is problematic.

While the court officials shook their heads, suddenly another person entered the North Square.

Seeing the newcomer, Grandmaster Jin went up to meet him, his face full of ingratiating smiles.

The adjacent General Zuo also approached with a smile, seemingly trying to make connections.

Those court officials immediately surrounded the newcomer tightly.

And this person was not any Imperial Noble, but merely a merchant, precisely Jiang Qing from Ping'an Refining Hall!

Xin Lin was also surprised that Jiang Qing would come to watch the Zixiao Palace Exam.

A mere owner of an alchemy hall being able to attend the Zixiao Palace Exam?

Facing the goodwill of Grandmaster Jin and General Zuo, Jiang Qing seemed not to have it in regard.

His gaze passed over the crowd, directly spotting Xin Lin among the candidates.

Chapter 272: Tycoon

Seeing Xin Lin, Jiang Qing hooked his thin lips slightly, bypassing the crowd and completely ignoring Grandmaster Jin and General Zuo, both of whom had plastered smiles on their faces, and walked straight up to Xin Lin.

"Xin, it really is you. I thought I was mistaken. You've also joined this Zixiao Palace Exam."

For some reason, Jiang Qing held a good impression of Xin Lin.

Yesterday, Grand Doctor Chu came to the Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall looking for trouble, and was directly kicked out by Jiang Qing's orders.

While others avoided Chu Mansion with caution, he did not care.

If it were Chu Beiqing who still ran the Imperial Doctor Mansion, he might have shown some respect, but unfortunately for Chu Beiqing...

Jiang Qing smiled brightly, and Xin Lin blinked her large eyes a few times.

"Hall Master Jiang, what brings you here as well?"

"I have some business relations with the Imperial Family. Aside from selling elixir pills, I also trade in things like shoes, jewelry, and Spiritual Treasure Beasts. The Emperor saw me with nothing to do and invited me to come watch the Zixiao Palace Exam."

Jiang Qing smiled, his demeanor at ease.

A mere business relation that could make even Grandmaster Jin and General Zuo treat Jiang Qing with such reverence?

"Hall Master Jiang, could you be the legendary tycoon they talk about, the kind who is wealthy enough to rival countries?"

"A tycoon?"

After considering it briefly, Jiang Qing thought that the title sounded quite nice and that he was indeed worthy of the title.

Xin Lin's mouth opened slightly to form an 'O' shape.

Although she had long noticed that Jiang Qing was no ordinary person, she hadn't realized that the Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall was so formidable.

What Xin Lin didn't know was that her surprised expression, in the eyes of Jiang Qing, was rather adorable.

For the moment, he felt an urge to act and pinched Xin Lin's tender cheek.

"You should try your best. Don't let others bully you."

Xin Lin rubbed her cheek, feeling resigned to Jiang Qing's treatment of her as though she were a child. Alas, when would her small frame ever grow bigger? It wasn't pleasant always being seen as Little Budian.

Yet she heard a cold sneer. Xin Lin looked around curiously, uncertain as to who had made the sound.

Behind Jiang Qing, Grandmaster Jin and a number of court officials were very surprised, particularly Grandmaster Jin as they looked at Xin Lin.

He had already inquired into the identities of the Xin siblings and Murong Ziyue.

It seemed the siblings came from the countryside with no significant background and were thus, in the eyes of Grandmaster Jin, not a threat. Murong Ziyue, however, had immigrated to Longteng Country from another nation half a year ago, and her background was mysterious.

What made Grandmaster Jin cautious, however, was Jiang Qing of the Alchemy Hall.

Although on the surface Jiang Qing was just a Hall Master, behind him, there was the support of a massive force.

That power, far surpassed the reach of the small Longteng Country.

He seemed amiable, but in reality, he was a very shrewd and cautious person, not even Emperor Longteng could gain any advantage over him.

He rarely got so close to someone; just what kind of background did Xin Lin have?

Grandmaster Jin pondered.

As for General Zuo standing nearby, he glanced at Xin Lin, then at Little Xinzhuo, seemingly lost in thought.

"The Emperor arrives, the Empress arrives."

Suddenly, a flash of bright yellow entered their vision. Xin Lin and others promptly knelt, their expressions serious, and ceased all commotion.

Little Xinzhuo also slightly raised his eyes.

The one being surrounded by the crowd and slowly approaching the Dragon Throne was his "Imperial Father."

Emperor Longteng was in his early thirties, with a face like a jujube fruit and a majestic build, sharp eyes, and a mustache on his lips.

Unlike his good brother Chu Bei, although Emperor Longteng didn't have the handsome features of Chu Bei, he still had a very impressive appearance. Perhaps due to holding a high position, there was a sharp light in his eyes that had a commanding presence, one that inspired awe in onlookers.

Chapter 273: An Irresistible Temptation

Is he the one who made my mother and I wander, destitute, and even drove grandfather to death?

Xin Zhuo saw his long-absent "Imperial Father," but there wasn't the slightest hint of excitement in his eyes.

"Your Highness, today you will see your Imperial Father. You must keep your composure and must not let Empress Feng recognize you."

The worried voice of Shi Guiren still echoed in his ears.

Empress Feng... Xin Zhuo caught sight of Empress Feng by Emperor Longteng's side at a glance.

A stunning beauty with flawless features, incomparably different from Shi Guiren.

When Xin Zhuo looked towards Empress Feng, it was as if she had a premonition and met his gaze. Their eyes collided.

Empress Feng's gaze turned slightly stern, and a hint of panic flashed through Xin Zhuo's eyes. Despite his effort to hide it, Empress Feng noticed.

Xin Zhuo panicked; just then, Xin Lin tugged at him, and he quickly lowered his head.

"All ministers, you may rise."

Emperor Longteng waved his hand, signaling the courtiers to take their seats.

Xin Lin noticed that Jiang Qing was seated in the same row as Grandmaster Jin and Zuo Zong, with Zuo Zong in the same row as Chu Tianyi, while the other ministers sat according to their ranks as well.

"You are the top ten candidates of the Zixiao Palace Exam this time, very good. Longteng Country is thriving, and this batch of candidates is full of scholarly and martial talents. I am truly gratified and hope that you will all display your strengths in today's Imperial Examination."

Emperor Longteng's voice was hearty and loud. This year's Zixiao Palace Exam was different from previous years, and although Emperor Longteng had not presided over the Literary and Martial Arts Examination, he had heard about the significant stir it caused.

However, Emperor Longteng did not expect some of the candidates to be so young.

The Xin siblings looked no more than seven or eight years old, with cute and tender appearances that didn't resemble common children at all.

"Thank you, Your Majesty."

The ten candidates expressed their thanks by kowtowing.

An eunuch stepped forward and announced the rules of today's Imperial Examination.

The Imperial Examination is the final round of assessment for this year's Zixiao Palace Exam.

The score of the Imperial Examination accounts for half of the final grade, along with the Literary and Martial Arts Examination scores, adopting an elimination system.

Among the ten candidates, each will face off in pairs, and the victor will become the top scorer of the Imperial Examination.

All ten candidates will gain direct entry to the Qingtian Academy.

Additionally, the first-place winner of the Imperial Examination will receive an extra reward, the opportunity to choose a Spiritual Formula or a Cultivation Technique from the Royal Spiritual Weapon Vault.

Upon hearing this, most candidates showed ecstatic expressions.

The Emperor-level Royal Spiritual Weapon Vault is the second-largest library in Longteng Territory, just after the Qingtian Tower of Qingtian Academy, containing numerous Spiritual Formulas and Cultivation Techniques that are not available on the market.

While all candidates appeared thrilled, Xin Lin quietly observed everyone's reactions, noticing that only Murong Ziyue and the one named Zhang Zhiqing remained calm.

"Pride Corpse, don't just speak halfway. What's the background of that Zhang Zhiqing?"

Xin Lin recalled Gui Hu's earlier words and secretly asked.

Gui Hu sneered coldly and ignored Xin Lin.

Uh, why does this sneer sound so familiar?

Where did I offend him again?

Xin Lin felt depressed.

"Thank you for Your Majesty's great generosity."

The candidates hastily bowed their heads in gratitude.

The top ten candidates stepped forward to draw lots.

Soon, the list for the paired contests was out.

"First group, Murong Ziyue, Cheng Xingwu.

Second group, Xin Lin, Lin Zhong.

Third group, Xin Zhuo, Jin Chen.

Fourth group, Zhang Zhiqing, Mu Ke.

Fifth group, Ren Feng, Chen Nian."

As soon as the draw results were announced, Xin Lin frowned slightly—Little Xinzhuo had ended up facing Jin Chen.

Chapter 274: Well-Deserved

"Little ghost, if you have to blame something, blame your poor fate. Watch how I deal with you shortly."

Jin Chen glared at Little Xinzhuo with ill intent when he saw the order of the duel.

Deal with the younger one first, then deal with the elder.

Neither Xin Lin nor Murong Ziyue are getting away today.

Jin Chen looked self-assured.

Little Xinzhuo, fearless, glared back at him.

"Ahzhuo, be careful. Jin Chen likes to play dirty. If you can't beat him, concede immediately. Better to keep the green mountains intact, than to burn all the firewood at once."

Xin Lin was somewhat worried and advised.

Ahzhuo is a Basic-level Spirit Master, whereas Jin Chen's true strength is that of a Xuanwu Triple. If they really fight, it's still unknown who is stronger or weaker.

Xin Lin was not worried about Ahzhuo's strength but concerned that Jin Chen might resort to the same vile tricks as last time.

"Sister, don't worry, I definitely won't bring shame to you or our mother."

Little Xinzhuo waved his fists, eager and ready to go.

"Ziyue is up next."

While the siblings were talking, the first group of contenders had already taken the stage, with Murong Ziyue facing Cheng Xingwu.

Xin Lin recognized both competitors.

Cheng Xingwu, a contestant at the Xuanwu Second Realm, came from a modest background without notable support, so reaching the Imperial Examination was no easy feat.

Therefore, even though Ziyue was his opponent today, he was fully energized without a hint of retreat.

Both parties performed a courteous gesture.

Facing Ziyue, Cheng Xingwu couldn't afford to be negligent. As soon as he entered the stage, he let out a low shout, and his whole body's bones crackled, channeling all his strength into his fists.

His knuckles changed, turning a bronzed red.

"Copper Hammer Fist," a basic Beginner Cultivation Technique, instantly turns one's fists as tough and enduring as cast bronze.

Similar to Xin Lin's Ghost God Fist, both are boxing techniques, and Xin Lin couldn't help but take a closer inspection.

Cheng Xingwu stepped forward, unleashing a rapid flurry of punches that soon enveloped Ziyue completely.

"Cheng Xingwu's boxing is executed quite skillfully, looks like he's not going to be easy to handle."

Xin Lin listened as several other candidates nearby discussed.

Xin Lin's eyes unblinkingly watched the two on the stage.

"Too many flaws; this boxing technique is simply full of them."

Cheng Xingwu's boxing, considered decent by other candidates, was crisp and neat, targeting many of Ziyue's vital spots.

But in Xin Lin's eyes, it was nothing special.

To Xin Lin, Cheng Xingwu's movements were excruciatingly slow, like watching a movie in slow-motion, and according to the Pride Corpse, peppered with numerous flaws.

"Ugh, why did I think of Pride Corpse?"

Xin Lin curled his lips.

Such a technique stood no chance against Murong Ziyue.

"His movement technique is ok, but the boxing technique is subpar."

"Is the Emperor reminded of the time when he first started practicing boxing?"

"Speaking of the past, I was too dull, inferior in both literature and martial arts to Bei Qing. At their age, it's a pity... Now Bei Qing, he..."

Emperor Longteng and Empress Feng shared their sentiments from atop the Dragon Throne.

Empress Feng's mouth displayed a pleasant smile, but her eyes lingered on Little Xinzhuo.

For some reason, Empress Feng thought she saw a familiar look in the eyes of that child, reminiscent of General Shi of the past.

Could that child be an illegitimate offspring of the Shi family?

Empress Feng's beautiful eyes deepened, and she glanced at Zhang Zhiqing on the field. The opponent swiftly made eye contact with the Empress and discreetly nodded.

Chapter 275: Fellow Townsfolk Meet, Eyes Brim With Tears

On the platform, Cheng Xingwu's attack was in full swing, yet Murong Ziyue didn't seem to be gaining the upper hand.

Bang—

On the platform, Murong Ziyue remained still until she struck, and when she did, it was as swift as lightning. Her long legs whipped out like lashes, seizing a momentary gap in Cheng Xingwu's defense and sweeping through.

Her strike landed on Cheng Xingwu's chest, forcing him to stagger back a step, but Murong Ziyue's momentum was unyielding.

With one kick connected, she followed up with a rapid succession of three or four kicks, Cheng Xingwu's offensive thwarted and kicked directly off the platform.

"Murong Ziyue truly lives up to her reputation. To be defeated by you, I, Cheng, am convincingly outmatched."

Having fallen from the platform, Cheng Xingwu was genuinely convinced.

He had mustered all his True Qi, yet Murong Ziyue hadn't used even a trace of hers, relying solely on her moves to defeat him. The gap between them was self-evident.

Murong Ziyue gracefully descended from the platform.

She gave a salute towards Cheng Xingwu.

"You, are quite good."

For the typically reticent Murong Ziyue, such praise was exceedingly high, at least proving that she acknowledged her opponent.

"This lady is quite capable, indeed a talent that can be utilized."

Emperor Longteng took a longer look at Murong Ziyue, appreciating her significant strength.

"Murong Ziyue does possess strength, but her character is too arrogant. She previously wounded the son of Grandmaster Jin. Such temperament still needs to be polished."

Empress Feng spoke softly.

"Is that so?"

Emperor Longteng said no more.

The second round, however, was between Xin Lin and a candidate named Lin Zhong.

Xin Lin's only memory of this Lin Zhong was that he ranked seventh in the Written Examination and seemed to be thirteenth in the Martial Arts Examination; such results were rather unimpressive.

Xin Lin stepped onto the platform.

Behind her, several fierce glares were directed her way.

Without turning back, Xin Lin knew it was Jin Chen and his group.

Lin Zhong was about fourteen, not tall, skinny, with a pair of perennially droopy, dead fish eyes.

As the two stepped onto the platform, Lin Zhong didn't strike first like Cheng Xingwu did. He lowered his voice, speaking inaudibly to others but Xin Lin.

"You're Xin Lin, right? I know you are an Advanced Spirit Master, and while others may fear you, I don't. Do you know who I am? I am the son of White Bird County Magistrate. You, a wanted murderer, even dare to participate in the Zixiao Palace Exam! I advise you to quickly kneel and concede, then I might spare you your life."

Lin Zhong sneered.

It was a coincidence that Lin Zhong turned out to be from Bainiao City, and the son of the County Magistrate.

This was his first time seeing Xin Lin in today's Imperial Examination.

Xin Lin had previously committed murder and arson in Bainiao City, and her wanted posters were plastered all over.

Xin Lin raised her eyebrows, who would have thought she'd encounter an "old acquaintance" in such a place.

Xin Lin's face fell, filled with shock.

"Young Master Lin, please don't expose me. If worse comes to worst, I'll just kneel and concede, to give you great prestige, alright?"

To Lin Zhong, this seemed to confirm that Xin Lin was cowering.

Lin Zhong grew even more smug.

So what if she was second in the Martial Arts Examination, she would still have to bow and beg before him.

But as Xin Lin slightly bent over, her face suddenly lifted.

"Young Master Lin, have you ever heard the phrase, 'When fellow townsmen meet, a tearful sight to see'?"

Who wants to be townsmen with a murderer like you?

Lin Zhong was about to retort when suddenly, Xin Lin made her move.

All Lin Zhong felt was a dark shadow flashing before his eyes; then, bang, darkness shrouded his vision, his world spinning. The next moment, he tumbled off the platform, lying motionless on the ground, unconscious.

Chapter 276: Xin Zhuo's Fortunes and Misfortunes (Part 1)

Won?

It was only after Xin Lin stepped off the arena that everyone came back to their senses.

Was the victor decided?

In the previous match, Murong Ziyue and Cheng Xingwu at least fought for several rounds.

But Xin Lin and Lin Zhong only exchanged a few words before the outcome was determined.

The question was, when did Xin Lin make her move?

Did she even make a move?

"Emperor, Xin Lin didn't use any Spirit Art, yet Lin Zhong fainted. This woman, she's the most cunning. I've said it all along, she won the Martial Arts Examination by cheating."

Jin Chen leapt forward, his face filled with righteous anger.

He didn't see anything but Lin Zhong suddenly falling from the arena. If that wasn't Xin Lin's trickery, what was it?

"Young Master Jin, a lesser cultivation comes with a narrower vision, no blame there. But to play the fool in public, that's where you're wrong. Who told you that a Spirit Master must use Spirit Art against an enemy?"

Xin Lin gave Jin Chen an eye roll, the kind that said 'Are you an idiot? You really are an idiot.'

"Xin, who are you calling names?"

Jin Chen was furious.

"Shut up! You're making a fool of yourself, now get back here."

Grandmaster Jin, furious, glared at Jin Chen.

With Jin Chen's level of perception, he naturally couldn't see clearly.

But to the likes of Grandmaster Jin, Emperor Longteng, and those other formidable ancestors, whether one had made a move was crystal clear.

Xin Lin had indeed made a move. Although it was just one punch, it was flawless and so fast it was imperceptible.

What astounded people like Grandmaster Jin the most was that Xin Lin's punch showed no weaknesses or style, leaving them clueless about the boxing technique she used.

Jin Chen was gobsmacked by his father's reprimand. Perhaps, he really did miss seeing it.

"If I remember correctly, this child was the second place winner in the Martial Arts Examination, an Advanced Spirit Master with Superior Talent?"

Emperor Longteng couldn't help but take a few more glances at Xin Lin, with a hint of teasing in his eyes.

"Reporting to the Emperor, indeed it's her. Perhaps there was an oversight on my part; her Martial Artist talent is also notable. I shall retest her Martial Artist talent shortly."

General Zuo was also somewhat surprised.

Xin Lin had clearly been tested for Martial Artist talent, she possessed no True Qi. If Xin Lin did have Martial Artist talent, even just a little bit, it would be enough to place her first in the overall scores.

But if she had no Martial Artist talent, how could one explain that punch?

"General Zuo, no need to blame yourself. It's just a victory or defeat, not worth mentioning. Whether she has talent or not will be revealed in the upcoming rounds."

Empress Feng spoke with a smile.

People will only remember the ultimate victor; no one will remember a nobody like Xin Lin.

It was already a stroke of great luck for her to pass the Written Examination.

With Zhang Zhiqing present, unless Xin Lin defied heaven, she, along with Murong Ziyue and Little Xinzhuo, would only be stepping stones for Jin Chen to win first place in the Imperial Examination.

The third round, it was Little Xinzhuo against Jin Chen.

"Kid, you're in for a show."

Jin Chen leaped forward, landing firmly on the arena.

His anger earlier, confronting Xin Lin without thinking, turned him into a laughing stock, and all his rage was now directed at Little Xinzhuo.

Jin Chen's face was dark as he sent a palm strike towards Little Xinzhuo's chest.

Little Xinzhuo might not have talent like Xin Lin's, but he was also a Basic-level Spirit Master, and once he used his Spirit Art, he would be tough to handle.

Jin Chen's preemptive strike aimed to stop Little Xinzhuo from chanting his Spiritual Mantra.

But his palm hit nothing but air, as Little Xinzhuo vanished in an instant.

Appearing suddenly behind Jin Chen, Little Xinzhuo emerged.

"Earth Spear."

The ground shook violently, and suddenly, multiple earth spears emerged from the soil, shooting up.

Chapter 277: Xin Zhuo's Fortunes and Misfortunes (Part 2)

The Earth Spear is a Ninth Rank Spirit Art formed by the condensation of Earth Spirits, a higher-level Spirit Art than the Earth Escape Skill.

The Earth Spear, formed by the condensation of Earth Spirits, resembles a long spear.

Puff puff puff, multiple Earth Spears sprouted from the ground beneath Jin Chen's feet.

Jin Chen was taken aback; he hadn't expected Little Xin Zhuo's offensive to be so fierce.

Moreover, this little ghost was clearly well-prepared, likely having begun Gathering Spirit as soon as he stepped onto the arena stage.

His movement technique was not slow, dodging the first wave of attacks, but a few Earth Spears still scraped his arms and legs, leaving him looking rather disheveled.

"Grandmaster Jin, it seems that Young Master Jin's situation is not too good."

Grand Doctor Chu, with a smile that was not quite a smile, cast a sidelong glance at Grandmaster Jin.

Grand Doctor Chu's own daughter had her True Qi crippled, enduring much scorn from the courtiers, and thus Grandmaster Jin had turned a much colder shoulder to him. Grand Doctor Chu was certainly not willing to pass up the opportunity to strike at Grandmaster Jin.

"Ninth Rank Spirit Techniques are not to be feared."

Grandmaster Jin kept a steady face, not regarding Little Xinzhuo's attack as significant.

The other candidates couldn't help but feel pity; encountering a Spirit Master during combat was truly unlucky.

Jin Chen was forced back step by step, yet Little Xin Zhuo's small face remained unchanged, embodying a calm and composed demeanor.

No wonder some say that when a Spirit Master of the same level confronts a Xuanwu Practitioner, as long as their Spirit Art is skillful, they can completely vanquish several Xuanwu Practitioners.

However, it would be too early to say that Jin Chen had given up already.

Jin Chen avoided another wave of Earth Spear attacks, his face clouded with displeasure.

He hadn't expected that a little ghost whom he hadn't taken seriously could force him into such a sorry state.

Yet, after all, he was a Third Level Xuanwu Practitioner, as he visibly shook his body.

Across his body, a veil-like True Qi surged, spreading like wildfire in an instant, quickly enveloping Jin Chen's entire body.

Jin Chen appeared as if he had been coated in a layer of gold dust.

Stomping his foot down, several sharp-as-blade Earth Spears were instantly crushed into dust beneath him.

He raised his right fist, which generated a wind with a whoosh, aiming a blow at Little Xinzhuo's head.

"Jinkui Skill, Jin Chen's cultivation has indeed improved quite a bit."

On the arena stage, Jin Chen's movements were swift as an arrow, suddenly closing in on Little Xinzhuo.

Several Earth Spears positioned in front of Little Xinzhuo were confronted by the fist's wind, scattering debris.

Forced by the fist wind, Little Xinzhuo stepped back a great distance, his small face flushing slightly redder.

Though Spirit Masters can condense Spiritual Energy, they are not adept at close-quarters defense.

Once Jin Chen employed the Jinkui Skill, both his movement technique and strength greatly increased.

With relentless punches, Little Xinzhuo was pushed back continuously, soon reaching the edge of the stage.

Just one fall off the stage, and Little Xinzhuo would be deemed the loser.

"Little ghost, if I were you, I would have already kneeled and begged for mercy."

Jin Chen was only inches away from Little Xinzhuo, with a vicious smile on his face.

"Even if I were to die, I would not kneel before a despicable person like you."

On Little Xinzhuo's face, there was no sign of retreat.

His body leaned backward, falling off the stage.

Jin Chen sensed the figure before him vanish in a flash, revealing a triumphant expression, already certain of his victory in this match.

Below the stage, the crowd gasped in astonishment.

But at that moment, a faint green glow surrounded Little Xinzhuo.

His body floated in mid-air.

Suddenly, he landed behind Jin Chen.

As he moved his lips, several Earth Spears, thick as wrists, behind Jin Chen thrust forward abruptly.

"Wind Breath Technique! This little ghost is actually a Dual Spirit Master of wind and earth!"

Below the stage, Grandmaster Jin's eyes sharpened, his voluminous official robe concealing the gathering of light in his hands...

Chapter 278: Twisted Victory and Defeat

Little Xinzhuo turned out to be a Dual Spirit Master of Wind and Earth!

In everyone's eyes, they only saw Little Xinzhuo standing suspended in mid-air, his movement technique becoming several times more agile than before.

Below the stage, Grandmaster Jin, being a Spirit Master, instantly realized that Little Xinzhuo's strength and talent had been underestimated.

The source of a Spirit Master's power is the condensation of Spiritual Energy between Heaven and Earth.

The more Spiritual Energy one can condense, the stronger the Spirit Master becomes.

However, most Spirit Masters are only sensitive to one type of Spiritual Energy. Earlier, Xin Lin also thought that Little Xinzhuo, who knew the Ghost Escape Technique, was an Earth Spirit Master.

"Dual Spirit Master!"

Emperor Longteng and General Zuo, especially General Zuo, were deeply shaken upon seeing this scene.

The Seventh Prince turned out to be a Dual Spirit Master!

General Shi, are you blessing the Seventh Prince from Heaven with such a talent?

For the first time in many years, General Zuo felt hopeful.

His decision was already made in his heart.

Sweat covered Little Xinzhuo's forehead.

He also discovered that he was a Dual Spirit Master of Wind and Earth not long ago, during his cultivation of the Five Spirits Introduction.

He didn't tell Mommy and Sister, as he wanted to surprise them.

Under the effect of the Wind Breath Technique, while standing suspended, he controlled the Earth Spirit, intending to deliver the final blow to Jin Chen.

But at this moment, his face turned pale, his body seemed weightless, and he missed a step, suddenly plummeting to the ground.

At the edge of the arena, Jin Chen quickly turned around, saw Little Xinzhuo fall, and swung a fierce punch to Little Xinzhuo's chest.

With that punch, he followed up with several more, hitting Little Xinzhuo hard.

Below the stage, Xin Lin's face drastically changed.

Xin Lin leapt into the air, and Murong Ziyue also jumped up simultaneously, heading towards the stage.

"Those who intrude on the stage, their Imperial Examination eligibility will be revoked."

Below the stage, the eunuch's cold voice sounded.

"Keep calm."

Captain Yang warned in a low voice.

On the stage, Little Xinzhuo's small body flew out.

"He gives up!"

Xin Lin shouted loudly.

Her figure disappeared, dodging the Imperial Guard's intervention, and she caught the falling Little Xinzhuo.

Little Xinzhuo's face was pale, spitting out a mouthful of fresh blood.

"Little ghost, what are you playing dead for, aren't you very powerful? Come back up and fight again."

Jin Chen looked down arrogantly, glaring at Xin Lin and Little Xinzhuo.

Boom—Several Imperial Guards were knocked away.

Murong Ziyue swooped and landed on the stage.

"Murong Ziyue, what are you doing! Emperor, Empress, Murong Ziyue is violating the rules of the Imperial Examination."

Jin Chen saw Murong Ziyue, slightly panicked.

"Murong Ziyue, you have a lot of nerve!"

Grandmaster Jin shouted angrily.

Murong Ziyue stood still, glaring furiously, staring at Jin Chen.

Xin Lin lowered her head, looking at the unconscious Little Xinzhuo, her lips tightly pressed.

How could this happen, Little Xinzhuo was earlier on the brink of victory, why the sudden misstep.

(Mommy, the Spiritual Energy has changed, the Spiritual Energy on him has changed)

Inside the Sealing Spirit Talisman, the Overlord Egg sniffed the surrounding Spiritual Energy and whispered.

The Spiritual Energy changed?

Is it saying that the Spiritual Energy on Little Xinzhuo has changed?

"Someone tampered with his body, his Wind Spirit was interfered with. Only an advanced-level Spirit Master possesses the ability to directly suppress Spiritual Energy."

Gui Hu said gravely.

Little Xinzhuo's talent exceeds Jin Chen's, if this contest continued, Little Xinzhuo would have won.

Someone tampered with it.

Xin Lin suddenly raised her head, staring directly at Grandmaster Jin.

On the scene, he alone has the Spiritual Energy control ability, definitely superior to Little Xinzhuo.

He, he altered Little Xinzhuo's Spiritual Energy!

Chapter 279: Tenfold Payback

In the arena, only Grandmaster Jin possessed the highest Spiritual Power.

Others didn't even notice when he made his move, but Grandmaster Jin, despite all his calculations, overlooked the fact that Xin Lin still had an Overlord Egg hidden in his arms.

Although this creature was lazy and gluttonous, it was ultimately a Spiritual Beast, far more sensitive to Spiritual Energy than humans.

Xin Lin, holding Little Xinzhuo, felt a surge of anger rushing to his head, but he knew very well that now was not the time to settle accounts with Grandmaster Jin.

"Ziyue, come down."

Xin Lin whispered.

Murong Ziyue moved and landed beside Xin Lin.

Empress Feng's face darkened; how dare Murong Ziyue completely ignore her and instead listen to a young girl's command.

Empress Feng grew even angrier at Murong Ziyue.

Little Xinzhuo's eyes were tightly closed, fresh blood continuously seeping from his nose and mouth.

Xin Lin handed Little Xinzhuo to Murong Ziyue, pleading,

"Xinzhuo is severely injured; I beseech the Emperor to immediately order his treatment."

"Xin Lin, what do you mean by that? Are you suggesting that Young Master Jin intended to harm the little ghost? On the arena, fists speak louder than words. There are bound to be casualties. Xinzhuo is simply weaker and should go back to nursing."

Jin Chen snorted coldly.

"I will remember those words, Young Master Jin."

Xin Lin gritted her teeth, emphasising every word.

Emperor Longteng met Xin Lin's gaze.

The little girl had her eyes wide open, her deep black eyes shining with a captivating light.

"Grand Doctor Chu."

Emperor Longteng spoke in a deep voice.

Chu Tianyi stepped forward upon receiving the order.

"It's merely a superficial wound, nothing serious."

Grand Doctor Chu approached and perfunctorily checked Little Xinzhuo's pulse, speaking dismissively.

Just a little ghost, why would he, a grand Imperial Physician, need to diagnose, thought Chu Tianyi disdainfully to himself.

"Xinzhuo's internal organs have been shaken by True Qi, causing internal injuries. It seems the Grand Imperial Physician's Medical Skill is indeed lacking."

Xin Lin's eyes sharpened as she looked at Chu Tianyi.

"And what are you? Daring to question the Imperial Physician's diagnosis?"

Chu Tianyi snorted coldly.

"Xin Lin, leave Xinzhuo's injuries to I; concentrate on the Imperial Examination and don't lose sight of the greater picture."

General Zuo signaled Murong Ziyue to hand over the patient to him.

Murong Ziyue glanced at Xin Lin, who nodded in agreement.

She had already secretly observed that although Ah Zhuo was internally injured, fortunately, it wasn't fatal.

His revealed talent and courage were enough to gain General Zuo's support.

Murong Ziyue then handed over Little Xinzhuo, and General Zuo immediately ordered someone to take Xinzhuo aside for treatment.

After the third group, Zhang Zhiqing and Mu Ke entered the arena for the fourth group.

Jin Chen, looking very pleased with himself, returned to the line.

He glanced at Xin Lin with malice and said,

"That little ghost is really lucky to be alive; if not for my Golden Silk Robe, he would've been dead."

Jin Chen, seeing Little Xinzhuo not killed by his own hand, was somewhat displeased, completely unaware that his success relied solely on his father's capabilities, arrogantly assuming it was his own skill.

"Jin Chen, the second round, tenfold. You punched Ah Zhuo three times, that makes it thirty punches. If one punch is missing, I, Xin Lin, would rather give up my place in this Imperial Examination."

Xin Lin spoke in a low voice.

"A joke, do you think I'm like that useless Lin Zhong?"

Jin Chen scoffed.

"And me too."

Murong Ziyue said blandly, her tone as casual as if she were talking about eating or drinking.

Jin Chen sneered, paying no heed to Murong Ziyue and Xin Lin's words.

The draw results, Empress had already arranged everything.

Murong Ziyue, enjoy your arrogance a little longer; in the next round, we will see how you fare.

Chapter 280: Snatched Without Warning

The results for the fourth and fifth groups were quickly revealed.

The winners were Zhang Zhiqing and Chen Nian.

Xin Lin additionally paid extra attention and noticed that Zhang Zhiqing's strength was not extraordinary, roughly around the Third Level of Xuanwu Practitioners, narrowly advancing over Mu Ke.

However, since even the Pride Corpse said so, Xin Lin remained extra vigilant towards this person, not ruling out the possibility that they might be concealing their true strength.

"The first round of the Imperial Examination is over. Those advancing to the next round are Murong Ziyue, Xin Lin, Jin Chen, Zhang Zhiqing, and Chen Nian. Five candidates, step forward and draw your lots for the second round of the Imperial Examination. Among you, one will have a bye, advancing directly to the third round, becoming one of the top three in the Imperial Examination."

After the chief eunuch finished speaking, he commanded someone to bring over a jade tray, within which lay five slips of fortune-telling paper.

Jin Chen was secretly pleased; as long as he grabbed the slip with the mark, he could advance directly.

The five candidates stepped forward.

Xin Lin looked at the jade tray, all five fortune-telling slips seemed no different from one another.

She raised Fu Xi's Energy, quickly concentrating it in her eyes.

Among the five fortune-telling slips, two were labeled "one," two were labeled "two," and only one slip was blank.

All five people reached out simultaneously.

Murong Ziyue was the first to draw a slip with "two" written on it; Zhang Zhiqing followed suit and also got a slip with the number "two."

Among the remaining three slips, Jin Chen did not hesitate and reached straight for the blank slip.

Xin Lin also made her move at the same time, while Chen Nian was the slowest. Just as Jin Chen was about to touch the slip that guaranteed advancement, his hand suddenly slipped, as if struck by some mysterious force, and he ended up with a slip in his hand.

Xin Lin swiftly took the slip that originally belonged to Chen Mu; Chen Nian ended up with the last slip.

Jin Chen's face darkened, looking at his hand, he wished he could chop it off. What just happened? How did it suddenly slip?

One after another, the five opened their slips.

"Brother Chen, shall we swap our slips?"

Before opening her slip, Xin Lin turned to Chen Nian next to her with a beaming smile.

Chen Nian hesitated for a moment.

The smile of this little fellow in front of him really made it hard for anyone to refuse.

He didn't have the heart to refuse and swapped slips with Xin Lin.

Everyone opened their slips.

"Chen Nian, you have a bye in the second round and directly advance to the third round of the Imperial Examination, becoming one of the top three."

"First group, Jin Chen... versus Xin Lin. Second group, Murong Ziyue versus Zhang Zhiqing."

Upon reviewing the slips, the chief eunuch hesitated before announcing the results.

Empress Feng and Grandmaster Jin's expressions changed slightly as they thought to themselves.

"What's wrong with Jin Chen, how could he have drawn the wrong slip?"

However, it was fortunate that the pairing of Murong Ziyue and Zhang Zhiqing was not mistaken.

Even if Jin Chen were underperforming, it's improbable that he couldn't even beat a little girl.

"Be careful. Watch out for... Grandmaster Jin."

Murong Ziyue had not expected that Xin Lin would actually face Jin Chen.

Xin Lin was also surprised; Murong Ziyue had also realized that the matter with Little Xinzhuo was manipulated by Grandmaster Jin.

She is clearly a Martial Artist, so how could she have noticed something amiss with Spiritual Energy?

It was only now that Xin Lin started to believe what Gui Hu had said earlier; could there really be something peculiar about Ziyue?

"Xin surname, didn't you want me to return the favor tenfold? As you wish, I'll let you lose even more miserably than that little ghost."

Upon seeing Chen Nian snatch away his opportunity to advance directly, Jin Chen was visibly displeased.

However, Chen Nian was not his match at all, as long as Zhang Zhiqing takes down Murong Ziyue, his first place would almost be a certainty!