

Little Girl 351

Chapter 351: Den of Thieves or Monastery

Hey!

To think he doesn't even care about Empress Feng's request to meet.

This Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship sure has some character.

Xin Lin thought to herself.

Xin Lin's principle in dealing with people is rather simple.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Beside her, Ma Jingtian was still babbling on.

Emperor Longteng and the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship from Taichang Temple are sworn friends, the emperor often visits Taichang Temple to consult the Minister about state affairs.

Rumors have it, he's an old Monk esteemed and respected, his hair and beard all white, with a benevolent and kind appearance.

Others have heard he's a stern Monk of great martial prowess, with an intimidating presence.

Of course, these are all just rumors.

After all, the Minister from Taichang Temple who lives a secluded life is rarely seen in public.

Xin Lin noticed that the common folk visiting Taichang Temple also had various desires.

There were those praying for children, wealth, household peace, and good health.

Like her, coming here with a sword to perform Transcendence, was truly unusual.

Xin Lin thought to herself and randomly stopped a young monk passing by to ask.

"Little monk, tell me, who at Taichang Temple can perform Transcendence?"

Xin Lin figured, as long as someone could perform Transcendence, with so many people around, she likely wouldn't get to meet the elusive old Monk of the Minister.

"Transcendence is usually conducted by monks in Central Temple, little benefactor, if you have deceased relatives or friends to transcend, please come this way."

The young monk was very polite, bowing to Xin Lin.

"I am looking for the one with the highest cultivation, oldest age, and most powerful Transcendence?"

Xin Lin gestured with a wave of her hand.

The nine Yin Sha within this sword can't be managed by just any Monk or Taoist.

According to Zhao Guihu, it has to be someone of profound Taoist virtues.

The young monk thought for a moment, then earnestly said.

"Little benefactor, do you intend to find the oldest, the one with the highest cultivation, or the one most adept at Transcendence? In our temple, the oldest is Saint Monk Pujisi, he is a hundred and thirty years old; the one who has performed the most powerful Transcendences is Master Qingyu; and naturally, the one with the most formidable cultivation is the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship."

The young monk's face filled with reverence when he mentioned the Minister.

Lord Taichang, truly the idol of all the novice monks in Taichang Temple.

I thought, this benefactor would ask more questions.

Little did I know Xin Lin's next question would be.

"Among these three people, who charges the least for incense oil money?"

"..."

Both the young monk and Ma Jingtian's mouths twitched fiercely.

As a modern atheist, Xin Lin was always rather dismissive of various temples.

However, she understands the rule of offering incense oil money when entering temples.

Since all can perform Transcendence, of course, choose the cheapest one.

"Amitabha."

The young monk from Taichang Temple still had great decorum; after pausing for a moment, he said.

"Please head to Shansheng Hall to find Master Qingyu."

After that, he pointed Xin Lin and Ma Jingtian down a path.

Xin Lin and Ma Jingtian turned down a bamboo-lined path and arrived in front of Shansheng Hall.

Indeed, there were significantly fewer people lined up outside Shansheng Hall, only about a dozen or so.

They walked a few steps and were stopped by a middle-aged Monk dressed in a yellow Kasaya.

The burly Monk had a face full of flesh and smelled strongly of meat and wine, clearly a meat-loving Monk.

"Are the two of you here to perform Transcendence for relatives or friends? Transcend one person for one thousand silver."

Upon hearing that, Xin Lin's face turned pale.

"Transcending one person for one thousand silver, isn't it nine thousand taels for nine people? Is this a temple or a den of robbers!"

Xin Lin's outcry also caused the face of the meat-loving Monk to change.

Chapter 352: Show You Who's Boss

He sneered.

"No money, yet you want to enter Shansheng Hall? Someone, throw these two poor devils out!"

Just then, from the bamboo path beside them, leapt out seven or eight robust Monks, glaring at Xin Lin with menacing eyes.

"Little Boss, these are all Xuanwu Practitioners, each with at least the cultivation of the Fifth or Sixth Realm, not to be trifled with."

Ma Jingtian beside him saw this and tugged at Xin Lin's arm.

A mighty dragon cannot crush a local snake; without the boss here, he alone was no match for so many Taichang Temple Monks.

Furthermore, this was merely the most basic Shansheng Hall, the lowest in the hierarchy of Taichang Temple. If things got out of hand, they might attract the attention of other masters from the Temple, and then they would be in trouble they couldn't walk away from.

Xin Lin glanced at the meat-and-wine Monk, then over at the nearby Shansheng Hall.

In this day and age, not only shops bully their owners, but even temples bully the flock!

Xin Lin hurriedly put on a look of terror, shrinking behind Ma Jingtian.

Meanwhile, Ma Jingtian also hurriedly stepped forward to smooth things over.

"Master, the child did not know the immensity of Heaven and Earth when speaking. We wish to Transcend nine people, and here are nine thousand taels for your inspection."

Saying so, he quickly took out a handful of silver notes and handed them over.

The meat-and-wine Monk, hearing that nine people needed Transcendence, softened his expression, sensing like he had stumbled upon a fat sheep.

"Saving a life is more meritorious than building a seven-story pagoda. Considering your sensible behavior, let's leave it at that."

Having said that, he allowed Xin Lin and Ma Jingtian to join the queue at the back.

After waiting for about two hours, Xin Lin and Ma Jingtian were finally summoned.

The two were led into Shansheng Hall.

The Shansheng Hall was nothing more than a small temple-like courtyard.

A Monk in his forties, wrapped in a red Kasaya, sat on a cushion—he must be Master Qingyu, the one the young monk mentioned.

Upon seeing them, the Monk did not even lift his eyelids.

"State the birthdates and eight characters for the individuals for whom you seek Transcendence."

"We don't know their birthdates and eight characters."

Xin Lin said.

"Don't know? Then how can we conduct Transcendence and chant Scriptures?"

The Monk, upon hearing this, glared with round eyes, his face full of impatience.

"Master, the deceased are not our family members, but several victim's spirits. They are within this sword; please take a look and see if you can Transcend them, allowing them to ascend to paradise and reincarnate sooner."

Ma Jingtian hurriedly handed over the Ancient Bronze Sword.

Xin Lin watched from the side, remaining silent.

"Nonsense, how can you Transcend with a broken sword?"

The Monk frowned upon seeing the Ancient Bronze Sword, his face full of displeasure.

"Master, one thousand taels per person, and we have paid."

Xin Lin reminded from the side.

The Monk looked at the Ancient Bronze Sword again, and suddenly the sword in front of him turned into a Money Shaking Sword that glittered with golden light.

"Leave the sword here, go outside and wait. After a quarter of an hour, the Transcendence will be complete."

Monk Qingyu waved his hand, signaling Xin Lin and Ma Jingtian to wait outside.

Having said that, he began reciting the Scriptures.

The two had to wait outside.

"Little Boss, now we're set; the Haunted House can finally be inhabited."

Ma Jingtian looked greatly relieved.

"Really?"

Xin Lin said with a look that was both smiling and not, as he glanced at Shansheng Hall.

Nine thousand taels, just for mumbling a hardly familiar Buddhist Scripture, and that's considered Transcendence?

That money really comes too easily, doesn't it?

Thinking it'll be so easy to earn her money?

Xin Lin's eyes deepened.

After Master Qingyu finished reciting the Great Compassionate Mantra once, he was about to call people in.

But just as he got up, a black light flashed suddenly on the Ancient Bronze Sword, and with a buzz, the sword flew up from the ground and slashed towards the bald head of the Monk.

Chapter 353: The Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship's Extraordinary Strength

"Ghosts!"

Inside Shansheng Hall, a scream echoed.

Monk Qingyu, clutching his badly gashed head, ran out.

Behind him, the Ancient Bronze Sword closely followed, thrusting and chopping, aiming straight for his bald pate.

Outside Shansheng Hall, the pilgrims were also frightened out of their wits, scurrying away with hands over their heads.

"Someone, come quick!"

Monk Qingyu sprinted frantically.

"Keep shouting, tear your throat out if you have to, might as well call over the several thousand pilgrims outside and everyone else from the temple."

A light, floating voice came from the side.

Monk Qingyu startled, turned his head, and saw that young girl from earlier squatting nearby, looking utterly relaxed, watching him being chased all over by the bronze sword.

It was thanks to this young girl's reminder that Monk Qingyu suddenly came back to his senses.

He exploited the incense-burning days, filled his own pockets, and under the guise of transcendence, extorted and defrauded the town's citizens—all unbeknownst to Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship and his colleagues in the temple.

Before, he had only been performing normal Buddhist ceremonies and never encountered any trouble. Who would have thought that today he would come across such a haunted, broken sword.

During this moment of hesitation, the sword whooshed past, closely shaving a piece of skin from the monk's forehead.

"Leave, leave! This has nothing to do with you!"

Monk Qingyu, holding his forehead, signaled the martial monks who had come in response to retreat.

He bore the pain bravely.

"Little benefactor, this poor monk is incompetent. I cannot transcend this sword. Please seek someone more skilled. Here, take back these nine thousand taels."

Saying so, and with a pained expression, he returned the silver note that he had gotten his hands on.

"Nine thousand taels? We clearly gave you eighteen thousand taels."

Xin Lin did not take the silver note, but glanced at Monk Qingyu.

Her money wasn't easy to take.

She knew the size of one's capabilities should match the size of their claims.

The nine Yin Sha spirits within the Ancient Bronze Sword were not to be trifled with.

Xin Lin had dealt with them and knew their temperaments well.

In front of the Pride Corpse, they acted as docile as sons, but in front of anyone else, they were as imperious as emperors.

Monk Qingyu, at first glance, was nothing but a swindling, deceitful monk. Xin Lin was sure that the Yin Sha wouldn't let him off.

And as expected, he received his comeuppance.

The corners of Monk Qingyu's eyes twitched.

"The little benefactor is right, I remembered it wrong."

With great reluctance visible on his face, he counted out another nine silver notes, totaling eighteen thousand taels to Xin Lin.

Xin Lin, without any hesitation, returned nine thousand taels to Ma Jingtian.

Ma Jingtian looked equally terrified. Through this transaction, without even lifting a finger, the amount of money had doubled just within the time it took to drink a cup of tea!

Little Boss is truly a divine being!

However, even as Xin Lin claimed the silver, the Ancient Bronze Sword continued to dart about, whooshing over Monk Qingyu's forehead. He pleaded,

"Little benefactor, what about the sword?"

Xin Lin raised a hand, and the Ancient Sword landed in her grasp.

Monk Qingyu had just breathed a sigh of relief.

Yet, he felt a chill on his neck; Xin Lin swung the sword in reverse, and the blade rested against his throat.

"Swords know no mercy. I may have spared you, but the Yin Sha on this sword hasn't agreed to let you go. If you want to save your life, tell me, who within Taichang Temple can transcend the Yin Sha?"

Xin Lin asked coldly.

She couldn't be bothered to investigate further; she simply went straight to the source to find out who had the ability.

"This poor monk does not possess such skills, but Lord Taichang can transcend them! Lord Taichang hails from the Taichang Holy Institute and is extraordinarily powerful. His residence is at Zhongji Courtyard, towards the southeast."

Monk Qingyu shivered in fear, spilling everything.

Chapter 354: Enemies Meet on a Narrow Road

Zhongji Courtyard, Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship.

Xin Lin revealed a broad smile upon receiving the confirmed news.

"Thank you, Master. I wish you abundant wealth and a thriving business."

Having said that, she tossed the Ancient Sword to Ma Jingtian and swaggered off.

"How preposterous! You little brat, you've offended Lord Buddha here; do you still think you can leave Taichang Temple alive? You think you can just meet the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship whenever you say so? Lord Buddha will make you meet King Yan!"

Monk Qingyu rubbed his head, still feeling the pain from the deep wound.

Monk Qingyu, too, was a man of deep schemes; there was no way he'd kindly point Xin Lin in the right direction.

Indeed the Minister lived in Zhongji Courtyard, but within Taichang Temple, the number of people who had actually seen the Minister himself could be counted on one hand; even Monk Qingyu had never seen the true face of the Minister, not to mention those who came on the fifteenth of each month to seek an audience with the Minister, crowded like a school of fish crossing a river—Xin Lin and company stood no chance of getting their turn.

The only reason he told Xin Lin was purely to buy time, to catch unwitting prey.

His eyes spun round, and after having his wound bandaged, he took several fierce-looking monks to encircle Xin Lin.

Xin Lin and Ma Jingtian progressed towards Zhongji Courtyard.

Along the way, indeed, there were fewer pilgrims.

Upon arriving outside Zhongji Courtyard, they saw a small courtyard.

Compared to other grand and elegant courtyards and pavilions in Taichang Temple, this one was much more tranquil and exquisite, marked by two lush welcoming pines at its gate.

Beneath the welcoming pines, around twenty or so people were waiting.

This was far fewer than the crowd at Shansheng Hall.

Xin Lin let out a sigh of relief and was about to approach.

"Those wishing to see the Minister already have a queue stretching to the main street; it's not your turn, you riff-raff."

As Xin Lin was about to ask about the whereabouts of the Minister, a contemptuous voice drifted over.

Minister Huang and his daughter Huang Zhijun approached.

Upon seeing Xin Lin, Huang Zhijun's eyes practically shot flames.

"Well if it isn't Miss Huang, what a coincidence."

Seeing Huang Zhijun, Xin Lin's face filled with a smile, as if she had completely forgotten the feud between them.

"You wretched girl, so you're from Chu Mansion! You set me up that time! I'll not let that go easily."

Huang Zhijun was gnashing her teeth with rage.

She had come today with her father to thank Lord Taichang for saving her. Previously, she had been schemed against by Xin Lin, encountered evil, and was on the verge of death. It was only thanks to Lord Taichang that her life was spared.

She blamed all of this on Xin Lin.

She was determined that the next time she saw Xin Lin, she would teach her a good lesson.

Little did she know, she would encounter Xin Lin here.

From Minister Huang, she learned that Xin Lin was Chu Beiqing's daughter and also the top scorer in the Zixiao Palace Exam.

She was supposed to participate in the Zixiao Palace Exam too; if it hadn't been for Xin Lin, she would not have missed this opportunity.

Huang Zhijun, gnashing her teeth in hatred, glared at Xin Lin but refrained from causing a scene in public.

"Amitabha, Taichang Temple is a holy Buddhist place; shouting and fighting isn't good. Don't you agree, Miss Huang?"

Xin Lin said with a smile.

Huang Zhijun wanted to erupt but was held back by Minister Huang at her side.

Taichang Temple—such was its renown that even the princes of Longteng wouldn't dare make trouble here.

Just then, an old novice monk emerged from inside Zhongji Courtyard.

The old novice monk had his eyes firmly shut, unable to speak or hear; when he reached the crowd, he simply pulled out a piece of paper, groping around, and stuck it up.

But on that paper, there was only one line written.

"Once in a lifetime, I meet only those predestined."

Chapter 355: So-Called Fated Ones

Waiting outside the Zhongji Courtyard to see the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship were over twenty individuals.

These people's statuses were vastly different from those of the pilgrims outside.

Most of them, like Huang Zhijun and her father, were either wealthy or of noble standing, seeking the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship for medical consultations, to offer gratitude, or to pray for blessings for their families.

It was said that the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship of Taichang Temple was a Spiritual Buddha, capable of curing all diseases and warding off demons and evil spirits just by being seen.

Huang Zhijun and her father had come today to offer their thanks to the Minister and also to check if Huang Zhijun's illness had been thoroughly eradicated.

Upon seeing the notice, these people hurriedly surrounded the old monk.

The old monk shook his head and gestured to his mouth and ears, signaling that he was both deaf and mute.

"This Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship really has some personality, to actually have such a servant."

Xin Lin watched and was quietly astounded.

"Lord Taichang only sees one person per day, and that person must be predestined. Alas, it looks like hopes are dashed for this month; I'll have to come back next time."

A well-informed pilgrim at the side remarked.

The pilgrim sighed endlessly.

He came to seek an audience with Lord Taichang every month, yet each attempt ended in vain.

"What does it mean to be a 'predestined person'?"

Ma Jingtian wondered.

Xin Lin just shrugged.

"By the looks of it, this is your first time here at Taichang Temple. The predestined person mentioned by Lord Taichang refers to those capable of traversing through Wanshi Mountain in Zhongji Courtyard."

The earlier-speaking pilgrim explained.

Suddenly, the gate of Zhongji Courtyard creaked open.

A small courtyard garden was revealed before everyone's eyes.

Inside Zhongji Courtyard, there was indeed a hidden paradise.

Though it was almost noon, this small courtyard was enshrouded in white mist, bathed in milk-white hues.

Unlike conventional courtyards, within this small garden, one could see the greenery but not any houses, much less the legendary Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship.

The milky-white mist hovered and floated, revealing row upon row of green jade bamboo, with a rockery situated beneath the shadows of swaying bamboo leaves.

This rockery seemed to be piled up with various oddly-shaped stones.

The rocks took myriad forms, resembling hundreds of lions that were either lying, crouching, or standing; and at the base of the rockery, there was an entrance.

Inside the entrance, the pathway was intricate and twisting, with several branch trails. Not just for the average person, even an ignorant scoundrel could easily lose their way once inside.

Rumor had it that a notorious thief once coveted the oil money and various martial arts scriptures of Taichang Temple and snuck into the Zhongji Courtyard, the heart of the temple.

Who knew that he would mistakenly enter Wanshi Mountain, getting trapped for seven days and nights? When found, the thief had been driven to the brink of madness, raving and deranged.

Since then, Wanshi Mountain of Taichang Temple had become infamous.

Xin Lin, who had only recently arrived in Purple Cloud City, was naturally clueless about Wanshi Mountain.

"The predestined person mentioned by the Minister is someone who can get through Wanshi Mountain. This Wanshi Mountain is not as simple as it appears to be. Every time I come, every time I enter, I am unable to get through, alas."

The pilgrim expressed his helplessness with a sigh.

"Is it really so mystical? It looks no different from the artificial mountains in the Water Wraith Gang."

Ma Jingtian said, disbelieving.

"Ignorant youngster."

Huang Zhijun, upon hearing this, scoffed coldly, mocking Ma Jingtian for his ignorance of the ways of the world.

"Little Boss, just wait here, I'll go take a look inside."

Ma Jingtian rubbed his hands together and confidently walked toward Ten Thousand Lion Ridge.

Chapter 356: All Living Beings

Xin Lin squinted and looked around.

Not long after, a loud scream came from Wanshi Mountain.

It was Ma Jingtian, his face pale as he staggered and crawled out of the labyrinth.

"Snakes, so many snakes!"

Ma Jingtian gasped heavily, his appearance utterly panicked.

He had just entered Wanshi Mountain when he encountered a large group of snakes, each as thick as a barrel, blocking his path, forcing him to flee in utter disarray.

Snakes?

Xin Lin frowned as he observed the entrance of the labyrinth.

Several skillful pilgrims, skeptical, also entered Wanshi Mountain one after another.

However, soon they, like Ma Jingtian, fled in a disheveled state.

"Ghosts, so many Evil Ghosts inside, they want my life."

"Such huge fire, it's a mountain of blades and a sea of flames inside, absolutely no methods to get through."

"So many corpses, bodies everywhere."

Each pilgrim who went in came back defeated, their reactions varied.

Could it be that this small Wanshi Mountain hid so many formidable things?

"Ma Jingtian, are there snakes, beasts, or Evil Ghosts inside?"

Xin Lin asked in astonishment, looking at the varied reactions of the people.

Observing their reactions, it didn't seem like they were pretending.

"Little Boss, I dare to guarantee with the lives of my dozen concubines, it really was giant snakes. This cursed place is impassable, Little Boss, let's not risk our lives, let's think of other methods to Transcend these Yin Sha."

Even now, Ma Jingtian hadn't come to his senses, his face still pale.

Not only Ma Jingtian, but many of the twenty-plus pilgrims who initially came to see the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship, after seeing others' experiences, mostly got cold feet and left Zhongji Courtyard.

From over twenty people, only four or five remained.

Seeing that Noon had already passed, yet still no one was able to get through Wanshi Mountain.

Xin Lin looked at Wanshi Mountain, then glanced at the Ancient Bronze Sword in his hand.

"Life Book prompt, accumulate 100 Heaven-defying Value, initiate Heaven-defying task mode. Heaven-defying Task One, Transcend the spirits. Complete the task and obtain a free dice roll. Fail the task, deduct 20 Heaven-defying Value."

Just when Xin Lin was hesitant, a golden light flashed suddenly in his mind from the Heaven-defying Book, and a line of text appeared in Xin Lin's mind.

"!!!"

Xin Lin appeared baffled.

What situation was this now?

Deduct Heaven-defying Value if the task isn't completed?

Life Book, you're being whimsical again!

Despite complaining, Xin Lin knew that the Heaven-defying Book was famously resolute; if the task wasn't completed, Heaven-defying Value would indeed be deducted.

Heaven-defying Value could be used to make Spiritual Food, which was very useful, Xin Lin couldn't afford to lose it recklessly.

"Still not giving up? If I were you, I would have scrambled already."

Huang Zhijun, who saw Xin Lin not leaving, mockingly said.

Compared to other pilgrims, Huang Zhijun and her father seemed much calmer.

They hadn't blindly entered Wanshi Mountain, but were waiting outside.

Xin Lin ignored Huang Zhijun; she looked around and saw the deaf and mute monk, quickly approaching him.

"Doesn't know life from death, a deaf and dumb person, how could he help."

Huang Zhijun sneered.

"Daddy, why hasn't your contact arrived?"

Huang Zhijun, seeing that most people in Zhongji Courtyard had left, urged her father.

"Don't worry, they'll be here soon. I spent thirty thousand taels to get that person, rest assured, you will definitely enter Qingtian Academy."

Minister Huang reassured her.

Chapter 357: The Task That Must Be Completed

Due to encountering an evil omen, Huang Zhijun missed the chance to take part in the Zixiao Palace Exam this time.

She had exhausted all her efforts just to gain admission to school.

After much difficulty, she found out that the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship was a special grandmaster hired by Qingtian Academy, and as long as he recommended her, she could enroll in Qingtian Academy without taking the exam.

That is why she pleaded with Minister Huang, insisting that she must meet with the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship at all costs.

Last time, even though she received treatment from the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship, Huang Zhijun had not met him in person.

She believed that as long as she met the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship, with her martial arts talent, she would surely impress him and get recommended to Qingtian Academy.

Huang Zhijun and her father both fixed their gaze on the entrance of Zhongji Courtyard, as if waiting for something.

Looking at Xin Lin, a mission against heaven had already been issued, and she had no choice but to complete it.

She approached the deaf-mute old Monk.

Since posting the notice, the old Monk sat motionless beside it, as if he were a clay statue.

None of the pilgrims approached him to greet him, and like Huang Zhijun, they all dismissed the old Monk as useless.

Xin Lin wandered near the old Monk for a moment, but he did not budge.

Xin Lin went behind the old Monk and wrote a few words.

The old Monk's body moved slightly.

A smile emerged on his weathered face.

He picked up a dry twig and wrote a line of words on the ground.

Xin Lin looked intently.

"The way out lies within Zhongji Courtyard."

The words Xin Lin wrote behind the old Monk were, "Master, how can I find my way out of Wanshi Mountain?"

Although the old Monk was both deaf and mute, he was not completely ignorant.

But among so many pilgrims, nobody had given him a second look, let alone asked him how to exit Wanshi Mountain. Xin Lin was the first to ask.

The way out is inside Zhongji Courtyard?

Xin Lin pondered thoughtfully, her eyes scanning the interior of Zhongji Courtyard.

"Dad, did that old Monk tell that little wretch how to get out of Wanshi Mountain?"

Huang Zhijun and her father also noticed the old Monk's actions, and Huang Zhijun looked surprised.

"How could a deaf-mute Monk possibly know the way out? Only a few people inside Taichang Temple know the secrets of the caves of Wanshi Mountain. Here come the people!"

Minister Huang looked on disdainfully, glancing at the old Monk and Xin Lin.

It was at this moment that several people hurried to the entrance of Zhongji Courtyard.

The leader was none other than Monk Qingyu, who had previously had a conflict with Xin Lin.

"Master Qingyu, you have finally arrived."

Upon seeing Monk Qingyu, Minister Huang hurried forward to pay respects.

"It's her."

Behind Monk Qingyu, several Martial Monks immediately recognized Xin Lin.

After receiving the hint from the old Monk, Xin Lin held the Ancient Bronze Sword, walking around the courtyard.

Monk Qingyu changed his expression when he saw the old Monk, gesturing to his subordinates not to act rashly.

The origin of the old Monk was unknown to outsiders, but Monk Qingyu was aware.

He was the only servant of the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship, also an old servant brought from the Taichang Holy Institute, the only person in the entire Taichang Temple who could access the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship.

"Minister Huang, Miss Huang, this is the map of Wanshi Mountain. However, once inside the mountain, you must be careful, for there is another universe in Wanshi Mountain called All Living Beings. Once you enter, you must stay focused, or you will be harmed by illusions," said Monk Qingyu in a lowered voice.

Huang Zhijun and her father nodded, about to take the map.

"One more thing, after you enter, find a way to deal with that little girl for me. If not dead, she must be severely injured, otherwise, it won't quell the hatred in my heart," Monk Qingyu said. He dared not commit murder within Zhongji Courtyard, but if someone else did the deed, that was a different story. He glared fiercely at Xin Lin.

Chapter 358: Ambush in the Dark

Monk Qingyu's sudden appearance truly startled Ma Jingtian.

He hurriedly reminded Little Boss, but when he turned around, Little Boss had disappeared.

"Let's go."

After obtaining the map, Huang Zhi Jun waved her hand and led several followers into Wanshi Mountain.

Before entering, she glanced disdainfully at Xin Lin.

Xin Lin was walking in circles in the courtyard, now pressing her body to the ground, now searching through the bushes, busy with who knows what.

Huang Zhijun sneered and entered Wanshi Mountain.

"Little Boss, that woman has entered. What are you dawdling for? If you're any later, she'll get to see the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship before us."

Ma Jingtian was frantically pacing.

The Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship met with guests only once a month. Missing this opportunity meant they would have to wait until the fifteenth of the next month.

"Stop nagging, can't you see I'm busy?"

Xin Lin didn't even bother to look back, crouching beside a pine tree.

She carefully found a hole in the tree.

From that hole, there was a line of ants marching in and out.

These ants were the size of the tip of a little finger, their bodies shiny and slick, black with tinges of red. On their backs was a brownish-yellow stripe resembling the pattern of a fierce tiger, hence their name Tiger Back Ants.

Tiger Back Ants, a lowly creature not even worthy of being called a Dark Beast.

However, their existence is recorded in Chu Beiqing's "Mystical Medicine Book."

Tiger Back Ants can be used in alchemy to create the lowest class of Mortal Medicine and Spiritual Food. Aside from their medicinal use, they also have a keen sense of direction, able to find the way.

Xin Lin glanced around, caught a Tiger Back Ant, and placed it in a porcelain bottle she carried with her.

"Follow me, into the maze."

Xin Lin commanded.

"Little Boss, can we not go in? There are snakes inside, I was bitten by one when I was a kid."

Ma Jingtian shrank back, his heart set on not entering Wanshi Mountain.

"You're still pretending to be a tough local ruffian."

Xin Lin spat out in contempt, not forcing Ma Jingtian any further. She alone, holding a sword, went towards Wanshi Mountain.

She also spotted Monk Qingyu nearby with a face clearly harboring ill intentions.

"Little benefactor, this humble monk advises you to reconsider. Turning back is the safe shore; Wanshi Mountain is not a place for mere mortals like yourself."

Monk Qingyu spoke in a peculiar tone.

Xin Lin chuckled dryly and entered Wanshi Mountain.

Soon, her small figure was engulfed by the white mist that filled the air from all sides.

After entering Wanshi Mountain, Xin Lin took a few steps and indeed encountered several winding paths in front of her, each one looking much the same.

She did not rush to choose a path, but took out the porcelain bottle and released the Tiger Back Ant inside.

The Tiger Back Ant realized it was in unfamiliar territory.

It crawled around in circles on the ground for a bit, and after a moment, it projected its antennae to confirm a direction, then headed down one of the paths.

Xin Lin followed the ant's lead without any hurry, step by step.

Meanwhile, Huang Zhijun, having obtained the map from Monk Qingyu, quickly found the correct path with confidence.

She led her Protector and walked for about half an hour, then checked the map.

"According to the map, I will soon meet the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship. You few, go back the way we came and set up an ambush at the main junction leading to the maze. If that blind little wretch comes this way, surround her and take care of her. Remember not to let her make noise, lest we disturb Lord Taichang's tranquility."

Huang Zhijun squinted her eyes as she ordered.

Several followers responded affirmatively and dispersed.

Only then did Huang Zhijun look at the map contentedly and head deeper into Wanshi Mountain.

Chapter 359: Dream Lover

The deeper they went, the fewer branching paths there were from earlier on, until finally only the main thoroughfare remained before them.

Walking down this road, they would be able to meet the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship.

A triumphant smile played across Huang Zhijun's face.

At that moment, she stepped forward.

Suddenly, a dense white mist rose up before her eyes.

Huang Zhijun's expression changed ever so slightly.

But as the white mist gradually dissipated, a figure emerged in front of her.

The figure was tall and stood out in the mist, vaguely discernible as a man.

"Lord Taichang!"

Huang Zhijun had not expected that the Minister of Imperial Sacrificial Worship would deign to wait for her in the labyrinth.

Overjoyed, she hurriedly straightened her clothes and approached him.

The man turned around.

Seeing the man's face clearly, Huang Zhijun's expression changed once again.

"Why is it you?"

Huang Zhijun was both shocked and delighted, staring at the man in black before her.

The man was tall and handsome, adorned in a black gold-plated robe, with profound features and a pair of deep blue eyes that shone brightly like stars.

Huang Zhijun's heartbeat suddenly went rogue.

She gazed at the strikingly handsome man before her, utterly entranced.

Ever since their parting at the stream, she had not seen him again.

She had fallen for him at first sight and dreamed of meeting him once more.

The man stood with a smile, looking at her.

Unconsciously, she took a few steps forward, wanting to embrace the man.

But just then, the man's expression changed abruptly, and suddenly, a Red Toad opened its shell, swallowing Huang Zhijun in one gulp...

Xin Lin followed the Tiger Back Ant, advancing unimpeded although she did not have a map, as the living Earth itself, the Tiger Back Ant, paved the way for her.

As for the snakes Ma Jingtian talked about, or the great fires and ferocious tigers mentioned by other pilgrims, Xin Lin did not encounter any of them.

After a few steps, Xin Lin paused.

She narrowed her eyes, looking towards the mist ahead.

The labyrinth was filled with mist everywhere, which affected visibility and made the field of view quite narrow.

A few shadows darted out.

"The young lady was right, this little wretch really entered."

"Last time, it was this little wretch who caused several of us brothers to get shot by arrows."

"The young lady said to make it quick."

The Protectors set their menacing sights on Xin Lin as they circled around her.

All of them had the cultivation level of martial masters, more than enough to handle a young girl.

Suddenly, the Protectors attacked from all sides.

The whistling of fists and the shadows of flying kicks enveloped Xin Lin's small figure.

Xin Lin bent down, grabbed the Tiger Back Ant on the ground, and placed it back into the small porcelain bottle.

As she stood up, her eyes transformed.

With a step, she slowly pushed out her fists, moving as if in slow motion, barely faster than a snail.

Her actions, seen by these battle-hardened Protectors, were undoubtedly a joke.

But at that moment, the Protector to her left let out a muffled grunt.

His arm was hit by a punch from Xin Lin, which snapped loudly, and the next moment, the arm twisted to one side.

Seeing Xin Lin land a punch, another Protector on the right side roared as he grabbed her shoulders, but in a blur, the young girl slid from under his gaze and slipped away.

His back absorbed a punch from Xin Lin.

With that punch, the Protector, weighing over 180 pounds, was sent flying straight out.

Amidst the mist, Xin Lin stood firm, facing four or five Huang Residence Protectors who were several times her size and strength. With each step and punch, she knocked each one down, and in a blink, all were sprawled on the ground.

Chapter 360: Little Moneygrubber

Xin Lin took a deep breath and slowly retracted her fist.

The effort had brought a flush of red to her small face.

Seeing the protectors of Huang Residence wailing on the ground, a hint of surprise flashed in Xin Lin's eyes.

She looked at her own fists.

The Ghost God Fist Second Form indeed contained some mysteries.

She had only practiced it once, capturing about thirty percent of its essence, yet she had managed to knock down a group of martial masters.

If she were to fully grasp it, facing real Xuanwu Practitioners, even multiple opponents, as long as they were not beyond the Xuanwu Fifth Realm, she would be more than capable of handling them.

"Where is your young lady?"

Xin Lin stepped on the wrist of one of the protectors, who whimpered under her foot.

"The young lady, having obtained Master Qingyu's map, has already gone to meet Lord Taichang."

"Was it your young lady who ordered you to ambush me here in secret?"

Xin Lin snorted coldly.

She and Miss Huang Zhi Jun had no deep-seated hatred; she adhered to the principle of not offending others unless offended, but if others did offend her... heh.

"It was Master Qingyu who said you've blocked his wealth path, asking the young lady to teach you a lesson."

The protectors dared not hide anything, revealing everything.

Xin Lin snorted coldly again, searching the protectors before binding them up, and continued onward with them in tow.

After walking for over a quarter of an hour, Xin Lin heard cries ahead.

"Someone, come and save me!"

Approaching the sound, Xin Lin saw a trap nearby.

With an angry expression, Miss Huang Zhi Jun was taken aback upon seeing Xin Lin.

"How did you get here?"

It made no sense.

She had Master Qingyu's map, which led her all the way here.

Without the map, Xin Lin couldn't possibly have... unless she had captured her own men.

A bunch of good-for-nothings!

Miss Huang cursed inwardly.

"Miss Huang, that's exactly what I should be asking you, how could you be so careless?"

From above, Xin Lin looked down leisurely at Miss Huang, trapped in the hole.

The pit was as deep as a well, impossible to escape without help.

Not to mention, Miss Huang had fallen into the trap and broken her right leg.

"Help me up; I'll give you silver."

Miss Huang declared haughtily.

Although Xin Lin was recognized as a daughter, she had not spent a single day as the Lady of Chu Mansion before being driven out and forced to separate from the family.

Chu Bei Qing, once the foremost Divine Doctor of Longteng Country and the heir of Chu Mansion, was cast out, left with only a haunted house, some barren lands, and a few unprofitable shops.

This news had spread throughout the official families of Purple Cloud City, becoming the subject of mockery.

So, Xin Lin was indeed penniless, a solid fact.

Sure enough, the moment Miss Huang brought up money, Xin Lin's eyes lit up.

"How much silver are you offering?"

Xin Lin asked, seemingly willing to negotiate.

"One thousand taels."

Miss Huang stated.

As soon as the words fell, Xin Lin patted her buttocks and walked away.

"Come back! Wretched girl, don't push it too far. If you don't save me, my father will soon bring people to rescue me. By then, you won't get a dime."

Miss Huang threatened.

"That's true; one thousand taels per person, doesn't seem like a bad deal."

Xin Lin murmured to herself.

"If you know what's good for you, pull me up quickly."

Miss Huang said, full of arrogance.

"One thousand taels to ransom a protector; I have five here, so it's five thousand taels."

Xin Lin pointed to the protectors.

"You're seeking death!"

Miss Huang fumed, smoke practically billowing from her seven orifices.

"Miss Huang, if you're not willing to ransom your men, I will soon take them to Lord Taichang and tell him all about your deal with Master Qingyu. These five thousand taels are a very good deal."

On Xin Lin's small face was a countenance full of schemes.