

STARLIT PATH OF THE MYSTIC FORGE

Chapter 5: My Temper's Just Fine

The system's mission was unlikely to be wrong. If it warned that Beiluo City was on the verge of falling, Lu's father's confidence was likely just blind optimism. Lu felt a pang of frustration—starting with such a high-stakes task right off the bat?

Still, defending a city was easier than attacking one. Though the Northern Prefecture's governor led fifty thousand troops, Lu Changkong was no ordinary commander.

“Sister Ning, how many soldiers do we have in Beiluo?” Lu asked.

“Master, with your father in charge, you don't need to worry about these things,” Ning Zhao replied earnestly, believing Lu had enough burdens without fretting over military matters.

“Just curious,” Lu said with a smile.

“Beiluo has twenty thousand troops. With the private forces of the three major clans and smaller families, we can muster about twenty-five thousand defenders. The Northern Prefecture’s army would struggle to breach our walls,” Ning Zhao said, her analysis sharp for a maid.

“The three major clans?” Lu’s eyes narrowed. A fortified city like Beiluo could fall not just from external pressure but from internal rot. Could the clans be colluding with the Northern Prefecture?

His slender fingers tapped the blanket on his lap. “Sister Ning, do you think the three clans might betray us?”

Ning Zhao paused, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear, her brow furrowing. “Impossible. They wouldn’t dare. Your father is Beiluo’s only Grandmaster, and his authority holds strong.”

Lu’s gaze flickered. “The Great Zhou Dynasty is in chaos, yet the emperor’s authority hasn’t stopped the rebellion. This world runs on profit, not prestige.” He added, “Take me to the city walls.”

Ning Zhao’s expression shifted. “Master, the walls are dangerous.”

“Sister Ning, have you forgotten? I’ve been touched by an immortal,” Lu said with a light chuckle, sensing his fabricated immortal would serve as a convenient excuse for some time.

Ning Zhao took a deep breath, feeling the spiritual energy stirring in her dantian. Her expression wavered, but she chose to trust Lu. After all, he held the key to reshaping the world. She pushed his wheelchair out of the Lu residence, with Yi Yue and Ni Yu hurrying to follow.

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Atop Beiluo’s city walls, Lu Changkong stood in cold armor, a sword at his waist, his gaze icy and commanding. Around him, hardened soldiers gripped their blades, standing firm.

Below, the Northern Prefecture’s army formed a dense blockade, surrounding the city. At the forefront, a bare-chested warrior with bronze skin and tribal tattoos, astride a horse, brandished a broadsword and hurled insults with unrestrained venom. Before him lay a gruesome sight—a soldier and his horse, cleaved in two, blood soaking the sand.

Lu Changkong's face darkened. "Who is this man?" he asked without turning, his voice cold.

"City Lord, that's Feng Shi, a Northern Prefecture general with innate strength, serving under Governor Tantai Xuan," a soldier replied, his expression grim. In a pre-battle taunt, Beiluo's champion had been cut down in three moves, a humiliating blow to the defenders' morale.

"He's a top-tier First-Rate fighter. Does anyone in Beiluo dare face him?" a trusted general asked, his face stern.

Lu Changkong's sharp gaze fixed on the enemy camp, as if piercing through to confront the mastermind within. "Sending a top-tier First-Rate with divine strength right away—what's Tantai Xuan playing at?" he muttered. Even among his forces, few could match such a warrior.

Below, Feng Shi, his hair tied in coarse braids, rode with savage arrogance, his broadsword slung across his back. "Lu Changkong, you coward! Dare to face me?" he roared. "Hiding behind your walls like a dog? Your pathetic champion was nothing—one swing and he's done! I'm barely warmed up!" His laughter boomed. "Heard your son Lu's a cripple, but pretty as a peach. Send him to me—my men love a delicate prize!"

The defenders' faces twisted with rage. Lu Changkong's generals clenched their fists, pleading to be sent out. But Lu Changkong knew his men's limits. Against a top-tier First-Rate like Feng Shi, only a Grandmaster stood a chance. Sending anyone else was a death sentence.

He said nothing, his gaze sweeping coldly to Feng Shi. Pre-battle taunts were standard, but this man's filth—especially targeting Lu, his son, his untouchable line—crossed a boundary.

His hand gripped his sword, eyes blazing with killing intent. He turned sharply. "Hold the gates and watch the three clans. If they stir, take their heads and await my return," he ordered his trusted men.

The generals nodded, their excitement palpable. Was their Grandmaster City Lord about to act?

Lu Changkong mounted a sleek, blood-red steed, yanked the reins, and charged out as the gates opened, dust billowing behind him.

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With the siege underway, Beiluo's streets were desolate, its citizens hiding indoors. The creak of wheelchair wheels echoed as Ning Zhao, graceful and poised, pushed Lu toward the city gates. Lu, in a white robe with a wool blanket over his lap, propped his chin with one hand while the other tapped lightly on the blanket, exuding a refined air.

To his right, Yi Yue, in a pale yellow skirt with a whip at her waist, followed with lowered eyes. To his left, Ni Yu, her round face framed by twin buns, huffed as she jogged to hold an umbrella over Lu.

The group stood out starkly in the empty streets.

A coarse laugh, like a tolling bell, carried from beyond the walls. Though faint, martial artists like Ning Zhao and Yi Yue heard it clearly. "Heard your son Lu's a cripple, but pretty as a peach. Send him to me—my men love a delicate prize!"

Lu, with his meager 0.5 physical strength—a true weakling by system standards—caught only fragments, vaguely sensing someone praising his looks. But Ning Zhao's face turned icy, her beauty hardening with murderous intent. Yi Yue's teeth clenched, her hand gripping her whip, eyes flashing with killing intent. Ni Yu, oblivious and out of breath, kept up with the umbrella.

“Sister Ning, what’s that guy yelling about?” Lu asked, smoothing the blanket.

“Nothing, Master,” Ning Zhao said, her killing intent vanishing behind a radiant smile.

Lu rolled his eyes. Did she think he couldn’t sense her earlier rage? “Come on, tell me. I’ve heard every rumor about me over the years. My heart’s as calm as a still pond, my temper’s just fine,” he said with a chuckle.

Ning Zhao only smiled, unconvinced. She knew Lu’s temper, fueled by his disability, was anything but calm.

“Yi Yue, you tell me,” Lu said, turning to her.

Yi Yue hesitated, reluctant but mindful of her desire for spiritual energy. She repeated Feng Shi’s words verbatim.

Before she finished, Lu sucked in a breath, clutching his chest. His smile vanished. “My chest... it’s tight. My liver hurts,” he gasped.

Ning Zhao and Yi Yue exchanged looks. *Who was it that swore his temper was just fine?*