

Stronger 311

Chapter 311: Lin Xuankong's First Exploration into the Demon Lair, the Shape-shifting Demon Monkey and the Earth Dragon Great Demon

Prefect Li of Great Marsh Prefecture was drinking with Jiang Haiyan, the Yin Talisman Sect Leader. Upon hearing Prefect Huang's words, Prefect Li's expression subtly changed. After a brief consideration, he put down his wine cup. "Prefect Huang is indeed correct! However, the Refining Method for Magical Artifacts in the Central Divine Dynasty has always been a closely guarded secret. Although we have many Artifact Refiners in Great Xia, none have ever managed to learn the Artifact Refining Technique of the Central Divine Dynasty! Now, a piece of Battle Armor comparable to Magical Artifacts has appeared, but that Conical Hat Guest keeps his identity hidden... If he could make the Refining Method of that Battle Armor public, the national power of Great Xia could multiply several times over in just a few years!"

Upon hearing this, Prefect Huang frowned and sighed. "Prefect Li, the Conical Hat Guest comes from Great Marsh Prefecture. If you can find him, obtain his Battle Armor Refining Method, and present it to our Third Princess, it would be an extraordinary achievement. You might even be rewarded with a few Thick Earth Treasure Elixirs!"

Not far away, Lin Xuankong, who overheard the conversation, couldn't help but shake his head slightly. The Refining Method for the Ruyi Battle Armor isn't mine... Miss Xiao has always harbored deep resentment towards the Great Xia Royal Family; how could she possibly pass the Battle Armor's Refining Method to them? Moreover, even if I were to publicize the Battle Armor's Refining Method, without Miss Xiao's talent in Artifact Refining, how could other Artifact Refiners in Great Xia possibly forge Battle Armor with the same power as the Ruyi Battle Armor? The path of Artifact Refining relies more on talent than Martial Cultivation. Even my Artifact Refining skills are far inferior to Miss Xiao's... The Third Princess's desire to obtain the Ruyi Battle Armor's Refining Method and mass-produce it is nothing but a pipe dream! As for me, after this banquet, once I've secretly given the Jade Particles to the Third Princess, I should find Miss Xiao to refine an Initial Tier Immortal Artifact! The power of that Initial Tier Immortal Artifact is vastly greater than any so-called Magical Artifact or the Ruyi Battle Armor!

After the banquet had lasted for three hours, Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er gathered many Tier Seven and Tier Eight powerhouses into the conference hall to discuss the recapture of the two medicinal production sites and the Thick Earth and Geng Metal Ore Veins in the Sealing Demon Mountain Range.

As a Steward of the Yin Talisman Sect, Lin Xuankong, a 'mere Tier Three cultivator,' naturally wasn't qualified to enter the conference hall. However, with his Eight Gates Celestial Eye, he didn't need to be inside to learn of their discussions; he listened in clearly while eating Demon Flesh.

In the conference hall, after considerable discussion among the powerhouses, the Third Princess finalized the plan.

First, within ten days, General Wang Linghui of Prince Yu's Mansion would organize Tier Five, Tier Six, and Tier Seven powerhouses to practice the simplified Battle Array of Prince Yu's Mansion. Once these powerhouses, gathered from various prefectures, could cooperate seamlessly and form the simplified King Yu Battle Array, the offensive would begin. As for the tens of thousands of Tier Two, Tier Three, and Tier Four cultivators accompanying them, they would form dozens of Simplified Battle Arrays, led by Yu Jiansheng. Additionally, the Yin Talisman Sect, Black Tiger Gang, Huang Family, and Guo Family forces would also form Simplified Battle Arrays under Yu Jiansheng's command.

Second, the primary goal of this war was to occupy the peaks surrounding the Thick Earth and Geng Metal Ore Veins and establish a Five Elements Array to control them. The first and second medicinal production sites were indeed extremely important, being crucial sources of Nine Revolutions Qi Replenishing Soup for Great Marsh Prefecture. However, for Tier Six, Tier Seven, and Tier Eight powerhouses, the effects of the Nine Revolutions Qi Replenishing Soup could be entirely substituted by Demon Flesh. Any powerhouse wishing to advance from Tier Six to Tier Seven, or from Tier Seven to Tier Eight, could not bypass Thick Earth Spiritual Objects and Geng Metal Spiritual Objects. Thus, the plan devised by these Tier Seven and Tier Eight powerhouses naturally prioritized the ore veins.

Third, powerhouses from Prince Dong's Mansion and Prince Qi's Mansion would be dispatched to first scout the areas around the Thick Earth and Geng Metal Ore Veins. The specific battle strategy would then be determined based on the demon army's deployment.

Once all matters were discussed, Yang Luofeng from Prince Dong's Mansion cupped his hands towards Third Princess Xiao Ying'Er, who was in the seat of honor, and said, "Third Princess, I, Luofeng, am willing to take the lead and be the first to depart for scouting the vicinity of the Thick Earth Ore Vein!"

Third Princess Xiao Ying'Er nodded slightly, retrieved three Thick Earth Spirit Elixirs from her Ghost Frog Pouch, and said, "General Yang, this war against the Sealing Demon Mountain Range involves several Great Demons and countless other demons within the Range and even the Boundaryless Mountain. This war is crucial to the Great Xia Dynasty and will affect my father's deployment of forces to quell demonic calamities across various regions! In warfare, reconnaissance and understanding the enemy are paramount. General Yang, if you can thoroughly investigate the demon army's deployment near the ore veins, it will be pivotal to the outcome of this war. These three Thick Earth Treasure Elixirs will then be yours!"

Hearing this, delight flashed in Yang Luofeng's eyes, though his expression remained solemn. He immediately cupped his hands. "Rest assured, Third Princess. I, Luofeng, will thoroughly scout the area!"

The other Tier Seven and Tier Eight powerhouses present gazed at the three Thick Earth Treasure Elixirs in the Third Princess's hands, a flicker of eagerness in their eyes. In their view, Thick Earth Treasure Elixirs were even more precious than Thick Earth Spiritual Objects; each Treasure Elixir was refined from Spiritual Objects but offered a much higher chance of advancing one's cultivation.

A moment later, Yang Luofeng took to the air with an Early Tier Eight cultivator and four Late Tier Seven cultivators, heading towards the Sealing Demon Mountain Range.

From a corner, Lin Xuankong secretly activated his Demon Reflected Pupils. A faint red gleam flashed out, instantly landing on Yang Luofeng. This red light was distinct in Lin Xuankong's vision, yet not a single one of the numerous powerhouses at the banquet perceived it.

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Lin Xuankong's brow furrowed slightly.

The powerful Great Demon of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range that has caused countless cultivators of the Great Marsh Prefecture to panic and fear, just how powerful is it? This time, I can finally use my Demon Reflected Pupils to see it up close! I just don't know if this Great Demon, which has gathered nearly a hundred Seventh and Eighth Layer powerhouses, can withstand a strike from an Initial Tier Immortal Artifact...

...

Among the five powerhouses led by Yang Luofeng, the weakest were Late Seventh Layer, and their flying speed was naturally extremely fast. In the blink of an eye, they had flown out of Great Marsh Prefecture City. More than an hour later, they had crossed over a thousand miles and reached the outskirts of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range.

In Linshui Pavilion, Lin Xuankong, who activated his Demon Reflected Pupils, sensed Yang Luofeng's vision and frowned again.

At this moment, Yang Luofeng was still more than two hundred miles away from the peaks on the outskirts of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range, but he could already vaguely see the Demon Qi rising from those peaks, with large Demons, as big as small mountains, riding on black clouds, coming and going.

Yang Luofeng and the other few powerhouses landed on the ground. After gazing at the distant scene for a while, their faces showed signs of apprehension.

Yang Luofeng said, "We are only slightly more than two hundred miles from Flying Bear Peak on the outskirts of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range. If we continue flying, we would easily be detected by the Great Demons there. We must proceed stealthily.

This scouting mission mainly aims to investigate the number, clans, and tiers of the Demons near the mineral veins at Flying Bear Peak, Flying Bird Peak, Falling Crane Peak, Guyun Mountain, and Wild Boar Mountain. The targets of this war are also these five peaks! Be extremely careful when we get closer!"

Another Early Eighth Layer powerhouse nodded, then bent down and pressed his right hand on the ground.

Instantly, some grass on the ground grew rapidly, wrapping around the six of them. With the grass covering them, their figures blended with the surrounding grassland, making it extremely difficult to detect unless observed from a close distance!

With these disguises, the six of them began rapidly approaching the Sealing Demon Mountain Range, hiding among bushes and rocks on the ground.

However, ground movement was obviously much slower than flying. Moreover, afraid of being discovered, they kept their speed low. After a full three cups of tea, they finally reached a small mountain forty miles from Flying Bear Peak.

Hiding in the dense forest, Yang Luofeng carefully looked towards Flying Bear Peak. After a long while, he spoke: "Most of the Demons gathered on this peak are subordinates of the Golden-haired Demon Bears. Just now, I saw two Tier Eight Demon Bears, four Tier Seven Brown Bear Liao People, about fifty Tier Six Demons, one hundred Tier Five Demons, and a total of over five thousand Demons of other tiers."

Another Tier Eight Powerhouse frowned and said, "These Demons patrol very diligently; the peaks and valleys, spanning tens of thousands of acres, have Demons active everywhere. It seems that the Golden-haired Demon Bear values this mineral vein greatly. Additionally, there must be hundreds of thousands of citizens captured and used as blood food in the valley... Damn these Demons!"

Yang Luofeng said:

"Demons and the Demon People also need Thick Earth and Geng Metal Spiritual Objects for advancement. Of course, the Golden-haired Demon Bear values it greatly!

"The Golden-haired Demon Bear advanced to the Early Ninth Layer a hundred years ago. Its realm is probably the highest among the few Great Demons. However, its Demon Technique's peculiarity and the number of Demons it commands are less than the other Great Demons, making it relatively easier to deal with!

"As for those hundreds of thousands of people! Being captured by Demons and forced to reproduce and provide blood food—how many places don't have this happening? Since the demon calamity appeared in Great Xia, countless ordinary people and Low-tier Martial Cultivators have died. Even many experts from Prince Dong's Mansion have been eaten by Demons! The demon calamity in Great Xia is not a situation that cultivators at our Early Eighth Layer can reverse!"

He retracted his gaze from the numerous people in the valley. Then, his eyes showed a hint of coldness as he glanced at the many Demons on Flying Bear Mountain.

"The Third Princess has gathered experts from all prefectures for this great battle. Once it begins, do your best to kill more Demons and avenge our experts from Prince Dong's Mansion!

"Alright, we've learned enough about the situation here. Let's prepare to go to Flying Bird Peak."

The Tier Eight Powerhouse said, "Flying Bird Peak is likely the territory of the Nine-tailed Demon Fox. The Eye Power of Demon Fox-type Demons is extremely strong, so everyone must be exceptionally careful when we go over!"

Before he could finish his sentence, his face suddenly changed, and he whispered, "Something's wrong, there's Demon Qi!"

Immediately after, he turned his head to look to the side, only to see that a dozen or so giant trees, tens of zhang away, had transformed into more than ten enormous, yellow-furred, Six-Eared Demon Monkeys.

"It's the Six-Eared Demon Monkeys, capable of shapeshifting and concealing their Demon Qi! Damn it, the Six-Eared Demon Monkeys are actually guarding here!" the Tier Eight Powerhouse exclaimed. His Battle Armor instantly covered his body, and his right hand shot out a green light, which transformed into numerous thick vines, entangling a nearby Demon Monkey.

Yang Luofeng's expression also changed drastically. Activating his True Qi, he drew his Longsword and pointed it towards the ground beneath one of the Demon Monkeys.

BOOM! The ground beneath that Demon Monkey's feet suddenly exploded, sending a powerful shockwave rippling outwards. The Demon Monkey shrieked and was blasted hundreds of meters away.

"Three Tier Eight Demon Monkeys, and the other twelve are all Tier Seven! The enemy is strong—retreat quickly!"

Yang Luofeng shouted, thrusting his Longsword repeatedly towards their surroundings. A series of explosions rocked the area near the attacking Demon Monkeys.

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Over ten Tier Seven and Tier Eight Demon Monkeys were caught off guard and were blown away hundreds of meters by his Dust Explosion Technique!

Yang Luofeng and the others activated their True Qi, preparing to fly into the air.

At this moment, a large number of earth-brown, sticky tentacles suddenly emerged from under their feet, wrapping around the legs of the six who were just about to take off!

The face of the Tier Eight Powerhouse changed dramatically. "Earth Dragon Demon! Damn it, it's a Late-stage Tier Eight!"

He summoned a large number of vines, whipping them towards the tentacles of the Earth Dragon Demon entangled around him. Gigantic sounds of the clashes echoed as True Qi surged, but unfortunately, the tentacles of the Ninth Layer Earth Dragon Demon were incredibly resilient. Despite his full strength, the vines were to no avail!

The other four Late-stage Seventh Layer cultivators each used their own techniques, furiously attacking the tentacles of the Earth Dragon Demon, causing them to tremble continuously.

Among them, Yang Luofeng's Dust Explosion Technique was the fiercest. Each time he launched an attack, the True Qi would cause a terrifying explosion, making the body of the Eighth Layer Earth Dragon Demon convulse uncontrollably!

Just as the six were about to escape, Yang Luofeng suddenly felt the sky darken. He looked up to see a Mid-Tier Eight Demon Monkey, which he had blown away earlier, transforming into a massive Stone Monkey, tens of meters tall, descending from above!

BOOM!

A huge explosion erupted.

The Stone Monkey, tens of meters tall, though evolved from its Demon Body, still had a terrifying weight. Such a monstrous body, crashing down from the sky and coupled with Late-stage Tier Eight Demon Qi, unleashed a terrifically destructive power!

In one hit, the True Qi of the four Seventh Layer powerhouses dissipated, and their bones and tendons broke instantly, causing them to faint on the spot.

Yang Luofeng and the Tier Eight Powerhouse also suffered severe injuries. Blood spurted from their mouths as their True Qi dispersed.

The Stone Monkey then extended its over thirty meters long stone claws, grabbing Yang Luofeng as Demon Qi surged into him, quickly annihilating his True Qi. Meanwhile, the Tier Eight Powerhouse had his True Qi rapidly annihilated by the Earth Dragon Demon's Demon Qi!

After forty breaths, the Tier Eight Powerhouse and Yang Luofeng, whose True Qi was gradually depleting, showed a trace of despair on their faces. The two gritted their teeth fiercely, and their True Qi suddenly contracted. In the next moment, their bodies exploded with a loud bang!

The self-detonation of the Tier Eight Powerhouse was equivalent to hundreds or thousands of attacks from a Tier Eight Powerhouse exploding simultaneously, its power naturally terrifying!

The Stone Monkey that grabbed Yang Luofeng screeched, half of its body blasted into dust, severely wounded!

The Tier Eight Earth Dragon Demon also did not fare well; over two thousand of its earth-brown tentacles were blown to bits by the Tier Eight Powerhouse's self-detonation, causing it to howl in anguish as its Demon Qi scattered!

「...」

Lin Xuankong's Demon Reflected Pupils lost their detection the moment Yang Luofeng self-detonated.

The red gleam faded. Lin Xuankong, seated in a corner of the banquet, was startled, unable to suppress a muffled groan.

Jiang Yuran, seated nearby, looked over curiously, "Steward Lin, are you alright?"

Lin Xuankong shook his head slightly, forcing a smile, "I'm fine!"

However, while his lips smiled, his heart felt heavy.

He had long since experienced the life-and-death struggle between Demons and the Human Race. Back when he was in the Second-Layer Realm, he had personally witnessed the brutal massacre by the Marsh Python People... But at this moment, experiencing the brutality of the Demons from Yang Luofeng's perspective still made it hard for him to accept!

Hundreds of thousands of common people were trapped in Demon Valley, forced to reproduce and serve as an endless supply of blood food... And these were just the humans still living; the number already Devoured by the Demons was incalculably greater. That valley of Flying Bear Peak could indeed be called a living hell!

And the power of these Tier Eight and Tier Nine Demons made Lin Xuankong feel quite apprehensive as well. Two Early Eighth Layer powerhouses, who had combat strength on par with his, and four Late-stage Seventh Layer cultivators, fell under the abrupt attack of an Earth Dragon and a Late-stage Tier Eight Demon Monkey in just sixty breaths of time!

These were still just Tier Eight Demons; what terrifying might would a Tier Nine Demon possess!

Moreover, the swift demise of Yang Luofeng and the Tier Eight Powerhouse also unsettled Lin Xuankong. Back in the Ba Mountain Secret Realm, Yang Luofeng had commended him quite a bit. Though not a friend, they were at least acquaintances! What was critical is that Yang Luofeng's over a century of cultivation was wiped clean in an instant due to a slight mistake!

Lin Xuankong frowned as he gazed towards the direction of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range.

The periphery of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range already harbored so many Great Demons... Who knows how many Human Race powerhouses will fall in the battle for the Sealed Demon Mountain this time! As a Tier Six Cultivator, if he wanted to obtain the Thick Earth Spiritual Object, he needed to proceed with utmost caution!

He must succeed in Refining an Immortal Artifact! Otherwise, going to claim the Thick Earth Spiritual Object would be mere suicide!

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Furrowing his brow and pondering for a moment, Lin Xuankong thought to himself: General Yang Luofeng and that Tier Eight Powerhouse, so decisive and resolute, choosing to self-detonate in the face of Demons, truly demonstrate the demeanor of powerful Cultivators! Unfortunately, I'm only at the

Mid-grade of the Sixth Layer myself and cannot resurrect these generals; otherwise, I could have captured their Divine Souls.

Just as he was thinking this, Sect Leader Jiang, Li Xiaohu, Yang Mountain, Han Lu, Bald Li Er, and the Spiritual Snake Gang Leader all walked over together.

Chief Steward Jiang Yuran cast an unfriendly glance at Li Xiaohu and the others, coldly saying, "Father, with the audacity of the Feng and Guo Families, how dare you stand with them?"

Sect Leader Jiang frowned and glared at Jiang Yuran, then said, "Elder Hua has already arranged for our Yin Talisman Sect, along with the Guo and Feng Families and the Spirit Snake Gang, to each select one hundred elite members. We are to form a four-hundred-strong Battle Array, undergo rigorous training, and when the real battle comes, Patriarch Feng Mengshan will lead the team under Elder Hua's command.

"Although our Yin Talisman Sect rarely associates with the Guo, Feng Families, and the Spirit Snake Gang, numerous powerhouses from various prefectures and areas have come to assist in the battle. The Cultivators of the Great Marsh Prefecture cannot just sit idly by and watch the chaos! Right now, as Demons are rampant and wreaking havoc in the world, any previous grudges must be set aside temporarily to deal with the Demon threat together!"

Upon hearing this, Jiang Yuran, though frowning heavily, said nothing further.

Li Xiaohu and Yang Mountain, looking at Lin Xuankong, initially wanted to greet him but held back when they saw him slightly shaking his head, standing to the side without daring to approach.

Sect Leader Jiang, along with Li Xiaohu, Yang Mountain, and Spiritual Snake Gang Leader Chu Kuangren, began discussing who to assign to the team, when and where to practice the Battle Array...

During this period, Spiritual Snake Gang Leader Chu Kuangren gradually showed a peculiar expression. He noticed that the Patriarchs of the Guo and Feng Families, who had previously been extremely hostile to the Yin Talisman Sect, were now consistently agreeing with Sect Leader Jiang's proposals, nodding in approval at whatever he suggested!

Spiritual Snake Gang Leader Chu Kuangren was puzzled: Recently, those three Hall Masters of the Black Tiger Gang have oddly ceded a considerable portion of the Great Marsh Prefecture's territory to the Yin Talisman Sect... Why are the Guo and Feng Families acting the same? What exactly are these three families up to? Could it be because of Jiang Yuran, the so-called Four-Seal Genius of the Yin Talisman Sect? No, even if Jiang Yuran has great Talent, it would still take her seven or eight years to reach Perfection of the Fifth Layer. Why would they be intimidated now? He looked questioningly at the members of the Yin Talisman Sect, glanced at Wu Liangye and shook his head, then at Gao Yunchao and shook his head... Finally, his gaze fell on Lin Xuankong, and he shook his head even more decisively. It was said that Lin Xuankong was only at the Third Layer; his attendance at this banquet was barely permissible. The significant change in attitude from the Guo and Feng Families, and the Black Tiger Gang, towards the Yin Talisman Sect couldn't possibly be because of him!

"Since Brother Guo and Brother Feng agree, let's settle it this way. Starting tomorrow, our elite members will practice the Battle Array at our Yin Talisman Sect's hall!" Sect Leader Jiang Haiyan declared.

Then he turned to the Spiritual Snake Gang Leader, "What do you think, Brother Chu?"

The distracted Chu Kuangren furrowed his brow and nodded. "Since Brother Guo and Brother Feng agree, I naturally agree too."

Lin Xuankong, standing next to Li Xiaohu and Yang Mountain, nodded slightly at them.

These two—Li Xiaohu is quite clever, and Yang Mountain very reliable. They have long since taken full control of the Feng and Guo Families after their reincarnation as their Patriarchs. Both are proving to be highly useful!

At this moment, Third Princess Xiao Ying'Er and others in the council chamber concluded their discussions and returned to the banquet. The drinking continued, the dancing persisted, and the meat was still being eaten...

This banquet served two purposes: a celebration for the Third Princess's birthday and a gathering before the upcoming battle. Consequently, all sorts of fine wines and Demon Flesh were abundantly prepared, much to Lin Xuankong's satisfaction.

「Half an hour later,」

Jiang Yuran, who had been near Lin Xuankong, finally noticed something amiss. "Steward Lin, your appetite is astonishing! There are several thousand pounds of Demon Flesh on these forty-plus long tables, and I think you've eaten almost half of it by yourself?"

Several thousand pounds? Calculating roughly, I've eaten thirty to forty thousand pounds already! This banquet cost hundreds of thousands of taels of silver—definitely worth it!

Lin Xuankong smiled without responding.

At this time, a sudden sound of tearing air came from a distance. Then, a figure descended from the sky, landing in the center of the banquet. The figure wove through the twenty-odd dancing women and headed towards the Third Princess.

The Martial Cultivators around, who were drinking and reveling, all stood up upon seeing the newcomer.

General Wang Linghui of Prince Yu's Mansion cupped his hands and said, "General Yang Luofeng, you've returned so quickly! Just the travel itself must have taken over an Hour. It seems the reconnaissance of the Demon army on the five peaks went very smoothly?"

The 'Yang Luofeng' in Battle Armor glanced at General Wang Linghui briefly, nodded slightly, and continued walking towards Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er.

In the distance, at the banquet's main seat, Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er's eyes lit up with joy upon seeing Yang Luofeng's return. She stood up, raised her wine cup, and said, "Everyone, while we enjoy our drinks here, General Yang has risked his life gathering intelligence for our upcoming battle at Sealed Demon Mountain. Come, let's all toast General Yang!"

When the Third Princess spoke, the hundreds of powerhouses present immediately raised their wine cups, signaling their respect towards Yang Luofeng.

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A smile touched Yang Luofeng's lips as he walked straight towards Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er. "Your Highness the Third Princess, during my recent expedition to the Sealing Demon Mountain Range, I have thoroughly investigated the demon army situation. All the intelligence is recorded in the booklet in my hand!" As he spoke, he drew closer to Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er.

All the Martial Cultivators present, including Grand Elder Ouyang Qinglan of the Profound Phoenix Celestial Sect at Eighth-Layer Perfection and Jia Yu of the Holy Dragon Association at Late Eighth Layer, did not doubt him. They stood up one after another, looking at the booklet in Yang Luofeng's hand.

Other Martial Cultivators showed envy in their eyes. If Yang Luofeng had indeed fully investigated the intelligence, he would be able to obtain three Thick Earth Treasure Elixirs this time!

Yang Luofeng smiled, drawing increasingly closer. He was just four zhang away from reaching Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er's table!

Just at that moment,

CRACKLE! CRACKLE! CRACKLE! CRACKLE! CRACKLE!

A piercing sound of spreading thunder and lightning filled the air. An immense amount of extremely bright lightning surged towards Yang Luofeng, enveloping his body in an instant.

Even though Yang Luofeng's physical strength was extremely high, he still staggered for a moment when struck by the sudden lightning, his long hair standing on end.

Yang Luofeng's expression twitched. He turned his lightning-covered face to look at Lin Xuankong, who was unleashing the Divine Thunder Illusion.

Lin Xuankong's face was icy cold. General Yang Luofeng had already self-destructed and perished on the outskirts of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range; how could this Yang Luofeng be the real one! Moreover, as soon as this person arrived, he headed straight for Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er, clearly targeting her... Whether he was human or demon, Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er treated me very well; how could I possibly allow danger to approach her!

This sudden turn of events at the banquet made the hundreds of powerhouses present freeze in surprise, some looking in astonishment at Lin Xuankong, the source of the lightning.

Even Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er, 'Yang Luofeng's' target, showed bewilderment on her beautiful face.

Hua Yanluo, standing beside Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er's table, paled and shouted in a low voice, "Lin Xuankong, you audacious maniac! You are too reckless! This is the Third Princess's birthday banquet, yet you dare to randomly attack others? And you're attacking General Yang, who is investigating demon intelligence! Lin Xuankong, stop immediately!"

The surrounding Cultivators also shook their heads continuously, whispering among themselves.

"Who is Lin Xuankong? Which Cultivator is this? Drank too much?"

"Causing trouble at the Third Princess's banquet? He must have a death wish!"

"He's incredibly bold! The Third Princess's banquet is not a place for recklessness!"

Sect Leader Jiang of the Yin Talisman Sect turned pale at the scene. He rushed to Lin Xuankong and grabbed his arm that was unleashing the lightning. "Xuankong, stop quickly! General Yang's power is not something you can attack recklessly! If it weren't for this being the Princess's banquet, a casual Dust Explosion Technique from General Yang would likely blast all of us from the Yin Talisman Sect to death!"

If Jiang Haiyan hadn't remembered Lin Xuankong was the sect's genius, he would have been reluctant to strike him. If it were his own daughter Jiang Yuran acting so recklessly, he probably would have crippled her with a single palm strike by now.

Chief Steward Jiang Yuran, Grand Chief Steward Wu Liangye, and others were equally stunned. A Third-Layer Steward Lin attacking an Eighth-Layer General Yang? Has Steward Lin gone mad? The Yin Talisman Sect is in for a terrible misfortune!

"General Yang?" Seeing 'Yang Luofeng' stop, Lin Xuankong halted his lightning attack, his face chilling. "General Yang is a Tier Eight Powerhouse; True Qi would instantly protect his body when attacked! After I attacked him, not a trace of True Qi appeared. How could he be Yang..."

SWISH! SWISH! SWISH!

The sound of something tearing through the air interrupted Lin Xuankong's words.

'Yang Luofeng', who had stopped, suddenly burst forward, rushing towards Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er with terrifying speed.

As he ran, his body writhed and transformed into a Stone Monkey several zhang tall. He flung out an arm, already reaching for Xiaoo Ying'Er's face.

The attack came too quickly. Despite Xiaoo Ying'Er's Sixth-Layer Cultivation, she had no time to mobilize her True Qi.

The pupils of the several hundred Martial Cultivators around suddenly shrank. Unfortunately, the situation was so sudden that even those at the Seventh and Eighth Layers couldn't save the Third Princess in time!

Just as the massive Stone Monkey's arm was about to crush Xiaoo Ying'Er's head—

In the nick of time,

SCREECH!

A phoenix cry sounded. At the same moment, a palm-shaped manifestation of True Qi heavily struck the Stone Monkey's arm.

BOOM!

A thunderous explosion echoed. The Stone Monkey's entire outstretched arm instantly shattered!

Immediately after, a figure blocked Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er. It was the one with the highest cultivation present, Grand Elder Ouyang Qinglan of the Profound Phoenix Celestial Sect.

WHOOSH! WHOOSH! WHOOSH! WHOOSH!

Dozens of palm shadows flashed like illusions, rapidly striking the enormous Stone Monkey.

In just one breath, the enormous Stone Monkey's body was completely smashed, only a small part of its upper body and head remaining.

Only then did Ouyang Qinglan stop, her face ice-cold as she glared at the Stone Monkey. "A mere Late Seventh-Layer Stone Monkey dares to attempt to assassinate our Third Princess at the banquet!"

The immobilized Stone Monkey suddenly burst into hysterical laughter. "Hahaha! If it weren't for that lightning-wielding fellow disrupting my plan and arousing your suspicions, Xiaoo Ying'Er's head would already be crushed!

"But Xiaoo Ying'Er will die sooner or later... How dare she plot against my king's Thick Earth Ore Vein? Not only will you all perish, but even if a few Ninth-Layer members of the Human Race came, they would just be lambs to the slaughter! Hahaha!"

After laughing wildly, Demon Qi rose from its body. Its torso and head gradually shrank, finally transforming into a single yellow monkey hair!

"A Demon Monkey Avatar!" The coldness on Ouyang Qinglan's face became more evident.

She turned to look at Xiaoo Ying'Er, whose expression was shifting, and a sudden shiver of dread coursed through her. The Stone Monkey demon was skilled at using its hairs to transform its appearance. Without a direct attack, it was very difficult to see through its Illusory Body. If that person from the Yin Talisman Sect hadn't attacked and disrupted this Demon Monkey Avatar, the Third Princess might have truly met a grim fate! If the Third Princess were to meet such a fate, and right in front of me,

the Celestial Sect Leader would probably throw me into the sect's death prison to suffer eternal torment!

The surrounding Martial Cultivators, witnessing this scene, were equally filled with shock and lingering fear. A Great Demon's avatar had infiltrated the Third Princess's birthday banquet and nearly killed her. If the Third Princess had died, every single person present would have been in grave trouble!

Standing beside Xiaoo Ying'Er's table, Hua Yanluo's heart was pounding. She looked at Lin Xuankong, feeling deep remorse for having scolded him as an audacious maniac earlier.

Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er's heart was also pounding furiously. She exhaled heavily, her gaze shifting towards Lin Xuankong in the corner.

Xiaoo Ying'Er certainly remembered this old genius who had once 'beaten' her. Moreover, she had planned to privately summon Lin Xuankong after this banquet to discuss certain matters. Who would have thought that this Lin Xuankong would end up saving her life before she even had the chance! And he had saved her life at her own birthday banquet! And right before she was about to launch a crucial war!

Hmm, it seems I'll have to handsomely reward this 'Blood Ox' genius, Lin Xuankong. Coincidentally, I received many Demon Pearls today... But how did he discover the flaw in the Demon Monkey Avatar? The Demon Monkey Avatar is known as one of the most difficult Demon Techniques to guard against; even Grand Elder Ouyang Qinglan didn't detect the flaw!

Her eyes shimmered as she carefully looked at Lin Xuankong.

"My narrow escape this time was thanks to Steward Lin detecting the flaw in advance. I will certainly reward you generously for this, very generously!

"However, I am a bit curious. With hundreds of powerful Martial Cultivators present, including myself, none of us noticed that the disguised General Yang was a Stone Monkey. How did you discover it?"

Chapter 316: The Third Princess's Astonishing Reward, Who is Mr. Mu?

Upon hearing Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er's words, the several hundred powerhouses present couldn't help but look towards Lin Xuankong.

Some had envy in their eyes. After all, saving the life of the Third Princess of Great Xia would undoubtedly bring immense rewards.

Some, such as Li Xiaohu, Yang Mountain, Li Er, and Han Lu, secretly felt happy for Lin Xuankong. Especially Li Xiaohu; if he weren't at the Princess's banquet, he probably would have burst into laughter by now!

Others, including Yin Talisman Sect Leader Jiang Haiyan and Jiang Yuran, showed confusion on their faces. Even Grand Elder Jia Yu and Ouyang Qinglan of the Holy Dragon Association looked somewhat curious.

Lin Xuankong slightly furrowed his brows. How did she know General Yang wasn't himself? I personally witnessed the real General Yang and his men self-destruct and perish, so I definitely knew this General Yang was an imposter. However, the Demon Reflected Celestial Pupils are my trump card; I certainly can't reveal it casually...

After a moment of contemplation, Lin Xuankong met everyone's gaze and cupped his hands towards Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er, saying,

"It actually wasn't difficult to spot the flaws; everyone was just too focused on General Yang's return from reconnaissance to think carefully!

"First, the Sealing Demon Mountain Range is over fifteen hundred miles from here. Although General Yang and his men can fly, a round trip at full speed would likely take them more than two hours. If you add the time to investigate the Demon army's distribution, their Equal Tiers, and their Demon Races, it would require at least another hour on top of that!

"Yet, this Stone Monkey Demon arrived when only two and a half hours had passed, claiming to have thoroughly investigated the situation in the Sealing Demon Mountain Range. This was clearly a major point of suspicion!

"Second, during the banquet today, General Yang never took off his longsword and Battle Armor. However, when that Demon arrived, it was not wearing the longsword. For a Cultivator, Battle Armor is vital for survival; how could it be discarded for no reason? This was the second major point of suspicion!

"Third, when General Yang departed, he directly activated his True Qi and flew. But upon his return, he arrived with the sound of rushing air, leaping and bounding. How could a Tier Eight Powerhouse be so powerful yet jump around like us Third or Fourth Layer Cultivators? This was the third major point of suspicion!"

He paused for a moment before continuing, "With these three major doubts, and considering General Yang was returning from the Sealing Demon Mountain Range, I naturally became quite wary. Therefore, I took the risk of attacking General Yang. As it turned out, this 'General Yang,' who was the Stone Monkey in disguise, didn't even use True Qi to protect himself when struck by my lightning attack. This, of course, confirmed my suspicions."

The several hundred Martial Cultivators present had no idea about the miraculous nature of Lin Xuankong's Demon Reflected Celestial Pupils. Seeing his meticulous analysis and clear, well-reasoned explanation, they all nodded silently, many powerhouses among them showing admiration in their eyes.

Yin Talisman Sect Leader Jiang Haiyan, at this moment, was quite agitated. His face, which had been pale, was now slightly flushed with excitement. This Sect Leader was clearly thrilled because Lin Xuankong had saved Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er!

She was, after all, the Third Princess of Great Xia, the Celestial Sect Saintess! He, as the Yin Talisman Sect Leader, wouldn't even have had the chance to see her, let alone interact with her, if not for this banquet. Now, Lin Xuankong had saved the Princess's life! How could he not be thrilled by such a monumental piece of good fortune?

In the heart of this Yin Talisman Sect Leader, it was now reaffirmed, absolutely reaffirmed, that the Nine-Seal Genius Lin Xuankong was undoubtedly the hope for the Yin Talisman Sect's future rise!

At the head seat, Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er listened and couldn't help but nod slightly. Her favor and appreciation for this 'Blood Ox' Talent grew even stronger.

The entire Linshui Pavilion, filled with hundreds of Sixth Layer, Seventh Layer, and Tier Eight Powerhouses, had failed to notice anything amiss. Yet, this Lin Xuankong was as observant as one could be, noticing such minute details... If he hadn't discovered it in time, I would likely be dead by now!

Xiao Ying'Er stood up and declared, "Yin Talisman Sect Silver Jade Steward Lin Xuankong, with his discerning eye, saved my life. I hereby appoint him as Saint-Protector General. He shall receive a First-Grade Salary from the Celestial Sect monthly and is additionally awarded a Saint Protection Jade Token. Seeing this Jade Token is akin to my presence; Celestial Sect Elders and Holy Dragon Association Elders must obey the commands of the Saint-Protector General!"

Upon hearing the Third Princess's words, the numerous powerhouses present couldn't help but reveal expressions of deep emotion. A First-Grade Salary and the authority to command Celestial Sect Elders and Prefects of various prefectures—this was a status and power that not even Seventh Layer powerhouses possessed! Only the dozen or so Tier Eight Powerhouses present held such standing!

Yet, the one receiving such status and authority now was merely a Third Layer Cultivation Yin Talisman Sect Junior Steward. How could they not be deeply moved!

Yin Talisman Sect Leader Jiang Haiyan; Grand Chief Stewards Wu Liangye and Gao Yunchao; and Li Xiaohu, Yang Mountain, Han Lu, and Li Er all wore expressions brimming with elation.

Especially Sect Leader Jiang of the Yin Talisman Sect; if they weren't at the Third Princess's banquet, this old Sect Leader would likely have been so overcome with emotion that he would have knelt on the spot, crying out to his ancestors and proclaiming that the Yin Talisman Sect's rise was upon them!

Jiang Yuran, dressed in a moon-white robe, gazed at Lin Xuankong, her eyes flashing. She suddenly recalled the circumstances under which she had accepted this man, who was over fifty years old...

At that time, she had taken him on as a Steward for the Yin Talisman Sect simply to show the many Loose Cultivators of Great Marsh that the Yin Talisman Sect was desperate for talent! Who could have imagined that he possessed a Nine-Seal Talent, making him the foremost genius the Yin Talisman Sect had seen in a thousand years? And now, in the blink of an eye, he had become the Cultivator with the highest status and greatest authority in the entire Great Marsh Prefecture, second only to the Third Princess!

Commanding Celestial Sect Elders... Even Prefect Liy of the Great Marsh Prefecture had to be utterly respectful when meeting Elder Hua!

Chapter 317: The Third Princess's Astonishing Reward, Who is Mr. Mu?_2

Jiang Yuran's delicate face showed a cascade of expressions; she was absolutely certain that from this day forward, the Yin Talisman Sect would rise to prominence thanks to Lin Xuankong!

"Quick, quickly thank Her Highness the Third Princess!" Yin Talisman Sect Leader Jiang Haiyan excitedly urged Lin Xuankong.

But how could the Yin Talisman Sect Leader know that Lin Xuankong already possessed several Holy Guardian Tokens and Holy Arrival Jade Tokens in his Ghost Frog Pouch? Why would he care about acquiring one more? As for commanding the Celestial Sect Elders? With his current strength and influence, he no longer needed their help. In fact, Lin Xuankong might have been more pleased if Grand Elder Jia Yu of the Holy Dragon Association and Grand Elder Ouyang Qinglan of the Celestial Sect were to obey him!

"Lin Xuankong offers his utmost thanks to the Third Princess!" Although he felt indifferent inside, with hundreds of Martial Cultivators around, Lin Xuankong still politely cupped his hands in gratitude. After all, he had to show respect to the Third Princess.

Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er smiled and said, "These are only part of the rewards. There are additional rewards awaiting you in the Council Chamber!"

Upon hearing this, Lin Xuankong's heart stirred slightly, and a hint of anticipation arose within him.

The surrounding Martial Cultivators were even more awestruck. The rewards already included the title of Saint-Protector General, the Saint Protection Jade Token, a First-Grade Salary, and the authority to command Elders. They couldn't believe Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er would offer even more!

However, what they didn't know was that Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er had long intended to closely ally herself with this 'Blood Ox' genius. Now, having been saved by Lin Xuankong, she was naturally even more determined to reward him generously. Had it been any other Martial Cultivator, perhaps bestowing the title of Saint-Protector General would have sufficed!

After speaking, the Third Princess glanced at the powerful experts from Prince Dong's Mansion. At this moment, among all those present, only these experts were not focused on Lin Xuankong's rewards. Among them was Yang Luo Chen, Yang Luofeng's elder brother, who currently wore a deeply worried expression, his brows furrowed.

The Third Princess noticed this, sighed inwardly, and then said, "General Yang led his men to gather intelligence on the Demon army and has not yet returned. However, a Stone Monkey doppelgänger disguised as him appeared. This likely means General Yang Luofeng has been discovered by the Demons. They must also know he was on an intelligence-gathering mission; otherwise, they wouldn't have impersonated him."

Yang Luo Chen cupped his hands and said, "Third Princess, I plan to take all my subordinates from Prince Dong's Mansion to the Sealing Demon Mountain Range immediately to investigate!"

The Third Princess nodded slightly and looked at General Wang Linghui of Prince Yu's Mansion. "General Wang, among the contingents from the various Prince Mansions this time, your unit of King Yu Battle Array Cultivators, numbering more than 5,000, is the strongest! General Yang's fate is unknown, and my heart is uneasy. I hope General Wang can lead his forces and accompany General Luo Chen to investigate the vicinity of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range."

Upon hearing this, Wang Linghui stepped forward from his ranks, cupped his hands, and declared, "Linghui accepts the order! On this mission, I will definitely ascertain General Yang's situation!"

The Third Princess nodded. "Be extremely careful on your journey; safety is paramount. If you encounter a Great Demon, retreat immediately to avoid further casualties!"

Then, she looked at Ouyang Qinglan beside her. "Elder Ouyang, please accompany General Wang as well, to prevent the experts from Prince Yu's Mansion from being trapped by Great Demons and finding it difficult to escape!"

"This subordinate obeys!" replied the Grand Elder, who was at Eighth-Layer Perfection, cupping her hands.

「...」

After Ouyang Qinglan, Yang Luo Chen, Wang Linghui, and the experts from Prince Yu's Mansion had departed, Third Princess Xiaoying'er had Lin Xuankong accompany her toward the Council Chamber.

Upon entering the empty Council Chamber, the Third Princess of Great Xia fixed her gaze on Lin Xuankong and said casually, "Mr. Mu, did you bring the Profound Truth Jade Particles you promised me?"

Lin Xuankong's expression froze for a moment, then a look of confusion spread across his face as he glanced around.

Seeing this, Xiao Ying'Er frowned slightly. "There are no outsiders here, Mr. Mu. Why put on such an act?"

Lin Xuankong looked utterly surprised. "Third Princess, who is Mr. Mu? Is there someone else in this Council Chamber?"

Xiao Ying'Er scrutinized him for a long moment. Seeing his genuinely bewildered and surprised expression, she finally shook her head slightly and said, "Oh, never mind. I must have misheard. I thought that Mr. Mu had arrived!"

Lin Xuankong remained silent.

Heh, little girl, still trying to pull a fast one on me?

Xiao Ying'Er then put on a very sincere expression. "This time, my life was hanging by a thread. Thinking back on it now still fills me with fear. If not for your meticulous mind, a major disaster would have occurred! Had I perished, the entire Six Prefectures of Nanjiang would have descended into chaos! For such a great service, Steward Lin, what other rewards do you desire? Demon Flesh, Treasure Elixirs, Battle Armor, or Demon Pearls?"

If Miss Xiao and I are to succeed in Refining the Initial Tier Immortal Artifact, other materials aren't a major concern, but we need 12 Demon Pearls... That's 12 Demon Pearls! Even though I currently have 15, losing 12 of them would still pain me greatly. Lin Xuankong thought to himself.

"Saving the Princess was merely this subordinate's duty!" Lin Xuankong declared with a forthright expression.

Xiaoo Ying'Er smiled. "Steward Lin, there's no need for such modesty! Ever since we parted at the Demon Slaying Conference, I've wanted to summon you multiple times. However, I was swamped with affairs and also made a trip to the Ba Mountain Secret Realm, so I never had the chance. A Talent like yours is unique in the entire Great Xia Dynasty... or perhaps, at most, there are two such individuals. The Mr. Mu I mentioned just now possesses an exceptionally high True Qi reserve, just like you! If Steward Lin can advance to the Fifth Layer or Sixth Layer in the future, I believe you will possess various powerful abilities, much like Mr. Mu! Great Xia must, of course, nurture such a genius as yourself with all its resources. Even without you saving my life, I would still have rewarded you! Steward Lin, please state whatever reward you desire. As long as I have it, you may take it!"

Hearing her words, Lin Xuankong couldn't help but take a closer look at Xiaoo Ying'Er's face.

This girl really spares no effort to recruit Talent, so generous and open-handed! Since that's the case, I won't be polite!

Lin Xuankong cupped his hands. "Since the Third Princess is so generous, I shall be bold enough to ask. I require neither Battle Armor, Demon Flesh, nor Treasure Elixirs! If the Princess agrees, perhaps you could grant me one or two Demon Pearls?"

Third Princess Xiaoo Ying'Er smiled. "For a genius like Steward Lin, what are one or two Demon Pearls! I know of your unique Talent; your Qi Blood Amount far exceeds that of others by dozens or even hundreds of times. I imagine you could simultaneously activate more than ten Demon Pearls with no effort at all! Hmm... Since you need Demon Pearls, then I shall give you a few more! Today is my 18th birthday, so how about I give you 18 Demon Pearls?"

Eighteen Demon Pearls? Eighteen Demon Pearls! Even with my family's large Secret Realm, I'm not as extravagant as this girl!

Lin Xuankong couldn't help but look at Xiaoo Ying'Er. He saw her nodding slightly, a smile playing at the corners of her mouth as she said, "To Great Xia, Steward Lin, your value far exceeds 18 Demon Pearls! If not for the current war against the Demons, requiring me to distribute these Demon Pearls among some disciples of the Celestial Sect, giving you 36 Demon Pearls would be nothing!"

「...」

After returning to his residence from the inner city, Lin Xuankong took out 18 Demon Pearls from his Ghost Frog Pouch. He looked at them for a few moments, his heart filled with joy and a swirl of emotions.

This Xiaoo Ying'Er, what a rich lady; she's truly somewhat admirable. If I had 18 Demon Pearls, aside from the Young Lady, Yu Fei, Little Hu, and a few others, I would be utterly unwilling to give them away to anyone else!

With 18 Demon Pearls now in hand, I have more than enough materials for Refining the Initial Tier Immortal Artifact!

「The next morning,」

Lin Xuankong left the Great Marsh Prefecture, heading towards the Flying Dragon Slope.

Just as he landed at the entrance of Xiao Xiuyi's cave, a graceful, black-clad figure flashed towards him. It was Xiao Xiuyi. She looked at Lin Xuankong with some surprise. "Steward Lin, what brings you here today? Have you already heard about the Demon Pearl auction in Prison Dragon City?"

Chapter 318: The Ultimate Immortal Artifact Plan, Lin Xuankong's Bold Request

Lin Xuankong was somewhat surprised. "Is there a Demon Pearl auction in Prison Dragon City?"

Xiao Xiuyi responded, "Yes, it's news released by the Prison Dragon City officials yesterday. Five days from now, there will be an auction with five Evil Sheep Demon Pearls up for bid. We just don't know who the generous seller is or what the starting price will be!"

Hearing this, Lin Xuankong's expression changed slightly.

Yesterday, when Xiaoo Ying'Er gave him eighteen Demon Pearls, Lin Xuankong hadn't brought himself to take the particularly good ones, since they were intended as consumables for weapon refining, their intrinsic combat power being irrelevant for that purpose!

So, he picked out all the plant-type Demon Pearls from Xiaoo Ying'Er's forty-eight Demon Pearls and also selected a few Demon Fox Demon Pearls.

At that time, he noticed that among the Demon Pearls Xiaoo Ying'Er held, there were precisely five Evil Sheep Demon Pearls... It seems the Third Princess is a bit tight on funds for war preparations and plans to auction off these five Evil Sheep Demon Pearls before the war begins? Just yesterday, she was putting on such a generous and grand air, and now she has to auction off Demon Pearls!

Thinking of this, Lin Xuankong frowned. This time, if I can successfully refine an Immortal Artifact, given Xiaoo Ying'Er's generosity towards me, I must help her, even if it's just to deal with some Great Demons in the Sealed Demon Mountain battle, regardless of whether it's for those Thick Earth Spiritual Objects and Geng Metal Spiritual Objects!

With this thought, his desire for the Immortal Artifact became even stronger!

"Miss Xiao, the Demon Pearls are actually already gathered!" Lin Xuankong reached into the Ghost Frog Pouch and took out over a dozen Demon Pearls.

"What?" Xiao Xiuyi looked at the dozen or so glowing Demon Pearls in his hand, astonishment on her beautiful face.

"This... there are actually more than twelve? You... where did you get so many Demon Pearls! These are priceless treasures! Even the top-tier factions in Great Marsh Prefecture, like the Black Tiger Gang, the Guo Family, and the Feng Family, possess very few—at most, one or two, perhaps two or three per family. Even some of the thousand-year-old prestigious families in Kyoto probably only have twenty or thirty in their entire reserves!"

Lin Xuankong smiled. "The other materials are also ready—twenty thousand Forehead Scales and various other materials!"

Hearing this, Xiao Xiuyi's beautiful face showed astonishment once more. She looked up at Lin Xuankong, her eyes filled with confusion and surprise.

A Silver Jade Steward from the Yin Talisman Sect, able to gather so many materials and over a dozen Demon Pearls in just two days? Who exactly is he? How did he manage all this?

Xiao Xiuyi was stunned for a long moment, utterly perplexed.

Lin Xuankong asked expectantly, "Miss Xiao, when can we start refining the Immortal Artifact?"

Xiao Xiuyi stared blankly at Lin Xuankong and didn't respond until he asked again. Then, she snapped back to reality as if waking from a dream. "Uh... The materials are ready. We can start refining anytime!"

Lin Xuankong's eyes lit up with joy. "Great! I have no other pressing matters these next few days, so I can accompany you during the refining, Miss Xiao!"

The two of them walked towards the cave.

After walking a dozen or so zhang, Xiao Xiuyi suddenly stopped, a fervent gleam in her eyes as she looked at the Demon Pearls in Lin Xuankong's hand.

"Steward Lin, while recently contemplating Artifact Refining Techniques for Immortal Artifacts, I had a bold idea! It's just that this idea will require some time."

Lin Xuankong smiled at her. "Miss Xiao, you're an Artifact Refining Genius. You're bound to have many unconventional ideas and designs that far surpass those of ordinary Artifact Refiners! Please, feel free to share any new thoughts you have!"

Xiao Xiuyi said, "Steward Lin, I've told you before that using twelve Demon Pearls can refine the most basic Initial Tier Immortal Artifact. If one hundred Demon Pearls could be gathered, a Grade-Entered Immortal Artifact could be refined. Do you have any idea what this new Artifact Refining Technique I've conceptualized is like?"

Lin Xuankong shook his head with a smile. "My knowledge of Artifact Refining is merely superficial. Even concepts like Battle Armor, Magical Artifacts, Initial Tier Immortal Artifacts, and Grade-Entered Immortal Artifacts are things I first heard about from you, Miss Xiao!"

A look of longing appeared in Xiao Xiuyi's eyes.

"When I was in Kyoto, I heard that even among the Immortals of the Central Province Divine Dynasty Immortal Sect, there are distinctions in power levels! Cultivators who have just ascended to the Immortal Tier can already roam the Void and traverse the Cyan Nether. Their physical bodies are as resilient as Magical Artifacts, and their Divine Souls are as firm as bedrock! But even such cultivators, newly ascended to the Immortal Tier, still cannot compare to the Immortal Lord who established the Central Divine Dynasty's domain spanning millions of miles!

"It is said that the Immortal Lord of the Central Divine Dynasty can strike across ten thousand miles, annihilating Demon Kings. He can journey from Boundaryless Mountain in the morning to the Boundless Sea by evening. That Immortal Lord's immense power stems not only from his vast and immeasurable Immortal True Essence and Magic, but also because he possesses the one and only Growth-type Immortal Artifact in the entire Central Province Divine Dynasty!

"That Growth-type Immortal Artifact had long since become Grade-Entered. It's said to have grown to possess power several dozen times that of an Initial Tier Immortal Artifact! With a mere thought from the Central State Immortal Lord, it can fly ten thousand miles to eliminate enemies, effortlessly suppress Great Demons and Demon Kings, and even carry him across millions of miles of territory at incredible speeds—far surpassing any fixed-grade Immortal Artifact!"

Kill enemies ten thousand miles away? A Growth-type Immortal Artifact that can easily suppress Demon Kings and even quickly traverse millions of miles of territory?

Even though Lin Xuankong already harbored some anticipation, hearing Xiao Xiuyi's words still profoundly shook his Heart Spirit and filled him with intense longing!

Xiao Xiuyi continued, "It is, naturally, extremely difficult to refine such a Growth-type Immortal Artifact! However, while recently contemplating Artifact Refining Techniques, I've had a faint inkling of insight! If I'm given a few more months for contemplation and insight, I believe I can conceptualize an Artifact Refining Technique for a Growth-type Immortal Artifact. The Initial Tier Immortal Artifact crafted using this technique would initially require twenty-eight Demon Pearls. However, it could then continually Devour Demon Pearls, Geng Metal Crystal Stones, and Li Fire Essence to grow stronger indefinitely!"

Chapter 319: The Ultimate Immortal Artifact Plan, Lin Xuankong's Bold Request_2

"It can devour and grow? A growth-type Initial Tier Immortal Artifact? Comparable to the weapons of the Immortal Lords of the Central Divine Dynasty!"

Upon hearing this, Lin Xuankong couldn't help but feel a surge of excitement.

He looked at Xiao Xiuyi before him and couldn't help but smile.

This kind of growth-type Immortal Artifact, this Refining Method, such a bold plan! If it were other Artifact Refiners, they probably wouldn't even dare to think of it in their lifetime! This Xiao Xiuyi—her talent, courage, insight, and comprehension are all extremely astonishing!

Xiao Xiuyi's eyes, however, carried a touch of confidence. "Indeed, it is a growth-type Initial Tier Immortal Artifact. But the specific and detailed Refining Method will probably take a few months of deduction and calculation—about four months in total!"

The words "four months" made Lin Xuankong, who had been brimming with excitement, suddenly feel a chill.

I had planned to refine the Immortal Artifact soon, striving to catch up with the battle of Sealed Demon Mountain. Then I could help Xiao Ying'Er kill some Great Demons and seize some Thick Earth and Geng Metal Spiritual Objects... Four months! There's simply no time!

Without the aid of an Initial Tier Immortal Artifact, in the battle of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range, who knows how many strong Human Race Cultivators would fall. If they were to lose this battle, if the Six Prefectures of Nanjiang faced trouble, then the Great Marsh Prefecture, bordering the Sealing Demon Mountain Range, would likely never see a day of peace again!

If that happens, the forces of the Black Tiger Gang, the Guo Family, and the Feng Family under my control will probably be wiped out. They would no longer be able to help me collect Demon Flesh!

Lin Xuankong pondered for a moment and then said, "Four months... Let's refine an Initial Tier Immortal Artifact first then!"

The eagerness in Xiao Xiuyi's eyes didn't dissipate. She shook her head and frowned, saying, "Steward Lin, to refine an Initial Tier Immortal Artifact, twelve Demon Pearls are needed! Demon Pearls are invaluable. If they can be put to greater use, why waste them now? This is an opportunity to own a growth-type Immortal Artifact! Since you were able to collect over ten Demon Pearls, you should have the chance to collect twenty-eight. By the time you've gathered all the Demon Pearls, I will have completed the deduction of the Refining Method. Then, we can perfectly cooperate to refine a growth-

type Immortal Artifact! In the future, as it slowly grows, it could rival the most powerful Immortal Artifact of the Central Divine Dynasty! The only two growth-type Immortal Artifacts in the world! It can grow from an Initial Tier Immortal Artifact to a Grade-Entered Immortal Artifact, and then continue to devour Demon Pearls and materials, constantly improving its grade and power. Don't you truly want to own one?"

She continued, "Although such an Immortal Artifact needs True Essence to activate, before one becomes an Immortal Tier Cultivator, it can only be used once after being charged with Qi Blood and True Qi. However, each use is enough to slay an Eighth-Layer Perfection Great Demon from an extremely long distance. It can also allow you to travel thousands, or even tens of thousands, of miles at great speed, and it will only grow stronger!"

After Xiao Xiuyi finished speaking, Lin Xuankong thought to himself, How could I not want to own it? But the problem is, three or four months means missing crucial events! This concerns the Sealed Demon Mountain battle, whether I can grow steadily, and whether I can obtain Thick Earth Spiritual Objects!

Lin Xuankong shook his head slightly.

Seeing this, a look of disappointment appeared on Xiao Xiuyi's delicate face. "Why not, Brother Lin, consider it for a few more days? Materials are not easy to collect. Why decide so quickly!"

After speaking, she walked to a corner of the cave, sat down at a table, and looked at some drawings on it.

Lin Xuankong frowned, pondering for a moment. Suddenly, his eyes lit up as an idea struck him.

He then glanced at Xiao Xiuyi a few times, coughed, and said, "Miss Xiao, my Lin Family possesses a Nourishing Spirit Elixir, inherited for many years and of an extremely high grade. This elixir can significantly improve a Cultivator's Heart Thought grade and also enhance their comprehension. Perhaps if you take it, you could speed up your deduction and comprehension process!"

Hearing this, Xiao Xiuyi looked at Lin Xuankong with some surprise. "A high-grade Nourishing Spirit Elixir that improves Heart Thought grade and comprehension? Such a miraculous elixir actually exists!"

Lin Xuankong sighed inwardly. This is just a stopgap measure, truly a stopgap. It's not that I want to deceive Miss Xiao, but I really can't wait four months!

He nodded decisively. "This elixir has been passed down to my generation, and only two remain. I once took one, and it was indeed miraculous. My comprehension speed in cultivating Martial Dao increased several dozen times, and my Realm advancement speed also increased several dozen times!"

Xiao Xiuyi raised her eyebrows slightly. "Brother Lin, you mention this because you intend to...?"

Lin Xuankong took a Treasure Divine Protection Elixir from his bosom. "Naturally, I intend to give one to you, Miss Xiao, to help speed up your comprehension and deduction process!"

Xiao Xiuyi carefully examined the Treasure Divine Protection Elixir.

She saw the elixir was suffused with a spiritual mist, nearly translucent and crystalline, faintly emitting a clear fragrance. Merely smelling this fragrance, she felt her spirits lift, and her train of thought for deduction became much clearer.

Although the Great Xia Dynasty had many Alchemists, it had only been established for a thousand years; its foundation was far inferior to that of the Rakshasa Kingdom or the Central Divine Dynasty. Consequently, even the best Alchemists in Great Xia could only refine Upper Grade Divine Protection Elixirs. Even Xiao Xiuyi, hailing from Kyoto, had never seen such a Treasure Divine Protection Elixir that could influence and invigorate the Heart Spirit merely by smelling its fragrance!

Seeing how miraculous the elixir was, Xiao Xiuyi's delicate face showed amazement. "This elixir is so wondrous! Brother Lin, do you really intend to give it to me?"

Lin Xuankong nodded solemnly, then a troubled look appeared on his face. "It is only right to gift a Treasure Elixir to a prodigy. It's just that..."

Seeing his expression, Xiao Xiuyi said, "Since it's a Lin Family heirloom and only one remains—such a precious Treasure Elixir—how can I simply take it? If Brother Lin has any conditions, please state them frankly!"

Lin Xuankong shook his head. "Miss Xiao is helping me refine an Immortal Artifact. Let alone one Treasure Elixir, even if I had a hundred, I would willingly give them to you! It's just... it's just that my family elders left last words saying this Treasure Elixir must only be consumed by a member of the Lin Family. Alas, how can I defy the words of my elders!"

Xiao Xiuyi frowned. "Since your elders stipulated that only a Lin Family member can consume it, how can I accept such a Treasure Elixir!"

Lin Xuankong shook his head. "Actually, there is a way... Um, Miss Xiao, if you just call me 'husband' once, you'd be considered a member of the Lin Family. Then it wouldn't count as me disobeying my elders' last words! Of course, it's just a verbal address, a way for me to feel I've honored their wishes and ease my conscience!"

As he said this, Lin Xuankong thought to himself, I don't know if a mere verbal address counts for the 'Wives, Children, Elders, and Youngsters' requirement. But the situation is urgent. To enhance Miss Xiao's comprehension speed, I can only try this!

When Xiao Xiuyi heard this, a peculiar expression appeared on her delicate face.

She scrutinized Lin Xuankong, looking him up and down until he felt thoroughly uncomfortable. Then, this Artifact Refining Genius suddenly laughed. "Brother Lin, you're quite the joker, trying to take advantage of me with an elixir? Is there really such an elder's last wish?!"

Lin Xuankong's confidence wavered. How could I be deceiving her? "How could I lie!" he exclaimed.

Xiao Xiuyi chuckled lightly. "Whether it's true or not, this elixir is indeed miraculous. It will certainly invigorate the Heart Spirit and speed up my deduction process! Since that's the case, what does it matter if I call you 'husband'? I, Xiao Xiuyi, am willing to give up my life for the sake of researching Artifact Refining!"

"Husband!" she called out without hesitation, then took the elixir from Lin Xuankong's hand.

Lin Xuankong actually felt a bit embarrassed. He hesitated for a moment before acknowledging her. The instant he responded, the Vigorous in Old Age light flashed in his Brain Mansion.

Immediately, a line of large characters appeared in his Brain Mansion:

[Artifact Refining Technique: Immortal Tier: Unranked 229/240]

At the same time, countless insights into Artifact Refining poured into his mind.

The vast flood of information made Lin Xuankong, a Mid-grade Sixth Layer Cultivator, feel dizzy and almost stumble. He quickly took two steps back, found a stone seat, and sat down, a painful expression on his face.

Beside him, Xiao Xiuyi looked at Lin Xuankong with some surprise, frowning. "Brother Lin, are you alright?"

He just got called 'husband' verbally, and it's not even for real. Is Brother Lin so excited he's swaying and about to collapse?!

Lin Xuankong, however, waved his hand slightly. "I'm fine, I'm fine!"

Though he said that, he was inwardly astounded. Miss Xiao's Artifact Refining Talent is truly astonishing! Her Artifact Refining Technique has actually reached the Immortal Tier. No wonder she dared to speak to me about refining an Immortal Artifact! Furthermore, the amount of comprehension information for this Immortal Tier Artifact Refining Technique is indeed terrifyingly vast... The most amazing thing is that my Life Plate's second talent is truly powerful! Even though Miss Xiao only called me 'husband' verbally, without any real affection, I was still able to gain proficiency in her Cultivation Technique and skills!

Chapter 320: Secret Realm Kingdom Plan, A Paradise-like Country of Secret Realms

Nearly half an hour later, the vast stream of information regarding the Immortal Tier Artifact Refining Techniques was finally and completely imprinted into Lin Xuankong's memory.

Even though Lin Xuankong was in the mid-grade of the Sixth Layer, with his Heart Thought at the Eighth Layer, suddenly accepting so much information was still incredibly painful. However, once the information transfer was complete, his headache quickly subsided.

Lin Xuankong couldn't completely digest the information about those Immortal Tier Artifact Refining Techniques in such a short period, but a surge of admiration for Xiao Xiuyi welled up in his heart.

She was willing to stay away from bustling cities, live in a simple cave, yet possessed unparalleled talent in artifact refining and was wholeheartedly dedicated to studying its techniques. Geniuses weren't frightening, but a genius like Xiao Xiuyi, completely undistracted, truly was!

Xiao Xiuyi, who was originally deducing artifact refining techniques, occasionally looked up at him. Seeing Lin Xuankong's face gradually return to normal and that he seemed fine, she finally felt relieved.

A touch of surprise then appeared in her clear eyes. "The Treasure Elixir passed down in Brother Lin's family is indeed quite miraculous. After taking it, not only was my Heart Spirit greatly invigorated, but my thoughts and deductions on artifact refining techniques also became continuously inspired. In just a little over half an hour of deduction, I surpassed what would normally take me several days!"

That wasn't the effect of the Treasure Elixir; it was because you called me 'husband'!

Lin Xuankong said, "Yes, that elixir indeed has an excellent effect."

Xiao Xiuyi nodded slightly and then fell silent. After a moment, she suddenly stood up, cupped her hands seriously, and said, "This kind of miraculous elixir is extremely beneficial for my future study of artifact refining techniques. It can even be said to bring about an earth-shattering change. If this elixir's effect could last, its value would be unimaginable. Even among the many spirit elixirs of the Central Divine Dynasty, I've never heard of such a miraculous Treasure Elixir!

"Brother Lin's ancestors were probably no ordinary cultivators to possess such a miraculous Treasure Elixir. The key is that Brother Lin was willing to share such a Treasure Elixir with me. I really don't know how to thank you, Brother Lin!"

Lin Xuankong waved his hand and said, "Miss Xiao, there's no need to be so formal. You're helping me refine an Immortal Artifact and haven't even mentioned payment. How could I possibly quibble over the value of this Treasure Elixir!"

Xiao Xiuyi revealed a slight smile. "I hadn't mentioned payment before because I wasn't sure I could guarantee a successful refinement. If I failed, the value of the wasted materials would be almost incalculable! Brother Lin, you trusted me to experiment with so many Demon Pearls; how could I mention any payment?"

"However, after taking this Treasure Elixir, I've gained many insights.

"If refining an Initial Tier Immortal Artifact, I already have a ninety percent confidence level; for a Grade-Entered Immortal Artifact, seventy percent. As for that growth-type Immortal Artifact, after I deduce and verify for a few more days, I should have plenty of inspiration. By then, I will definitely be able to come up with a perfected artifact refining technique!"

Seeing her eyes full of confidence, Lin Xuankong couldn't help but praise, "Miss Xiao, your artifact refining techniques are marvelous and unfathomable; I truly admire them! For the next few days, please focus on your deductions. Once you are confident, we'll start the refinement.

"However, this place is still the remote wilderness. Miss Xiao, why don't you conduct your deductions at my residence? It would be safer that way!"

Now that he knew of Xiao Xiuyi's astonishing talent in artifact refining, how could Lin Xuankong allow this genius to stay alone in the wilderness? This wasn't just an Artifact Refining Genius; this was his future Immortal Artifact! Moreover, it was a growth-type Immortal Artifact, the kind of ultimate Immortal Artifact wielded by the strongest Immortals of the Central Divine Dynasty!

If she encountered any danger, his Immortal Artifact plan would be completely ruined!

But Xiao Xiuyi slightly shook her head. "I am accustomed to living alone in the mountains and forests. Besides, I've been living here for these past few years and have never encountered any danger. Brother Lin, you can rest assured."

Seeing the determination on her face, Lin Xuankong couldn't help but furrow his brows. After a moment of thought, he reached into his Ghost Frog Pouch, retrieved a Protective Jade Token given to him by Xiaoo Ying'Er, and handed it to Xiao Xiuyi.

"For a rare genius like you, Miss Xiao, to live alone in the wild makes me uneasy," he said. "Especially now, with Great Marsh Prefecture and Profound Phoenix Celestial Sect preparing to deal with the Great Demons of the Sealing Demon Mountain Range, the situation is increasingly tense. Who knows when those Great Demons might send out their minions to wreak havoc and kill cultivators near Great Marsh Prefecture!"

"This Jade Token was given to me by a friend. It can store True Qi and Qi Blood, and it can automatically defend its wearer. In terms of defense, it's even stronger than Battle Armor!"

Xiao Xiuyi was quite independent and wouldn't easily accept someone else's treasure. After refusing a few times, she saw Lin Xuankong's insistence and reluctantly accepted the Protective Jade Token.

She took the Protective Jade Token, which was refined from Mid-grade Profound Truth Jade, and infused it with her Qi Blood. After sensing it carefully, her brows suddenly furrowed. "Brother Lin, this Protective Jade Token of yours is indeed extremely precious. It's made from Mid-grade Profound Truth Jade from the Central Divine Dynasty and is probably more valuable than a set of Exorcism Armor.

"Within the Profound Truth Jade, there is also a micro Body-Protecting Array inscribed by an Artifact Refiner, providing very strong protective effects.

"However, aside from the micro Body-Protecting Array, there's another peculiar array inside!"

Lin Xuankong was a bit surprised. "A peculiar array! Miss Xiao, do you know the purpose of this peculiar array? When my friend gave me this Protective Jade Token, they only mentioned the protective effect, without mentioning any other arrays or effects!"

Xiao Xiuyi said, "I will carefully sense it again!"