

War God 101

Chapter 101: Grandmaster's Promise!

"Master Lin!"

Guan Chengye was startled, his expression turning embarrassed. He hadn't expected Master Lin to have heard everything he said.

Guan Jiaojiao glared at Lin Mu indignantly, certain that he must have intentionally hinted at something to her grandfather. Otherwise, given how much her grandfather doted on her, he would never have made such an excessive demand.

"Master Lin, about Xin He..."

A sudden thought struck Guan Chengye, and he looked at Lin Mu with a mixture of anxiety and hope.

"When Young Master Mu takes action, success is a matter of course." Sun Tianyang came down the stairs and said, "The patient is out of immediate danger. However, his hand was detached for too long. Even though it's been reattached, it won't be as functional as it was before."

"You've saved Xin He's life, and for that, I am already immensely grateful," Guan Chengye said excitedly. "I wouldn't dare ask for more from you two masters."

Guan Jiaojiao couldn't control herself. She grabbed Lin Mu's hand and asked, "Lin Mu, is my dad really okay?"

Lin Mu nodded. "However, his injuries are severe, and his body is currently very weak. He'll need to rest and recuperate properly. At the very least, he won't be able to get into any fights for the next six months."

"Thank you, thank you so much," Guan Jiaojiao said, crying with joy. As long as her father was going to be okay, nothing else mattered.

"I'm going to check on my dad."

Guan Jiaojiao let go of Lin Mu and hurried upstairs.

Guan Chengye looked as if he wanted to say something, but he only sighed.

"Oh, please, both of you, have a seat."

Guan Chengye quickly ushered them to their seats and ordered tea to be served.

After Lin Mu and Sun Tianyang sat down, they sipped their tea slowly, showing no hurry to leave.

Guan Chengye took out two checks from his pocket and handed them to Lin Mu with both hands.
"Master Lin, this is a small token of the Guan family's appreciation. I hope you will accept it."

Lin Mu gave a slight nod and accepted the checks. He happened to be short on cash; otherwise, he wouldn't have accompanied Guan Jiaojiao in the first place. Besides, if he didn't accept, Guan Chengye might get the wrong idea.

Of course, he only kept one check, handing the other to Sun Tianyang.

Sun Tianyang waved his hand dismissively. "Young Master Mu, I can't accept this. I didn't do anything. You should keep the money."

"It's what you've earned. Take it," Lin Mu said.

"Well... alright. Since you insist, Young Master Mu, I'll accept it," Sun Tianyang replied after a moment's hesitation, taking the check.

Five hundred thousand was a substantial sum of money.

After finishing his tea, Sun Tianyang saw that Lin Mu had no intention of leaving. Assuming Lin Mu had something to discuss with Guan Chengye, he excused himself and left first.

Guan Chengye walked him to the door before returning to the main hall.

At that moment, Lin Mu was standing before a painting, scrutinizing the figure depicted on it.

"Does Master Lin also have an interest in painting?" Guan Chengye asked.

Lin Mu shook his head. "I don't, but while the brushwork is simple, this painting is full of charm. I'm curious, where did you acquire it, Elder Guan?"

The painting depicted a woman with a sword on her back. The paper was yellowed, and its edges were frayed, clearly indicating it was an antique, not a modern piece.

Guan Chengye said, "This has been passed down in my Guan family for generations. It is said to be several hundred years old, but who actually painted it is unknown to us."

There was no seal or signature on the scroll, so the artist remained unknown.

Furthermore, the ancestors of the Guan family were simple farmers. There wasn't even a single scholar among them, let alone a painter. It was only after the national wars began that the Guan family joined the military. After the liberation, they finally had the opportunity to become literate.

Still, the painting was an heirloom passed down from his ancestors, so Guan Chengye kept it as a memento.

Lin Mu suddenly spoke. "Elder Guan, I have an audacious request. I wonder if you would be willing to part with this painting and give it to me?"

"This..."

Guan Chengye hesitated for only a moment before replying, "Master Lin, you saved Xin He's life. Forget a mere painting—even if you asked the Guan family to go through fire and water, we would do so without hesitation!"

With that, Guan Chengye personally took down the scroll and handed it to Lin Mu.

Lin Mu looked at Guan Chengye. "You won't regret this, Elder Guan?"

Guan Chengye laughed heartily. "I, Guan Chengye, am just a coarse old man. I know nothing of painting or calligraphy. This painting is just a keepsake to me. Since you need it, Master Lin, please, take it."

"Alright then, I'll accept it," Lin Mu said, not refusing the offer. The painting was indeed of little use to the Guan family, but it was useful to him.

"Consider this a favor I owe the Guan family." Lin Mu hesitated for a moment before continuing, "How about this? I will make you a promise. As long as they are within my capabilities and do not violate my principles, I will do three things for the Guan family."

Those who practice cultivation are most wary of karmic entanglement. Although he had saved Guan Xinhe's life, he had already received payment for it. Now, by accepting an ancestral painting from the Guan family, he owed them another favor. Promising to do three things for them was a way to resolve this karmic debt.

"In that case... I thank you for your immense kindness, Master Lin!"

Guan Chengye gave Lin Mu a deep bow, his expression filled with emotion.

He knew just how important Lin Mu's promise was to the Guan family. To call it a lifeline would be no exaggeration.

On the surface, the Guan family owed its status to imperial favor, having been commanded to guard River City. But only a select few knew the truth: the Guan family had been exiled.

After all, great merit can arouse a ruler's envy.

Moreover, their ancestors were generations of farmers; they lacked a deep family foundation and an extensive network of connections. Trying to gain a foothold in the ever-changing Capital City was a virtually impossible task.

Even though the current sovereign was a wise ruler and his court was filled with capable ministers dedicated to serving the nation and its people, no one—neither the state nor the other great families—wanted to see a single family become all-powerful. This was especially true for a family that had clawed its way up from the dirt.

They faced marginalization from all sides, and every step was a struggle. This had been the norm for the Guan family during their years in the Capital City.

While Guan Chengye had spent many years in River City, mostly feigning illness at home and seldom venturing out, he was well aware of external affairs. A man who could rise from a peasant background to such a high position was no fool.

Later, seeing which way the political winds were blowing, he took the initiative to resign from all his posts and retire to his hometown, citing poor health.

At the time, the nation was shocked. Some remained silent while others were agitated.

At that moment, standing there in the grand hall, Guan Chengye distinctly felt the killing intent in the gazes around him diminish.

The sovereign hesitated repeatedly, but after Guan Chengye offered his resignation three times, the ruler had no choice but to accept.

However, in private, the sovereign had a secret letter delivered to him.

It contained just eight characters:

Pillar of the nation, guard River City!

The first four characters were an affirmation of the Guan family; the latter four carried guilt and, more importantly, a solemn duty.

Holding the letter, Guan Chengye's tears flowed freely. Facing the resplendent grand hall, he kowtowed three times and uttered eight characters of his own: "For family and country, I would die a hundred times without regret!"

Chapter 102: How about letting you have three punches?

The Guan Family was now guarding River City, and they were under immense pressure.

People thought Guan Chengye had returned to his hometown to enjoy a peaceful life, but Guan Chengye knew that the powerful figures in the court had already seen through it all.

Although they wouldn't trip him up from behind the scenes, they were eager to watch the Guan Family become a laughingstock.

Should the Guan Family encounter any trouble, those hungry wolves would surely pounce, tearing the family to shreds.

Actually, Guan Chengye wasn't afraid of these things.

A general facing death on the battlefield harbored no regrets.

What he feared was failing to meet his sovereign's expectations.

What he worried about was the Dark Web lurking in the gutters.

Now, Guan Xinhe was seriously injured and would be unable to fight for three months.

Although Guan Feifei was capable of standing on his own, he still seemed naive when facing a behemoth like the Dark Web.

Guan Feifei couldn't even solve the current dilemma the Guan Family faced.

But Lin Mu was different; he was a Martial Arts Grandmaster!

A single Grandmaster could stabilize a nation!

That was no exaggeration.

How many Grandmasters were there in the country today?

You could count them on one hand, and in his entire life, Guan Chengye had only ever seen one.

What glory was that? What prestige?

Although Lin Mu had only promised to do three things, it was enough to give the Guan Family more time to breathe and prepare to deal with the Dark Web.

"You don't have to be so formal, Elder Guan."

Lin Mu sat down and said, "Elder Guan, you can tell me now. Who is that person outside?"

Guan Chengye was slightly startled. "Master Lin, you... you already know?"

A smile touched the corner of Lin Mu's mouth. "With such a large commotion, it's a bit difficult not to."

"What I'm curious about is what kind of background the other party has to hold the Guan Family in such contempt."

Guan Chengye sighed and said through clenched teeth, "That person, the one outside, is a descendant of an old enemy of mine. He's here to fulfill an agreement we made years ago."

"A ten-year agreement, where life and death are not a concern!"

Lin Mu appeared surprised. "And you refused?"

Guan Chengye said, "It's useless for anyone to refuse this wager. My old enemy has already sent word, giving me only three days to consider. If I avoid the fight, he will slaughter my entire family!"

"Does that person not know the status of the Guan Family?" Lin Mu raised an eyebrow.

A hint of fury and unwillingness filled Guan Chengye's eyes, and he felt utterly humiliated.

"Because the opponent has a life-and-death contract signed by the Martial Alliance, he's challenging me to a duel as a Martial Artist. Even if the authorities have objections, they can't say much."

Guan Chengye said helplessly, "Moreover, that person's identity is not simple, so..."

"So, Elder Guan, you have to fight whether you want to or not?" Lin Mu asked.

"Correct."

Guan Chengye sighed. "The problem is that my old enemy has already achieved Internal Energy Mastery; his realm far surpasses mine. If Xin He hadn't been injured, he would have been strong enough to fight him, but now..."

Lin Mu said, "Can't you ask someone for help?"

Guan Chengye replied, "Yes. As long as a life-and-death agreement is signed with the Martial Alliance, the outcome is irrelevant!"

Guan Chengye immediately stood up, bowed to Lin Mu, and said, "Master Lin, the Guan Family is in grave danger, and I have no other options. I must boldly ask you, Master Lin, to save my family this one time!"

"I'll do it."

Lin Mu agreed instantly without a second thought.

The reason he had offered to do three things for the Guan Family was that he sensed they were in trouble.

Of course, there was another reason.

The Guan Family consisted of generations of loyal subjects who had served their country and its people.

In his past life, Lin Mu was the God of Slaughter of his generation. Though he had killed countless people, he only killed those who were utterly wicked and vile. He held the utmost respect for pillars of the country like them.

Otherwise, that divine war would never have happened.

"Guan Chengye... Thank you, Master Lin, for saving my life!"

Guan Chengye's voice was choked with emotion as he bowed deeply.

This time, Lin Mu calmly accepted his bow.

After Guan Chengye composed himself, Lin Mu rose and said, "Let's go. Take me to meet the person outside."

"I'm very curious to see just how formidable a junior trained by an enemy of Elder Guan can be."

"Master Lin..." Guan Chengye had a million things to say, but the words wouldn't come out.

Only one thought remained in his heart: A Martial Arts Grandmaster is like a great mountain one can only look up to!

Outside the gate, a young man in a traditional long robe stood under the scorching sun.

His posture was ramrod straight, utterly unmoving.

There wasn't a single drop of sweat on his face, and his gaze was perfectly calm.

However, a hint of disdain was visible in his expression.

It was as if he was mocking them.

What of a pillar of the country? So what if they were a family of loyal subjects for generations? This time, his master was coming as a Martial Artist to fulfill the ten-year-old bet with Guan Chengye. Publicly or privately, the authorities couldn't find any pretext to object. Moreover, the person backing his master had a terrifyingly immense background.

The reason he was blocking the Guan Family's main gate was to thoroughly humiliate them before the duel.

Stepping on the face of a General's family was not something ordinary people would even dare to imagine, let alone do.

Seeing the infuriated yet silent members of the Guan Family inside the gate, Xu Feng felt a deep satisfaction. Even the sun overhead seemed to cool by several degrees.

It was like drinking a bowl of refreshingly cold sour plum soup.

"Heh," Xu Feng sneered, looking at one of the large men. "What's the matter? Want to fight? Feel free. I, Xu Feng, will take you on."

That man's strength was not low, perhaps even slightly superior to his own.

But Xu Feng was certain the man wouldn't dare to act.

The Guan Family's rules forbade its members from striking anyone outside of a battlefield.

Xu Feng's words made many of the Guan family members' faces darken, making them wish they could rush out and tear him to pieces.

"What's wrong? Scared? If you're scared, then get lost. Don't embarrass yourselves here," Xu Feng jeered loudly.

"Bastard, I'll kill you!"

A young Guan Family member, his face flushed red with rage, started to charge out to fight Xu Feng to the death.

"Xiao Wu, don't be rash!"

The large man known as Da Jun stopped him, his hawk-like eyes fixed on Xu Feng.

"Don't forget the Guan Family's creed!"

Xiao Wu, his eyes red with fury, retorted, "But are we just going to let him trample on the honor of the General and the Family Head? To hell with it! I'll beg the Family Head to kick me out of the family, and then I'll go kill that son of a bitch!"

"Fool!"

Da Jun roared, "You may have no shame, but the Guan Family Army still has its pride!"

"Well said. The Guan Family can kill enemies on the battlefield and guard the frontiers, but this little insect isn't qualified to scream and shout at our doorstep."

At that moment, Guan Chengye walked over. Everyone immediately fell silent, but they looked at him with excited eyes, hoping he would give the order to crush the bastard at the gate.

Guan Chengye ignored them and instead turned to Lin Mu behind him. "Master Lin, I know this cur isn't worthy of your time, but I must still ask for your help."

Lin Mu nodded lightly, walked toward Xu Feng, and tilted his head.

"Kid, how about I let you have the first three punches?"

Chapter 103: If you are this weak, your master can't be that strong!

"Young man? I'll spot you three punches?"

Lin Mu's words left everyone stunned.

"Is this guy an idiot?" the man called Xiao Wu said with a strange look on his face. He could tell that Lin Mu wasn't much older than him. Yet here he was, calling Xu Feng—a man nearly thirty years old—a "young man."

Even Da Jun's mouth twitched. Though he didn't know Lin Mu's exact identity, he reasoned that anyone treated with such respect by the old General had to be extraordinary.

"General, can we really trust this man?" Xiao Wu couldn't help but ask, his face full of doubt.

Although Guan Chengye had retired from his post and left all affairs to his son, Guan Xinhe, the men of the Guan Family still habitually called him General.

Guan Chengye chuckled. "Whether he's reliable or not, we'll see soon enough."

"That's true," Xiao Wu said. "General, let's get this straight. If this guy can't handle it, you can't stop me from going over there and killing that punk."

"Alright, I promise," Guan Chengye replied with a slight smile, seemingly unconcerned about such a minor issue.

Da Jun gave the old General a strange look, wondering where he got his confidence from. Could that young man really be a match for Xu Feng? He had seen that Xu Feng, although not particularly strong, possessed at least the strength of an Initial External Strength Martial Artist. But this fellow, whom the old General called Master Lin, didn't exhibit a single trace of a Martial Artist's True Qi fluctuations. Could he actually win?

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Xu Feng glared at Lin Mu, his voice icy. "Young man, are you looking for death?"

Lin Mu, looking utterly unconcerned, replied with a hint of impatience, "Are you going to fight or not? If you're too scared to make a move, then crawl back to whatever hole you came from."

His tone was completely discourteous, causing Xu Feng's expression to turn grim.

The young soldier named Xiao Wu's eyes lit up. "This guy... I'm not sure about his strength, but his spirit is impressive."

SMACK!

Da Jun rapped him on the head, scolding him with a laugh. "How old are you, talking like such a wise old man?"

Xiao Wu just chuckled, not the least bit offended.

A cold glint flashed in Xu Feng's eyes. "Kid, state your name. I don't kill nobodies!"

"You're not worthy of knowing my name," Lin Mu said flatly. "If you don't make your move now, you won't get another chance."

"You're courting death!"

A powerful aura suddenly erupted from Xu Feng. He swept his arms out, settling into a fighting stance. "I don't need three punches. One is all it will take to kill you!"

The moment the words left his mouth, Xu Feng stomped his foot and charged, slamming a fist toward Lin Mu's chest. The punch howled through the air, circulating with True Qi. Although an External Power Martial Artist couldn't channel True Qi throughout their body or release it to injure an enemy like an Inner Strength Martial Artist could, the power contained in this punch was still considerable.

Xu Feng had used at least fifty percent of his strength. He was going to kill this arrogant fool in a single blow!

Xiao Wu's expression turned grave. "Looks like Xu Feng has been provoked."

"Shut up!" Da Jun snapped. "Distractions are the worst thing during a martial artist's duel."

Xu Feng's entire being flowed with fighting intent; he clearly wasn't a recent convert to the External Strength realm. On the contrary, he had broken through many years ago and had cultivated his fighting

style to a respectable level. Da Jun had already decided that if Lin Mu was all talk and couldn't take this punch, he would intervene and save him. After all, the man was standing up for the Guan Family.

BANG!

The fist landed squarely on Lin Mu's chest. A cold smirk appeared on Xu Feng's face. Kid, my fist technique is derived from the Eight Extremes Fist, refined by my master for many years. A single punch can take down a bull, let alone you!

But in the next instant, Xu Feng's smile froze.

He saw Lin Mu standing perfectly still, his expression completely unchanged.

How is this possible? Xu Feng stared at Lin Mu in disbelief. In my eyes, he's just an ordinary person—a nobody who hasn't even cultivated True Qi. How could he possibly withstand my punch?

Lin Mu casually brushed the non-existent dust from his chest and looked at Xu Feng. "Is that all the strength you have? Did you forget to eat breakfast?"

Lin Mu shook his head slightly. "How about I let you go get a full meal before we continue? You still have two punches left, so you still have a chance."

"Hahaha!"

A wave of laughter erupted from the Guan Family's side. Lin Mu's words were enough to make a man die of anger. But it was so satisfying!

Da Jun also let out a quiet sigh of relief. The fact that Lin Mu could block that punch proved his own strength was not to be underestimated.

The Guan Family's laughter made Xu Feng's face turn dark with fury. He felt utterly humiliated.

"Xu Feng, why don't you just give up? You're clearly no match for him."

"Yeah, if you keep this up, you'll only humiliate yourself further."

Xiao Wu and the others laughed heartily, taunting him without reservation. Xu Feng had done his best to humiliate the Guan Family earlier, and now they weren't about to miss their chance for payback.

"Hmph!" Xu Feng snorted coldly. "There are still two punches left. Whether he can block them is another story!"

His eyes hardened as he said, "Kid, I'll admit I underestimated you. But do you really think you can take my next punch? Open Mountain Fist!"

Xu Feng roared. Though there was no visible fist intent flowing around him, the sheer pressure of his aura made everyone's expression turn solemn.

"The Open Mountain Fist! That's a martial technique Liu Xianhe honed for years. Can he block it?" Da Jun's expression was grave as he imperceptibly took a step forward. If Lin Mu couldn't block it, he would intervene immediately, even if it meant being punished by the General later.

Liu Xianhe was the old General's rival. This man was quite famous in River City. He had been involved in the Martial Way since childhood and, blessed with natural talent, was proclaimed the number one expert in the city. However, he had been in secluded cultivation for many years, so his true strength was unknown to the outside world. For him to come out of seclusion to challenge the old General now meant he must be extremely confident in his abilities.

A cold light flickered in Xu Feng's eyes. With a great shout, he shot both fists forward, smashing them brutally toward Lin Mu's shoulders. This attack contained the unique hidden strength of the Eight Extremes Fist, powerful enough to shatter bone.

THUD!

A dull sound echoed as Xu Feng's face twisted into a savage grin. "Kid, if you're not dead this time, I'll—"

He never finished his sentence. He saw Lin Mu, the man who should have been on the ground coughing up blood, still standing there with a calm smile.

"You're so weak," Lin Mu said. "I guess that means your master can't be all that strong, either."

At his words, the entire area fell silent.

Chapter 104: Next, it's my turn!

"You're so weak, so how could your master be much stronger?"

Such words are so infuriating! Xiao Wu, however, felt incredibly satisfied. If I get the chance, I have to have a good drink with this little brother. This is just too satisfying, too awesome!

But Guan Chengye couldn't bring himself to celebrate. Although he knew that Lin Mu was a Martial Arts Grandmaster, Liu Xianhe's martial talent was so high that even he was afraid. Otherwise, he wouldn't have made that ten-year agreement with him back then. At that time, Liu Xianhe's cultivation was only his equal. Although neither could defeat the other, it was only because Liu Xianhe was wary of his status. Ten years had passed, and the man had long since reached the Grandmaster realm, his Cultivation Level rising to a terrifying degree. If Lin Mu had only defeated his disciple, that would have been one thing, but to humiliate Liu Xianhe so thoroughly... given the man's vengeful nature, he would never let this go. At that moment, Guan Chengye even regretted letting Lin Mu fight in his place.

Xu Feng looked at Lin Mu with a gloomy expression and said angrily, "Kid, are you wearing some kind of protective armor? Otherwise, how could you have taken two of my punches in a row?"

Hearing Xu Feng's words, everyone was startled before a look of realization dawned on them. It turned out Lin Mu hadn't withstood Xu Feng's two punches with his own strength but had relied on some kind of armor.

Da Jun, however, thought otherwise. Even if armor capable of blocking an External Power Martial Artist's attack existed, it would be exceedingly rare, and such items were scarce to begin with. To take two of Xu Feng's punches and remain completely unharmed, even with armor, was rarer still.

"No way, was it really because of armor?" Xiao Wu didn't know enough to argue, so he felt a pang of disappointment. But then he immediately sneered and shouted, "So what if he used armor, Xu Feng? That's still our own ability! Why don't you use gauntlets? You accuse someone of cheating just because you can't beat them. Do you have any shame?"

Instantly, the members of the Guan Family began to mock Xu Feng, their words filled with disdain.

Xu Feng was so angry he felt like his lungs were about to explode. These people are simply shameless.

"Fine, fine, fine!" Xu Feng snarled, glaring at Lin Mu. "You're ruthless, kid!"

"What? Are you not going to throw the last punch?" Lin Mu asked coolly, offering no explanation.

Xu Feng almost jumped with rage. This bastard, he's doing this on purpose, isn't he?

"Kid, do you really think I can't kill you?" Xu Feng stared at Lin Mu, a murderous intent emerging in his eyes.

"Oh?" Lin Mu said coolly, his hands clasped behind his back. "If you can actually kill me, that would be a display of your own skill."

"Good! You forced my hand!"

Xu Feng's eyes were bloodshot. He very seriously took something out from inside his robes. It was a small box. As he opened it, a foul, fishy stench instantly filled the air.

"What is that? It stinks!" Xiao Wu couldn't help but cover his nose, frowning.

"I don't know, but for Xu Feng to speak with such confidence, that thing must have a significant origin," Da Jun said, his expression also becoming solemn with a hint of concern.

Lin Mu, however, simply narrowed his eyes.

Xu Feng let out a cold laugh and carefully took out a red insect, holding it in his hand. The creature resembled a centipede, but it was blood-red and carried a foul, unpleasant odor. It writhed and struggled in Xu Feng's hand, its sharp barbs looking incredibly vicious.

"Where did you get that?" Lin Mu suddenly asked, a cold glint flashing in his eyes.

It was the third time he had seen such a centipede. The first was with a man named Zeng Wen, who used the insect to forcibly enhance his Cultivation Level. The second was when he removed one from Liu Zijian's mother's body. The third was just moments ago... when he found the very same kind of centipede inside Guan Xinhe.

This is a Gu Insect from the Southern Border! And if I'm not mistaken, this Gu Insect is the handiwork of that so-called Master Ding. But what is the relationship between Xu Feng and Master Ding? One is River City's number one figure, while the other is a famous Martial Arts Grandmaster, also from River City. Heh. Two Martial Arts Grandmasters. Now things are getting interesting.

"What is it?" Xu Feng's eyes were savage as he spoke with a feverish glint. "You'll find out soon enough!"

Then, he swallowed the insect.

"ARGH!"

As the insect entered his body, Xu Feng let out a bloodcurdling scream. The creature must have immediately begun to wreak havoc inside him. His face twisted in agony as he endured immense pain. Seemingly unable to bear it, he collapsed heavily to one knee, his body trembling violently.

After several torturous minutes, Xu Feng's body slowly calmed, but his aura skyrocketed. His aura climbed from Initial External Strength to Mid-Stage, finally stopping after reaching the Late-Stage of External Strength.

This time, even Lin Mu was somewhat surprised. Can this Gu Insect really be like the Elixirs from the Immortal Realm that enhance one's Cultivation Level? Can it really raise someone's cultivation so substantially?

He immediately shook his head. I see now. Although this Gu Insect can enhance a Martial Artist's strength, the effect isn't significant. It grants the aura of power, but not the actual strength to back it up. In fact, I don't even need to do anything. I just have to wait quietly, and this Xu Feng will have his life essence drained by the Gu Insect until he's nothing but a corpse. Still, the master of this Gu Insect, capable of creating such a formidable thing, must possess some impressive methods.

"So strong!" Xiao Wu's expression grew serious. "Brother, if you can't handle it, let's just concede. There's no shame in that." If Xu Feng wants to block our door, just let him. It's frustrating, but compared to staying alive, what is pride worth?

"No need," Lin Mu said with a faint smile, his expression calm once more.

"You..."

Xiao Wu was about to say more, but Da Jun stopped him. He, too, was curious whether Lin Mu was truly a match for Xu Feng. The other man's strength was now no less than his own.

Guan Chengye opened his mouth as if to speak, but seeing Lin Mu's utterly serene demeanor, he ultimately said nothing.

"Kid, I won't hold back with this final punch," Xu Feng declared, lifting his head with a sinister grin.

CRACK!

Xu Feng stomped his foot, and the hard ground fractured beneath him. In an instant, his figure appeared before Lin Mu. His True Qi surged as he smashed his fist downward. The force of the punch was incredibly fierce, creating a whistling sound as it flew. A tangible ring of red mist pulsed into existence around Xu Feng.

BANG!

The punch landed squarely on Lin Mu's body, its terrifying strength seemingly capable of crushing him into a fine paste. Yet, Lin Mu stood his ground, not taking a single step back.

"This..." Xu Feng's eyes widened as he shrieked in disbelief. "This is impossible! Absolutely impossible!"

It wasn't just him; everyone else looked as if they had seen a ghost. How could Lin Mu be unharmed?

Lin Mu shook his head slightly, looking at the utterly panicked Xu Feng. "Three punches are over," he said. "Now... it's my turn!"

Chapter 105: The Dark Web Again!

HISS! This guy took three of Xu Feng's punches and he's fine?

Xiao Wu gasped, his feelings for Lin Mu now a mixture of admiration and respect. Men like them, who had crawled their way through the battlefield, respected the strong above all else.

Xu Feng's current strength hadn't just increased by a large margin—it had literally doubled. Yet, Lin Mu had managed to withstand such a punch with his body alone.

Is his body made of iron? Or is he really wearing some kind of armor, like Xu Feng said?

Da Jun's expression also turned extremely grave. He could tell that Lin Mu wasn't wearing any armor and had withstood Xu Feng's three punches with his body alone. This was something even he couldn't do.

"Old General, who exactly is this person?" Da Jun couldn't help but ask.

Guan Chengye was also slightly stunned. After all, even he wouldn't dare claim he could take three of Xu Feng's punches and remain unscathed.

"A Martial Arts Grandmaster."

To Da Jun's question, Guan Chengye offered just those four words.

"A Martial Arts Grandmaster?"

Da Jun's expression changed dramatically, and he exclaimed in disbelief, "How is that possible?"

Lin Mu isn't older than me, is he? Is he even thirty? A Martial Arts Grandmaster under thirty... Does such a young Grandmaster even exist in the world?

"Brother Da Jun, what is a Martial Arts Grandmaster?" Xiao Wu asked, puzzled.

Da Jun suppressed his astonishment and explained, "A Martial Arts Grandmaster is someone who has reached a state of natural simplicity. Their True Qi is contained within, their will is connected to Heaven and Earth, and they can injure people with nothing more than a tossed flower or a falling leaf."

Xiao Wu's confusion only deepened, because he still didn't understand.

Da Jun fell silent, but the shock in his heart was far from settled. No wonder he'd thought Lin Mu's movements and posture seemed so ordinary, not like a martial artist at all. It turned out he had long since reached that state of natural simplicity.

It's said that those in the Grandmaster Realm can perceive the Great Way of Heaven and Earth and can even begin to borrow the power of nature itself. Fighting a Grandmaster is like fighting Heaven and Earth. How could anyone win? If Lin Mu truly is a Martial Arts Grandmaster, then...

Sensing Da Jun's thoughts, Guan Chengye couldn't help but admonish him. "A Grandmaster is revered by thousands, an encounter of a lifetime. Don't be greedy." A Martial Arts Grandmaster stands at the pinnacle of the Martial Arts World. To even meet one is a stroke of incredible luck. Daring to hope for more is simply courting death.

"Your teaching is correct, General!" Da Jun was startled back to his senses, and the thoughts in his mind instantly scattered.

Guan Chengye sighed heavily in his heart. Unfortunately, my own girl, Jiaojiao, lacks any talent for the Martial Way and cannot train. Otherwise, I would swallow my pride and throw away this old face of mine just to have Guan Jiaojiao study under Master Lin.

...

Xu Feng looked at Lin Mu in disbelief. His third punch had failed to kill him. The man's expression hadn't even flickered.

At that moment, a sense of desperation washed over Xu Feng. It was only after Lin Mu spoke that Xu Feng felt a true surge of fear.

"You... what do you want?" Xu Feng stumbled back three steps, his complexion ghastly.

"What do I want?" Lin Mu said coolly. "Since I've taken three of your punches, isn't it only fair that you take three of mine now?"

"You..." Xu Feng stared at Lin Mu with a menacing look. "Kid, my master is Liu Xianhe. If you dare to hurt me, you won't survive either!"

"Enough nonsense. Take my punch." As soon as Lin Mu finished speaking, he began walking slowly toward Xu Feng.

Xu Feng's expression shifted slightly, but as he watched Lin Mu's movements, which in no way resembled a martial artist's, he began to relax. Every martial artist had unique characteristics in their posture and gait that set them apart from ordinary people. Lin Mu's steps, however, were uneven, and his posture was loose and sloppy—clearly, he had never trained.

He must have withstood my three punches because of some kind of armor he's wearing.

Thinking this, Xu Feng took a deep breath and declared in a low voice, "So what if I take three of your punches!"

Lin Mu gave a faint smile. In an instant, his figure blurred into an afterimage, lunging straight for Xu Feng. The change was instantaneous. One moment he was placid, the next he moved with the swiftness of a startled rabbit.

At that moment, Xu Feng's expression changed drastically.

"NO!" he cried out.

SPURT!

A fist smashed directly into his chest. He was sent flying backward, a spray of blood misting the air.

THUD!

Xu Feng's body hit the ground and slid across the surface for some distance before finally stopping.

GACK!

As soon as he came to a halt, Xu Feng coughed up another mouthful of blood, his face turning deathly pale. But even worse than the searing pain in his chest was the absolute terror flooding his heart.

"You..."

Lin Mu walked toward him step by step, stopping three paces away.

"Tell me," Lin Mu said, looking down at him with a cold gaze, "where did you get that Gu Insect?"

I held back, but this Xu Feng is incredibly weak. He couldn't even take one hit. He's completely finished. But that's not what I care about. I need to know about that Gu Insect.

"You bastard, you injured me! My master will never let you get away with this!" Xu Feng spat defiantly, daring to threaten Lin Mu even while severely injured.

"Threatening me?" Lin Mu's eyes grew cold. "Too bad you picked the wrong person."

As his words fell, Lin Mu's fist shot out again, smashing into Xu Feng's Dantian.

CRACK!

A sickening snap echoed as Xu Feng's Dantian was shattered by the punch.

"AHH!"

A heart-wrenching scream tore from Xu Feng's lips. "You little bastard, you dare to ruin my Dantian?! My master will kill you! Not just you, but your entire family! He won't spare a single one!" Xu Feng's face was a twisted mask of venomous hatred.

With his Dantian destroyed, Xu Feng was now a cripple, even weaker than an ordinary person.

"It seems my fists aren't hard enough," Lin Mu mused, a murderous glint in his eyes as he prepared to throw his third punch.

"DON'T! I'LL TALK! I'LL TALK!" Xu Feng shrieked, his pupils shrinking in terror.

"This Southern Region Gu Insect... My master obtained it by accident. Taking it can temporarily raise your Cultivation Level, but the side effects are extreme," Xu Feng hurriedly explained.

Lin Mu's eyes turned cold. "Is that all?"

Xu Feng nodded frantically.

"Did you know," Lin Mu said calmly, "you've just lost your chance to live."

Xu Feng shook his head vehemently. "I told you everything! I swear I didn't lie to you!"

"Really?" Lin Mu asked suddenly. "You're actually from the Dark Web, aren't you?"

Xu Feng's pupils contracted, his face a canvas of pure shock and terror.

"You... How did you know?"

Chapter 106: Sparring? You Are Not Worthy!

"Master Lin, we insist that you leave this man to us!"

The news that Xu Feng was from the Dark Web shocked Guan Chengye. He had never anticipated that Liu Xianhe's disciple could be one of their people.

At this moment, many thoughts crossed Guan Chengye's mind.

"Fine."

Lin Mu certainly had no objections. After all, he knew the Guan Family was tasked with defending River City, which meant rooting out the Dark Web's operatives there. Handing Xu Feng over to them was the best choice.

"However, I have one condition," Lin Mu said, looking at Guan Chengye with a calm expression.

"Please speak, Master Lin."

Lin Mu said, "From now on, I want to be informed of any news regarding the Dark Web."

"This..."

Guan Chengye looked troubled. "Master Lin, these matters are confidential. I..."

"You've already said the Dark Web has many experts. Guan Xinhe is injured and will need several months of bed rest at the very least. How do you plan to deal with the Dark Web?" Lin Mu stated indifferently.

"Hey, kid, are you looking down on the Guan Family Army?" Several men with cold expressions walked over. These individuals had not watched the previous fight; they had only appeared after learning that Xu Feng was from the Dark Web.

Their expressions turned hostile at Lin Mu's words.

Lin Mu glanced at them faintly and remarked, "You lot are not enough."

"You..."

A muscular man spoke up, "Kid, going by what you said, are you implying we're inadequate, but you're capable?"

Lin Mu nodded as if it were only natural. "Only I can."

Hearing Lin Mu's words, one of the men laughed out of pure fury and snorted, "You've got a big mouth. I'd like to see just how capable you really are!"

"Don't!" Guan Chengye's face changed as he started to issue a warning.

"Rest assured, General. We know what we're doing," the leader of the group said with a faint smile, showing little respect for Guan Chengye.

Although they hadn't seen the exchange between Xu Feng and Lin Mu, they had heard the others discussing it.

A Martial Arts Grandmaster? Bullshit. Given his age, forget about being a Grandmaster; it would be impressive if he could take even one punch from my guard.

"Zhang Xifeng, you..."

Guan Chengye looked at the man and sighed heavily.

Although Zhang Xifeng and the Guan Family Army shared the same objective of defending River City from the Dark Web, their responsibilities differed. The Guan Family Army was responsible for combat, while Zhang Xifeng was in charge of intelligence gathering and organization, essentially a logistical role.

Furthermore, Zhang Xifeng hadn't come up through the ranks of the Guan Family Army. The complexities of the situation couldn't be explained in a moment. On this mission, Guan Xinhe would never have been injured if not for an error in the intelligence department's investigation of the Dark Web's stronghold.

Guan Chengye tried to stop them not because he feared Lin Mu would get hurt. On the contrary, he was afraid that Lin Mu, in a fit of rage, would injure Zhang Xifeng's bodyguard.

Zhang Xifeng himself was an ambitious but incompetent fool, and he was the type to hold a grudge over the smallest slight. Making an enemy of Lin Mu would be extremely detrimental to their mission of defending River City.

Zhang Xifeng's expression was serene, his lips even curled into a cold smirk.

So the Guan Family Army thinks it's so great, famous for being daring in battle? Well today, I, Zhang Xifeng, am going to take you all down a peg.

Seeing the look on Zhang Xifeng's face, Guan Chengye was suddenly overcome with a sense of disillusionment.

With vermin like this in our ranks, when will we ever eradicate the Dark Web?

Meanwhile, the other members of the Guan Family Army watched Zhang Xifeng with a strange look.

That pansy... Is he asking to be humiliated?

Zhang Xifeng's bodyguard had already taken a step forward with his right foot. He clenched his fist and charged straight at Lin Mu.

The punch was aimed directly at Lin Mu's face. He intended to humiliate the Guan Family Army right to their faces!

He had joined the army in his teens to temper himself. He could endure hardship, was quick-witted, and possessed some talent for the Martial Way. Because of this, Zhang Xifeng saw his potential and cultivated him with care. Once he had cultivated his True Qi and broken through to the realm of External Strength, he stayed by Zhang Xifeng's side and had been in countless fights.

Moreover, although he was part of the intelligence department, he had also served on the front lines and fought in several tough battles. He couldn't stand the sight of the Guan Family Army acting so haughty around them.

This time, upon hearing that Guan Xinhe was injured and that someone had come to the Guan Family's residence to issue a challenge, they had originally just come to watch the show. They never expected to actually catch a small fry from the Dark Web.

And so, he knew exactly what he had to do.

The members of the Guan Family Army couldn't bear to watch and averted their gazes.

Zhang Xifeng sneered. Can't take it already? We're just getting started.

Then, Zhang Xifeng spoke aloud, "A Long, just a light spar will do. Don't actually kill the guy."

The guard named A Long responded.

"Got it!"

But his attack was anything but slow. True Qi flowed, gathering in his fist.

A Long had practiced a simple set of military boxing to a profound level. He was quite satisfied with this punch.

The young man opposite him, who was about the same age, seemed to be scared stiff, just standing there in a daze.

A Long smirked and smashed his fist downward.

At that moment, his opponent finally seemed to react, slowly raising one hand.

Idiot!

A Long's eyes were filled with contempt. In the army, he was known as a Martial Way prodigy for having cultivated True Qi and broken through to External Strength at such a young age. On top of that, his combat experience was incredibly vast. This single punch would be enough to shatter the other man's hand to pieces.

BANG!

The fist struck the palm, but the expected scream never came. Instead, a searing pain shot from his fist and spread throughout A Long's entire body. Only then did A Long realize that his fist was caught fast in the other man's grasp.

His opponent appeared indifferent, but a flicker of coldness glinted deep within his eyes.

Then, the man's hand tightened slightly.

"Ah!"

A Long's fist felt like it was being crushed in a steel vise. The pain was unbearable, as if his very bones were about to be pulverized.

"Kid, you're looking for death!"

A Long's face flushed red with rage. He violently swung his other leg up, aiming a kick at Lin Mu's head.

Lin Mu's brow furrowed as he swatted with his hand.

CRACK!

The next moment, A Long's leg went completely limp.

"My leg!"

A Long's face contorted as he let out a heart-wrenching scream.

"Spar?"

Lin Mu looked down at him, his voice ice-cold. "Does trash like you think you're worthy?"

"Get lost!"

With a flick of his hand, Lin Mu sent A Long's body flying. He landed in a heap right in front of Zhang Xifeng.

A Long looked up at Lin Mu one last time before his eyes rolled back in his head and he passed out cold.

Lin Mu didn't even glance at Zhang Xifeng. He stated coolly, "What I said before wasn't a negotiation. You're free to refuse. But you will have to bear the consequences yourselves."

Leaving those words behind, Lin Mu walked away.

Only then did Zhang Xifeng snap back to reality, roaring in fury, "That kid is so arrogant! Does he have a death wish?"

Guan Chengye gave him a pitying look. "He's a Grandmaster. If you're not convinced, you're welcome to go and seek revenge."

"Grandmaster?"

Zhang Xifeng froze. A jolt of realization shot through him, and his expression turned incredibly ugly, as if he'd just swallowed a dead fly.

By the time he thought of apologizing to Lin Mu, the man was already gone.

Finally, he glanced down at A Long on the ground. Fear overshadowed his embarrassment, and he kicked the unconscious man's body.

"Useless trash!"

Chapter 107: I'll Take a Look Myself!

Over the next two days, Lin Mu did not go out but stayed at home to cultivate.

His mother and Qin Luoli, however, would leave early in the morning and not return until evening. Every time they came home, they would huddle together, writing and drawing as they discussed something in low voices. Sometimes, when Lin Mu tried to eavesdrop on their conversation, Qin Luoli would chase him away.

Lady Su would also ask, "Can you even understand this?" before rattling off a bunch of professional jargon.

The remark left Lin Mu quite flustered, as he truly didn't understand. He had absolutely no interest in business.

The day after returning from the Guan Family, Lin Mu made a trip to the bank to cash the check. The 500,000 was a substantial sum of money. Meanwhile, Ning Xian personally called to inform him that once the company settled its accounts, they would transfer a payment to him within the next couple of days.

Lin Mu wasn't in a hurry. Now that he had money, he no longer needed to worry about it.

For the past two days, aside from focusing on his cultivation, Lin Mu had been studying the scroll he obtained from the Guan Family. On it, a woman stood alone with a longsword on her back. Although rendered in just a few simple strokes, her unique charm seemed to leap off the page.

The following evening, after finishing his cultivation, Lin Mu took out the scroll as usual and gently ran his fingers over it.

The paper of this scroll is clearly very ordinary, yet it can withstand this sword intent. The person who painted it must have been a sword cultivator.

Lin Mu examined the scroll and fell into deep thought. From the first moment he saw it, he knew it contained a faint yet extremely pure sword intent. Moreover, he was certain the artist's Cultivation Level was incredibly high; otherwise, that sword intent could not have been embedded so perfectly into the painting, preserved to this day.

However, what troubles me is that even though I was once Emperor Zun, with a lifetime of vast knowledge, I still can't unravel the secrets of this scroll. Just the sword intent alone makes me feel an inexplicable thrum of excitement. I'm certain that if I can unlock the scroll's secret, I'll obtain a considerable stroke of fortune. In truth, even though I never specialized in the sword, I acquired countless advanced sword cultivation techniques. Back then, my own cultivation was no longer bound by any single school or sect. I knew a great many of the advanced techniques and secrets of the various Immortal sects. To be stumped by a mere painting now... It's quite frustrating. For the past two days, I've tried countless methods—burning it with fire, soaking it in water, infusing it with mana, even attempting to refine it with numerous secret techniques—but the scroll hasn't reacted at all.

Putting the scroll down, Lin Mu adjusted his mindset and assessed his current cultivation.

I'm still at the fourth level of Qi Refining, but I've reached a bottleneck. I estimate I should be able to break through in about a month. This might sound slow, but in the current environment on Earth, where spiritual energy is scarce, it's actually incredibly fast. I'm not in a rush, though. I need to build a solid foundation, to condense and refine my mana again and again.

While Lin Mu was contemplating, he didn't notice that under the moonlight, the female figure on the scroll lying to the side seemed to move slightly, but it was only for an instant before it returned to normal.

The next day, Qin Luoli and his mother left the house as usual. They said they had found a promising storefront; not only was the location excellent, but the interior facilities were also complete and ready for immediate business. However, the owner's asking price was high, and several other competitors were interested, so they hadn't been able to finalize a deal. Today, they planned to try their luck again and see if they could find the owner for a private negotiation.

Although I don't know how great this storefront is, I can guess from their tone that they'll probably come back empty-handed again. Still, I can't be bothered with such things. Qin Luoli knows what she's doing.

After breakfast, Lin Mu began exercising in the courtyard, slowly practicing a set of punches. A short while later, he finished the set, lowered his hands, and looked toward the entrance.

"I didn't expect Master Lin to be a boxing master as well."

A man and a woman walked in. The man in front was tall and powerfully built, carrying himself with an imposing aura. His piercing eyes sized Lin Mu up seriously. The person behind him, a young woman, was petite but fiery, and she glared at Lin Mu with undisguised annoyance.

It was none other than the siblings, Guan Feifei and Guan Jiaojiao.

"Is there something you need?" Lin Mu glanced at Guan Feifei, then nonchalantly found a chair, poured himself a cup of tea, and began sipping it slowly.

"Hey, Lin Mu, you..." Seeing Lin Mu blatantly ignore her, Guan Jiaojiao seethed with such anger that her teeth itched, and she had to resist the urge to bite him.

"Jiaojiao!" Guan Feifei called out sharply. He then stepped forward, offering Lin Mu a fist and palm salute. "Master Lin, please don't be offended. My sister is young and doesn't know any better."

Lin Mu replied indifferently, "If she doesn't know any better, she should be taught. Besides, she doesn't look that young to me."

"You're the one who's old! Do you even know how to talk?" Guan Jiaojiao nearly leaped into the air, brandishing her hands like an angry little lioness.

"Guan Jiaojiao, if you disrespect Master Lin again, I will confine you to the house for three months!" Guan Feifei's tone grew heavy as he scolded her coldly.

"Brother, I... fine. I'll shut up."

Seeing her brother's warning glare, Guan Jiaojiao fell silent, though she still felt wronged.

In our family, I'm not afraid of Grandpa or Dad, only my big brother. He's bullied me since we were little, but he's also incredibly good to me. Whenever I was picked on, I never dared to tell Grandpa, and Dad wouldn't bother with such trivial matters. It was always my brother who stood up for me. He wouldn't even care if he got a bruised and swollen face; he'd just pat my head, tell me not to cry, and promise

that we'd go fight them again after he healed. It's been like that for as long as I can remember. The Guan Family has humble origins, so it's normal to be looked down upon in Capital City. But with his bare fists, my brother beat those young masters and princes from the capital until they cried for mercy.

Guan Feifei looked at Lin Mu, a young man about his own age, with a flicker of curiosity in his eyes.

A Martial Arts Grandmaster? A healer with divine abilities? Of course, this was all just what Grandfather told me. I haven't seen it myself, but I saw what happened to that Qi Xiaolong. It was truly tragic. And that Xu Feng... his Dantian was destroyed.

Thinking of this, Guan Feifei suppressed his curiosity and said to Lin Mu, "Master Lin, Grandfather asked me to tell you that we will proceed as you instructed. We will inform you immediately of any news from the Dark Web, but you must promise to keep it confidential."

Lin Mu nodded. "Tell Elder Guan that I will honor my promises."

"Thank you, Master Lin." With that, Guan Feifei turned to leave.

Suddenly, he stopped and turned back. "By the way, is that person named Liu Zijian a friend of yours, Master Lin?"

"What happened to him?"

Guan Feifei said, "While investigating a Dark Web faction in River City, we stumbled upon his name."

Lin Mu's eyes narrowed.

In that instant, Guan Feifei felt as if his very soul had been plunged into an icy sea, a bone-deep chill spreading through him. Even Guan Jiaojiao couldn't help but shiver, a hint of fear now coloring her gaze as she looked at Lin Mu.

I'm not an idiot, I know Lin Mu is powerful... I'm just annoyed.

"Master Lin, please don't misunderstand," Guan Feifei explained hastily, suppressing the unease in his heart. "Of course, Liu Zijian isn't a member of the Dark Web. However, our investigation suggests that he has been targeted by them."

"What exactly is going on?" Lin Mu asked, his gaze turning cold.

"We're not sure of the details yet," Guan Feifei said, "but I've already sent people to protect him secretly. It's just that I'm too busy with other matters right now and can't spare any more men, so..."

Before Guan Feifei could finish, Lin Mu was already on his feet and heading for the door.

"Thanks. I'll go take a look myself!"

The Dark Web... Daring to target a brother of mine? You're courting death!

Chapter 108 What if I scare my godson to death?

「Liu Zijian's home.」

The dilapidated house was filled with the thick scent of traditional medicine, punctuated by the sound of painful coughing.

"Dad... Daddy..."

Liu Xiaolin leaned against the edge of the bed, gazing at his father with an eager yet dazed expression. He was not yet four years old and had been slow to develop, so he could only manage a few simple words.

But for Liu Zijian, that was more than enough.

"Xiao Lin, Daddy's okay."

Lying pale-faced on the bed, Liu Zijian looked at his son's thin little face, his heart aching with guilt.

As a father, he couldn't even protect his own mother and son. How could he call himself a son, let alone a father?

At that thought, a familiar face involuntarily appeared in his mind. No! A friend is a friend, and a brother is a brother! As his brother, I already owe Elder Brother Mu far too much. I absolutely cannot trouble him again.

With this resolve, Liu Zijian forced his swaying body to sit up. He pinched his son's cheek and said, "Son, what do you want to eat? Daddy will make it for you."

"Dad... meat, eat..." Liu Xiaolin giggled, mumbling incoherently.

"Alright, Daddy will go make it for you right now!"

Liu Zijian started to cough but forced himself to suppress it. His mother had finally fallen asleep, and he didn't want to wake her.

He dragged his heavy body to the refrigerator and took a look inside. His face turned grim. The fridge was empty, and he hadn't left the house in days.

Ever since that man surnamed Fang last came, Liu Zijian had been beaten so badly he was bedridden for days. Even his mother and son had been implicated and suffered alongside him.

Now, those two despicable men were constantly guarding his door. If he so much as tried to leave, they would barge in and smash everything in sight. There wasn't a single decent item left in the house.

Clenching his fists tightly, Liu Zijian turned to look at his son, who was toddling behind him using a stool for support. He crouched down, ruffled his son's hair, and said, "Son, be a good boy and play quietly at home, okay? But you absolutely must not disturb Grandma's rest."

His son tilted his head, gazing up at him with clear, innocent eyes.

An inexplicable sting pricked at Liu Zijian's eyes. Fighting back tears, he said, "Daddy is going out to buy groceries. I'll buy meat and cook it for Xiao Lin, okay?"

"Meat... eat... okay."

Liu Xiao Lin's eyes lit up, and he even started to drool. Liu Zijian's heart ached as he lovingly patted his son's head again.

"Good boy."

Liu Zijian stood, walked to the entrance, took a deep breath, then pulled the door open and stepped outside.

"Well, now. Did the sun rise in the west today? You actually dare to come out?"

The moment Liu Zijian opened the door, two men emerged from the alley and blocked his path.

Tightly controlling his emotions, Liu Zijian locked the door, pushing on it once to ensure it was secure before turning to face the two men.

"I'm going to buy some groceries. You'd better not cause any trouble."

His gaze was calm, but his body trembled slightly. Liu Zijian was desperately trying to restrain himself. If he were alone, he would have fought these two to the death. But he wasn't alone; he had to think of his mother and son.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk."

One of the men slowly shook his head before kicking Liu Zijian squarely in the stomach, sending him stumbling to the ground. The man then grabbed Liu Zijian by the collar. "Who the hell do you think you are? You dare to bargain with me?"

"If you know what's good for you, hand over the item and spare yourself a beating!"

The other man crossed his arms and sneered, "Liu Zijian, if I were you, I'd have handed over the thing ages ago. It's better than hiding at home, too scared to come out."

"Besides, do you really think you can hide forever? The moment Steward Fang arrives, you're dead meat."

The one holding Liu Zijian's collar continued, "Come on, Liu Zijian. Even if you don't think about yourself, you have to think about your old mother, right? And your son?"

"Hahaha, I heard your son wants to eat meat. For a father to fail this badly... isn't that just pathetic?"

Liu Zijian clenched his fists, a crazed look beginning to surface in the depths of his eyes. But in the end, the fight went out of him, and he slumped back to the ground, his face a mask of misery.

"What? You still want to fight?" The man stuck out his neck and gestured to it. "Go on! If you're still a man, Liu Zijian, hit me right here! Hit me hard!"

Liu Zijian clenched his jaw so hard it ached, refusing to say a word.

"Hit me!" the man roared, making Liu Zijian flinch.

From inside the house, the sound of a child crying drifted out, followed shortly by an elderly woman's voice.

"Zijian, what's wrong?"

Liu Zijian tried to keep his voice steady. "Mom, it's nothing. I'm just going out to buy some groceries. Please keep an eye on Xiao Lin."

Then, he turned a pleading gaze to the two men before him. "Please, I'm begging you, don't hurt my mother and my son."

One of them sneered, "Sure we can. Just hand over what we want. That way, we can report back to our boss, and your old mother and son won't get hurt. Wouldn't that be nice?"

Liu Zijian growled, "I really don't have what you want! Don't push me!"

The man planted a foot on Liu Zijian's chest and said coldly, "Push you? So what if we are? What are you going to do about it?"

Liu Zijian's lips trembled, the veins on his hands bulging. He had reached his limit.

"If you don't take your foot off me, you will die."

Just then, an ice-cold voice drifted in from the end of the alley.

"Who the hell is this bastard interrupting my business? You got a death wish?" the man on top of Liu Zijian snarled, glaring toward the alley's entrance.

A figure was walking slowly toward them. His pace wasn't fast, but each step covered half a meter. In the blink of an eye, he was standing before them.

"Elder Brother Mu, what are you doing here?"

Upon seeing Lin Mu, Liu Zijian hung his head in shame, his eyes red. He bit his lip so hard it started to bleed.

"Why am I here? I came to see if my useless brother had been tormented to death yet."

The newcomer was none other than Lin Mu. His expression was calm and his tone was icy, but deep within his eyes lurked an irrepressible, towering rage. This rage was for Liu Zijian, and for the men who were toying with his brother.

"Oh, so you're here to back up Liu Zijian?"

The two men exchanged a look and burst out laughing. One of them gave Lin Mu a shove. "Hey, kid, who do you think you are? You want to stand up for this piece of trash, Liu Zijian?"

Lin Mu suddenly raised a finger to his lips. "Shh," he said. "Keep your voices down. What if you frighten my godson?"

"Can you pay for that with your lives?!"

Chapter 109: Let the Fang Surnamed Come Out and Face Death!

What if you scared my son? Would you pay with your lives?

These two plain sentences carried an icy indifference filled with murderous intent. Even Liu Zijian didn't know how to respond. As for the two thugs, they were stunned for a moment before flying into a rage.

"You little punk! In my entire life, no one has ever dared to speak to me like that!" one of them snarled, pointing a finger at Lin Mu.

"Oh. And now, there never will be again," Lin Mu said calmly. "Because I'm taking your lives."

He's taking our lives?

The statement was brutally domineering.

"Haha, kid, did you get your head stuck in a door?" the man roared with laughter. "You want to take my life? Let's see if King Yama himself even dares to accept it!"

With that, he threw a punch straight at Lin Mu's head. Although he hadn't learned any formal fighting techniques, he had been brawling since he was a child. Combined with his large frame, he was confident that one punch would be enough to ensure a pipsqueak like Lin Mu never got up again.

"Elder Brother Mu, be careful!" Liu Zijian shouted, but in the next instant, he clamped his mouth shut.

The man's fist was already caught firmly in Lin Mu's hand.

"Is this all the strength you have? I really overestimated you." Lin Mu shook his head slightly, then exerted force with his arm.

CRACK!

The man shrieked as his entire arm was twisted into an unnatural arc, the bone beneath the skin completely mangled.

"AAAAH! MY ARM!"

The man's face turned deathly pale with pain, and large beads of sweat covered his forehead.

"You're courting death, kid!" The other man snarled, pulling out a dagger and lunging at Lin Mu with lethal intent.

"Hmph!" Lin Mu snorted coldly and kicked the first man away. The man let out a wail as he crashed into a pile of debris, unable to rise again.

Lin Mu's movements were lightning-fast. He shot out a hand, grabbing the other man's wrist and squeezing hard. The man let out a strangled cry, his face twisting in agony as his hand went limp,

dropping the dagger. Before the dagger could hit the ground, Lin Mu snatched it out of the air. With a flick of his wrist, he sent the blade flying, a streak of cold light.

PFFT!

At the alley's entrance, a figure froze, a dagger now deeply embedded in his back, piercing his heart. The man slowly turned, his face a mask of disbelief as he stared at Lin Mu.

THUMP!

The man's body swayed before falling heavily to the ground, as dead as could be.

When Emperor Zun's fury was ignited, his hands delivered death!

As for the man whose wrist Lin Mu still held, his face was ghostly pale. He stared at Lin Mu, his eyes filled with pure terror.

"You... you killed Rat?" the man stammered, trembling so badly he could barely stand.

"Kid, do you have any idea what you've just done?" the man shrieked. "Do you know whose men we are? You just killed one of Steward Fang's people! You're dead! You're so dead!"

Lin Mu snorted, and a sharp SLAP! cracked across the man's face. The blow was incredibly forceful, sending a spray of blood and several teeth from the man's mouth.

"If I didn't still have a use for you, do you think you'd still be breathing?" Lin Mu shot him a final, cold glance before turning to the dumbfounded Liu Zijian.

"Elder... Elder Brother Mu, you... you killed someone?" Liu Zijian shuddered, scrambling to his feet. "Elder Brother Mu, you have to go, now! You killed one of his men, Steward Fang will never let you get away with this! Run! Get out of River City and never come back!"

Liu Zijian was truly terrified. He had never imagined Lin Mu would actually kill someone. This was a major crime, the kind that meant a long prison sentence.

"So I should leave, and you go to prison?" Lin Mu asked, his gaze cool but his voice tinged with anger.

"Elder Brother Mu, I..." Liu Zijian took a deep breath and wiped his face, forcing a smile that was uglier than a grimace. "It doesn't matter, Elder Brother Mu. My life is pointless anyway. What's the worst that could happen? A few years in jail? I'll get out eventually."

SLAP!

Lin Mu's hand flashed out, striking Liu Zijian across the face and leaving him stunned.

"Elder Brother Mu...?" Liu Zijian stammered, covering his cheek and staring at Lin Mu in confusion.

"Liu Zijian, are you even a man? You'll go to jail? What about your son? What about your mother?" Lin Mu's voice was sharp with disappointment. "Do you really think they'll leave you alone after you're in prison? That they'll spare your family?"

"Wake up!"

"Of course," Lin Mu's voice softened to a cold, flat tone, "if you want your son to be an orphan and your mother to mourn her only child, then by all means, go."

Liu Zijian stood frozen as if struck by lightning, utterly speechless.

Lin Mu snorted coldly, hoisted the unconscious thug onto his shoulder, and strode toward the alley's exit.

"Elder Brother Mu, where are you going?" Liu Zijian called out from behind.

"To kill people." Lin Mu's voice drifted back, his footsteps never faltering. He said the words with a terrifying calmness.

"If you aren't afraid of dying, then follow me. If you are, then don't bother. It just proves what a coward you are, Liu Zijian.

"When Liu Xiaolin grows up, I'll be sure to tell him his father was nothing but a hopeless, spineless coward."

Lin Mu's words pierced Liu Zijian's heart like sharp spikes.

"No! I, Liu Zijian, am not a coward!" he roared, his eyes bloodshot and fists clenched.

"Not a coward?" Lin Mu scoffed. "Then prove it to me."

「Xin Yuan Club.」

The Xin Yuan Club was a little-known establishment in River City. Located on the outskirts, few people had even heard of it. Even those who knew of its existence couldn't simply walk in. The club operated on a strict membership basis; a new member needed an introduction from an existing one. Only after a thorough identity verification would they have a chance to apply for a card. Furthermore, the referring member had to have held their membership for at least three years; anything less was not accepted. The entire process was incredibly complex, far beyond what an ordinary person could imagine.

But what even fewer people knew was that the Xin Yuan Club was actually a front for an underground fighting ring.

Half an hour later, Lin Mu arrived at the club with Liu Zijian in tow. It was an abandoned parking garage on the outskirts, patrolled by guards who reported their status via walkie-talkie every fifteen minutes. If any abnormality was detected, an alarm would be sounded immediately. Slipping in unnoticed was as difficult as ascending to the heavens.

Lin Mu knew all of this, of course, because he had extracted the information from the thug he was carrying.

Upon seeing Lin Mu and Liu Zijian, a patrolman immediately started shouting, "Hey, what are you two doing here? You got a pass? If not, get the hell out!"

His words had barely faded when, with a sickening THUD!, a body landed at his feet. It was a man, half-dead and covered in blood. The patrolman recognized him instantly. "A Gou?"

He looked up, his expression turning icy as he pointed a finger at Lin Mu. "Kid, you dare to mess with someone from Xin Yuan Club? Are you looking to die?"

Lin Mu stood with his hands in his pockets and spoke with chilling indifference. "Tell that Steward Fang to come out and meet his death. I'll give him five minutes. If he doesn't show, I'll destroy this filthy, hellish place."

Chapter 110 Who else!

The owner of the Xin Yuan Club was Fang Yonglong, a cousin of Steward Fang, who held considerable sway in River City.

Thus, Lin Mu's remark had directly offended the entire Xin Yuan Club.

"What arrogance!"

The patrolling security guard scoffed and spoke into his walkie-talkie.

"Boys, we've got a troublemaker. Grab your weapons!"

Instantly, a cacophony of curses erupted from the device, and the atmosphere in the parking lot grew heavy.

"Elder Brother Mu, we..."

Liu Zijian was visibly nervous. He'd lived an honest life for many years, never getting involved in this sort of trouble, so his fear was understandable.

Lin Mu patted his shoulder. "Got a smoke? Give me one."

"Huh?" Liu Zijian was taken aback. "Elder Brother Mu, you don't smoke either."

But Liu Zijian still took out his pack, handed a cigarette to Lin Mu, and lit it for him.

Lin Mu took a deep drag and exhaled a perfect smoke ring. "Four minutes left," he said.

"COUGH, COUGH!"

Liu Zijian, who was in the middle of a puff, choked on his cigarette.

"Elder Brother Mu, you can't be serious?" Liu Zijian stared at Lin Mu in shock, his heart pounding with apprehension.

Lin Mu said coolly, "What? Did you think I came here to play?"

Liu Zijian's mouth hung open. He was so stunned that the cigarette butt fell onto his chest, unnoticed until the sound of approaching footsteps made him cry out and frantically pat his shirt.

He looked up, his face paling.

Before them stood at least twenty men, each holding steel pipes and rubber clubs, all looking at them with cold sneers.

"Which blind bastard dares to stir up trouble on Second Master Fang's turf?" a bulky, stout man growled as he slowly approached, slapping a steel pipe against his palm, his face a mask of cruelty.

"Well, well, if it isn't Liu Zijian, the loser. What, did you come to deliver something to Second Master Fang?"

This was the same man who had gone to the Liu Family's home and mercilessly beaten Liu Zijian.

Liu Zijian shivered, but a firm hand gripped his shoulder.

"You know him, Zijian?" Lin Mu asked, casually smoking as he observed the brawny man.

In a low voice, Liu Zijian explained, "Elder Brother Mu, that's Yang Xiaojin. He's a notorious thug in River City."

"Oh," Lin Mu said, "I see."

From the look in Yang Xiaojin's eyes, he could tell this man had given his brother a hard time. That was all he needed to know.

"Kid, what crew are you with? Don't you know where you are? Came here looking to die?" Yang Xiaojin regarded Lin Mu with a predatory gaze.

Lin Mu replied calmly, "You're asking a lot of questions. Which one should I answer first?"

Shaking his head, Lin Mu flicked his finger, sending the cigarette butt flying.

"Five minutes are up. Time to get to work!"

The glowing tip struck Yang Xiaojin squarely in the face. He screamed, clutching his scalded skin, and pointed at Lin Mu, bellowing, "Brothers, get him!"

"Yes!"

The other bodyguards and thugs charged as one, rushing toward Lin Mu.

Lin Mu stepped aside, raised his hand, clenched his fist, and punched.

BANG!

A thug clutching his stomach was sent flying backward, landing on the ground and vomiting uncontrollably.

After felling one man, Lin Mu took a half-step back, raised his arm, and drove his elbow backward.

OOF!

Another man cried out, his body doubling over like a cooked shrimp. He tried to retreat, but Lin Mu grabbed him by the collar.

Lin Mu then lifted a foot, bent down, and delivered a knee strike!

"Argh!"

The man's face twisted in agony.

With a shove, Lin Mu sent him to the ground, where he lay wailing.

Lin Mu's movements were clean and decisive, with no wasted motion. Every single strike sent another man to the ground, unable to get back up.

He was like a movie protagonist. His skill was extraordinary, the sight of it breathtaking.

Liu Zijian stared at the figure, filled not just with shock, but profound gratitude.

Elder Brother Mu is doing all of this for me.

At this thought, Liu Zijian took a deep breath, his gaze turning resolute. In that moment, he truly understood that Lin Mu considered him his best brother, so asking a brother for help was nothing to be ashamed of.

Yang Xiaojin's eyes widened as he watched Lin Mu display such overwhelming power, temporarily stunned.

"A bunch of losers! So many of you can't even take down one guy? What's the point of keeping you around?" Yang Xiaojin's expression turned ugly. He cracked his neck and, clutching his steel pipe, suddenly charged.

WHOOSH!

Yang Xiaojin moved with the speed and power of a leopard. He had been at the Xin Yuan Club for many years and had fought in many underground bouts, winning some and losing some. But his strength was undeniable; otherwise, the club's owner wouldn't have put him in charge of security.

"Elder Brother Mu, watch out!" Liu Zijian cried out, only to feel his warning was redundant. Just how strong is Elder Brother Mu? He probably doesn't even know himself.

Lin Mu smiled faintly. Though his back was to Yang Xiaojin, it was as if he had eyes there. Instead of dodging, he took two quick steps backward.

"You're asking to die!"

Yang Xiaojin's face twisted into a cruel grin as he swung the steel pipe directly at Lin Mu's head. Today, I'm going to see if your head is harder than my steel pipe!

BANG!

In the next instant, however, Yang Xiaojin felt the steel pipe stop dead. It wouldn't drop another inch. Lin Mu had caught it.

Yang Xiaojin had plenty of combat experience. He immediately let go of the pipe, clenched his fists, and swung them furiously at Lin Mu's head.

Lin Mu, his back still turned, suddenly slammed backward with a sharp, powerful bump.

"Hmph!"

Yang Xiaojin grunted and stumbled back several steps.

"Boss Jin!" A few of his underlings rushed to support him, their faces etched with shock.

Yang Xiaojin was the best fighter among them, but he had been defeated in a single move. This kid is unbelievably strong.

"Again!"

Yang Xiaojin rubbed his chest, his face looking unnatural. Lin Mu's strike had fractured his sternum, and he was in agonizing pain. Gritting his teeth, he charged at Lin Mu again.

Watching Yang Xiaojin's thunderous charge, Lin Mu shook his head slightly. As his opponent closed in, he raised the captured steel pipe and brought it crashing down.

Yang Xiaojin scoffed, his expression disdainful. That's not nearly fast enough!

He tilted his head, intending to dodge the blow.

Then, to his utter shock, the steel pipe was suddenly arcing down right where he was dodging.

THUD!

With no time to react, Yang Xiaojin took the full force of the blow to his head. His eyes rolled back and he collapsed, unconscious and twitching on the ground.

"Boss Jin!"

The others stared at Lin Mu in shock, fear finally creeping onto their faces.

Even Liu Zijian watched with his mouth agape, looking at Lin Mu in disbelief. Elder Brother Mu is incredible!

"Anyone else want a try?" Lin Mu asked, his gaze sweeping over the remaining thugs. "But this time, I can't guarantee I'll hold back."

No one dared to move. No one dared to speak.