

War God 191

Chapter 191: This Sword is Named Limitless!

"Who I am is not important," Lin Mu said slowly. "What's important is that I've come for your life."

The man sneered, "Such arrogance!"

He suddenly slammed both hands on the coffin.

THUD!

With a deafening roar, the coffin lid flew into the air, hurtling toward Lin Mu.

"Child's play." Lin Mu shook his head and waved his hand gently.

RUMBLE!

An invisible force sent the coffin lid flying, smashing it against the tomb chamber wall. The lid instantly shattered into pieces.

Yet, the black-robed man merely revealed a sinister, eerie smile. "Boy, now, allow me to show you my masterpiece!"

The man's face was alight with feverish excitement, his eyes shining with the same glow one has when beholding their most treasured possession. His gaze was burning, frenzied, and held even a hint of adoration.

"ROAR!"

An incredibly deep and suppressed roar erupted from within the coffin as an overwhelmingly powerful force swept through the chamber.

BOOM!

A figure, standing at least one-meter-ninety tall, shot upright from within the coffin.

The corpse inside had reanimated. It was a good thing no outsiders were here to witness this, or they would have fainted from sheer fright.

"Did you think the one I sent out earlier was the master of this tomb?" the man cackled, a crazed and savage grin plastered on his face. "That was just a decoy I released on purpose. The goal, of course, was to buy enough time for me to complete the final step!"

The man surveyed the towering zombie before him, his face a mask of satisfaction. "Not bad, not bad at all. Truly worthy of a treasure I spent over a decade refining. This body is practically impervious to all weapons."

He patted the zombie here and there, growing more delighted and excited the more he inspected it. "Boy, you nearly ruined my plan. Tell me, how should I kill you?" he asked, looking at Lin Mu with a glint of ferocity in his eyes.

"Go, kill him!" the man commanded, pointing a finger at Lin Mu.

The towering zombie from the coffin took a light leap and landed on the ground.

THUD!

The floor cratered as if struck by a cannonball. The zombie's strength was truly terrifying.

However, Lin Mu's expression remained completely unchanged. On the contrary, a faint, mocking smile hung on the corner of his mouth.

"Tsk, tsk. It seems the feng shui of Tiger's Lair Mountain is quite good after all. It allowed you to get just one step away from condensing a Corpse Core. Given a better cultivation environment, or even just more time, reaching the Hanba Realm in the future might not have been impossible," Lin Mu said slowly. "Its body is tough and impervious to weapons, already far superior to an ordinary Iron Zombie."

"It's just a pity." Lin Mu shook his head slightly. "You were unlucky enough to meet me today."

Lin Mu assessed the tall zombie as he spoke. The creature seemed to understand his words, for it didn't attack immediately but instead observed him carefully.

"Kill him!" the man shrieked, a sudden sense of unease washing over him.

The zombie let out a low growl. Its movements were stiff at first, but it quickly swiped its claws toward Lin Mu.

"Too slow." Lin Mu shook his head and slapped his hand out.

BANG!

The zombie was sent flying by the slap, destroying numerous burial artifacts as it crashed through them.

"How... how is this possible?" The man who witnessed this was aghast. He had spent an untold amount of time, effort, and money to refine this zombie. With its current strength, ordinary Martial Arts Grandmasters would be no match for it. But in front of Lin Mu, it was like a helpless child, sent flying with a single slap.

Is this an illusion, or is that man a martial arts expert far beyond my imagination?

"ROAR!"

Clearly enraged by Lin Mu's slap, the zombie roared, leaped into the air, and flew toward him. Its sharp fingernails were like blades, aimed to cleave Lin Mu in two.

THUD!

However, before the zombie could even land, Lin Mu's leg shot out, kicking it squarely in the stomach.

"AWOOO!"

With a pained howl, the zombie smashed back into what remained of the coffin, causing the thick wood to explode into splinters. When the zombie staggered back to its feet, its body was covered in numerous gashes. Even most of its claws were broken.

"Still quite durable," Lin Mu chuckled lightly, then gestured toward a far wall. "Sword, come!"

The tomb chamber was filled with burial goods. Since Huang Weihu had been a military official in life, most of the grave goods were weapons like sabers, spears, swords, and staves, which were scattered everywhere. But the most important among them was Huang Weihu's personal sword, which hung on the wall.

As Lin Mu's voice fell, a faint ringing sound seemed to echo through the tomb.

WHOOSH!

On the wall, the renowned sword, which had been sealed in dust for over two hundred years, began to tremble as if answering a summons. Then, with a resonant cry, the blade flew from its sheath.

CLANG!

The sword spun once around the chamber before landing perfectly in Lin Mu's hand. He held it with one hand, his expression as tranquil as still water, but a piercing, sharp aura suddenly erupted from him.

HUM!

In the next instant, the sword in his hand burst forth with a golden sword light that was a zhang long. A heaven-shattering sword intent condensed upon it, seeming powerful enough to blow the roof off the entire tomb and tear the very sky asunder.

"This is..." The black-robed man's pupils shrank. "What terrifying sword intent!"

Who in the world is this young man? How can he possess such a powerful technique?

The zombie also sensed the danger and launched a frenzied attack at Lin Mu, moving even faster than before.

However, it was all in vain.

Before it could get close, Lin Mu, holding the sword in one hand, murmured, "This sword is named the Infinite Sword!"

As he spoke, his arm swept down.

He slashed out.

The entire tomb chamber was suddenly as bright as day.

「In the adjacent chamber」

Huang Ning and Master Feng had heard the sounds of fighting, but the passage was blocked. They couldn't advance or retreat. Fortunately, the path they had come from was suddenly cleared, and Huang Ning could even hear Mayor Fang's hoarse shouts.

BOOM!

The passage was forced completely open, and Mayor Fang and Yan Lun walked in, their faces flushed with excitement.

"Miss Huang!"

Just then, a piercing, brilliant light appeared before them. It was a ray of sword light.

The light blazed like a sun, radiating an aura of peerless, solitary arrogance as it whistled out in all directions. At that moment, Huang Ning felt as if she was about to die.

The sword light tore through the air with a despair-inducing momentum and passed through the zombie.

SLICE!

With a crisp sound, the zombie's head rolled onto the ground. Its headless body, carried by inertia, continued to charge forward for a few more steps. Then, with a soft pop, it crumbled into a pile of fragments and disintegrated into the air.

The sword in Lin Mu's hand, unable to bear the strain, was now covered in spiderweb-like cracks.

CRASH.

The sword was shattered, but the demon had been vanquished.

Chapter 192: A Spirit Vein Forms Beneath the White Jade Platform!

The moon hung high in the sky, the sword light having long since dissipated.

The zombie had been utterly reduced to dust.

Lin Mu turned his head to look at the black-robed man, who was still staring in utter shock.

"If you have any other tricks up your sleeve, now would be the time to use them," he said, his tone calm as if he were discussing some insignificant trifle.

The black-robed man fell silent for a moment before speaking. "It seems you're really determined to fight me to the death."

Lin Mu neither confirmed nor denied it.

Had it been anyone else, Lin Mu might not have bothered, so long as they didn't interfere with him. But this man practiced dark arts, specifically the Corpse Control Technique, and could not be left alive. Such techniques were an affront to nature and could bring great disasters to the world if things went wrong. If Lin Mu hadn't been here today, Huang Ning and the others might not have escaped with their lives. Even worse, with a single lapse in control, the villages at the foot of the mountain could have been used to refine his zombie.

And that was merely the immediate goal. In the future, as the zombie advanced, it would require even more sacrifices of essence and blood. At that point, this man would surely stop at nothing to acquire them.

However, Lin Mu didn't believe the man could truly control that zombie. After two hundred years of cultivation, the zombie had already developed its own consciousness. Although it was just a sliver, its intelligence would grow along with its strength. By then, the zombie turning on its master would be a minor issue; the real danger would be the threat it posed to the world.

In his past life, Lin Mu had been a world-class assassin who specialized in eliminating great evils. After embarking on the path of cultivation, he learned a saying from a senior: "As cultivators, we either bring benefit to the world or focus on our own enlightenment."

Lin Mu had taken this saying to heart as his guiding principle, which was why he chose to act now.

The black-robed man took a deep breath. "Boy, do you realize..."

Lin Mu cut him off impatiently. "I'm not a patient man, and you can spare me the threats."

"Very well! Very well!" the man laughed, his voice sharp with anger. "Since I first set foot on this path, you are the first person to dare act so presumptuously before me. In that case, I will kill you first and then refine you into a puppet!"

As he finished speaking, a surge of black energy erupted from his body.

WHOOSH!

This energy was thick with a heavy aura of Evil Qi and death. Lin Mu's eyes narrowed slightly. Evidently, this man had been cultivating in a corpse-refining ground. Otherwise, he wouldn't emanate such an intense deathly aura.

However, this alone was not enough to affect Lin Mu. With a casual wave of his hand, a gust of wind swept forward, rolling the black energy back on itself before it dissipated into nothing.

"Die!"

Just then, a voice filled with killing intent rang out. The black-robed man had somehow appeared behind Lin Mu.

"Boy, do you think I have as little combat experience as that beast? You are sorely mistaken." The black-robed man sneered, his palms now a pitch-black color. "Yin-Transforming Palm!"

A frigid, bone-chilling gale of deathly energy howled toward Lin Mu.

Such dense deathly energy.

But Lin Mu remained completely still, neither moving nor counterattacking. It was as if he intended to take the blow head-on.

BANG!

The black-robed man's palm struck Lin Mu's back, but the rebound sent the attacker flying several meters away. Landing on his feet, he suddenly burst into triumphant laughter.

"Boy, you're as good as dead!" he sneered, his voice filled with excitement. "This Yin-Transforming Palm is a secret technique from my sect. To master it, one must cultivate in a place teeming with corpse energy on the seventh, seventeenth, and twenty-seventh of every month. A single strike is enough to melt an ordinary person into a pool of blood. I have practiced this technique for over thirty years. Even if you're a Martial Arts Grandmaster, the Yin Qi will invade your body, leaving you unable to use even thirty percent of your strength!"

"Is that so?" Suddenly, Lin Mu turned around, standing with his hands clasped behind his back. "Is that all you've got?"

The black-robed man was first stunned, then horrified. "How are you unharmed? Impossible! Absolutely impossible!" He pointed a trembling finger at Lin Mu. "You're faking it! You must be faking it, right?"

Lin Mu's face was etched with mockery. "Why don't you look at your own hand first?"

"Eh?" The man glanced at his palm. "It's fine, isn't it?"

"What an idiot!" A mocking voice sounded in his ear as a shadow flashed before him. A figure suddenly appeared and threw a punch.

"How dare you trick me!" the black-robed man roared in fury, realizing he had been played by Lin Mu.

But he would never dare to take this punch. If even a zombie with a body like iron couldn't withstand Lin Mu's fist, what chance did he have? The man roared again as black energy swirled around him.

WHOOSH!

The punch landed, but it only struck the swirling black energy.

Lin Mu's brow furrowed. All that remained before him was an empty black robe; the person inside had vanished.

Shedding his skin to escape? He does have some skill.

Suddenly, a black shadow flickered in a corner of the chamber as a dark gleam shot toward the exit.

"Thinking of leaving? It won't be that easy!"

Lin Mu pointed his finger, and a thick shaft of light shot out, whistling toward the target.

"Godslayer Finger!"

With a cry of alarm, a figure smashed onto the ground, his face filled with terror. He had been completely unable to dodge that finger attack.

Lin Mu slowly walked over and found that the man was actually a dwarf. He had the wizened face of an old man, a few strands of sparse yellow hair, and a rather ugly appearance. The look he gave Lin Mu was both vicious and terrified.

"That isn't a martial technique," Lin Mu said, shaking his head.

The man was stunned. "Impossible! If it's not a martial technique, then what is it?"

Lin Mu spoke slowly. "This is Immortal Law. Naturally, it isn't a martial technique."

"Immortal Law?" The man's eyes widened slightly, and as if he realized something, his pupils shrank. "Could you be..."

Lin Mu shook his head. "It's over."

"No... don't kill me! I am—"

Before he could finish, Lin Mu brought his foot down on the man's chest, crushing it and ending his life.

"I'm not interested in who you are."

After dealing with the man, Lin Mu was alone in the tomb chamber. From the adjacent chamber, the sound of thunderous explosions echoed, causing him to frown slightly.

ROAR!

Lightning flashed in his hand as a Thunder Dragon roared into existence. It then flew into the chamber wall, disappearing as it placed a seal upon it.

This way, no one else can get in.

Having done this, Lin Mu slowly walked over to where the coffin had originally been. In its place was a stone platform that seemed to be carved from white jade, a faint light flowing across its surface.

BANG!

Lin Mu threw a punch, cracking the platform open. A potent surge of Spiritual Energy immediately gushed out.

Who would have thought there would be a minor Spirit Vein here? What a find.

Chapter 193: True Immortal of Thunder Law of the Celestial Master Mansion!

A figure came walking across the Bolan River in River City.

The sun was setting, filling the sky with rosy clouds. The numerous tourists by the river were all stunned by the scene. Everyone frantically took photos, their emotions running high.

It was not until the person approached that the crowd could clearly see his appearance. He was an old man, nearly seventy years old, though one could have just as easily believed he was sixty, or even fifty. His aura was so indistinct and mysterious that it was impossible to determine his true age. Dressed in a Daoist Robe and holding a horsetail whisk, he had white hair but a youthful complexion, his face lean and refined.

He stood on the surface of the river. His posture seemed hunched, yet he emanated a startling aura, one that felt capable of shattering everything in his path.

The river's surface roiled as a torrential rain began to pour.

As the crowd fled in terror to escape the rain, the old man burst into hearty laughter, tapped his foot on the water's surface, and soared into the sky. Though he had been hundreds of meters away, the old man was as light as a feather when he landed on the ground, making not a single sound.

While the crowd was still exclaiming in shock, the screech of tires cut through the air. Looking over, they saw dozens of identical sedans parked on the roadside, stretching out like a long dragon. The car doors opened, and hundreds of men in suits stepped out, led by a tall, imposing young man. They all walked in perfect unison toward the riverbank.

At this moment, no one dared to cry out; unease filled their hearts.

The young man led his people to the old man, bowed respectfully, and said, "Jiang Ming of the Jiang Family greets you, Daoist Master Yunxu!"

This was Jiang Ming, the eldest son of the Jiang Family and Jiang Xia's older brother.

"Greetings to Daoist Master Yunxu!"

Behind Jiang Ming, hundreds of burly men bowed and cupped one fist in the other hand, their unified voices powerful and their expressions solemn.

The old man nodded with a smile, performed a Daoist salutation, and chuckled, "Yue Guang has gone to great lengths to have you all fetch this old man. He is most thoughtful."

Jiang Ming's spirits lifted, but his face showed even more respect as he said, "You flatter me, Daoist Master. Grandfather said that if it weren't for you, he might have died years ago."

"He originally intended to greet you in person this time, but grandfather's condition has been a bit..."

The old man nodded. "No matter," he said dismissively. "I will go see him in a little while."

Jiang Ming, visibly moved, quickly thanked him. "Thank you, Daoist Master!"

The old man waved his hand and glanced at the panicked tourists. "What have you found out about the matter I asked you to investigate?" he asked, his face devoid of expression.

"Reporting to the Daoist Master, the one who killed Brother Zhang is named Lin Mu," Jiang Ming replied reverently. "He is also known as Master Lin or the Master of the Three Rivers. He is twenty-eight years old, and his mother is his only living parent. His wife is Qin Luoli, the president of the Qin Corporation."

"The strange thing is," Jiang Ming continued, a hint of confusion on his own face as he relayed what he had found, "this man used to be just an ordinary college student. After graduating, he married into the Qin Family, where he was always looked down upon. But for some unknown reason, about a month ago, he not only gained astonishing strength but is also said to possess medical skills so profound that even Divine Doctor Sun Tianyang admits his own inferiority."

The old man frowned, speaking with clear displeasure. "I only wish to know his current whereabouts!"

"This Lin Mu's whereabouts are currently unknown, but I've already sent people to investigate..." Jiang Ming hurriedly replied, wiping sweat from his forehead. He then asked cautiously, "Daoist Master, do you think he might have known you were coming and fled in advance?"

"Fled?" Yunxu was taken aback for a moment, then looked somewhat disappointed. "If that's the case, this Master Lin is quite disappointing indeed. You will relay a message to the Qin Family. Tell them that I, Yunxu, have arrived.

"Three days from now, atop the Bolan River, I will face Master Lin. We will determine not only the victor but also who lives and who dies!

"If this Master Lin dares to avoid the battle, then I won't mind paying a personal visit to the Qin Family and using the blood of his kin to appease the soul of my beloved disciple!"

"Understood!" Jiang Ming hurriedly agreed, a hint of excitement rising in his heart. But he still asked with some trepidation, "But, Daoist Master, what if the Guan, Song, and other families intervene to help him?"

"The Guan Family?" The old man scoffed dismissively. "If they dare to interfere, I will take them down as well! Do they really think the name of the Celestial Master Mansion is merely for show?"

This elderly man was none other than Daoist Master Yunxu of the Celestial Master Mansion, the master of Zhang Yan. He had finally found a disciple, but due to his own seclusion, he hadn't had time to guide him personally. Nevertheless, the disciple's talent was beyond question. With diligent cultivation, he was certain to achieve greatness. But the moment he left the mountain, someone had killed him. This revelation caused Daoist Master Yunxu, who had just emerged from his seclusion, to be filled with a towering murderous intent.

Dare to kill my disciple, and I will kill you! If you, Master Lin, dare to avoid battle, I don't mind personally executing your family and friends to appease my disciple's spirit in heaven! As for whether the Martial Alliance will intervene, that will depend on whether my Celestial Master Mansion will agree!

Standing against the wind, he exuded a sharp and terrifying aura. The river behind him seemed to boil in response, making Jiang Ming and his men feel an overwhelming urge to kneel in worship.

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Only after Yunxu and his party had left did the crowd finally recover their senses. They exclaimed that they had encountered an immortal descending to earth. Excitedly, they checked their phones, only to be shocked. All the photos and videos they had just taken were gone.

「Meanwhile, at the Guan Family.」

Guan Chengye and Guan Xinhe sat facing each other. The old master's face was dark, his brows furrowed with worry.

"Grandfather, what exactly happened?" Guan Feifei asked, puzzled. In his memory, his grandfather had never lost his composure like this.

"Daoist Master Yunxu has arrived," the old man sighed.

Guan Feifei grew even more baffled. "Who is that? Who could make you so tense, Grandfather?"

"The True Immortal of Thunder Law from the Celestial Master Mansion, Daoist Master Yunxu!" Guan Chengye said with immense gravity.

Guan Feifei's expression changed. "What?" he gasped. "You mean Zhang Yan's master, Daoist Master Yunxu?"

"Correct." Guan Feifei's expression turned grave. "But wasn't he in seclusion?"

He had investigated Zhang Yan before and knew he was a disciple of the Celestial Master Mansion, but he had been busy lately and it had slipped his mind. He only knew that Daoist Master Yunxu was in seclusion and that it would take some time for him to emerge. That was why his grandfather had told him not to worry. He never expected Yunxu to emerge from seclusion in just a few days, let alone come to River City.

The old man spoke bitterly, "I just received a call. The caller said Daoist Master Yunxu has already arrived in River City. He issued a direct challenge to Master Lin, setting a duel to the death on the Bolan River in three days' time! Moreover, our Guan Family cannot get involved in this!"

"Father," Guan Xinhe interjected anxiously, "Master Lin is the Guan Family's great benefactor and the man who saved my life! Can we really just stand by and watch while he's..."

Lin Mu had saved his life, after all!

"This is... an order from above," Guan Chengye said, his face etched with bitterness.

"Above?"

The Military Department. This meant the Military Department had tacitly approved of the duel and forbidden anyone from intervening.

"Correct." Guan Chengye spoke with a heavy heart. "The orders from above state this is a personal duel. As long as it doesn't involve ordinary people, no one is allowed to interfere!"

"Then... what should we do?"

Guan Chengye's spirit seemed to rally. "Is Jiaojiao still with Master Lin's wife?" he asked.

Guan Feifei nodded. "She hasn't returned yet."

"Send more people to protect Master Lin's wife around the clock," Guan Chengye ordered immediately. "If anyone with an unknown identity approaches, once they're confirmed as hostile, you have permission to kill them on the spot! Lin Mu's wife cannot be harmed!"

"I'll see to it right away," Guan Feifei declared. "I will personally oversee the arrangements!"

"Good." Guan Chengye nodded. "At the same time, find a way to contact Master Lin and explain the situation. I will report this to the higher-ups again in the hopes that they might intervene and mediate!"

However, he sighed inwardly, his heart heavy. The Military Department is certain to just watch from the sidelines without taking action.

Chapter 194: The Supreme Dao, The Twelve Legacies!

「The Qin Family.」

Even though it was late at night, the residence was still brightly lit.

"Has Lin Mu not arrived yet?" Qin Hongbo asked.

Someone immediately replied, "We haven't been able to contact him yet."

Qin Hongbo's expression darkened. "What about Qin Luoli?"

The person spoke again, "The Eldest Miss said she is unwell and unable to attend this family council."

The family council was the highest-level family meeting of the Qin Family; all high-ranking members were required to attend. However, Qin Luoli, the president of Qin Corporation, was absent, which left many people feeling quite dissatisfied.

"This is absolutely outrageous!" Qin Hongshu was furious. "I think Qin Luoli is completely ignoring our family rules, and so is Lin Mu! Don't they realize this is a matter of life and death for our Qin Family?"

Everyone instinctively glanced at the gold-embossed challenge letter on the central table, their hearts heavy. It was a challenge from Daoist Master Yunxu of Celestial Master Mansion, the True Immortal of Thunder Law! It felt like a time bomb, ready to explode at any moment. And now, with Lin Mu missing and Qin Luoli making excuses, were they really supposed to be the ones to go and face Daoist Master Yunxu?

"Regardless, Lin Mu started this, and he must be the one to resolve it!" Qin Hongshu said with a grave voice. "Does anyone have any objections?"

"Of course, I have no objections," one person chimed in.

Qin Hongshu immediately added, "Lin Mu made this mess, so he should be the one to clean it up!"

"Exactly!"

"Didn't Lin Mu claim to be some Martial Arts Grandmaster with divine healing skills? I'd like to see how he gets out of this one!"

Yet, another person voiced their concern, "What I'm worried about now is that if the outside world learns about this, they might retaliate against our Qin Corporation."

Upon hearing this, the mood in the room immediately sank. This was something everyone was aware of, but having it stated so bluntly left them at a loss.

Qin Hongshu spoke bluntly, "What does this have to do with our Qin Family? It's all Lin Mu's own doing. When he gets here, we'll just have him apologize to Daoist Master Yunxu and then sever ties with him. Who knows, our Qin Family might even forge a connection with Daoist Master Yunxu as a result."

"Second Master's words make sense."

"That's exactly what we should do."

The crowd nodded in agreement, some even looking faintly excited.

"A bunch of idiots!"

Just then, a furious, elderly rebuke came from outside. Everyone looked up, startled.

"Old Madam, why have you come?"

The newcomer was none other than the most eminent individual in the Qin Family, the Old Madam. Qin Hongbo immediately stood up to welcome her, moving to offer his support.

"Hmph, let go!" The Old Madam pushed Qin Hongbo's hand away, her anger unabated. "How did the Qin Family end up raising a bunch of creatures worse than pigs and dogs!"

Qin Hongshu asked anxiously, "Old Madam, what is this about...?"

CRACK!

The Old Madam struck Qin Hongshu with her cane. "Especially you," she roared, pointing at him. "With such a vicious heart, turning on your own kin—you are a disgrace to this family!"

Qin Hongshu's face turned pale. He fell to his knees with a thud, pleading, "Old Madam, I've been wronged!"

He truly felt he had been wronged. How is pushing Lin Mu out considered turning on our own kin?

Burning with anger, the Old Madam retorted, "You've been wronged? Since Lin Mu married into our Qin Family, he is one of us. Yet you want to cast him out for the sake of an outsider. If that isn't turning on your own, what is?"

Qin Hongshu protested loudly, "But that person is the True Immortal of Thunder Law from Celestial Master Mansion! Our Qin Family can't fight him."

The others immediately knelt. "Old Madam, the Second Master is right! We're just an ordinary family; how can we fight against such immortal beings?"

The Old Madam sneered. "A bunch of shortsighted fools."

"So what if Yun Xu is powerful? You think that Lin Mu boy is weak?" Her face was filled with disdain as she continued, "Have you not considered Lin Mu's age against Daoist Master Yunxu's? A Martial Arts

Grandmaster and Master of the Three Rivers before the age of thirty! Are you fools blinder than this old woman? Can you not see what an accomplishment that is?"

The crowd was stunned but remained unconvinced. Even if Lin Mu's achievements were grand and his future potential was immense, he was still no match for Daoist Master Yunxu. That man was an immortal being from the Celestial Master Mansion.

The Old Madam spoke coldly, "All you see is Yunxu challenging the Lin Mu boy as a disaster for the Qin Family. But don't you realize that if the boy weren't strong enough, would Yunxu have resorted to such a formal challenge?"

"For an ordinary person, the Celestial Master Mansion would have sent just anyone. Yunxu didn't need to come personally. The fact that he is here proves that the Lin Mu boy is strong enough—at least strong enough to fight him."

Looking at this younger generation of her family, the Old Madam's eyes filled with disappointment.

"But you idiots fail to see that point," she lamented bitterly. "Do you really think that by pushing him out, the Qin Family can rest easy? What a joke!"

"The Qin Family has stood in River City for many years, weathering countless storms. If we had to exchange the lives of our family members for survival every time, our family would have long since turned to dust, its integrity lost!"

At this point, the Old Madam's tone grew heavy, her words ringing out with power, "What has the Qin Family relied on all these years? It is our unyielding spirit and our pride that never bows, not currying favor with the powerful or kneeling and begging for mercy like cowards!"

"If the Lin Mu boy survives this, it will be a once-in-a-century opportunity for our Qin Family. If his skills are inferior and he is killed by Yunxu, that is simply the risk one takes in these contests. The Celestial Master Mansion wouldn't stoop to attacking us over it."

The Old Madam shakily stood up and walked toward the door.

"All of you think about it carefully. Don't you dare throw away such a great opportunity!"

Qin Hongbo and the others exchanged glances, shock apparent in their eyes. The Old Madam intended to protect Lin Mu.

「Inside a tomb on Tiger's Lair Mountain.」

Lin Mu's eyes snapped open, a sharp gleam shooting out more than three inches.

"Who would have thought this Spirit Vein would increase my strength so much," Lin Mu said, a hint of joy on his face.

Spirit Veins had always been nurtured by the essence of heaven and earth, making them ideal for cultivation. Although this one was not large, it was exceedingly rare on Earth. Otherwise, General Huang Weihu of Tiger's Lair Mountain wouldn't have been able to cultivate into a Zombie more than two hundred years after his death. The Dwarf must have learned of the Spirit Vein here from somewhere, which was why he used this place to refine Zombies.

Unfortunately for him, it all ended up benefiting Lin Mu.

Now, having cultivated with the Spirit Vein, his strength had increased dramatically. Previously, Lin Mu was only at the fourth level of Qi Cultivation. Now, his power had nearly doubled, pushing him directly to the seventh level. Although only two levels separated the fourth and seventh levels of Qi Cultivation, they were worlds apart.

The twelve levels of Qi Cultivation were divided into distinct phases every three levels. The first to third levels were the initial phase, the fourth to sixth were the middle phase, and the seventh to ninth were the late phase. The tenth was completion, the eleventh was the peak, and the twelfth... was the stuff of legend.

At the tenth or eleventh level of Qi Cultivation, most cultivators began to refine their Qi into essence in preparation for Foundation Establishment. Only a few exceptionally talented geniuses would strive for the supreme Heavenly Dao, the legendary twelfth level. Every cultivator who achieved Foundation

Establishment at the twelfth level of Qi Refining was one embraced by the Great Dao, a person of extraordinary willpower.

As the only cultivator currently on Earth, Lin Mu also aspired to contend for that supreme pinnacle of the Great Dao.

Chapter 195: If He Wants to Fight, Then We'll Fight!

Now that his cultivation level had reached The Ninth Layer of Qi Cultivation, he was able to employ some minor spells.

With this thought, Lin Mu extended a finger.

A flame gathered on his fingertip, coalescing into a fireball that emitted a faint warmth.

Flame Control Technique.

Then, with a shift of his will, the fireball vanished, transforming into a perfectly round, adorable drop of clear water, like a little sprite.

Water Control Technique.

The droplet disappeared, replaced by a wisp of gentle wind that coiled around his fingertip, bringing a refreshing coolness.

Wind Control Skill.

...

Lin Mu tried several minor spells in succession, wielding them all with ease and without a hint of awkwardness.

Although these spells were not high-level, they were the fundamental techniques Lin Mu had practiced when he first embarked on the path of cultivation.

So, being able to cast them again felt pleasantly familiar.

And as his cultivation level increased, even these minor spells could unleash terrifying power.

Most importantly, now that his strength had reached the ninth layer and he had mastered the Flame Control Technique, Lin Mu was even more confident in refining the Ever Youth Pill.

At this thought, even Lin Mu felt a surge of excitement.

Once the Ever Youth Pill was successfully refined, Qin Luoli's appearance could not only be restored but also remain forever young and beautiful.

This was an irresistible temptation for any woman.

An inscrutable smile crept onto Lin Mu's lips.

He composed himself, took out all the medicinal ingredients, and arrayed them on the White Jade Platform.

Green Spirit Fruit, Qilin Flower, He Shouwu, red flowers, and... the Beauty Flower.

This Beauty Flower was the very one he had just retrieved from the belly of the giant python.

Although called a flower, the Beauty Flower looked more like a Ganoderma mushroom. It was white as jade and incredibly difficult to digest.

Even a knife would have trouble cutting it.

Refining it required a special kind of flame.

Fortunately, Lin Mu had now mastered the Flame Control Technique.

Adjusting his mindset, Lin Mu began to purify the ingredients for the Ever Youth Pill, following the recipe from his memory.

With Thunder Dragon standing guard, he had no fear of anyone suddenly breaking in and disturbing him.

「Tiger's Lair Mountain.」

Mayor Fang, Huang Ning, and the others stood before the grave with solemn expressions. Unexpectedly, Huang Laoshi was also present.

Although Master Feng now had only one arm, he seemed to be in good spirits, aside from his pale complexion.

He was currently conducting a ritual.

Although Huang Ning's ancestor had turned into a Zombie and been slain by Lin Mu, the feng shui of this place had been disrupted. If left unaddressed, it would continue to bring misfortune upon the Huang Family.

Now, Master Feng was performing the final rites to resolve the issue.

Once the ritual was complete, the blemishes on Huang Ning's body would disappear completely.

Of course, this was only Master Feng's understanding.

If Lin Mu were here, he would have scoffed at Master Feng for going to such unnecessary trouble.

Since Huang Ning's ancestor had been killed by him, the so-called feng shui curse was already broken, and the blemishes on her skin would fade on their own.

"Miss Huang, rest assured. As soon as my master finishes the ritual, your problem will be solved," Yan Lun said with a small smile.

Huang Ning ignored him. The previous day's events may have passed, but she was still deeply shaken.

Even now, her face was etched with fear and lingering dread.

What pained her most was that all of her bodyguards had died here.

At the thought, Huang Ning gritted her teeth in anger.

If it weren't for that man named Lin Mu, would her bodyguards have died?

He was clearly so powerful, yet he hadn't lifted a finger to help her or save them.

He deserved to die!

Good thing that bastard died in the tomb.

Thinking of this, Huang Ning's mood improved slightly.

"Miss Huang, come and kowtow three times," Master Feng said as his ritual concluded, handing her three sticks of incense.

Huang Ning took the incense and respectfully kowtowed three times before the grave.

"Let's go."

After finishing her kowtows, Huang Ning was ready to leave this dreadful place, having sworn never to return in this lifetime or the next.

"Huang Laoshi, what are you doing?" Mayor Fang suddenly shouted, his tone sharp.

Huang Laoshi was lighting some paper money and incense. He had even brought some fruit as offerings, which he was arranging carefully on the ground.

"Mr. Lin, I don't know how to contact your family. It was your bad luck to be buried here," Huang Laoshi said as he planted the incense in the ground. "Don't worry, if your family comes looking for you, I'll bring them to see you. Whether they move you or leave you here will be their decision."

"If they don't come, I, Huang Laoshi, will come and burn some paper money for you during the holidays. Rest in peace, and please don't hold any grudges against me."

With that said, Huang Laoshi started to get up.

"Why would I hold a grudge against you?"

Just then, a voice laced with amusement reached Huang Laoshi's ears.

"Of course, it's because you... AHH, A GHOST!"

Huang Laoshi replied instinctively, but after a few words, his face turned deathly pale and he collapsed to the ground.

Pointing at the figure standing before him, he stammered, "Mr... Mr. Lin, I told you Tiger's Lair Mountain was dangerous, but you insisted on coming! Even if you're a ghost, please don't haunt me!"

Huang Laoshi was on the verge of tears from fright, and the others weren't much better.

Master Feng stared at Lin Mu for a long moment before exclaiming in shock, "Master... Master Lin, you're not dead?"

Lin Mu hopped off the burial mound. "Who said I was?"

"But, you..."

Master Feng started to speak, but stopped and bowed deeply to Lin Mu. "Feng Chen pays his respects to Master Lin. I hope you can forgive my previous disrespect."

Lin Mu waved his hand. "No offense taken. You didn't know."

After speaking, he turned to Huang Laoshi, a faint smile playing on his lips.

"You've done well."

Huang Laoshi was baffled.

Lin Mu thought for a moment, then took out a white, jade-like stone from his robes and handed it to Huang Laoshi.

"This is for you. Keep it on your person, and it can save you from one disaster. If you place it in your home, your household will be at peace, and no evil will enter."

Huang Laoshi looked at the stone in his hand. It had a cute and pleasant appearance, but it was just a rock.

"Mr. Lin, this..."

Valuable or not, Huang Laoshi felt he couldn't accept it. He was about to refuse when Lin Mu said, "Take it. You've earned it."

Huang Laoshi reconsidered. This Mr. Lin was clearly a man of great ability and probably wouldn't miss such a small item, so he accepted it.

He didn't know that this very stone would one day save his life, and that he would later treasure it as a family heirloom.

But that is a story for another time.

Master Feng, however, stared at the stone with burning, even greedy, eyes.

However, Master Lin had remarked that he had inscribed a Formation onto the stone. Anyone who tried to steal it would die on the spot. If not for that warning, Master Feng might have considered getting the stone from Huang Laoshi later, whether by buying it or stealing it.

He could feel a powerful aura emanating from it.

A treasure!

Lin Mu shot a meaningful glance at Master Feng.

A chill ran down Master Feng's spine, and all his covetous thoughts vanished.

"I'm leaving."

Having settled the matter, Lin Mu prepared to depart.

"Stop!"

It was Huang Ning who called out to him.

"Is there a problem?" Lin Mu frowned, his dislike for her apparent.

Seeing his expression, Huang Ning's anger flared. "You're obviously very powerful, so why did you just stand by and watch my bodyguards die? If you had acted sooner, they would have been fine!"

"You owe me an explanation!"

Lin Mu laughed, but his smile was chilling.

"And what kind of explanation do you want?"

Huang Ning hesitated for a second before declaring, "You must return with me to Harbor Island and serve the Huang Family for three years as penance for their deaths!"

"Hmph, I'll have you know, so what if you're powerful? If you dare refuse, I guarantee you won't live to see tomorrow!" Huang Ning said haughtily. She had already decided that as soon as Lin Mu was in Harbor Island, she would have him firmly in her grasp and turn him into her pawn.

"Miss Huang!"

Master Feng's face fell. He was about to intervene, but Lin Mu just sneered and raised a hand.

Huang Ning, who was several meters away, suddenly trembled and shot through the air, landing right in Lin Mu's grasp.

Lin Mu seized her by the throat, his voice cold and detached. "What do you take me for? Even the Martial Alliance Leader wouldn't dare act so presumptuously in my presence!

"Who do you think you are to speak to me with such a tone? Believe it or not, I could end your life right here, right now."

With Lin Mu's hand around her throat, Huang Ning couldn't utter a sound.

But she could clearly feel the icy killing intent radiating from him, and boundless terror consumed her.

He really dares to kill me!

"What are you doing!"

Seeing Huang Ning captured, Yan Lun had just roared in anger when an invisible force slammed into him.

He was sent flying backward, his condition unknown.

"Master Lin, spare us!"

Master Feng dropped to his knees before Lin Mu, kowtowing repeatedly.

"Master Lin, for my sake, please spare Huang Ning this once. She is young and foolish and has offended you. I beg you to show mercy."

If Huang Ning actually died here, it would cause enormous trouble.

Though Mayor Fang didn't understand why Master Feng was begging, he knew this young man was not to be trifled with. He added, "Master Lin, just let it go. There's no need to bicker with a woman."

Looking at Huang Ning's pleading face, Lin Mu threw her to the ground.

"If you're not satisfied, you can have the Huang Family come after me for revenge. But I'll tell you this: one day, I will take my sword to Harbor Island and slaughter your entire Huang Family!"

After saying this, Lin Mu turned and left without a backward glance.

His feet tapped lightly on the ground as his figure soared like an Azure Hawk, leaping through Tiger's Lair Mountain.

Within a few blinks, he had vanished into the vast wilderness.

Where Lin Mu had just stepped, the ground caved in, leaving a crater half a meter deep and crushing the stones to fine powder.

Seeing this, Mayor Fang and the others were too stunned to speak.

As for Huang Laoshi, he simply called out, "A god!" before falling to his knees and bowing his head, clutching the jade stone tightly in his hand.

Lin Mu had just descended the mountain when his phone rang. It was Guan Chengye.

After hearing what Guan Chengye had to say, a faint smile curled Lin Mu's lips.

So, they've finally come. If he wants a fight, then a fight it is.

"Send a helicopter to pick me up!"

Chapter 196: Martial Alliance Hall Master Lu Tong!

At 10 a.m., Lin Mu returned to River City.

Upon seeing Lin Mu, Elder Guan let out a great sigh of relief. "My friend Lin, you're finally back."

Lin Mu nodded. "I'm sorry to have worried you these past two days, Elder Guan." He knew Elder Guan must have been concerned about his impending duel with Yun Xu.

Guan Chengye gave a wry smile. "That's a small matter. You should go home and take a look."

Lin Mu raised an eyebrow. "Is something wrong at home?"

Elder Guan said nothing, but Lin Mu understood instantly. "Alright, I'll head back and take a look first." After bidding them farewell, he got into the car Guan Chengye had arranged and left.

「Qinzhu Courtyard.」

Something felt off the moment Lin Mu arrived. Two men were standing by the villa's main gate. On the surface, they seemed unremarkable, but Lin Mu could tell at a glance that their strength was considerable—they both possessed External Strength. They stood at the front gate like guards.

"Sorry, but you can't enter," one of them said, stepping forward to block Lin Mu's path.

"Hmm?" Lin Mu narrowed his eyes. "Get out of my way!"

The man's expression changed. "This is a private residence," he said in a low voice. "If you try to force your way in, don't blame me for being discourteous."

"Private residence?" Lin Mu laughed in anger. He took a slow step forward, his tone indifferent. "Today, I'd like to see just who has the gall to run wild in my home!"

"Get out of my way!"

With a blur of motion, Lin Mu charged straight into the man.

The man snorted and prepared to strike back. But the moment he moved, he felt as if he'd been hit by a speeding truck and was sent flying backward.

PFFT! As he flew through the air, the man spat out a mouthful of fresh blood.

Just as the other man was about to act, an indifferent and merciless voice reached his ears. "If you don't want to die, stand still and don't move."

The man instantly felt as if he were being stared down by an Ancient Fierce Beast. His entire body trembled and froze solid.

Without a single glance in his direction, Lin Mu walked straight into the villa. Only after Lin Mu had disappeared inside did the man let out a huge sigh of relief. A breeze drifted past, and he realized his back was drenched in cold sweat.

Upon entering the villa, Lin Mu noticed the strange atmosphere at once. His expression turned cold as he headed for the main hall.

"Stop right there!"

Just as Lin Mu set foot on the stairs, a towering figure suddenly blocked his path.

Late Stage Inner Strength!

The man had a fierce, fleshy face, and his muscular body emanated explosive power. He stood before Lin Mu like a small mountain, his eyes brimming with murderous intent.

"Kid, hurting a member of our Martial Alliance doesn't end well." The burly man twisted his neck, producing a series of sharp cracks.

A smile touched Lin Mu's lips. "The Martial Alliance? I haven't even come looking for you, yet you have the audacity to show up at my door. In that case, don't blame me for being merciless."

SWOOSH!

The moment he finished speaking, Lin Mu's figure flickered.

"You're courting death!" A ferocious glint appeared in the burly man's eyes as he swung his fan-sized palm down.

BOOM!

The palm landed on "Lin Mu," but the figure instantly vanished.

The burly man's pupils shrank. An afterimage? He sucked in a sharp breath, a flicker of shock in his heart.

Not good!

Suddenly realizing something, he spun around, only to see a palm descending upon him.

Just then, a cold shout came from the main hall. "Stop!"

But it was too late.

SMACK!

A palm struck the burly man squarely in the face, sending him flying.

THUD! The burly man crashed into the courtyard with a loud bang. PFFT! He spat out a mouthful of fresh blood, along with a few teeth.

"You... are courting death!" The burly man glared at Lin Mu. He had only uttered those few words when his expression changed drastically, for Lin Mu was already walking slowly toward him.

"You... what do you want?" As Lin Mu drew closer, a hint of panic appeared in the burly man's eyes.

The two Martial Artists who had been guarding the entrance came inside but stood at a distance, their faces full of fear, daring not to approach.

This kid appeared out of nowhere, but he's far too powerful! Even Elder Ouyang was no match for him.

Lin Mu said nothing. He simply walked over to the burly man and planted his foot on his head.

Lin Mu applied more and more pressure. "What do you think?"

The burly man struggled several times, but it was useless. He could only feel his cheek being crushed against the ground in agony.

"Kid, let me go!" the burly man roared in fury.

But Lin Mu was unmoved. Instead, he delivered a heavy kick to the man's head.

PFFT! The burly man was kicked out of the villa like a sack of potatoes, landing on the road outside like a dead dog.

Lin Mu had controlled his strength perfectly. He hadn't killed the man, but he had shattered many of his bones. It would take months for him to recover, and even then, his strength would be permanently affected.

"This is just a little interest," Lin Mu's icy voice drifted out from the villa.

The burly man glared toward the villa. "You..." He spat out another mouthful of blood and fainted.

Inside the villa, Lin Mu glanced at the two remaining Martial Artists. "If you're not convinced, you're welcome to try me."

The two exchanged a look and quickly bowed their heads, not daring to meet Lin Mu's gaze.

This guy is definitely not someone to mess with. Our strength isn't even in the same league.

"That's enough!" a detached voice echoed from the hall.

Footsteps sounded, and a group of people slowly walked out. The leader, a middle-aged man in a purple Tang suit, was followed by another person: Zhuang Yu.

Looking at Lin Mu in the courtyard, Zhuang Yu's expression was complicated. He stepped forward and whispered something in the ear of the middle-aged man. The middle-aged man nodded arrogantly and looked down at Lin Mu with a condescending air. "You're Lin Mu?"

This man was Lu Tong, the Hall Master of the Jiangling Martial Alliance Branch!

Lu Tong stood with his hands clasped behind his back, his expression haughty.

Ignoring Lu Tong, Lin Mu turned to Zhuang Yu, a dangerous glint in his eyes. "If I recall correctly, I've warned you before."

Remembering Lin Mu's methods, Zhuang Yu shuddered involuntarily. "Greetings, Master Lin," he said, his tone bitter.

"Hmph." Lu Tong's expression soured. Staring at Lin Mu, he snapped, "Insolence! I am speaking to you!"

Lin Mu walked slowly forward. As he passed Lu Tong, he paused, a slight smirk playing on his lips. "And who are you to question me? Get lost."

Zhuang Yu's mouth twitched. Did Lin Mu just tell a Martial Alliance Helmsman to get lost?

Lin Mu paid them no further mind and walked straight into the hall.

Behind him, Lu Tong's expression turned grim. What an arrogant brat! Watching Lin Mu's retreating back, he suddenly gave a slight smile.

Lu Tong also started toward the hall.

I'd really like to see how you beg me later!

Chapter 197: A Man Should Kill!

In the main hall of the villa.

The moment Lin Mu stepped inside, his brow twitched slightly. Several people were seated in the hall.

A man in his forties with a calm demeanor sat on the sofa. Though silent, he radiated an iron-willed aura, as did the two men beside him. Their eyes were as sharp as a hawk's, and they sat as straight as javelins.

On the other side were Qin Luoli and Daoist Master Qing Yu, who appeared to be injured.

"You're back?"

Qin Luoli rose and walked toward Lin Mu. Her face was covered with a mask, but her eyes revealed a gentle smile. Her injuries had mostly healed, but scars still lingered on her face. The poison hadn't been fully purged either, leaving her skin dark and bereft of its once-famous beauty.

Lin Mu felt a pang of heartache. He took Qin Luoli's hand and said softly, "You've been through a lot."

Qin Luoli shook her head gently. "It wasn't hard."

Lin Mu nodded, took out a small box, and placed it in her hand. "Take one of these. The wounds on your face will heal."

Qin Luoli's eyes widened as she looked at Lin Mu. He simply nodded in confirmation.

Qin Luoli accepted the box and gently hugged him. "Lin Mu, you're so good to me."

No woman is indifferent to her appearance, especially not Qin Luoli, once hailed as the number one beauty in River City.

"Go on. Leave this to me," Lin Mu said, patting her shoulder with a reassuring nod.

"Alright."

Sensibly, Qin Luoli turned and headed upstairs. With Lin Mu back, she no longer had anything to worry about.

After Qin Luoli had left, Lin Mu looked at Qing Yu and asked, "Who hit you?"

Qing Yu's lips parted, his voice bitter. "Master, I'm fine."

"I asked you who did it!" Lin Mu's voice rose a notch.

"I did!" A tall, well-built young man standing beside the middle-aged man on the sofa shot to his feet, a look of pure arrogance on his face. "And what can you do about it?"

He smirked, not the least bit worried about what Lin Mu could do to him. Given his status, he believed he could point his finger and curse Lin Mu, and the man wouldn't dare to utter a peep in protest.

"It's good that you admit it."

Lin Mu nodded. Without any discernible movement, his hand floated out in a slapping motion.

SMACK!

The young man who had stood up was struck across the face by an invisible force. The tremendous power sent him flying, his face contorting in agony. He crashed to the ground and couldn't get back up.

The slap had seemed simple, yet with that single blow, Lin Mu had crippled the man's Cultivation Level. From this day forward, he would be nothing more than a cripple.

To cripple one of his men the moment he arrived—this decisive action made the highest-ranking man's expression turn grim.

"Boy, you're seeking death!" another young man roared in anger as the aura of an Inner Strength Martial Artist flared from him.

"If you don't want to die, I advise you to stay quiet," Lin Mu said with a nonchalant glance.

That single glance made the man feel as if he had been struck by a thunderbolt. His body went rigid, and he didn't dare make a move. This scene sent a shock through Qing Yu's heart.

Leaning back against the sofa, Lin Mu addressed the stunned Qing Yu. "From now on, if anyone dares cause trouble in this house, kill them on the spot."

"I'll cover for you!"

He'll cover for me? Qing Yu thought, his mind reeling.

The middle-aged man's thoughts were darker. Such arrogance from this Lin Mu!

"Good. Very good!" the middle-aged man laughed, his voice dripping with rage. "To think that in this small River City, someone would dare to lay a hand on a man from the Military Department."

"Kid, you must be tired of living!"

The middle-aged man held a very high rank and served in the Military Department. He believed that killing Lin Mu would be as easy as crushing an ant.

"Lin Mu, you'd better apologize to Mr. Liu right now! With just one word from him, you could end up dead without a place to be buried!" Lu Tong interjected, pointing a finger and scolding him loudly.

"Are you tired of living?" Lin Mu glanced at Lu Tong, his eyes brimming with murderous intent.

This Lu Tong is really courting death, daring to barge into my home and make such a racket. If it weren't for the impending major battle, I wouldn't want to stir up more trouble. A man like him could be killed just like that.

Meanwhile, Mr. Liu stared fixedly at Lin Mu, his face grim. "Kid, I've seen plenty of people like you," he sneered. "You think having a little strength means you can look down on everyone? If you were to encounter a true Martial Arts Grandmaster, you wouldn't even know what hit you." His words were filled with contempt.

"If the 'true Martial Arts Grandmaster' you're referring to is anything like that man on the floor, then I advise you not to embarrass yourself further," Lin Mu said, completely unconcerned.

"You..." Mr. Liu was left speechless. Lin Mu crippling his subordinate was a direct slap to his own face, utterly humiliating him. It also seemed this person was acting so recklessly because he had something to back him up.

Worried Mr. Liu would be provoked further, Lu Tong quickly stepped in. "Lin Mu, let's cut the chatter. I came today to discuss a matter of great importance with you!"

Lin Mu scoffed internally. So, force didn't work, and now they're trying the soft approach? Let's see what kind of tale they can spin.

"To be frank, Daoist Master Yunxu has already submitted a formal life-and-death challenge to the Martial Alliance. In this fight, your death is all but certain!" Lu Tong said, clearly having no faith in Lin Mu's chances.

"No one knows the outcome until the fight is over," Lin Mu replied, completely indifferent to his words.

"Kid, I'm doing this for your own good!" Lu Tong suppressed his rage. This Lin Mu was truly impervious to reason. "You are not a Grandmaster, so you naturally don't understand how terrifying a Martial Arts Grandmaster is. And this Daoist Master Yunxu comes from Dragon Tiger Mountain; his strength is immeasurable."

Lu Tong sneered, "With your meager strength, you honestly couldn't even take one blow from Daoist Master Yunxu."

He thought Lin Mu was being impossibly arrogant. Just because people call him Master Lin, he really thinks he's a Martial Arts Grandmaster? Ridiculous! To be so conceited without ever having seen a true Martial Arts Grandmaster... it's pure hubris!

Seeing Lin Mu's silence, Lu Tong assumed he had finally realized he was no match for Yunxu. He pressed on, "You killed Yunxu's disciple. Now he has come seeking revenge and certainly won't let you off the hook.

"If you avoid the battle, he will surely enter River City. You might be able to escape, but your family..." Lu Tong glanced upstairs, his meaning perfectly clear.

Lin Mu's brows rose slightly. He was beginning to understand Lu Tong's plan.

Lu Tong smiled faintly. "However, if you agree to become Mr. Liu's servant and serve him for life, this battle can be avoided.

"I can assure you that with Mr. Liu's status, he will resolve the grievance between you and Daoist Master Yunxu. Your family will even receive immense benefits because of it."

An arrogant expression appeared on Mr. Liu's face. Although Lin Mu's current strength was a bit lacking, they had already calculated that he was certain to become a Grandmaster in less than ten years. Acquiring a future Grandmaster as a servant was by no means a losing proposition for him.

"Servant?" Lin Mu laughed. "I don't think I'm the one who's arrogant. You're the ones who are ridiculously conceited!"

Hearing this, the expressions of both Lu Tong and Mr. Liu instantly darkened.

Lin Mu stated flatly, "I, Lin Mu, stand tall and bow to no man. I will never be another's servant. Say one more word of this nonsense, and I will kill you!"

"You..." Lu Tong's face flushed with anger. "Are you sure you won't reconsider?" he asked, as if offering one last chance.

"Get out!"

Lin Mu waved his hand. A fierce wind surged forth, wrapping around Lu Tong and his companions and sweeping them out of the hall. His icy voice carried clearly to their ears.

"A true man must be willing to kill. A mere Yunxu isn't enough to make me run from a fight.

"But if the Martial Alliance dares to play tricks behind my back, don't blame me for one day bringing my sword to Jiangling to eradicate you all!"

Outside, the faces of Lu Tong and his group were incredibly grim.

"Ignorant fool! I'd like to see just how you die!" Mr. Liu declared, then waved his hand. "Let's go!"

Chapter 198: Hang with Young Master from now on!

Over the next two days, Lin Mu stayed at home to keep Qin Luoli company, turning a deaf ear to the rumors swirling outside.

Meanwhile, the entire Empire's Martial Arts World was boiling with excitement over the upcoming duel.

"What? True Immortal of Thunder Law, Daoist Master Yunxu, from the Dragon Tiger Mountain Celestial Master Mansion has actually sent a challenge to Master Lin?"

"You're just hearing about this? Rumors have been circulating for days, but who would have thought that Daoist Master Yunxu would actually sign a life-and-death contract with the Martial Alliance?"

"Who exactly is this Master Lin? For Daoist Master Yunxu to issue him a challenge, could the rumors be wrong?"

"Wrong? Do you even follow news from the Martial Arts World? How could such a major event be fake?"

"I also heard that this Master Lin is a highly skilled magic user. Someone saw him at the River City martial meet controlling thunderbolts and slaying Crane Immortal Sect Elder Liu Xianhe. Daoist Master Yunxu's beloved disciple was killed by him, and he was proclaimed the Master of the Three Rivers."

"Controlling thunderbolts? You've got to be kidding. Everyone in the Martial Arts World knows that only the Heavenly Masters of the Dragon Tiger Mountain Celestial Master Mansion are qualified to wield thunder."

"Whether it's true or not, the fact that Daoist Master Yunxu has issued a challenge proves Master Lin must be no ordinary person."

"No matter how strong he is, can he be as powerful as Daoist Master Yunxu? This is the same Daoist Master Yunxu who nearly became the Heavenly Master, right?"

"That's right. Daoist Master Yunxu achieved the rank of Martial Arts Grandmaster thirty years ago. After failing in his bid for the position of Heavenly Master, he went into seclusion. Now, after thirty years, his strength has probably become even more terrifying."

"Regardless of who wins or loses, I have to go watch this battle. After all, a duel between Grandmasters is a rare sight, something you might see only once a decade."

"I'm going too..."

Countless people were shaken. They never imagined that the Martial Arts World, which had been quiet for decades, would be hit by one wave after another these past few months. And all of it was related to this newly minted Grandmaster, Master Lin. First came the rumors that Divine Doctor Sun Tianyang had praised Master Lin's medical skills, admitting his own were inferior. Then, Master Lin won the title of Master of the Three Rivers at the River City martial meet. Now, the True Immortal of Thunder Law, Daoist Master Yunxu, had forcefully emerged from seclusion to challenge him.

Such a series of events could only be compared to the legendary battle from over twenty years ago when the Central Plains Sword Immortal Liu Mubai challenged four Grandmasters at once.

「On the morning of the third day.」

Lin Mu glanced at Qin Luoli sleeping beside him, then leaned over and kissed her cheek.

Sleep well. When you wake up, the world will be quiet again.

A gentle smile graced Lin Mu's face. After taking the Ever Youth Pill, Qin Luoli's beauty had not only been restored, but she had become even more stunning. And this was before she had fully absorbed the pill's effects. Her skin was now smoother and more delicate, as flawless as an infant's. That transcendent aura she possessed was enough to make any woman in the world burn with envy.

Qin Luoli turned over, pouting her lips slightly as she gently wrapped her snow-white arms around Lin Mu.

"Darling, I love you."

Lin Mu smiled warmly, tucked the blanket around her, and quietly left the room.

"Protect her," Lin Mu said gravely as he came downstairs, addressing Daoist Master Qing Yu, who was meditating in the hall. "If she suffers even the slightest harm, I will hold you accountable!"

"Yes, Master!" Daoist Master Qing Yu nodded solemnly. He bowed to Lin Mu and said, "I wish you victory in this battle and hope you reach a new peak on your Martial Way!"

Lin Mu nodded slightly. "After this battle is over, I will help you break through to the Grandmaster Realm."

Qing Yu trembled with excitement, his tone growing even more reverent. "To have met you in this life is Qing Yu's greatest fortune!"

Lin Mu waved his hand and headed straight for the Bolan River.

Dragon Tiger Mountain Celestial Master Mansion! True Immortal of Thunder Law! Daoist Master Yunxu! I'm coming! You'd better not disappoint me too much.

「Half an hour later.」

Lin Mu arrived at the Bolan Riverside. The area was already swarming with people. The river itself was dotted with numerous boats, including quite a few yachts. All told, there were no fewer than a hundred vessels. The yachts and dragon boats were packed with people, all of them heading toward the center of the river, churning the water and sending waves rolling.

So many people? Lin Mu frowned slightly, not having expected his battle with Yun Xu to attract so many spectators. Shaking his head, he dismissed it. When the fight starts, I hope these people can protect themselves.

Just then, Lin Mu suddenly heard a familiar voice.

"Wow, Wenrou, look at all the boats!"

He turned to see a group of young men and women walking toward him. Leading them was an extremely handsome young man in casual designer clothes, surrounded by an entourage. He was clearly a person of significant status.

Lin Mu's eyes narrowed slightly.

Qiao Zishan! The son of River City's wealthiest man, Qiao Jinghao!

Lin Mu had a particularly deep impression of this man. The original owner of this body had been harmed by him. Furthermore, Lin Mu had promised the original owner that he would seek revenge and annihilate the Qiao Family. He had initially planned to eliminate the Qiao Family first to avenge the previous owner before focusing on his cultivation. But life was unpredictable, and too much had happened since his rebirth. Still, he had not forgotten the original owner's grudge.

In that case, after I defeat Yun Xu, I'll annihilate your Qiao Family.

Lin Mu was about to turn and leave, but a woman in the group fixed her beautiful eyes on him and offered a gentle smile.

It was Song Wenrou. Next to her was his old classmate, Ye Tong. Jiang Xia and Li Ping were also there.

"Lin Mu? What are you doing here?" Ye Tong's expression stiffened, a flicker of unease in her eyes.

Jiang Xia also spotted Lin Mu, and his face turned even uglier. He had been thoroughly humiliated by Lin Mu back in Wufeng Town. However, he had left early after his loss to Zhang Yan, completely unaware of the events that followed. He certainly had no idea that Lin Mu was the same Master Lin who had shaken River City. Ye Tong, too, only knew that Lin Mu was strong, but in her mind, he and the famous Master Lin were worlds apart. Moreover, Song Wenrou hadn't told anyone about this.

"And why can't I be here?" Lin Mu looked at Ye Tong. This old classmate of mine is certainly interesting.

"Who's this guy?" Qiao Zishan asked, looking at Lin Mu without recognizing him as the man he desperately wanted to kill. After all, with his status, he didn't need to personally deal with an ant.

Jiang Xia sneered. "Young Master Qiao, this is the person I told you about."

Previously, Jiang Xia had been filled with resentment and apprehension toward Lin Mu, but things were different now. His elder brother, Jiang Ming, had told him that one of the main figures of today's event, Daoist Master Yunxu, had once been a guest at the Jiang Family and had even healed their grandfather's injuries. On top of that, he had managed to connect with Qiao Zishan, the son of River City's richest man. In his eyes, a mere Lin Mu was less than nothing.

"Oh?" Qiao Zishan studied Lin Mu, his slightly puffy eyes narrowing. "So you're Lin Mu. The name sounds a little familiar. Have we met?"

Jiang Xia's expression changed. Young Master Qiao has met Lin Mu? Could they be friends?

Lin Mu looked at Qiao Zishan and grinned. "Though we haven't met, Young Master Qiao and I go way back."

At his words, the expressions of the onlookers shifted. Lin Mu really knows Young Master Qiao?

Song Wenrou, however, wore a peculiar expression, sensing that things were not as simple as they seemed.

"Jiang Xia says you're quite skilled?" Qiao Zishan nodded. "From now on, you'll work for me. I won't treat you poorly."

Lin Mu was taken aback for a moment, then he cracked a smile. This Young Master Qiao sure thinks highly of me.

Chapter 199: I Don't Have a Habit of Kneeling and Licking!

"Lin Mu, Young Master Qiao is talking to you!" Jiang Xia snapped, clearly dissatisfied when Lin Mu remained silent.

"With Young Master Qiao's status, what kind of talent couldn't he find? The fact that he's willing to take you on is all because he's giving us face. Of course," she added, a hint of pride on her face, "your strength is a factor too."

A reserved smile played on Qiao Zishan's face. From what I heard from Jiang Xia, this Lin Mu seems to be a Martial Artist with decent capabilities, which is why I even considered recruiting him. But most importantly, I want to demonstrate my magnanimity and appreciation for talent in front of Song Wenrou. Otherwise, with my status, what kind of talent couldn't I find? Forget someone like Lin Mu who merely has some brute strength; I could find plenty of truly top-tier people.

"He's right, Lin Mu. I heard you're still jobless. Following Young Master Qiao might not be a bad path," Ye Tong advised earnestly. "You're not getting any younger, you know. You should have a proper job, shouldn't you? Otherwise, how are you going to find a girlfriend or buy a house in River City?"

Of course, Ye Tong had her own ulterior motives. After all these years, Wenrou still hadn't forgotten Lin Mu, and that just wouldn't do. How could Lin Mu possibly be good enough for Wenrou? As long as Lin Mu starts working for Young Master Qiao, he'll eventually realize the massive gap between them and naturally give up. Then, from Song Wenrou's perspective, it would be a choice between the son of River City's wealthiest man and someone's minor subordinate. The stronger choice would be obvious.

"Don't worry," Qiao Zishan said with a faint smile. "Considering you're an acquaintance of Wenrou, I won't treat you poorly. As for your compensation, I guarantee you'll be satisfied."

He could certainly afford a mere Lin Mu. This would not only help Jiang Xia vent her frustration but also win Song Wenrou's favor. It was truly killing two birds with one stone.

Any ordinary person would have been overflowing with gratitude and accepted immediately. After all, the chance to work for Young Master Qiao, even as a mere follower, was an incredible honor—an opportunity many would kill for.

But Lin Mu was different.

Never mind the feud between him and Qiao Zishan. With Lin Mu's current status as the husband of Qin Luoli, the president of Qin Corporation, there was no way he would work for someone else. He even had his own company.

And besides, was Qiao Zishan even worthy of having the great Master Lin of River City as his enforcer? What a self-important fool.

Seeing Lin Mu shake his head, Jiang Xia's expression turned ugly.

"Lin Mu, what do you mean by that?" Jiang Xia demanded coldly. "This is a great opportunity. You'd better think it over carefully."

Thinking that Lin Mu was still hung up on Song Wenrou, Ye Tong grew even more anxious. "Lin Mu, do you really want to live your life having achieved nothing? You're almost thirty. For a man of your age to have no family and no career is a shameful thing."

She looked at him sternly and said, "People will look down on you."

"Hmph, some people just don't know what's good for them," Li Ping said with a hint of jealousy. "Just because they can fight a little, they think they're so special. But this world isn't a place where fighting gets you everything."

"Indeed," Gu Can added in a sour tone. "A respectable job, a happy family, a blissful love life... you can't get those things through violence. It's a pity Young Master Qiao doesn't think much of us. Otherwise, working for him would be far more promising."

Qiao Zishan chuckled. "If you ladies want to work at my company, I would be more than happy to welcome you. And I definitely wouldn't shortchange you on compensation."

As the son of the tycoon Qiao Jinghao, Qiao Zishan was no fool. He had started his own company and was, in fact, in need of talent.

"Really?" Li Ping's eyes lit up. "Young Master Qiao, you have to keep your word."

"Of course. I never go back on my word."

Qiao Zishan's offer was tempting to Li Ping and the others.

Ye Tong, however, was still focused on Lin Mu. "Lin Mu, hurry up and accept Young Master Qiao's offer! This is such a rare opportunity."

Jiang Xia also pressed him, "Kid, you've hit the jackpot by catching Young Master Qiao's eye. Anyone else would have kowtowed in gratitude by now."

"Kowtowed in gratitude?" Lin Mu looked at Jiang Xia. "If you want to be someone's dog, that's your business. Don't drag me into it. I don't have a habit of groveling."

His words immediately made the expressions on Jiang Xia, Ye Tong, and the others darken. Was he saying they were grovelers?

"Lin Mu, what's that supposed to mean? Who are you calling a dog?" Li Ping glared at him furiously. His words were just too harsh.

Lin Mu shot her a disdainful look. "If you can't even understand human speech, I suppose you are only fit to be a dog."

"As for you..." Lin Mu's gaze fell on Jiang Xia, his voice dripping with contempt. "You're a loser I've already beaten. What right do you have to bark in my presence?"

The words struck Jiang Xia like a dagger. He glared at Lin Mu, about to erupt, but Lin Mu simply gave Song Wenrou a nod.

"I'm leaving."

After Lin Mu walked away, the remaining group exchanged awkward glances, their expressions unnatural.

"That Lin Mu is as arrogant as ever," Jiang Xia said, narrowing his eyes.

"Young Master Qiao..." Li Ping began, still fuming.

Qiao Zishan just chuckled. "Everyone has their own aspirations. Let's not bother with him. Come on, I've already booked a room at a fish restaurant by Bolan Riverside. Their fish head dish is excellent. Since we're here, we might as well give it a try."

He turned to Song Wenrou, his tone softening. "Wenrou, would you prefer to eat first, or have some fun on the river? If you want to go on the river, I can charter a speedboat right now."

"Wow, Young Master Qiao is amazing! Chartering a speedboat must cost a lot, right?" Li Ping exclaimed with envy.

"It's nothing, just tens of thousands. The important thing is that everyone has fun," Qiao Zishan said nonchalantly, though the pride on his face was impossible to miss.

"Tens of thousands? That's several months' salary for me," Gu Can laughed awkwardly.

"That's nothing," Qiao Zishan said with a dismissive wave, his eyes never leaving Song Wenrou. "In my company, our monthly team-building events easily cost over a hundred thousand. The annual company trip abroad costs enough to buy a small yacht."

His real target, of course, was Song Wenrou. Although the woman he most wanted was River City's number one beauty, Qin Luoli, a gentle woman like Song Wenrou was good for a bit of fun.

"Sigh, if a certain someone knew how well Young Master Qiao treats his people, I wonder if he'd be green with regret," one of the girls muttered.

Qiao Zishan looked at Song Wenrou again. "Wenrou, why don't we go have some fun on the river first?"

"Yes! The weather is beautiful today. It's rare we get to go out, so let's do it!" Ye Tong urged, her face full of excitement.

Song Wenrou just smiled faintly. "No, thank you. You all go ahead. I have something to do, so I'll be leaving now."

She turned and called out, "Lin Mu, wait for me!"

Watching Song Wenrou hurry after Lin Mu, the corners of Qiao Zishan's and the others' mouths twitched.

Chapter 200: The Azure Sea Surges, A Hundred Boats Compete in Current!

"You're not with them?" Lin Mu asked Song Wenrou, looking slightly confused.

Song Wenrou smoothed her hair, her tone ambiguous. "Ye Tong said she was in a bad mood and wanted to get some fresh air. I didn't expect anyone else to be here."

Lin Mu nodded.

Song Wenrou glanced at Lin Mu, blinked, and asked, "You're not mad, are you?"

Lin Mu gave a wry smile. "What would I be mad about?"

While Song Wenrou felt a wave of relief, she was also a little disappointed.

"How about we hang out together?" Song Wenrou stretched lazily, her graceful figure drawing the attention of many passersby. "I've lived here my whole life and have never once come here just for fun." She smiled lightly, indifferent to the strangers' gazes, as she was clearly used to it.

"I..." Lin Mu wanted to say that he wasn't here for fun but for a duel, but he couldn't very well tell Song Wenrou that.

"I know you're here to fight a duel," Song Wenrou said with a bright smile, seemingly reading his mind. "Don't worry, I'll keep my distance. I definitely won't get in your way. Master Lin wouldn't refuse me, would he?"

Only then did Lin Mu remember that Song Wenrou knew his identity.

"Alright. Since you put it that way, it would be heartless of me to refuse, wouldn't it?" Lin Mu then added a warning, "But there seem to be a lot of people here today, including many martial artists who are probably here to spectate. Once the fight starts, I might not be able to protect you."

Song Wenrou giggled. "To hear the renowned Master Lin say something like that... I wouldn't be afraid even if there was danger."

Lin Mu just shook his head and said no more. "Let's go. We can walk around for a bit."

Yun Xu hadn't arrived yet, so Lin Mu planned to walk around with Song Wenrou first, then find a safe place for her to wait.

"Okay." Song Wenrou's smile widened.

"Wenrou!" A voice called out from behind them.

It was Ye Tong and the others, who had caught up.

Lin Mu's brow furrowed. Song Wenrou's expression also soured, and she could only offer Lin Mu an apologetic smile.

"Wenrou, why did you run off so fast?" Ye Tong grabbed Song Wenrou as soon as she reached them, eyeing Lin Mu warily. "It's dangerous here. What if you run into a bad person?" Her words were clearly aimed at Lin Mu.

"Yeah, Wenrou, you should stick with us. If something happens, we can protect you," Qiao Zishan offered eagerly.

Just as Lin Mu was about to speak, a laugh came from nearby. "Are you all here to watch the fight, too?"

Everyone followed the sound and saw a small boat by the riverbank. On it stood an old man in traditional Chinese attire and a young woman in casual clothes. The woman was exceptionally beautiful, but her cool and distant temperament gave her the air of an ice queen. Though the old man had a full head of white hair and a weathered face, he was lean and vigorous, exuding vitality.

Lin Mu was slightly surprised. He could sense a formidable power from the old man, one that was even stronger than that of the Martial Alliance Hall Master, Lu Tong. The woman, on the other hand, was much weaker, likely a newcomer to the Martial Way. They're both martial artists.

It seems this fight has drawn quite a crowd. Lin Mu's eyes flickered.

The moment Qiao Zishan saw the cold beauty, his eyes lit up. Completely ignoring Song Wenrou, he stepped forward to greet the old man. "Sir, what did you mean just now about watching a fight?" Although he addressed the old man, his gaze remained fixed on the woman.

The woman shot him a look of utter disgust and pointedly turned her head away. A similar flash of revulsion crossed Song Wenrou's eyes. This Young Master Qiao really is a lecher.

Ye Tong also looked slightly embarrassed.

"Yeah, old sir, what do you mean by 'watch the battle'? Is someone fighting here? No wonder there are so many people today," Jiang Xia asked, his curiosity piqued.

The old man in the traditional suit glanced at them and shook his head. "It seems you're not from the Martial Arts World. You wouldn't understand even if I told you."

"The Martial Arts World? A Martial Artist?" Jiang Xia's heart stirred. He pointed at Lin Mu and said, "He's a Martial Artist too. Could you tell us about it?"

Lin Mu frowned slightly.

The old man looked at Lin Mu in surprise. Even the young woman cast a curious glance his way, but when she sensed not a trace of qi from him, she immediately lost interest. They're probably just making it up, she thought.

The old man clearly thought the same. "It's complicated to explain," he said. "But if you're brave enough, you can come and see for yourselves." He then smiled at Qiao Zishan. "Do you dare?" In his eyes, Qiao Zishan, dressed head-to-toe in designer brands, was clearly the leader of the group and held a much higher status than Lin Mu.

"What's there to be afraid of!" Seeing the disdain in the woman's eyes, Qiao Zishan promptly agreed and waved for everyone to get on the boat.

"What about you, young man? Aren't you coming?" the old man asked with a chuckle, seeing only Lin Mu and Song Wenrou left on the shore. He assumed Lin Mu was too scared.

"He probably doesn't dare," Li Ping sneered. "Let's not worry about him, Elder."

Lin Mu hesitated for a moment before saying, "I'm going. Why wouldn't I?" He had come specifically for this, after all. His hesitation was only because it was inconvenient to bring Song Wenrou. But since he didn't want to reveal his identity yet, he simply took her hand and boarded the boat.

The old man shook his head slightly. He had noted Lin Mu's hesitation but was old and shrewd enough not to comment on it.

"Hold on tight!" he yelled, then began rowing the boat directly toward the center of the river.

As they sat on the boat, watching the scenery recede, the others were filled with excitement and began chatting animatedly.

The vast blue river surged as a hundred boats vied for the lead!

Qiao Zishan was trying his best to get close to the woman. After he said something, she suddenly let out a snicker but quickly stifled it, her face becoming stern. "Elder," she then asked, "what's actually going on? Why are there so many people today? It's not a holiday."

While rowing the boat, the old man replied, "You all can stop calling me 'old man'. My surname is Jiang, so you can just call me Elder Jiang. This is my granddaughter, Jiang Mingyue."

"Haha, I didn't think I'd run into family here," Jiang Xia laughed. "My name is Jiang Ming."

Elder Jiang just smiled faintly without offering an explanation.

As they drew closer to the center of the river, they noticed more and more boats gathering around them, making it feel like a bustling market fair. Many of the people on the boats had an extraordinary air about them, and a lot of them looked quite similar to Elder Jiang.

Jiang Xia couldn't hold it in any longer. "What on earth is happening today? Why are there so many people?"

Staring toward the river's center with a fiery glint in his eyes, Elder Jiang explained, "Today, on the Bolan River, two great masters of the Martial Way will fight to the death. This is a grand event, the likes of which is seen only once a decade. All these people have come to witness it."

"Masters of the Martial Way? A duel to the death?" Qiao Zishan scoffed. "Elder Jiang, you must have read too many novels. In a society governed by law, who has duels to the death?" This guy has a screw loose, Lin Mu thought.

"Are they like the martial arts masters in the movies? The duel on Mount Hua?" Ye Tong's heart fluttered as she glanced at Lin Mu.

Elder Jiang nodded slightly. "Something like that."

Qiao Zishan laughed. "There are no real martial arts masters in this world. It's all just rumors."

Sitting beside Lin Mu, Song Wenrou gently shook her head. They're just a bunch of frogs in a well. The real deal is sitting right in front of them, but they have no idea. Soon enough, they'll see what a true miracle looks like.

At that thought, Song Wenrou's heart began to beat a little faster. Lin Mu, you have to win!