

War God 251

Chapter 251: Watch How I Take Your Dog's Head!

"Mr. Lin..." Liang Sheng's expression changed. Just as he was about to speak, Lin Mu interrupted, "Wait here for me. I'll be back soon."

"Master, let me go with you," Daoist Master Qing Yu said, unwilling to let Lin Mu face danger alone.

Lin Mu gave a faint smile. "What? Do you think they can do anything to me?"

Qing Yu fell silent. He knew his master's strength, of course. He figured that in this world, if his Master claimed to be number one, no one would dare claim to be number two.

"Alright!" Qing Yu agreed. "Master, please be careful."

Lin Mu nodded and said to Sang Tu, "Let's go. Take me to see Ma Liu." Since that Ma Liu doesn't know what's good for him, it's time to take his damned head.

Sang Tu hesitated. After all, Lord Liu's order was to bring all of them back. Bringing back only Lin Mu would surely enrage Lord Liu. He shook his head firmly. "No! Lord Liu's order is to bring all of you back! Not a single one less!"

Lin Mu smiled coolly. "That's not up to you." As soon as he finished speaking, he nodded at Qing Yu.

Qing Yu understood and took a step forward.

CRACK!

The hard ground centered on Qing Yu's foot spiderwebbed with countless fissures. The sight stunned Sang Tu and his men. This one-armed Daoist's strength is terrifying! Even though Daoist Master Qing Yu hadn't revealed a sliver of True Qi, this one move was enough to intimidate Sang Tu completely.

"Let's go. I'm in a hurry," Lin Mu said, turning and walking straight outside.

Sang Tu hesitated for a moment before scurrying to follow. As for Qing Yu and the others, I'll have men watch them. I'm sure they won't even manage to take a single step out of Xijiang!

"Watch them," Sang Tu said coldly to Zhao Hedong. "If even one of them leaves, I'll kill ten members of your Zhao Family! If they all leave, I will exterminate your entire Zhao Family!"

Zhao Hedong's face turned pale. The immense pressure from Daoist Master Qing Yu shattering the ground with a single stomp was still fresh in his mind. If they want to leave, I can't possibly stop them. That Daoist's cultivation level is so high that even if I sent out every expert from the Zhao Family, we still couldn't defeat him. However, the fear Lord Liu instilled in him was even greater, so Zhao Hedong could only grit his teeth and agree. "Lord Sang Tu, rest assured. I will do my best to keep them here."

Sang Tu nodded and left immediately.

"Listen well. If anything happens to my Master, this humble Daoist will personally pay Ma Liuye a visit and ask just how many heads he has to spare!" Daoist Master Qing Yu's words made Sang Tu shudder, and for a moment, the tattoos on his skin seemed to writhe as if they were alive.

But he said nothing more, simply turning and leaving with Lin Mu.

After Sang Tu and his men had left, Zhao Hedong gave an awkward smile. "Well, gentlemen, now that it's come to this, let's just hope that young man can make it out of this safely. Daoist Master, please rest assured. You will not suffer the slightest grievance here under my roof."

Liang Sheng merely snorted in response. If this fool knew Mr. Lin's true identity, would he still be saying such things? I wonder if he'll come to regret his words.

A commercial van pulled up to the entrance of Ma Liuye's villa. Several large, powerfully built men stepped out.

"Get out," Sang Tu said, standing by the open door. His expression was grim, but he didn't dare to act too forcefully. Daoist Master Qing Yu's parting words had simply put too much pressure on him. Furthermore, Lin Mu had been unnervingly calm throughout the entire journey. He even had the composure to admire the passing scenery, seemingly oblivious to the fact that this might be a one-way trip.

Besides, Sang Tu refused to believe that the Daoist, no matter how strong, could possibly be stronger than Lord Liu. Over the years, plenty of people had tried to oppose Lord Liu. In the end, they either met a miserable fate or vanished without a trace.

Lin Mu stepped out of the van, surveying the villa before him with a slight nod. Ma Liu really lives up to his reputation as the Earth Emperor of Thunder Mountain. You'd need significant status and power to build a private villa like this here. Too bad it's about to become a pile of rubble.

Stepping into the villa, Lin Mu finally met the so-called Earth Emperor of Thunder Mountain: Ma Liu. He was over sixty, with graying hair. At a glance, he was indistinguishable from the old men one might see playing chess or practicing forms in a park. No one would ever connect this man with the powerful Ma Liuye, who held sway over all of Thunder Mountain.

"Lord Liu, I've brought him," Sang Tu said respectfully as he approached Ma Liu's side.

Ma Liu looked up from his newspaper, revealing a pair of sharp, triangular eyes. His gaze landed on Lin Mu, his eyes narrowing as a dangerous light flickered within them.

"So, you're the one who destroyed my dogfighting den?" Ma Liu's voice was hoarse, betraying no anger or joy. However, those who knew him well understood that this hoarseness was a prelude to murder.

"A filthy place like that, unfit to see the light of day, deserved to be destroyed." Lin Mu smiled, strolled forward, and sat down on the sofa directly across from Ma Liu. "You must be Ma Liu?"

Lin Mu's tone was casual, but a sharp, dangerous smile curved his lips. So this is the man who created that den. A man who toys with human lives, using people as tools to make money. Absolutely inhuman, with no moral bottom line.

"Audacious!" Enraged that Lin Mu dared to sit, Sang Tu was about to lunge forward.

Ma Liu raised a hand to stop him. He looked at Lin Mu with a meaningful expression and let out a low chuckle. "It's been many years since anyone dared to be so insolent in my presence. You're the first, and you will certainly be the last."

The smile vanished from Ma Liu's face, replaced by pure murderous intent. "Was it you who said you were coming to take my head?"

Lin Mu nodded. "That's right. It was me." He had indeed said as much yesterday. Ma Liu knew now, though clearly, the threat had not yet been carried out.

"You've got guts." Ma Liu shifted in his seat. "I'm sitting right here. I'd like to see just how you plan to take my head."

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

As soon as Ma Liu finished speaking, the hall was suddenly flooded with men brandishing weapons. They wore black headscarves, and their eyes were filled with killing intent. The weapons in their hands were all the same: the distinctive Miao Knives from Thunder Mountain, renowned for their toughness and sharpness, capable of cleaving the fiercest of beasts in two with a single strike.

Ma Liu leisurely picked up a cigar, lit it, and exhaled a cloud of smoke. "Now, let's see what you're going to use to take my head."

Ma Liu had been surprised when Sang Tu called to say Lin Mu was coming alone, but he hadn't cared in the slightest—not even about the powerful one-armed Daoist Sang Tu had mentioned. He had already dispatched men to Xijiang to kill them all. Destroy something that belongs to me, Lord Ma Liu, and expect to leave Southern Sky alive? What a joke! Do I have no face to save?

Being cautious by nature, Ma Liu wouldn't be careless even if Lin Mu seemed like an ordinary person, which was why he had made these preparations in advance. These men were his most capable and fearless warriors. Using them against a mere youth was, frankly, using a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Lin Mu glanced at the men surrounding him and smiled. He slowly rose to his feet. "It's been a while since I got to stretch my legs. My hands are getting a bit itchy." He looked at Ma Liu. "Since that's the case, open your dog's eyes wide and watch closely how I take your dog's head!"

With those words, Lin Mu advanced. Chapter 252: Just One Strike!

"Ignorant fool!" Ma Liu sneered. "Tear off his limbs for me!"

He didn't plan to kill Lin Mu outright. First, he would chop off Lin Mu's limbs, whittling him down to a human torso. Then, he would toss him into a gu pot and let him experience a fate worse than death.

"Kill!"

Upon Ma Liu's command, several men rushed toward Lin Mu with their blades raised.

WHOOSH!

The blades whistled through the air, carrying a fierce, murderous aura. The Miao man who led the charge had a cold, murderous glint in his eyes. Clearly, killing was second nature to them, something they did without feeling. For them, taking a life was as simple as slaughtering a chicken or a sheep.

Lord Liu had ordered them not to kill, so this strike was aimed at Lin Mu's shoulder. If it landed, it would definitely take off his entire arm.

"Too slow."

However, faced with such a swift attack, Lin Mu simply shook his head. He sidestepped, easily dodging the man's blade. Before his opponent could even react, Lin Mu's arm shot out and seized the man's wrist. With a sharp pull, Lin Mu slammed his shoulder into his attacker's.

CRACK!

An excruciating pain instantly shot through the Miao man's body. Just as he was about to scream, he was already flying through the air.

THUMP!

The Miao man landed hard on the ground, bleeding from his eyes, nose, and mouth. He was already dead. The Miao Knife he had been holding was now held effortlessly in Lin Mu's hand.

Although the Miao Knife was not exclusive to the Miao People, it was revered as a weapon of their kin. Legend had it that Chi You, the leader of the ancient Tribal Alliance of the Three Miao and Nine Li, carried a Miao Knife, which is why it was later known as the "Ancestor of the Miao Knives."

This type of weapon had a long, exceedingly sharp blade. The Miao Knives used by Ma Liuye and his men varied in length. The long ones measured about five feet, while the short ones were around a foot and a half. But they all shared the same design: the blade curved outwards, and the spine of the blade followed the curve of the edge. Besides two blood grooves on either side, the blades were also etched with two wavy, nail-print-like patterns. This design not only made the Miao Knife sharper but also ensured that any wound it inflicted would bleed ceaselessly.

Lin Mu only needed a single glance to recognize that this blade was based on the improved design by the famous anti-pirate general, Qi Jiguang. Examining the Miao Knife in his hand, Lin Mu's lips curled into a faint smile.

"A good blade!"

The knife felt slightly heavy in his hand, but Lin Mu barely noticed. To him, it was as light as a feather.

After I reach Foundation Establishment, I'll be able to refine my own life-bound Flying Sword. A trace of anticipation flickered in Lin Mu's heart. But for now, I'd better deal with these pests first.

As the thought settled in his mind, he swung the Miao Knife.

CLANG!

A crisp sound echoed as the Miao Knife parried an assailant's attack. Seeing Lin Mu's impossibly swift response, the Miao man's expression changed slightly. Just as he was about to switch his angle of attack, a sharp, dark blur flashed before his eyes.

PFFT! The sharp blade effortlessly sliced open his throat, and blood gushed out. The Miao man's eyes bulged. He hurriedly clutched his throat as his Miao Knife clattered to the ground. He collapsed, dead beyond any doubt.

With two men killed in an instant, the entire hall fell into a brief, stunned silence. Lin Mu, however, remained calm, his expression as impassive as if he had merely stepped on two ants.

"What are you morons staring at? Kill him for me!"

Seeing Lin Mu's skill, even Ma Liu was momentarily shocked. But what storm haven't I weathered? How could I be scared by such a small scene? Seeing his subordinates frozen in a daze, he became furious.

"Kill!"

A few of the Miao People exchanged glances and then charged at Lin Mu together, their Miao Knives slashing out quickly.

"Heh." Lin Mu chuckled, twisting his wrist.

The Miao Knife traced a graceful yet bloody arc through the air.

CLING! CLANG! CLANG!

A series of sparks flew as the Miao People suddenly felt their weapons lighten. Lin Mu had sliced a section clean off their Miao Knives. At the same time, Lin Mu's wrist flicked again.

SHLICK! SHLICK! SHLICK!

With the sickening sound of a blade slicing through flesh, fresh blood sprayed from the chests of several Miao People.

THUD! THUD! THUD!

Several more bodies fell into a growing pool of blood, their eyes wide open in death. A metallic scent began to permeate the hall.

GULP!

Throats bobbed as everyone instinctively took a step back. They were no strangers to killing; they had taken many lives themselves. But compared to Lin Mu's slaughter, they felt like innocent little lambs.

The expression on his face as he killed... Calm. Indifferent. What a terrifying man. How many people must he have killed to remain so emotionally detached?

Ma Liu's brows furrowed tightly. He realized he had misjudged the situation completely. This seemingly ordinary young man is actually a fearsome god of death. He must not be spared! He absolutely cannot be allowed to leave this place alive!

Ma Liu made a swift decision.

"Kill him! I don't care if he's alive or dead!"

He no longer planned to turn Lin Mu into a human torso. Now, he just wanted Lin Mu dead.

"Kill!"

The Miao warriors' faces twisted into ferocious expressions as they charged at Lin Mu again. Their companions had been no match for Lin Mu because they were trying to take him alive, which held them back. But now that Lord Liu had ordered them to kill, things would be much simpler!

Lin Mu's expression did not change in the slightest. With one hand behind his back and the other holding the knife, he strode forward leisurely. With each step he took, another man died wretchedly under his blade. With his current Cultivation Level, Lin Mu could slaughter everyone present with just the knife, even without using his spiritual power.

As time passed, Ma Liu realized something was terribly wrong. More and more of his men were dying, and fewer and fewer were left standing. Every man who fell was killed with a single strike. The living were pale-faced, their will to fight completely gone.

Lin Mu took another step forward.

The remaining men, their faces filled with terror, retreated in unison. One of them couldn't even hold his blade steady, and it clattered to the floor.

"Sang Tu, kill him!" Ma Liu snarled through clenched teeth, his face as dark as water. "If he doesn't die, you will!"

Sang Tu's expression was grave as he slowly stepped forward. As he moved, the dragon tattoos on his body seemed to writhe to life, pulsing with a violent aura. He came to a stop in front of Lin Mu and slowly drew the Miao Knife from his waist.

"Kid, you're full of surprises," Sang Tu said solemnly, twisting his neck. "Honestly, if I had met you two years ago, I would've turned tail and run. But now..."

BOOM!

An astonishing aura burst forth from Sang Tu as a black fog began to emanate from his body.

Releasing True Qi externally? Lin Mu raised an eyebrow but immediately sensed something was amiss.

"Ah, so this is True Qi cultivated through witchcraft and gu-poison," Lin Mu mused with a smile. "It might be enough to scare ordinary people, but in front of me... it's just a matter of one slash."

Enraged, Sang Tu shouted, "Such arrogance! This is—"

SWISH!

Before he could finish his sentence, a flash of blade light passed by. Sang Tu suddenly felt a sharp pain in his neck. He instinctively looked down.

THUD.

A head promptly fell to the ground as blood sprayed from the neck.

The formidable Sang Tu, Ma Liu's top warrior, was decapitated before he could even finish speaking? And what was that glow just now? Blade aura? Does such a thing really exist in this world?

At the sight of Sang Tu's corpse, the remaining men screamed, dropped their weapons, and scrambled for the exit. But they had only taken a few steps before a streak of blade light whistled through the air, striking them all down.

And so, only Ma Liu was left standing in the hall.

THUD.

Staring at the bodies strewn across the floor and the young man standing with the knife, a pale-faced Ma Liu immediately fell to his knees.

"Young man, it was my fault for not recognizing Mt. Taishan! Don't kill me! I can give you anything you want!" Ma Liu pleaded, terrified. This person was too fierce, too strong! He killed over a hundred of my men in just a few minutes, leaving no one alive!

"I have a lot of money, and numerous women, territories, and properties! I can give them all to you! Just please, don't kill me!"

The current Ma Liu, desperate and terrified, bore no resemblance to Thunder Mountain's once-mighty figure.

"For a person like you, living is a waste of resources," Lin Mu said flatly. "You're better off dead." As he spoke, his knife swept through the air.

"No! If you kill me, the High Priest will definitely—"

Before Ma Liu could finish, his head soared into the air.

Catching Ma Liu's head in his hand, Lin Mu looked at the fear and despair frozen on the man's face and said indifferently, "Taking your dog's life wasn't as hard as I imagined."

"It only took one strike."

Chapter 253: Leave it to me!

「Xijiang Town.」

「Forgotten River Hall.」

"Boss Liang, things have come to this. There's no use overthinking it," Zhao Hedong said. He had been ordered to keep a close eye on Liang Sheng and the others, so he naturally couldn't let them leave. Thus, he found excuses to stay and frequently engaged Liang Sheng in conversation.

Zhao Hedong's son, Zhao Ping, sat to the side, his gaze repeatedly falling upon Liang Shanshan.

A strange light flashed in Zhao Ping's eyes. Liang Shanshan was beautiful and had a fine figure; in his eyes, she was like a rosebud ready to bloom. Her unique, cultured temperament, cultivated from a young age, made Zhao Ping's heart itch with desire. He had seen his fair share of beautiful women. Even the women of Thunder Mountain possessed a natural, exotic charm, but they lacked Liang Shanshan's gentle grace.

From the moment he first laid eyes on Liang Shanshan, Zhao Ping had set his sights on her. And there was indeed a deeper meaning behind Zhao Hedong's decision to stay.

"Boss Liang, although we are business partners, I have always placed the utmost trust in your character." Zhao Hedong smiled, then his tone shifted. "This time, you've provoked Lord Liu. It won't be easy for you to leave Southern Sky alive."

Liang Sheng replied indifferently, "That is no concern of Patriarch Zhao's."

He was utterly disappointed with Zhao Hedong's attitude and had no desire to speak with him further.

Zhao Hedong gave a bitter smile, his voice tinged with grievance. "Boss Liang, if you blame me for this, I have nothing to say. But Lord Liu is a major figure in both Thunder Mountain and all of Southern Sky. My Zhao Family's humble enterprise cannot withstand his wrath."

Zhao Hedong glanced around before lowering his voice. "And to be frank, everyone in Southern Sky knows that Lord Liu only has his current status because he's backed by a powerful figure. You killed his men and destroyed his foundation. It would be strange if he weren't furious."

Liang Sheng snorted. "You're afraid of this Ma Liu, but you aren't afraid that Mr. Lin will punish your Zhao Family when he returns?"

What powerful figure? In the presence of the Venerable Master, they're less than nothing!

Zhao Ping couldn't help but scoff. "This Mr. Lin you speak of is that kid who left with Lord Sang Tu, right? Let me tell you, he probably isn't coming back. After provoking Lord Liu, not even a god could save him!"

Zhao Ping glanced at the shifting expression on Liang Shanshan's face, a grim light flickering in his own eyes.

"You can't possibly imagine Lord Liu's status in Thunder Mountain. If I were you, I wouldn't be protecting that man. Thinking he can come back alive? You're dreaming!"

Liang Shanshan clenched her hands together, worry written plainly on her face.

That damned fool, playing the hero! Daoist Master Qing Yu is so powerful, yet he insisted on going alone.

As her mind raced, she began to blame herself. This was all my fault. If I hadn't taught Huang San a lesson, none of this would have happened. The more she thought about it, the more guilty she felt.

Zhao Hedong glanced at Liang Shanshan. "Boss Liang, I'm not trying to be an alarmist, but Lord Liu is known for eradicating his enemies, root and stem. If this isn't handled properly, you could all be implicated."

Liang Sheng's brow rose. "Patriarch Zhao, if you have something to say, say it directly. Don't beat around the bush."

Zhao Hedong burst out laughing. "Boss Liang is a straightforward man! In that case, I'll be blunt." Pointing at his son, Zhao Hedong said, "My son, Zhao Ping, has already been confirmed as the next head of the Zhao Family. The foundation of Forgotten River Hall will be his someday."

At his side, Zhao Ping puffed out his chest, a smug and proud expression on his face.

Zhao Hedong's eyes filled with satisfaction as he looked at his son. "Little Ping has been in business with me since he was young. He even spent a few years in a big city to learn and gain experience, and he's become much more mature and steady. I'm very confident in handing Forgotten River Hall over to him."

He continued, "To be honest, after cooperating with your Liang Family for so long, I can't just stand by and watch you fall into danger. Even if you're willing to take that risk, would you want your daughter to suffer with you?"

Liang Sheng finally understood. That bastard Zhao Hedong is after my daughter.

Pathetic. They think everything is so simple. As long as Mr. Lin is here, there is no problem.

"I see your daughter and my Little Ping are about the same age. Why don't we unite our families through marriage?" Zhao Hedong finally showed his true colors, smiling as he spoke. "Rest assured, as long as you're willing to marry your daughter into my Zhao Family, I can guarantee your safety."

He was confident that if he pleaded for them, Lord Liu would give him face. After all, the Zhao Family was not without its own backers. Besides, the main culprit was probably already dead. Lord Liu wouldn't care about letting Liang Sheng go.

"I refuse!"

Before Liang Sheng could even speak, Liang Shanshan shot to her feet. She glared at Zhao Ping, her pretty face flushed with anger. "I would rather die than marry a man like him!"

She remembered how arrogant Zhao Ping had been when he arrived with Sang Tu and the others. And now this man wanted to force her into marriage? In his dreams!

"In matters of marriage, the parents' command and the matchmaker's word are final. Your opposition is futile," Zhao Ping chuckled. "Don't worry, I'll treat you well in the future." His words made it sound as if Liang Shanshan were already his woman.

"Patriarch Zhao, your son certainly takes after you," Liang Sheng suddenly said with a laugh.

As if deaf to the sarcasm in Liang Sheng's tone, Zhao Hedong laughed heartily. "Indeed! Of all my sons, Little Ping is the most like me."

Liang Sheng nodded, his words turning cold. "No wonder he's so arrogant."

"Boss Liang, what's that supposed to mean?" Zhao Hedong's expression finally changed.

"What I mean is..." Liang Sheng suddenly stood up and faced Zhao Hedong. "I haven't agreed to marry my daughter to anyone, yet your son already considers her his property! What, just because the Zhao Family has a backer, you think you can take advantage of someone in a vulnerable position?"

The moment Liang Sheng finished speaking, both Zhao Hedong and Zhao Ping rose to their feet.

"So, Boss Liang," Zhao Hedong said, his face turning cold, "you're refusing?"

"Even if we die here in Southern Sky, my daughter will not marry into the Zhao Family. The two of you can forget about it!" Liang Sheng declared, his tone resolute.

"Dad..." Liang Shanshan's eyes reddened, and her heart swelled with emotion.

"Don't be afraid, daughter. As long as I'm here, no one can force you to do anything you don't want to do!" Liang Sheng said, pulling his daughter behind him as he stared down Zhao Hedong and his son.

"Fine, fine!" Zhao Hedong sneered. "It seems you've chosen the hard way! Lord Sang Mu, come in."

A group of men suddenly barged in from outside. Leading them was a bald, burly man with a fierce expression, wielding a five-foot Miao Knife. He bore some resemblance to Sang Tu; this was Sang Tu's younger brother, Sang Mu.

"Boss Zhao, I told you. Kind words are useless on these people," Sang Mu remarked with a strange laugh. "Sometimes, you need to use other methods."

Sang Mu pointed his Miao Knife at Liang Sheng and Qing Yu Daoist, a cruel grin on his face. "Leave the woman. Kill the two men!"

As soon as he spoke, the dozen or so burly Miao men behind him surged forward, raising their blades to strike at Liang Sheng.

"Heh. A few small fry dare to act so presumptuously before me!"

Just as Liang Sheng was about to make a move, Qing Yu Daoist, who had been sitting to the side drinking tea, suddenly stood up and strode forward to meet the charge.

"Boss Liang, stand back. Leave these men to me."

Before Liang Sheng could even reply, the scene that unfolded before him left him utterly shocked, his mouth hanging agape.

Chapter 254: Heavenly Punishment Blade!

"Ghk..."

Sang Mu clutched at his neck, but blood sprayed out from between his fingers, impossible to stop. He looked at Qing Yu Daoist in terror, wanting to say something, but as soon as he opened his mouth, a gush of blood flowed out.

With a thud, Sang Mu collapsed to the ground, his breath gradually fading.

Qing Yu turned, sat back down in his chair, and picked up his teacup.

Yes, the tea was still warm.

But the corpse on the ground was already growing cold.

Looking at the many corpses on the floor, Zhao Hedong and his son Zhao Ping turned pale, their bodies drenched in cold sweat.

Zhao Ping gulped, feeling his limbs go weak, barely able to remain standing.

Lord Liu's top warrior, Sang Tu's own brother, is dead? And killed with a single slash to the throat?

Zhao Hedong and Zhao Ping looked at each other, both seeing a hint of terror in the other's eyes. In that moment, Qing Yu Daoist had become a demon in their eyes. This supposedly benevolent Daoist had, in an instant, slaughtered all the men sent by Lord Liu.

The most terrifying part wasn't that Sang Mu himself was a martial arts expert, but the demeanor with which Qing Yu Daoist killed. His expression remained placid the entire time; he even smiled as he killed.

How many people must one kill to reach such a state?

RETCH!

Zhao Ping could no longer hold it in and ran to the side to vomit.

Zhao Hedong wasn't much better off. As the Family Head of the Zhao Family, he had seen his share of trials and tribulations, but even he was deeply shaken. A short while ago, Qing Yu Daoist's display of power had made him think the man was skilled, but not overwhelmingly so. Therefore, while he had remained respectful, it was only because he hoped Liang Sheng would agree to the marriage between his son and their daughter.

But he had never expected Qing Yu Daoist to be so formidable.

Over a dozen lives, snuffed out in a matter of minutes.

If those had been members of his Zhao Family... Zhao Hedong dared not let the thought continue.

It wasn't just him; Liang Sheng was also watching Daoist Master Qing Yu in shock. He had suspected that Daoist Master Qing Yu was an incredibly terrifying expert, but no matter how he racked his brain, he could never have imagined that Daoist Master Qing Yu was even more formidable than he had believed. At this thought, Liang Sheng was overjoyed. With Daoist Master Qing Yu here, what did he have to worry about?

But the most shocked of all was Liang Shanshan. This esteemed Daoist was so powerful, yet in front of Lin Mu, he called him 'Master' and behaved with the utmost deference.

Then... Lin Mu's strength, or perhaps his identity... could it be...?

It was a terrifying thought, and Liang Shanshan dared not ponder it further.

All she knew was that she wouldn't have to marry Zhao Ping. Her dad wouldn't die. And Lin Mu probably wouldn't die either! That was enough!

Therefore, even though the scene was bloody, Liang Shanshan wasn't frightened. Instead, she felt a profound sense of catharsis.

After finishing his work, Qing Yu sat silently in his chair, sipping his tea. His expression was indifferent, a faint smile on his face. It was as if he hadn't been the one killing people just moments before.

Liang Sheng suppressed his shock, taking a deep breath to compose himself before turning to Zhao Hedong. "Patriarch Zhao, do you still wish for my daughter to marry your son?"

"I wouldn't dare! I wouldn't dare!" Zhao Hedong frantically shook his head. "I was blind before and failed to recognize Taishan, causing Brother Liang this misunderstanding. I am here to apologize."

Having said this, Zhao Hedong bowed with clasped hands to Liang Sheng and then kicked his son, who was still retching. "Hurry up and apologize to your Uncle Liang!"

"Oh, oh, Liang... Uncle Liang, I was wrong." At this moment, Zhao Ping was stripped of his earlier pride and confidence, appearing utterly dispirited and unable to speak clearly.

"And Miss Liang, we were in the wrong earlier. We must have frightened you, haven't we?"

A sycophantic smile spread across Zhao Hedong's face as he hurriedly had someone bring over several boxes. Inside one was a bracelet of pure, vibrant green jade that was clearly priceless.

"Miss Liang, this is a bracelet I acquired years ago. Since I have no daughter, please accept it as a gift. I hope you will accept it."

The words cost him dearly. This bracelet was worth a fortune. Zhao Hedong had spent several hundred thousand to obtain it, even offending its original owner in the process. But if he couldn't appease Liang Shanshan's anger, and she asked that Daoist to kill him and his son, then all the wealth in the world wouldn't matter if he was dead.

Liang Sheng glanced at it and said to Liang Shanshan, "Shanshan, take it."

"Dad... this..." Liang Shanshan instinctively wanted to refuse. Even though she liked the bracelet, she knew that accepting gifts could lead to obligations. If the Zhao Family made more unreasonable requests, would she have to agree or refuse?

"It's fine. Since it's a heartfelt gift from Patriarch Zhao, there's no harm in accepting it," Liang Sheng said, his face all smiles.

Since he had already decided to sever ties with the Zhao Family, what was the harm in taking something from them? Moreover, he could see that his daughter liked the bracelet. Consider it interest collected on the back of Daoist Master Qing Yu's reputation.

"Exactly, Miss Liang! If you don't accept, my son and I will have no peace of mind," Zhao Hedong urged, relieved that Liang Sheng had spoken. He now saw it as simply spending money to avert a disaster.

"Alright, then." Liang Shanshan truly did like the bracelet, so she accepted it.

"Thank you, Mr. Zhao," Liang Shanshan remembered to say.

"Of course, of course."

Zhao Hedong then opened the other two boxes. "This is a wild ginseng root, nearly a hundred years old. It's a treasured heirloom of my Zhao Family. Brother Liang, you were injured just now. Please accept this for your recovery."

A century-old wild ginseng was indeed a rare find, and Liang Sheng accepted it without hesitation.

"And this..."

Finally, Zhao Hedong looked at the last box, hesitating. But in the end, he gritted his teeth and opened it. Inside was a long weapon, neither quite a saber nor quite a sword.

Zhao Hedong solemnly picked up the blade, walked over to Qing Yu Daoist, and dropped to his knees with a thud. He presented the weapon with both hands. "Senior, the fault is mine. I don't dare pray for your forgiveness. I only hope that you will accept this blade and spare my Zhao Family."

This blade was the ancestral treasure of the Zhao Family, normally enshrined in their ancestral hall. He had brought it out today only for fear that Qing Yu Daoist, in his anger, might annihilate the entire Zhao Family.

Qing Yu Daoist, who had been silently sipping his tea, saw the blade and his expression changed instantly.

"The Heavenly Punishment Blade!"

Daoist Master Qing Yu stood up, examining the blade before him.

"You recognize this blade, Daoist Master?" Zhao Hedong asked, startled. He quickly added, "Since you recognize it, it proves you are fated to have it. Please, the blade is yours."

"Very well. This blade and I do indeed share some fate. I will accept it." Qing Yu Daoist took the Heavenly Punishment Blade and drew it an inch from its scabbard.

CLANG!

A sharp glint of light filled the hall. Zhao Hedong was thrown back by the blade's aura, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood.

"It truly is the Heavenly Punishment Blade!"

Qing Yu Daoist quickly sheathed the blade and said to Zhao Hedong, "Having accepted this blade, I now owe your Zhao Family a favor."

Zhao Hedong, who had been so reluctant to part with it, was suddenly overjoyed upon hearing this.

"Thank you, Daoist Master!"

Chapter 255: Take me as your master, I'll grant you the law of fate!

"Heavenly Punishment Blade?"

Lin Mu looked at the long blade on the table, his expression pensive. "Does this blade have an origin story?"

Dusk had fallen by the time Lin Mu returned to Forgotten River Hall. Seeing Lin Mu's return, Liang Sheng and his daughter were naturally filled with a mix of surprise and joy. They were surprised that Lin Mu had returned safe and sound, as though he had merely gone out for a stroll. Their joy came from the fact that Lin Mu was unharmed, which greatly relieved them both.

Zhao Hedong, in particular, was shocked and felt even more fortunate about his earlier decision. Indeed, apart from Liang Sheng and his daughter, it was Mr. Lin and Daoist Master Qing Yu who were the most unfathomable, their origins clearly extraordinary.

Qing Yu gazed at the Heavenly Punishment Blade, his expression somewhat despondent. He began to explain slowly, "In the Ancient Era, Chiyou, the leader of the Jiuli Tribe, was defeated and slain by the Yellow Emperor in the Battle of Zhulu. His people dispersed, later migrating to places like the Southern Sky."

"Although Chiyou was slain and his body buried in Zhulu County, his weapon, Tiger Soul, disappeared without a trace."

Liang Sheng exclaimed, "Daoist Master, are you saying this Heavenly Punishment Blade is Great God Chiyou's weapon, Tiger Soul?"

He couldn't help but be astonished. Even though Chiyou was a mythical figure shrouded in mystery, historical texts did reference his existence. His weapon, Tiger Soul, was a divine blade he had personally forged by fusing his mount, a battle tiger, with an object from beyond the heavens. If the blade before him was indeed the legendary Tiger Soul, Liang Sheng felt his life would be complete. An ordinary person might never even see such a thing, yet he had secretly touched it just a moment ago.

Daoist Master Qing Yu gave a wry smile. "You're overthinking things. How could a mortal like me possess a divine weapon like Tiger Soul?"

"Legend says that one night during the war between Great God Chiyou and the Yellow Emperor, Chiyou saw something fall from the sky. He quickly gave chase and discovered it was an unknown demonic beast. The beast was ferocious and brutal, devouring any human it encountered without a trace. Chiyou couldn't help but think that if he could refine this beast into a weapon, its power would surely be immense."

"Chiyou's mount, the battle tiger, thought its master was in danger and rushed to protect him. However, Chiyou, afraid of damaging his potential future weapon, instead merged the battle tiger and the demonic beast into one, naming it Tiger Soul."

Even though it was just a legend, the group listened with rapt attention.

Daoist Master Qing Yu caressed the Heavenly Punishment Blade and continued, "After Chiyou's defeat, the whereabouts of Tiger Soul became unknown. However, rumors claimed the blade had shattered into countless pieces during the great battle, and its meteoritic iron dispersed into numerous fragments, vanishing in all directions."

"According to the oral tradition passed down by Chiyou's direct descendants, they collected the fragments of the Tiger Soul blade and used them to forge several divine weapons. This Heavenly Punishment Blade is one of them."

As soon as Qing Yu finished, Liang Sheng's eyes widened as he stared at him. "Daoist Master, are you saying this Heavenly Punishment Blade was forged using fragments of the Tiger Soul blade?"

"Indeed," Qing Yu explained. "Great God Chiyou was adept at forging weapons. Throughout his life, he crafted countless famous divine weapons. Even after being slain by the Yellow Emperor, the Yellow Emperor still referred to him as the 'Master of Arms'!"

Liang Shanshan's beautiful eyes widened as she asked, "Daoist Master, if this is a weapon belonging to Chiyou's direct descendants, how do you know about it?"

"Shanshan, do not be impolite," Liang Sheng quickly scolded his daughter with a glare, afraid that Daoist Master Qing Yu might be displeased.

However, Lin Mu seemed to have a faint guess. Just as I thought.

Qing Yu gave a bitter smile and said, "To be honest, before I took up the monastic life, my secular surname was Li."

The Li surname, according to tradition, belongs to the direct descendants of Chiyou. With this revelation, the group's doubts were dispelled. No wonder Daoist Master Qing Yu had recognized the Heavenly Punishment Blade at a glance.

"I've heard that Chiyou was once an equal match for the Yellow Emperor. The reason for his defeat was that his weapon, Tiger Soul, turned on its master, giving the Yellow Emperor an opportunity to kill him," Lin Mu said, eyeing the Heavenly Punishment Blade with a flicker in his gaze.

With a heavy sigh, Qing Yu confirmed, "That is indeed true. After Great God Chiyou forged the divine weapon Tiger Soul, he discovered its tremendous ferocity in his battle against the Yellow Emperor. The two fought more and more valiantly as the land became soaked in blood. However, Tiger Soul was not only a lethal weapon against his enemies, but it could also harm its owner. This weakness, combined with the Yellow Emperor's assault, led to Chiyou's defeat and death."

As he spoke of these recorded events, Qing Yu's face was filled with regret. The ways of the world were often so strange. In those years, Great God Chiyou had forged Tiger Soul by combining his battle tiger with celestial iron, and while it gave him a divine weapon, he was ultimately undone by its backlash. It really was a matter of timing and fate.

"No wonder," Lin Mu muttered softly to himself.

"No wonder what?" Liang Shanshan's ears were sharp, and she had caught his words.

Lin Mu smiled. "Qing Yu, this blade is still heavy with malevolent energy. If you wish to use it, it must first be tempered."

Qing Yu was startled; he hadn't noticed.

After a moment's thought, Lin Mu said, "Never mind. I'll teach you a refinement technique now. After some time, the malevolent energy within the blade will naturally dissipate."

Qing Yu was overjoyed. "Thank you, Master."

Lin Mu shook his head. "It's what you've earned."

"Then, Mr. Lin, we'll take our leave," Liang Sheng said, preparing to exit.

"Why? I want to watch," Liang Shanshan said, not understanding.

Liang Sheng grabbed his daughter and said angrily, "How can you be so thoughtless, child? Mr. Lin is about to pass on a technique. Is that something an outsider should watch?"

"Pass on a technique?" Liang Shanshan looked suspiciously at Lin Mu. Does this guy really possess some profound martial prowess?

"There's no need," Lin Mu said, shaking his head. "This will be quick. Qing Yu, come here."

Qing Yu hurriedly approached Lin Mu and knelt respectfully.

Liang Shanshan watched this scene, somewhat shocked. Daoist Master Qing Yu is actually kneeling to this Lin Mu guy? Yet, Qing Yu did so with perfect poise.

Lin Mu closed his eyes slightly and searched his mind. Within a few seconds, he located a suitable refinement technique. Extending his finger, he touched it to the center of Qing Yu's brow.

Qing Yu felt his head swell as a tide of memories washed over him. He suddenly opened his eyes, his face filled with utter shock. The memory that had just flooded his mind was composed of countless tiny golden characters, each as fine as a gnat, yet every single one contained a wondrous power.

"This is the Divine Weapon Tempering Technique. It can refine any weapon in the world and make it recognize its master," Lin Mu stated calmly.

"Thank you, Master!" Qing Yu kowtowed, pressing his forehead to the ground.

Seeing this, a thought suddenly struck Lin Mu. "Qing Yu, would you be willing to become my disciple?"

As soon as he spoke, not only was Qing Yu stunned, but Liang Shanshan was also staring at Lin Mu, dumbfounded. He just casually touched the Daoist Master and that counts as passing on a technique? Now he wants to take him as a disciple? Is he even qualified?

However, Qing Yu's expression was ecstatic as he exclaimed, "I am willing! I am willing!"

He then kowtowed three times with loud thuds.

"Disciple Qing Yu pays respect to Master!"

Lin Mu nodded. "Since you have taken me as your master, I shall pass on to you another art, the 'Heavenly Emperor Nine Steps'!"

"This technique must not be revealed to outsiders, or it will bring a lethal disaster upon you!"

Qing Yu felt an even more massive surge of memory flood his mind. In his mind's eye stood a towering Dharma Body, a figure that touched the heavens and stood firm on the earth, demonstrating profound divine skills.

"Disciple Qing Yu shall heed Master's command!"

Chapter 256: Shengmiao Forbidden Land!

At the side, Liang Shanshan and her father were both dumbfounded.

That's it? Just a casual tap or two and the technique was successfully transmitted?

Liang Shanshan even mimicked Lin Mu's actions, pointing her fingers in the air a couple of times, only to find...

Is this a joke? But judging by the senior Taoist's expression, he seems serious. Could Lin Mu really be some kind of Martial Way master? No, that can't be right.

Although Liang Shanshan was not a Martial Artist, she had heard from her family's elders that when Martial Artists taught the Martial Way, they always started with the fundamentals. Who had ever heard of transmitting a technique just by poking someone twice with a finger?

However, Liang Sheng's face was solemn.

"A Grandmaster's methods are like those of an Immortal!"

Hearing her father's words, Liang Shanshan shuddered.

"Grand... Grandmaster??"

She widened her beautiful eyes at Lin Mu. This guy is a Grandmaster? You've got to be kidding me. How old is he?

Lin Mu paid no mind to the thoughts of the Liang father and daughter. He had only accepted Qing Yu as a disciple because Qing Yu was loyal and handled his tasks reliably. With Qing Yu around, many matters could be entrusted to him in the future.

Lin Mu said, "Qing Yu, now that you have entered my tutelage, there is no need to use your Taoist name. Use your former secular name."

Qing Yu's expression stiffened. "Master, there's no need for that, is there?"

Lin Mu looked at him, puzzled.

A shiver went through Qing Yu's heart, and he quickly said, "This disciple will heed Master's wishes."

Taking on a disciple also means telling him what name to use? Liang Shanshan wondered. Nevertheless, her curiosity got the better of her, and she asked, "Senior Taoist, what is your secular name?"

Qing Yu replied with some embarrassment, "Li Xiaotian."

Liang Shanshan: "..."

In the next moment, the room filled with Liang Shanshan's boisterous laughter.

Even Lin Mu couldn't help but crack a small smile.

The name does have a certain archaic charm to it.

Qing Yu—no, Li Xiaotian, to be precise—rubbed his hands together and said, "My apologies, I've made myself a laughingstock."

"Not at all, not at all." Liang Shanshan stifled her laughter and said, "That name is very... very impressive!"

Li Xiaotian also laughed, but he was laughing about something else entirely.

The two Divine Skills his master passed on to him are truly Immortal Techniques. Not to mention the Divine Weapon Tempering Technique, the Heavenly Emperor Nine Steps alone gives me the confidence to achieve the final breakthrough within a few years. I will advance to Grandmaster! Only a Grandmaster can be called a true expert. Moreover, the Divine Weapon Tempering Technique also includes a qi-refining mantra that is countless times more powerful than the Cultivation Technique I practiced before. It can truly be called a genuine Immortal Technique. No wonder Master is so powerful. In front of him, even someone like Yun Xu would be killed with a single palm strike.

Lin Mu said, "Alright, cultivate the Divine Skills I have passed on to you diligently. Do not disappoint the expectations I have for you."

Li Xiaotian's expression turned serious as he vowed, "This disciple will absolutely not let down Master's painstaking efforts!"

Seeing Li Xiaotian about to bow again, Lin Mu waved his hand. "There aren't so many rules here with me. There's one more thing. You have a Senior Brother; I'll take you to meet him when there's time."

Li Xiaotian was taken aback.

A Senior Brother? He must also be an unrivaled expert with profound cultivation.

Seeing Li Xiaotian's reaction, Lin Mu was somewhat amused.

I wonder what kind of expression Li Xiaotian will have when he finally meets Liu Xiaolin.

「Zhao Family Hall.」

"Mr. Lin, these are the medicinal herbs you requested."

Zhao Hedong tremblingly held out two boxes, his expression uneasy.

"Weren't there three types? Why are there only two?" Liang Sheng asked, his dissatisfaction clear upon seeing only two kinds of herbs in the boxes.

Zhao Hedong immediately put on a woeful expression. "Boss Liang, I truly didn't mean to deceive you, but the last herb, the Sky Star Grass, has already been taken."

"Taken?" Lin Mu's brows furrowed.

With the two herbs Zhao Hedong had produced, the main ingredients for refining the Foundation Establishment Pill were nearly complete. However, the Sky Star Grass was an indispensable and irreplaceable main ingredient.

Zhao Hedong said, "Indeed. Before you arrived in Xijiang, Lord Liu—that is, Ma Liu—sent someone to take away the Sky Star Grass. He said it was a gift for the Shamanic High Priest of the Shengmiao."

"High Priest?" Li Xiaotian suddenly asked. "Which High Priest?"

Not daring to hide anything, Zhao Hedong replied, "The Shamanic High Priest of the Shengmiao, in Thunder Mountain."

"So, it's him!"

An imperceptible coldness flashed in Li Xiaotian's eyes, and he subconsciously clenched his fist.

"What, you know him?" Lin Mu asked, raising an eyebrow.

Li Xiaotian nodded. "Yes, I know him. He is my elder brother!"

At the edge of Thunder Mountain, Li Xiaotian stared at the dense fog with a complex expression. "Master," he said slowly, "if we walk for another two hours from here, we will enter the Shengmiao Forbidden Land."

The heavy fog obscured their vision and carried a faint, foul odor. This fog was lethally poisonous.

"Oh? Is this where you lived when you were young?" Lin Mu asked, seeming quite curious.

Lin Mu had learned from Li Xiaotian's explanation that he was a direct descendant of Chi You, from the main bloodline, and had grown up deep within Thunder Mountain. Although he was the second son, his innate talent was exceptionally high, and his cultivation speed was swift. Doted on by the elders, they had planned to support him to become the next Clan Leader.

But he had an elder brother.

According to clan rules, Li Xiaotian was not eligible to inherit the position of Clan Leader. His brother, far from ordinary, was also fiercely ambitious. Later, after their father's death, his elder brother joined forces with several Elders to kill all who opposed him, successfully seizing the position of Clan Leader.

Because of this, the Li Clan split into two factions. One was controlled by Li Xiaotian's elder brother, the High Priest, while the other revered Li Xiaotian as its leader.

However, Li Xiaotian had left Southern Sky years ago. He wandered the lands, and his ambitions gradually faded. He had returned to Thunder Mountain this time only to help his master acquire the Sky Star Grass.

"The fog is poisonous," Li Xiaotian said. "Outsiders can't enter. Even a Martial Artist would risk their life forcing their way in."

Lin Mu nodded. With his profound strength, he had no need to worry.

And so, the two swiftly stepped into the fog.

The Liang father and daughter didn't follow. The Li Clan's rules were strict, and not even Li Xiaotian dared to break them.

His master, however, was an exception.

Passing through the fog, they arrived in a valley filled with the songs of birds and the fragrance of flowers. The trees were lush, and a stream babbled gently.

"I never would have thought a paradise like this still existed," Lin Mu remarked with a slight nod, seeming quite pleased.

What surprised him most was that the valley was filled with abundant Spiritual Energy. Cultivating here would certainly yield twice the results with half the effort.

"It's beautiful, but things are not what they used to be," Li Xiaotian said, his voice laced with melancholy.

Ever since his family died, he no longer had any desire to inherit the position of Clan Leader. He could only avoid the clansmen who had sworn to follow him to the death and travel far from home. He had been away for many years before this return.

Suddenly, Lin Mu stopped. "Someone's coming." He looked toward a specific spot.

Li Xiaotian immediately grasped the Heavenly Punishment Blade on his back.

RUSTLE. RUSTLE.

The sound of footsteps followed, and two figures leaped out from the undergrowth, their expressions wary as if facing a formidable enemy.

Seeing the two of them, Li Xiaotian first froze, then his expression changed. "Li Zhou? Li Tong?"

Chapter 257: The Struggle Between Black and White!

"Who are you...?"

Two young men clad in white tunics and matching headbands looked at Li Xiaotian in confusion.

"Brother, don't waste your breath on him," the young man called Li Tong urged, a Miao Knife in his hand and hatred on his face. "This man must be a reinforcement brought by the High Priest. Kill them!"

Just as he was about to move, a cold laugh echoed from the woods behind them. "Hahaha, Li Zhou, Li Tong! Let's see where you two can run now!"

Immediately, seven or eight armed men rushed out. The leader was a young man in a black tunic and matching headband. He wore a nose ring and glared coldly at the Li brothers.

"Sang Kui!" Li Zhou's expression changed drastically as he tightened his grip on his knife.

The brothers had been on the run for some time and were seriously injured. Now faced with such overwhelming numbers, it seemed escape was impossible.

"Brother, we have to fight for our lives!" Li Zhou whispered, wiping the sweat from his face. "I'll hold them off. You run and make sure to get the message out!"

"Brother!" Li Tong cried out, about to protest.

"I'm your older brother, listen to me!" Li Zhou said sternly. "The lives of hundreds of our people in Bai Miao Village are in your hands!"

"I..." Li Tong held back his tears. "Alright! I'll come back as fast as I can to save our people!"

"Good brother!" Li Zhou roared and charged forward.

"Go!"

Li Tong retreated rapidly, trying to escape in another direction.

"Trying to run? Not so easy," Sang Kui sneered. "Kill them!"

At his command, his men immediately fanned out, completely cutting off Li Tong's escape route.

"Li Zhou, I told you that you wouldn't escape," Sang Kui laughed, stepping forward and kicking Li Zhou, sending him flying.

BANG!

Li Zhou was sent flying, crashing down in front of Lin Mu and Li Xiaotian. But Li Zhou was ruthless. Even as he fell, he slashed upwards with his Miao Knife, aiming for Lin Mu's stomach. He moved with incredible speed, clearly making a desperate, final gambit.

"If I can't live, neither can you!"

Lin Mu's eyebrow twitched, ready to act.

"Master, don't kill him!" Li Xiaotian's face changed. He lunged forward, grabbing the back of the blade. With a deft twist, he disarmed Li Zhou, sending the knife clattering to the ground.

"Li Zhou, it's me!" Li Xiaotian said, looking at him with a complex expression, his eyes filled with guilt.

"Brother!" From a distance, Li Tong saw his brother captured and cried out, preparing to charge forward. But Sang Kui's men blocked his path.

Sang Kui laughed heartily. "Thanks for your help. From now on, you are friends of my Heimiao Village." Knife in hand, he advanced, ready to end Li Zhou's life.

"Heimiao Village?" Li Xiaotian's expression turned frigid as he gritted his teeth. "It seems Li Xiaofeng has truly split our Li Clan in two!"

"You... who are you? How do you know the High Priest's name?" Sang Kui's face changed, and he hastily took two steps back.

"Who am I?" Li Xiaotian sneered coldly. "Li Xiaofeng will tell you in due time!"

With a flick of his wrist, the Heavenly Punishment Blade left its sheath.

CLANG!

A crisp ring echoed as a crimson flash of blade energy shot out.

SLICE!

Sang Kui stood frozen. A line of blood appeared, running from between his eyebrows down to his abdomen.

CRUMPLE!

To everyone's horror, Sang Kui's body split vertically in two.

HISS!

The scene not only terrified Sang Kui's men but also stunned the Li brothers.

"You're not with the High Priest?" Li Zhou asked.

"We'll talk later," Li Xiaotian said, advancing with his blade.

Seeing this, Sang Kui's men turned pale and began to retreat frantically, but there was nowhere for them to run. In the blink of an eye, Li Xiaotian cut them all down. Every single one was bisected with a single slash.

Seeing the murderous intent radiating from Li Xiaotian, Lin Mu was uncharacteristically silent.

"Regardless of who you are, thank you for saving me," Li Zhou said, slowly getting to his feet. "If you're just visiting, please leave quickly. A battle is about to break out."

This one-armed elder is too dangerous, Li Zhou thought. He killed Sang Kui, a warrior of the Heimiao Village, with a single strike. Since they're not enemies, I should urge them to leave. Otherwise, given the High Priest's ruthlessness, he'll definitely have them killed to silence them. As for asking them for help... I don't dare. If these two were deliberately sent by the Heimiao Village, I would become a traitor to the Li Clan.

"You've killed people from my Heimiao Village and now you think you can leave? You'll have to ask for my permission first."

As the voice faded, a figure sped in from the distance. After a few swift leaps, he landed before the group. The newcomer was an old man dressed in black, with a large, coiled Big Flower Snake on his arm, which was flicking its forked tongue at everyone.

"The Second Elder of the Heimiao Village!" Seeing the old man, Li Zhou's face paled, his eyes filled with despair. He never expected the Second Elder of the Heimiao Village to come after them personally. It seemed the Heimiao Village was truly determined to wipe out the Bai Miao Village.

The elder glanced at the corpses on the ground before his gaze finally settled on Li Xiaotian, his expression freezing. "You are..." He looked vaguely familiar.

"Li Yin. It's been a long time," Li Xiaotian said, the killing intent on his face completely undisguised.

"It's you... Li Xiaotian!" Li Yin cried out in disbelief. "You're still alive?"

"The Clan Leader?!" Hearing Li Yin's exclamation, the Li brothers stared in disbelief, thinking they had misheard.

"Thanks to you, I'm not dead yet," Li Xiaotian said, pointing at Li Yin with lethal intent. "But today, you most certainly are!"

Back then, Li Xiaofeng had led several Elders in a rebellion. They first killed his parents, then killed or captured anyone who resisted, forcing the remaining clan members to flee for their lives. And Li Yin was the one who had led several experts to hunt him down. If not for his incredible luck, he would have died long ago.

Li Yin's expression shifted erratically before he finally let out a cold sneer. "Li Xiaotian, you shouldn't have come back. Under the High Priest's leadership, the Li Clan will be unified and restored to its former glory. This is a grand undertaking for our clan! You should not have returned at a time like this!" The moment Li Xiaotian returns, the Bai Miao Village will resist to the death, Li Yin thought. Even the dissenting voices that have risen within the Heimiao Village in recent years will erupt completely.

"Bullshit!" Before Li Xiaotian could respond, Li Zhou pointed at Li Yin, his eyes bloodshot with rage. "If you and the High Priest hadn't colluded to murder so many of our Li Clan's elders, would we have fallen to this state?"

Li Zhou was now slowly recalling the clan elders speaking of a Clan Leader who was wandering abroad but would one day return. That person was Li Xiaotian, standing right before them. The brothers had even seen him when they were children, but it had been so long that their memories were hazy.

"Clan Leader, Li Yin and the High Priest, those two old beasts, have killed so many of our people! And now they've even allied with several great families like the Xiao Long, Yang, and Zhao to completely annihilate our Bai Miao Village! They are traitors to our Li Clan! They are criminals!" Li Zhou shouted, his voice thick with emotion and his eyes brimming with tears.

"Hmph, criminals?" Li Yin sneered. "What do you know? This is the irresistible tide of history." He looked at Li Xiaotian and licked his lips. "Li Xiaotian. Because I let you escape back then, the High Priest nearly threw me into the Dragon Lair. This time, as long as I kill you, Bai Miao Village will crumble without a fight."

"You want to kill me? I'm afraid you lack the ability!"

Chapter 258: Killed with a poke of a finger!

"Hmph, you've got a sharp tongue!" Li Yin sneered. "I'm curious to see how much you've improved after all these years!"

As his voice fell, Li Yin waved his sleeve, and countless venomous insects crawled out from all directions, swarming toward the group. He dared to come here alone because he had something to rely on.

"Clan Leader, be careful! That old bastard Li Yin has a Gu King that can control thousands of insects!" Li Zhou quickly warned.

Although Li Xiaotian had been away for many years, the blood of the Li Clan still flowed through his veins, and he was still the Clan Leader they recognized.

"Nothing to worry about," Li Xiaotian replied with a cold smile as he swept the Heavenly Punishment Blade through the air.

SWOOSH!

A wave of blade light howled out, instantly annihilating all the venomous insects on the ground.

GASP!

Li Zhou drew a sharp breath. The Clan Leader is unbelievably powerful!

"Big brother, is he really our Clan Leader?" Li Tong approached Li Zhou, his face etched with shock.

"He is, without a doubt!" Li Zhou affirmed with a firm nod. "When I was little, the Clan Leader even held me. It's just been so many years that I'd almost forgotten."

"That's great! That's great!" Li Tong said excitedly. "With the Clan Leader back, our Bai Miao Village has hope."

"But that old bastard Li Yin, as despicable as he is, is no ordinary opponent," Li Zhou said, his expression grave. He had a deeper understanding of the situation than Li Tong.

"I didn't expect you to have grown so much stronger after all these years." With the venomous insects wiped out, Li Yin's smile faded slightly. "But do you really think I've been idle all this time?"

As soon as Li Yin finished speaking, he loosened his grip.

HISS! HISS!

The Big Flower Snake he had been holding immediately slithered to the ground and charged toward Li Xiaotian. The serpent flicked its tongue, and Li Xiaotian was instantly hit by a foul-smelling gust of wind.

"My Gu King is as powerful as a Half-step Grandmaster," Li Yin said smugly. "Li Xiaotian, no matter how capable you are, you're going to die today!"

"Kill him!"

The Big Flower Snake seemed to understand human speech. It suddenly reared its neck and opened its jaws wide, revealing sharp crimson fangs as it lunged at Li Xiaotian.

Li Xiaotian was not the least bit afraid. Holding the Heavenly Punishment Blade, he sidestepped the snake and slashed downward.

But just as the blade was about to strike the Big Flower Snake, a dark shadow whipped toward Li Xiaotian.

It was the giant snake's tail!

The expressions of the Li Zhou brothers changed in an instant. The Clan Leader was being careless!

However, just as the snake's tail was about to hit Li Xiaotian, he performed a strange footwork pattern, eerily avoiding the attack. At the same time, the Heavenly Punishment Blade in his hand came down.

SPLAT!

A shower of blood rained down as a severed section of the tail fell to the ground.

HISS! HISS!

The great snake writhed in pain, desperately trying to flee.

"You think you can escape?" Li Xiaotian scoffed and swiftly gave chase. Man and snake were once again locked in combat.

Watching the fierce battle unfold before them, the Li Zhou brothers were astounded.

"The Clan Leader is mighty!" Li Tong couldn't help but cheer, seeing victory within reach.

Li Zhou's expression, however, remained grave. "If the Clan Leader is having this much trouble with the Snake King, what if Li Yin attacks..."

Before Li Zhou could finish his sentence, a figure rushed swiftly toward Li Xiaotian.

"Li Xiaotian, die!" Li Yin's palm had turned an inky black, as if it had been steeped in poison. If that strike landed, it would undoubtedly injure Li Xiaotian severely.

"Hmph, you aren't qualified to take my life!" Li Xiaotian snorted coldly. His body trembled as a mighty aura burst forth. The Heavenly Punishment Blade in his hands began to glow brilliantly. He swung the blade at the Big Flower Snake, which was opening its cavernous maw to swallow him.

"Hm?" Li Yin's expression changed, but it was too late to pull back his hand. He could only grit his teeth and follow through with the strike.

THUD!

His palm landed squarely on Li Xiaotian's back.

"Hahaha, and I thought you were so strong! You're just relying on that precious blade of yours," Li Yin laughed loudly.

But in the next moment, the smile on his face froze.

Not only was Li Xiaotian unharmed, but he had also bisected the Big Flower Snake with a single slash, killing it utterly. He himself hadn't moved an inch from the blow.

"Is that all the strength you have?" Li Xiaotian shook his head slightly. "Li Yin, you have truly disappointed me."

As his words fell, Li Xiaotian's aura surged once more.

BOOM!

A blast of Internal Energy erupted, sending Li Yin flying backward.

"A Half-step Grandmaster?!" Li Yin landed hard on the ground, his expression shifting from shock to horror. He never expected that, after so many years, Li Xiaotian had actually become a Half-step Grandmaster. His power was now almost equal to his own.

After all, back in the day, his own strength was more than enough to crush Li Xiaotian. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to hunt him down, forcing him to flee and not dare return.

"Are you disappointed?" Li Xiaotian cracked his neck, his face a mask of killing intent. "Li Yin, you murdered my family back then, and today you threatened my kinsmen. I will not spare you!"

SHIIING!

The blade's light flared as it whistled through the air.

"Hmph!" Li Yin snorted coldly. "So what if you're a Half-step Grandmaster? I reached that level years ago. Killing you will be as easy as slaughtering a chicken!"

Li Yin's aura roiled as he unleashed a flurry of strikes.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The two exchanged dozens of blows in an instant.

THUD!

Finally, Li Yin found an opening and landed a punch on Li Xiaotian's chest, sending him flying. However, Li Yin's chest now bore a deep slash from Li Xiaotian's blade, a wound deep enough to expose bone.

"What a sharp blade!" Li Yin's face darkened. He hastily took out a porcelain bottle and poured some powder on the wound.

But to his horror, not only did the powder fail to stop the bleeding, it made the blood flow even faster.

"What kind of blade is this?" Li Yin's pupils shrank.

Li Xiaotian flicked his wrist, the Heavenly Punishment Blade remaining utterly unstained by blood. "Its name is Heavenly Punishment!"

As his voice fell, Li Xiaotian leaped into the air and charged toward Li Yin. Killing Li Yin would be like severing one of Li Xiaofeng's arms.

I have to escape! Li Yin thought. In terms of raw power, he wasn't afraid of Li Xiaotian. But his opponent's blade was too bizarre—it wounded without being stained by blood, and the injuries it inflicted wouldn't clot. The longer this dragged on, the worse his situation would become. He had to get back immediately and inform the High Priest of Li Xiaotian's return.

"Still think you can run?" Li Xiaotian held the Heavenly Punishment Blade, his killing intent flaring so intensely that his speed increased by a third.

"Not good!" Li Yin saw his path was blocked and his mind raced.

Suddenly, he caught sight of Lin Mu standing off to the side, and his eyes lit up. This person looks like a disciple Li Xiaotian took on outside. If I capture him, Li Xiaotian will surely surrender!

Having made his decision, Li Yin abandoned his escape and charged toward Lin Mu with incredible speed.

Seeing Li Yin rushing toward Lin Mu, Li Xiaotian paused, instinctively halting his advance. This Li Yin is simply courting death.

"Young man, run!" the Li Zhou brothers cried out.

However, Lin Mu stood rooted to the spot as if petrified, not moving an inch.

This is bad! Li Zhou was furious, but it was too late to intervene. Besides, they were no match for Li Yin anyway.

"Tough luck, kid," Li Yin sneered as he rapidly closed the distance, a ferocious grin spreading across his face. He reached out a large hand to grab Lin Mu.

Just as Li Yin's hand was about to seize him, Lin Mu finally seemed to react. He slowly extended a single finger and pointed forward.

What is he doing? Li Tong was stunned.

In the next moment, he witnessed a scene he would never forget for the rest of his life.

Lin Mu's finger, moving with a deceptive slowness that was actually lightning-fast, touched the center of Li Yin's brow.

PFFT!

With a soft sound, a bloody hole blossomed on Li Yin's forehead.

"Ugh..."

Li Yin's body went rigid. He collapsed to the ground, dead, his eyes wide with disbelief.

The Li Zhou brothers were utterly dumbstruck.

Li Yin... killed by a single poke of a finger?

Chapter 259: The Saintess of the White Miao!

"This..."

Li Tong stared at Li Yin's corpse, unable to process what had happened for a long time. In my memory, Li Yin's strength ranked among the top few in the entire Li Clan. And yet, a master like that was poked to death with a single finger? If the clan found out, who would believe it?

Li Zhou wasn't faring much better. His mouth hung open, and his lips trembled as he stared at Lin Mu. He even instinctively took a step back. He was truly afraid Lin Mu would do the same to him. His frail body definitely couldn't take it.

"Sorry, I couldn't control my strength and accidentally killed him," Lin Mu said apologetically to Li Xiaotian as he withdrew his hand.

Li Zhou and Li Tong were left speechless.

You call that an accident? Man, that was Li Yin! The Second Elder of Heimiao Village! If you weren't being careful, would you have killed the High Priest of Heimiao Village too?

However, what shocked the two brothers even more came next.

Li Xiaotian declared, "For Li Yin to die at my Master's hands, he got off easy!"

Got off easy? Wait a minute! Master? The brothers exchanged a glance, both doubting if they had heard correctly. The Clan Leader just called a man in his twenties 'Master'?

"Big brother, I think my ears are damaged," Li Tong said, patting his head with a pained expression.

Li Zhou muttered, "You heard right."

"Then what's going on?"

"Don't ask me, I don't know either."

"What are you two whispering about? Hurry over here!" Li Xiaotian called out.

Li Zhou shuddered and carefully made his way over. "Clan Leader..."

Looking at the two younger members of the Li Clan, Li Xiaotian nodded and said, "Alright, let's head back to Bai Miao Village. On the way, tell me what's happened these past few years."

Having been away for so long, he was ignorant of many of the clan's affairs.

"Yes, of course." Li Zhou nodded quickly, letting Li Tong lead the way while he recounted the events of the last several years.

Apparently, after Li Xiaotian left all those years ago, the clan had sent out several search parties. But at that time, the Li Clan had just split. Hunted by the High Priest, the ancestors of Bai Miao Village were forced to hide and flee constantly. They eventually managed to establish a foothold in the deep mountains, but not before more than half of their members had died or were grievously injured, leaving them with fewer than a hundred people.

However, the People of the Li Clan had always valued the purity of their bloodline. Although the High Priest possessed the direct bloodline, he had committed patricide and forcibly seized the position of Clan Leader, so many factions within the Li Clan refused to submit to him. In the first few years, many of these branch factions had even resisted. But the High Priest was too powerful, and he had many capable warriors at his command. He swiftly dismantled the more stubborn factions, leaving the rest with a choice: submit, or flee into the mountains as well.

Then, just some time ago, the High Priest seemed to have gone mad, sending his men to Bai Miao Village to demand their surrender. Bai Miao Village had developed rapidly over the decades, its population growing steadily. With the allegiance of several branch factions, it had gradually grown stronger. Even so, Heimiao Village was simply too powerful; they were no match for them.

The High Priest had already issued an ultimatum. He gave Bai Miao Village three days to surrender. If they refused, he would lead his forces to annihilate them. Li Tong and Li Zhou had been venturing out to seek aid, never expecting that Heimiao Village had them under surveillance. They were attacked the moment they left the village. If they hadn't run into Lin Mu and Li Xiaotian, they would have been dead by now.

Although Li Xiaotian had long since lost any desire to be the Clan Leader, the blood of the Li Clan still flowed through his veins. Hearing this, he became furious.

"Hmph. The High Priest?" Li Xiaotian said coldly. "Now that I'm here, he can forget about harming a single person from Bai Miao Village!"

"That's right! It's wonderful that the Clan Leader is back!" Li Tong exclaimed, overjoyed.

After walking for another hour through the mountains, the group finally arrived at an even more secluded valley. At a glance, the valley was dotted with bamboo buildings, with wisps of cooking smoke rising into the air and the constant sounds of chickens crowing and dogs barking. A tall wall of stacked boulders encircled the valley, with a huge wooden gate for an entrance. If not for the threat of extermination, this place would have been a perfect sanctuary, a paradise hidden from the world.

Lin Mu's Divine Soul was powerful, allowing him to sense the many hidden sentries posted around the valley. The moment his group stepped foot in the area, people had begun moving in the shadows.

"Sister Li Lai, open up! We're back!" Li Tong shouted excitedly toward the valley entrance before running ahead.

"It's Li Tong!" a surprised voice called out from behind the gate.

CREAK!

The large wooden gate swung open, revealing several Miao People armed with weapons, their faces lit up with pleasant surprise.

"Haha, Sister Li Lai, look who's here!" Li Tong laughed.

Li Zhou kicked his brother. "Li Lai is only eighteen. She's never met the Clan Leader."

"Right, right," Li Tong said, scratching his head. "I'm just too excited."

JINGLE, JINGLE.

As they were speaking, the clear chime of silver bells sounded from beyond the gate, and a figure gracefully approached.

"Brother Li Zhou, you're back," a voice as melodious as a lark's rang out. A young woman in a white dress stood charmingly at the entrance. Her clothes were adorned with countless silver ornaments that shimmered with youthful vitality.

Though the girl was young, her skin was as fair as snow, and her cheeks were rosy. In a region like Southern Sky, she was a one-in-ten-thousand beauty. Even in the outside world, she would be considered absolutely top-tier.

"We are!" Li Tong nodded. "Li Lai, go quickly and inform the clan elders that our Clan Leader has returned!"

"Clan Leader?" The girl named Li Lai glanced between Lin Mu and Li Xiaotian. When she saw Lin Mu smile and nod at her, her pretty face blushed, and she shyly lowered her head.

"Aiya, just hurry up and go," Li Tong urged, nudging her to go and inform the others.

"Little brother, Sister Li Lai is pretty, isn't she?" Li Zhou sidled up to Lin Mu and whispered, "Sister Li Lai is the Saintess of our Bai Miao Village. You wouldn't believe how many men secretly have a crush on her."

Lin Mu simply smiled and nodded, saying nothing.

"Alright, let's stop standing around and go in. I'm sure the clan elders will be thrilled to see the Clan Leader has returned," Li Tong said impatiently.

"There's no need."

Just then, an old, hoarse voice called out. From inside the gate, a group of people emerged. At the forefront was an elderly woman leaning on a snake-shaped staff. The wrinkles on her face were so deep they looked as if they might fall off, and her eyes had a somewhat frightening intensity.

"Grandma!" Li Lai hurried forward to support the old woman. "Brother Li Zhou and the others are back."

The old woman patted Li Lai's hand. "Grandma knows."

Then, leading the group, she walked toward Li Xiaotian.

"Mother, I... have returned." Li Xiaotian stepped forward slowly, then suddenly dropped to his knees, his eyes turning red.

Hearing his words, the old woman's body trembled. She hurried to help him up, her hand shaking as she caressed his face, old tears streaming down her own cheeks.

"It's good that you're back. It's good that you've come home!"

Chapter 260: Crisis in Bai Miao Village!

"Xiao Tian, this is..."

Once they had met, the old woman looked at Lin Mu, a trace of wariness in her turbid eyes.

"Amu, this is my Master." Li Xiaotian lowered his head, not daring to look at the old woman.

Master?

The old woman's expression changed drastically, as did those of the Bai Miao Village elders behind her.

"Xiao Tian, how could you take an outsider as your Master? Have you forgotten the ancestral teachings?" The old woman's walking stick thudded heavily on the ground.

"Amu, please hear me out."

In the outside world, Li Xiaotian could intimidate an entire region, but at this moment, he was as nervous as a child. The Li Clan was extremely xenophobic, and given the current dire situation of Bai Miao Village, they were naturally very hostile toward an outsider like Lin Mu. Amu was the person he respected most. She had been as close as a sister to his mother and was currently the elder with the highest seniority in Bai Miao Village. Therefore, Li Xiaotian dared not disobey her.

But Lin Mu was his Master. He truly didn't want any conflict between them.

"Hmph, what is there to explain?" a tall and imposing old man snorted angrily. "Since you have already accepted an outsider as your Master, you are no longer qualified to be the Clan Leader of the Li Clan."

The old man's words made many people nod in agreement. This was the ancestral teaching of the Li Clan, and it could not be violated.

"Elders, don't be so hasty," Li Tong, who was always quick to speak, interjected. "The Clan Leader's Master is incredibly powerful. He even killed Li Yin, the Second Elder of Heimiao Village." Li Tong gestured emphatically. "Killed him with a single finger."

Li Zhou added, "Yes, Elders, he saved Li Tong and me. We owe him our lives."

Li Tong nodded vigorously. "Yes, yes."

The old man glared. "Li Zhou, didn't the clan send you to seek aid from the Nine Villages and Eighteen Caves? Why have you returned?"

Li Tong couldn't help but say, "Second Elder, didn't I just tell you? We were being hunted by Li Yin of Heimiao Village. We were only saved thanks to the Clan Leader's Master."

"Nonsense!" the elder roared in fury. "Even I am no match for Li Yin. How could a greenhorn like him possibly be his opponent?" The elder didn't believe a single word Li Tong had said.

"It's true!" Li Zhou insisted. "The Clan Leader saw it with his own eyes!"

Li Xiaotian gave a wry smile. "Second Elder, it's true. Amu, my Master's strength is such that not even a Martial Arts Grandmaster is his match. For him to accept me as his disciple is a blessing of three lifetimes."

Not even a Martial Arts Grandmaster is his match?

The crowd was in an uproar. How could that be possible? Lin Mu looked so young. Even if he had started training in the womb, he couldn't possibly be strong enough to defeat Li Yin at his age.

"From what you just said, Li Yin was already injured by the Clan Leader and was ambushed by this boy during a moment of carelessness," the elder said with a skeptical look. "As for him being stronger than a Martial Arts Grandmaster, I refuse to believe it."

"Believe it or not, my brother and I saw it with our own eyes," Li Tong retorted indignantly.

"Li Tong, mind your place!" the old woman said sharply. Seeing the elder was about to speak again, she continued, "Since he is the savior of the Li Zhou brothers, we of the Li Clan are not ones to forget a debt of gratitude."

The old woman looked at Lin Mu and said, "Regardless of whether you are Xiao Tian's Master, and no matter how high your status is in the outside world, our Li Clan has an ancestral teaching: outsiders are forbidden from setting foot in our ancestral lands, on pain of death!"

Li Xiaotian grew alarmed, but the old woman waved her hand to stop him from speaking. "However, since it is already late, I will make an exception and allow you to stay here for one night. At dawn tomorrow, I will have him escort you out."

"Amu..."

"The matter is settled!"

Li Xiaotian looked at Lin Mu helplessly. "Master, you..."

Lin Mu remained completely unconcerned and said with a smile, "Let's just listen to your Amu." He didn't want to make things difficult for Li Xiaotian. After all, this was a rule of the Li Clan. Besides, he was here to find the Sky Star Grass, and as an outsider, he had no way of finding Heimiao Village on his own.

That night, Lin Mu stayed in a small wooden hut arranged by Bai Miao Village.

「That night.」

"Has that outsider been settled in?" in the simple meeting hall, the old woman inquired, looking toward Li Lai.

Li Lai nodded. "Yes, Grandmother." For a moment, she was slightly lost in thought, remembering the young man with the faint, constant smile.

The old woman didn't notice Li Lai's expression and turned to the others. "There are only two days left until the appointed time with Heimiao Village. If we don't come up with a foolproof plan, our Bai Miao Village could be destroyed."

Her words instantly cast a solemn mood over the meeting hall.

"Hmph! The High Priest of Heimiao Village wants to absorb our Bai Miao Village? I'll be the first to object!" the same elder who had questioned Lin Mu earlier declared. "If Heimiao Village dares to come, they'll have to get past me first!"

One of the clan elders said worriedly, "But what about all our people?"

"Don't worry, I've already made preparations," the elder said with a slight smile. "I've instructed the Third Elder to be ready to lead the children of the village away at dawn tomorrow."

Oh?

Everyone's eyes lit up. Even the old woman couldn't help but nod. "Second Elder, you have been thoughtful."

The Second Elder smiled. "As a member of the Li Clan, I must be worthy of the blood that flows in my veins!"

"Well said!" everyone applauded.

Suddenly, the Second Elder added, "But should we really not keep an eye on that outsider?"

"Second Elder, are you suggesting..."

The Second Elder put on a worried expression. "I'm concerned he has other motives and might pose a threat to our Bai Miao Village."

The old woman waved her hand dismissively. "Don't worry. If he dares to make a move, kill him." She didn't believe for a second that Lin Mu had killed Li Yin with a single finger.

"What about the Clan Leader?" someone asked.

The old woman slammed her hand on the table and said in a heavy voice, "He is a man of the Li Clan! The blood of the Great God Chi You flows in his veins!"

No one said another word.

A hundred miles from Bai Miao Village, on a mountainside, lay Heimiao Village.

On a table inside a room, a small plant with nine leaves emitted a faint starlight, looking incredibly splendid. The High Priest held a small cauldron in both hands, his expression hesitant.

If my Gu King consumes this grass, it will surely evolve into a Golden Silkworm Gu.

However, he hesitated. If he failed, years of hard work would be for naught.

Just then, there was a knock on the door. "High Priest, I have something to report."

The High Priest put away the grass and said in a deep voice, "Come in."

A young man entered cautiously, trembling as he knelt on the ground. Without daring to raise his head, he reported, "The Lifebound Gus of Sang Kui and the Second Elder... are dead."

"What?" the High Priest roared. "What happened?"

"It was Bai Miao Village," the young man said.

"Bai Miao Village!" the High Priest ground out through clenched teeth. "It seems they're eager to court death!"

Filled with murderous intent, he commanded, "Pass on my order! Tell Xiao Long, Yang Zhao, and the rest from the Nine Villages and Eighteen Caves to each dispatch five hundred warriors. They will assemble at dawn. Tomorrow, I will personally annihilate Bai Miao Village!"