

War God 261

Chapter 261: Just in Time!

"Master, your disciple has wronged you."

In Lin Mu's room, Li Xiaotian's face was filled with guilt, feeling he had let his master down.

Lin Mu smiled. "I came uninvited, after all. It was bound to make things difficult for you."

"Master..." Li Xiaotian was deeply moved and made to kneel again.

Lin Mu gave a wry smile. "If your clansmen were to see this, their opinion of me would only worsen."

"Let them see. I never wanted to be Clan Leader anyway," Li Xiaotian said resentfully.

"You..." Lin Mu pointed lightly at Li Xiaotian twice. "You're an old man now. Why do you still speak like a child?"

Li Xiaotian's old face reddened. "Before you, Master, I would not dare act with arrogance."

Lin Mu shook his head. "Alright, that's enough flattery. Go back and cultivate. Focus on refining the Heavenly Punishment Blade as soon as possible."

The Heavenly Punishment Blade was formidable, but Li Xiaotian couldn't fully unleash its power until he had completely refined it.

"Yes, Master. Please rest well. Your disciple takes his leave."

After Li Xiaotian left, Lin Mu pushed open the window, gazing out at the brilliant starlight. The chirping of insects and calls of birds filled the air under a sky dotted with brilliant stars. Even with his eyes closed, Lin Mu could sense the abundant Spiritual Energy that saturated the entire valley.

It's truly a good place for cultivation.

Lin Mu chuckled softly and sat down cross-legged to begin his cultivation. His Cultivation Level had already reached the Ninth Level of Qi Refining, and it wouldn't be long before he reached the tenth. Once he obtained the Sky Star Grass, Lin Mu planned to dedicate all his energy to cultivation.

He drew Spiritual Energy into his body, tempering his flesh and strengthening his meridians.

After an unknown amount of time, Lin Mu's eyes snapped open, a peculiar expression on his face. He lifted his hand. On its back, the Thunder Dragon tattoo seemed to come to life, its eyes abruptly opening.

"ROAR!"

At his thought, the Thunder Dragon let out a roar audible only to Lin Mu as it writhed on his palm. Sensing something, Lin Mu looked up at the sky and laughed heartily.

"This is your opportunity as well. Go!"

With a raise of his hand, the Thunder Dragon burst forth from his skin, shooting straight into the Starry Sea above. In that moment, the depths of Thunder Mountain fell utterly silent. Only the occasional peal of thunder echoed from the Milky Way.

...

「The next day, before dawn.」

Just as Lin Mu was waking from his cultivation, a knock came at his door. The old matriarch of Bai Miao Village stood at the entrance, leaning on a walking stick, her face expressionless. "Mr. Lin, it is time. You should be leaving."

Behind her stood the Second Elder and several others, including the younger members like Li Zhou, his brother, and Li Lai.

"Please forgive us for asking you to leave so early."

"Matriarch, can't Master stay for a few more days?" Li Xiaotian couldn't help but ask.

"Xiao Tian!" The old woman struck her walking stick heavily against the ground. "Have you forgotten how our Li Clan fell into its current state?"

Li Xiaotian's expression changed, and he fell silent. The High Priest of Heimiao Village, his own elder brother Li Xiaofeng, had brought outsiders into the village all those years ago. That act had led to a great catastrophe for the Li Clan, causing it to split in two.

When the old woman brought this up, everyone except for Li Zhou and a few others looked at Lin Mu with eyes devoid of warmth, filled instead with hostility and rejection. In the eyes of the Bai Miao villagers, outsiders were no different from enemies. This was also why they loathed Heimiao Village so deeply. For years, Heimiao Village had maintained contact with the outside world, even starting to cultivate their own forces there, all of which violated the ancestral teachings of the Li Clan.

"Mr. Lin, please forgive the poor hospitality of Bai Miao Village," the old woman said flatly. "But sheltering you for even a single day has already brought shame upon my ancestors."

"Very well. I'll pack my things and leave," Lin Mu said with a faint smile, turning back into the room.

Of course, he had nothing to pack. It was just that the Thunder Dragon had entered the Starry Sea to cultivate last night and still hadn't returned. Lin Mu connected with it using his Divine Sense, only to find the creature had fallen into a deep slumber and would need a significant amount of time to awaken.

Lin Mu was exasperated. That creature...

...

「In the courtyard.」

Li Xiaotian said, his face etched with displeasure, "Matriarch, it's not even dawn. Why are you in such a hurry to make Master leave?"

The old woman huffed. "This boy's origins are unknown. Of course, we can't let him stay in Bai Miao Village. Sheltering him for one day was already breaking the rules."

The Second Elder also spoke up, "Xiaotian, we know you've been adventuring in the outside world for many years and were deceived by this person into calling him Master. But you must remember that you are the Clan Leader of the Li Clan!"

"If it comes to that, I'll just step down as Clan Leader!" Li Xiaotian gritted out. He had never wanted to be the Clan Leader in the first place. It was only because the High Priest had turned traitor and was desperate to seize the position that he had been forced into the role.

"Nonsense!" The old woman was furious. "Xiao Tian, do you realize what you're saying? How can you say such things to your departed father and mother?"

"I..." Li Xiaotian was at a loss for words. He sighed. "But he is my Master, after all. You don't know his true strength. If you did, you would never drive him away like this."

Li Xiaotian knew he was far stronger than anyone present, but as a member of the Li Clan, he still had to abide by its rules.

"The matter is settled." The old woman was resolute. "This man must leave immediately."

The Second Elder added, "That's right. He killed people from Heimiao Village. The High Priest will not let him go. We might be able to protect him for a time, but not forever."

A dark-faced elder chimed in, "Indeed. There's already discord within our village. Some have even suggested we hand him over to Heimiao Village to sue for peace."

"What?" Li Xiaotian was enraged. "I'd like to see who dares!"

The elder immediately replied, "So isn't asking him to leave now simply to prevent Heimiao Village from coming to demand him from us later?"

The old woman also said, "Xiao Tian, you don't understand. For many years, we've been brutally suppressed by Heimiao Village. This isn't just because of that beast Li Xiaofeng; it's also because the clan leaders of the Xiao, Yang, Long, and Zhao families are all Half-step Grandmasters. If Li Xiaofeng manages to rally all the people of the Nine Villages and Eighteen Caves, our Bai Miao Village will truly be finished."

"So, making the boy leave is for his own good," she concluded.

Li Xiaotian let out a long sigh. You've all completely misjudged the situation. With Master's level of cultivation, who in this world could possibly be his opponent? It would be useless even if Heimiao Village threw everything they had at him. But no one would believe me if I said that. Since the Matriarch and the others have made their decision, I'll let it be. If worst comes to worst, I will beg Master to help Bai Miao Village resolve this crisis, even if it means being expelled from his tutelage.

As they were speaking, Lin Mu pushed the door open and walked out.

"Master..." Li Xiaotian hurried to greet him.

Lin Mu smiled. "I heard everything. You stay here and handle your clan's affairs. Don't worry about me."

Of course, he had no intention of leaving. The Thunder Dragon hadn't woken up yet, and he still hadn't obtained the Sky Star Grass. Leaving now would mean this entire trip was for nothing.

Since the Thunder Dragon is still asleep, I'll just make a trip to Heimiao Village and get the Sky Star Grass first.

"Mr. Lin, let's go. I will personally see you out," the old woman said, watching him closely, afraid the young man might try to stay.

"There's no need to trouble yourself. I remember the way back," Lin Mu said with a light smile, preparing to depart.

"The mountain paths are treacherous with many forks. It's better if I escort you." The old woman insisted, leaving no room for argument.

Just then, Lin Mu suddenly stopped. He turned to look toward the mountain gate and smiled faintly. "Right on time."

"What do you mean?" the old woman asked, startled.

Suddenly, flashes of fire and piercing screams erupted from the village entrance nearby.

"Enemy attack! Enemy attack!"

The Matriarch's expression changed drastically. "This is bad! It's the people from Heimiao Village!"

Chapter 262 Betrayal!

"Quick, go check it out!"

The old woman could no longer care about Lin Mu and immediately dashed toward the village gate.

At the same time, the people of Bai Miao Village heard the commotion. Countless individuals rushed out from their bamboo houses, led by several clan elders, and hurried over.

Seeing the dead and wounded villagers and the sky-high flames, the old woman's face immediately turned incredibly grim.

"What exactly happened?"

"The people from Heimiao Village are attacking us!" The patrolling Bai Miao villager was terrified; if the clan elders hadn't been there, he might have fled. "Apart from the High Priest of Heimiao Village,

everyone from the Nine Villages and Eighteen Caves has been mobilized. Even the five Great Chieftains have come in person!"

"What?" Upon hearing this, the old woman's expression grew even more grim.

For a moment, the hearts of everyone in Bai Miao Village were filled with trepidation. Their faces were pale with fear, their bodies trembling. The population of Bai Miao Village was small, and their peak combat power was no match for Heimiao Village. Against the combined forces from the Nine Villages and Eighteen Caves, how could Bai Miao Village possibly stop Heimiao Village's attack?

After years of recuperation, the people of Bai Miao Village have barely regained some vitality. Is our entire tribe going to be wiped out here today? The old woman's heart filled with bitter hatred.

She led a group of people to the village gate, only to see the open ground below lit by a dense mass of torches. The uniform black robes and headscarves fluttered like flags of death. The four black-clothed elders in the lead had tattooed faces and emanated a powerful aura.

The old woman climbed onto the wall, her face dark as she looked down at the five elders below. "Xiao Su, what is the meaning of this? Do you intend to go to war with Bai Miao Village?"

"Hahaha, Li Xuan, you old hag! Your Bai Miao Village killed my Heimiao Village's Second Elder and even our kinsman Sang Kui. This enmity is irreconcilable! By the High Priest's decree, today, we shall flatten your Bai Miao Village!"

The man called Xiao Su was the Patriarch of the Xiao Family, one of the Nine Villages. His head was wrapped in a black cloth. Even more terrifying was the huge, multicolored spider in front of him, which was the size of a small calf.

"Bullshit!" the Second Elder roared in fury. "Your Heimiao Village has killed plenty of our people over the years! Furthermore, our agreement with the High Priest isn't over for another day. Aren't you afraid of the Great God Chiyou's wrath for attacking Bai Miao Village now?"

The Great God Chiyou was the ancestor of the San Miao and the Nine Li, the deity worshipped by all the people of the Li Clan.

Xiao Su gave a cold laugh. "I'll count to ten. Open the gates and surrender without resistance. Otherwise, don't blame me for slaughtering everyone in your Bai Miao Village!"

"Then we'll fight! As if the people of Bai Miao Village are afraid of death!" Li Zhou gripped his Miao Knife, ready to charge down.

"That's right! We'll defend Bai Miao Village to the death!"

"Defend Bai Miao Village to the death!"

The people of Bai Miao Village roared, brandishing their weapons. Their voices were thunderous, their will to fight intense.

"Good!" the old woman bellowed. "You are all worthy sons of Bai Miao Village!"

The Second Elder's fighting spirit erupted. "Warriors of Bai Miao Village, today Heimiao Village seeks to destroy our home and kill our people! How can we stand by and wait for death? Attack!"

"Kill! Kill! Kill!"

The rage of Bai Miao Village was completely ignited.

"Lai Lai, I'm going to have the Third Elder take you away in a moment," the old woman grabbed Li Lai's hand and whispered. "Listen to me, for the sake of the Li Clan's heritage!"

"Grandmother, I am the Saintess of Bai Miao Village. How can I leave?" Li Lai's eyes were red as she stubbornly refused.

"It is precisely because you are the Saintess of Bai Miao Village that you must leave!" the old woman said sternly. "Heimiao Village came prepared today. With the people we have, we cannot possibly

withstand them. The Third Elder has already gathered the village's underage children. You must leave with them!"

"Grandmother..." Tears streamed down Li Lai's beautiful face.

"Lai Lai, go!" At that moment, the Third Elder grabbed Li Lai's hand and began to retreat swiftly.

"Go!" the old woman said, her own eyes brimming with tears as she looked at Li Lai with great reluctance.

No longer resisting, Li Lai followed the Third Elder.

However, the Third Elder gripped Li Lai's wrist tightly and quickened his pace, charging down into the fray. As they moved, he ruthlessly struck down any Bai Miao villagers they encountered. In the blink of an eye, several of their own people had been killed.

"Li Xu, what are you doing?!" the old woman howled, her eyes nearly splitting with fury.

"Third Grandpa..." Li Lai was completely stunned with fright.

Everyone who witnessed this stared in disbelief. Li Xu was the Third Elder of Bai Miao Village, his strength at the Late Stage of Inner Strength. He was in charge of the clan's affairs. No one ever expected him to betray them!

"Hahaha! Li Xuan, you old hag, didn't see that coming, did you? Your Bai Miao Village's Li Xu pledged his allegiance to the High Priest long ago!" Xiao Su laughed heartily from below. "And I don't mind telling you, it was Li Xu who told us about your repeated attempts to send people out for help."

BOOM! The old woman felt as if she had been struck by lightning. She stared in disbelief at Li Xu slaughtering their kinsmen below and wretched, spitting out a mouthful of blood.

"Li Xu, may you suffer a horrible death!"

"My apologies, Li Xuan. The High Priest's power is supreme, and I do not wish to perish alongside Bai Miao Village. Pledging my allegiance is the only chance for survival," Li Xu said with chilling indifference.

"Then... what about the children?" Li Xuan managed to ask, suppressing her terror.

"They were, of course, sent to Heimiao Village long ago," Li Xu said with a cruel smile.

"You..." Li Xuan felt the world spin, and she coughed up another mouthful of blood.

"Li Xu, I will kill you!" The Second Elder's aura surged explosively as he prepared to strike.

However, with a thunderous BOOM, the village gates burst open.

The warriors of Heimiao Village swarmed in like ants.

"Kill them all! Flatten Bai Miao Village and leave no one alive!" Xiao Su roared in ecstasy, waving his hand. Behind him, thousands of Heimiao Village warriors poured through the gates. Some fired arrows while others released poisonous Gu. In an instant, the entire village was overrun with snakes, insects, rats, and ants, and the air filled with ceaseless, agonized screams.

Bai Miao Village only had Li Xuan and the Second Elder as Half-step Grandmasters, and both were old, their vitality diminished, which greatly reduced their combat power. Li Xu's betrayal was a devastating blow, widening the already immense gap between the two villages.

Li Xuan fought against two opponents by herself, and the Second Elder managed to hold off two more. But there was also a fifth, Zhao Heng, the Clan Leader of the Zhao Family, whose power was very close to the Half-step Grandmaster stage. With every move he made, more people from Bai Miao Village met a tragic end.

"Zhao Heng, you old beast! May you suffer a horrible death!" Watching this, Li Xuan's eyes nearly burst from their sockets in rage.

But in her moment of distraction, Xiao Su found an opening. He struck Li Xuan with his palm, sending her flying.

"Li Xuan, you're old. Bai Miao Village should have submitted to the High Priest long ago." Xiao Su slowly approached her, ready to deliver the killing blow.

"Xiao Su! You killed my father years ago! Today is the day you die!"

Just as Xiao Su was about to strike, a furious shout erupted. A crimson slash of blade light whistled through the air, aimed directly at him.

Not good! Xiao Su quickly retreated.

CRACK!

The blade light slammed down. Though it missed Xiao Su, it carved a massive fissure in the ground before him.

"You are... Li Xiaotian!" Xiao Su's pupils shrank as he recognized the one-armed Daoist standing before him. "You're actually not dead?!"

Clutching the Heavenly Punishment Blade, Li Xiaotian spoke in a chilling tone, "Of course I'm not dead. Which means today, you most certainly are!"

Chapter 263: Killing Them Like Killing Chickens!

"Hahaha, you think you can kill me?" Xiao Su laughed, his tone mocking. "Back then, I beat you until you fled like a stray dog. I thought you'd died in some forgotten corner. To think you'd return today."

Li Xiaotian swung the Heavenly Punishment Blade, his face filled with killing intent. "That beast Li Xiaofeng isn't dead yet," he said. "How could I dare to die first?"

"Hmph! And you think you're worthy of being compared to the High Priest?" Xiao Su said coldly.
"Patriarch Yang, join me. Let's slaughter Li Xiaotian first!"

"Good!" the Patriarch of the Yang Family agreed with a nod, taking a box from within his robes. As he opened it, a Red Gold Scorpion dropped to the ground, burrowed into the earth, and vanished.

Xiao Su let out a low roar. "Die!" he bellowed, rushing toward Li Xiaotian.

"Xiao Tian, be careful!" Li Xuan cried out from the ground. Her expression changed drastically when she saw Li Xiaotian intended to fight two opponents at once.

"Grandmother, stay back!" Li Xiaotian declared without a trace of fear. "Leave these two beasts to me!"

The moment he finished speaking, Li Xiaotian's aura surged dramatically.

Inner Strength!

Late Stage Inner Strength!

Peak of Late Stage Inner Strength!

Half-step Grandmaster!!!

Not only was Xiao Su shocked, but even Li Xuan was stunned. Xiao Tian is a Half-step Grandmaster? On par with me? A wave of joy immediately washed over her.

"Die!" Li Xiaotian roared, infusing his True Qi into the Heavenly Punishment Blade.

VSSSHHH! A sharp blade aura scattered in all directions, pulverizing the weeds and rubble on the ground.

Carrying his blade, Li Xiaotian walked toward Xiao Su step by step. His pace didn't seem fast, yet each step appeared to cross several meters. One moment, he was still several meters away; the next, he was right in front of Xiao Su.

He brought the blade slashing down.

"This—" Xiao Su's expression changed drastically at Li Xiaotian's bizarrely sudden appearance. But as a Half-step Grandmaster himself, his reactions were swift, and he rapidly retreated.

SLASH! The Heavenly Punishment Blade descended.

"Aaargh!" A piercing scream ripped through the air. Xiao Su staggered to a halt. Looking down, he saw a long gash across his abdomen. While not fatal, the wound was severe enough to hamper his ability to fight.

What bizarre footwork! What terrifying bladework! Xiao Su was utterly shaken, his gaze toward Li Xiaotian now filled with dread.

Li Xiaotian frowned, disappointed that his first strike hadn't been fatal. The Heavenly Punishment Blade in his hand trembled, as if struggling to break free of his grasp. His expression flickered for a moment before he tightened his grip, holding it firm.

WHOOSH! Just then, a flash of golden light appeared at Li Xiaotian's feet. A tail shot up, its stinger aimed directly at his heel.

It was Patriarch Yang's Red Gold Scorpion! "Be careful! That's the ancestral Gu King of the Yang Family!" Li Xuan screamed in terror.

A bite from the Gu King could cost even a Grandmaster half their life, let alone a Half-step Grandmaster like Li Xiaotian.

"Hmph!" However, Li Xiaotian simply snorted. "Heavenly Emperor Nine Steps... One Step, Rivers Shatter!"

A vast aura erupted from Li Xiaotian, and in that instant, he looked like a Heavenly God descending to the mortal realm. With a fierce stomp, he brought his foot down.

BOOM! The ground caved in around Li Xiaotian. As for the Red Gold Scorpion Gu King, it was crushed under his foot, utterly obliterated.

PFFT! With his Lifebound Gu's death, the Patriarch of the Yang Family suffered a backlash, violently spewing a mouthful of blood.

Li Xiaotian's eyes flashed. The instant his foot landed, he shot forward. The Heavenly Punishment Blade in his hand blazed with a blinding light as he swung it at the Patriarch's head.

THWACK! A head soared into the sky before rolling across the ground. With a single strike, the Patriarch of the Yang Family was dead.

The entire battlefield fell silent. The Patriarch of the Yang Family, a leader from the Nine Villages and Eighteen Caves, was dead just like that? Everyone stared at Li Xiaotian, their eyes wide with astonishment.

Then, in the next moment, the members of Bai Miao Village erupted into cheers. "The Clan Leader is mighty!"

"The Clan Leader is mighty!"

"Kill them! Kill every last bastard from Heimiao Village!"

The morale of Bai Miao Village surged. For a moment, they managed to halt the advance of Heimiao Village's warriors. Xiao Su and the others' expressions turned grim. They hadn't expected that Li Xiaotian killing the Patriarch of the Yang Family would so effectively rally their enemies.

However, Xiao Su also noticed something else. Although Li Xiaotian had killed his opponent, the effort had taken an immense toll on him. His face was now pale, and his arm was trembling faintly.

"Let's see how long you can last!" Xiao Su snorted, then shouted at the stunned Li Xu, "Li Xu, don't just stand there gawking! Attack!"

Li Xu snapped back to his senses. He glanced around before his gaze locked onto Li Xuan. The Second Elder was currently tied up in his own fight and couldn't intervene. Li Xuan was severely injured. If he could kill her now, it would be a fatal blow to Bai Miao Village.

Putting thought into action, Li Xu slowly approached Li Xuan, raised his palm, and brought it slamming down.

"Grandma, run!" Li Lai screamed, rushing at Li Xu. She slammed into him with all her might, making him stagger backward.

"You're courting death!" Li Xu's expression darkened as he prepared to deliver a fatal strike.

"Sister Li Lai!" Seeing this, the Li Zhou brothers turned pale and immediately abandoned their opponents to rush over.

But they were no match for Li Xu. With two resounding smacks—BANG! BANG!—he sent both brothers flying.

"Don't be in such a hurry. You're all going to die," Li Xu sneered. "After I kill this old crone, I'll deal with you."

Li Xuan pushed Li Lai toward Lin Mu. "Lai Lai, run!" she pleaded, turning to him. "Mr. Lin, I was wrong before. I apologize. Now, I only beg that you take Lai Lai and leave this place of conflict."

"Grandma, I won't go!" Li Lai cried, tears streaming down her face.

Li Xuan shook her head. "Lai Lai, the situation is decided. Go! No matter what happens, we will ensure you escape!"

The Li Zhou brothers scrambled to their feet, shouting as they blocked Li Lai's path. "Go, don't let your grandmother's sacrifice be in vain! Sister Li Lai, hurry and run! We'll hold this traitor back!"

Li Lai just shook her head frantically, weeping in despair.

"Li Xu, capture that wench! The High Priest specifically asked for her!" Xiao Su, still battling Li Xiaotian, roared from a distance. "If she escapes, we're all dead!"

Li Xu's expression changed. He didn't know why, but since it was an order from the High Priest, he had to carry it out. He started walking slowly toward Li Lai.

"You won't lay a single finger on Sister Li Lai!" Li Zhou shouted, his hand trembling as he gripped his blade.

"Get out of my way!" With a single slap, Li Xu sent the brothers flying.

Li Lai instinctively stumbled backward, ending up right next to Lin Mu.

"Third Granduncle, why?" Li Lai asked, her face streaked with tears. "Why did you betray Bai Miao Village?"

"Every man for himself," Li Xu said, his expression icy as his gaze fell upon Lin Mu. "You're coming with me too. Since they say you killed someone from Heimiao Village, you can go confess your sins to the High Priest in person."

"No!" Li Lai's body trembled as she spread her arms to shield Lin Mu. "Let Mr. Lin go! I'll go with you! He's innocent!"

"Do you really think that's an option?" Li Xu slowly shook his head. "He killed Li Yin. He has to die."

"Mr. Lin, run! He won't dare kill me!" Li Lai said, her eyes flashing with determination as she bit her lip.

Just as she was about to lunge at Li Xu, a large hand rested on her shoulder. A calm, gentle voice reached her ears.

"When have I, Lin Mu, ever needed a woman to sacrifice herself to save me? Besides," the voice continued, "killing trash like this is as easy as slaughtering a chicken."

Chapter 264: Bring the Knife!

Li Lai's delicate body trembled. She turned back to look at Lin Mu blankly.

"When did I, Lin Mu, ever need a woman to sacrifice herself to save me? Kill him as if he were a chicken?"

In just a few words, the tenderness did not diminish his dominance, and the dominance revealed a strong disdain. Intense waves and ripples stirred in Li Lai's heart, leaving her slightly dazed for a moment.

As the Saintess of the Li Clan, who had ever spoken to her like this? She had been born and raised in Bai Miao Village, and her heart was pure and clean, like a snow lotus untainted by dust. But at this moment, Lin Mu's words had caused some strange changes in her pure and natural heart.

"Audacious scoundrel!" Lin Mu's words almost drove Li Xu mad.

Kill him like a chicken? Who did this kid think he was?

A few meters away, Li Xu suddenly unleashed a palm strike. His figure did not move, but the wind from his palm was fierce, rushing toward them like a raging gale.

"Run!" Li Lai's face turned pale in an instant.

Lin Mu shook his head, then stepped forward, shielding Li Lai behind him.

"Forget it. If I'm to die, then so be it," Li Lai suddenly said with a bitter laugh, and a trace of tenderness appeared in her eyes as she looked at Lin Mu.

The village is about to be destroyed and my people slaughtered. To hear such wonderful words before I die... that's enough!

A single tear slowly fell from Li Lai's beautiful eyes, adding a touch of tragic beauty to her gorgeous face.

Just as the wind from Li Xu's palm was about to hit Lin Mu, he slowly reached out and grabbed at the empty air. A white light roared, and a white Sword of Light instantly condensed in his palm. Li Lai was blinded by a dazzling brilliance and subconsciously closed her eyes.

When she opened her eyes again, she saw Li Xu standing motionless several meters away. His eyes were wide, as if he had seen something terrifying.

SPURT!

A line of blood suddenly bloomed from between his eyebrows as warm blood sprayed out.

"I told you, killing you is like killing a chicken."

As his voice fell, Li Xu's body split neatly down the middle into two halves.

"Ah!" Li Lai had never seen such a bloody scene. Her pretty face went pale, and she covered her mouth, her eyes filled with terror.

The third-strongest elder in the village... dead just like that? And from beginning to end, Lin Mu didn't even get close to him, did he? How... how is that possible?

As Li Lai came to her senses, her eyes lit up. She grabbed Lin Mu's hand. "Mr. Lin, I beg you, save my granny and my people! Please!"

She understood now. Big Brother Li Zhou and the others weren't lying! Lin Mu really did kill Li Yin with a single poke! The Clan Leader wasn't lying! Lin Mu truly is the Clan Leader's master! Granny was wrong! The whole clan was wrong! Lin Mu is the strongest one!

Lin Mu glanced around and saw that more than half of the Bai Miao Village people were already dead or injured. Even the Second Elder was grievously hurt and barely holding on. Even the strongest of them, Li Xuan, was being forced back under the siege of more than a dozen warriors. Meanwhile, Li Xiaotian, who was battling Xiao Su, seemed to be faltering. His arm trembled more and more violently, and the crimson glow of the Heavenly Punishment Blade grew even more intense.

He hesitated. After all, this is an internal affair of the Li Clan. But... Li Xiaotian is my disciple.

"Mr. Lin, I'm begging you! If you help us, I'll do anything you ask!" Li Lai gripped Lin Mu's hand, her voice cracking with sobs. "I can do laundry and cook. I'll be very obedient. Please!"

Just as Li Lai was about to kneel, Lin Mu let out a long sigh. "Enough. For the sake of my disciple, Xiaotian, I will intervene this one time."

Lin Mu slowly shook his head. If Bai Miao Village were to be wiped out, Li Xiaotian would surely resent him for it. Thinking this, Lin Mu slowly opened his palm.

SWOOSH!

A dazzling beam of sword light shot out, instantly flying toward Xiao Su.

At the same time, Xiao Su felt his scalp tingle as a profound sense of crisis welled up in his heart. Without thinking, he let out a strange whistle.

SKREEEE!

A five-colored spider suddenly descended from the sky, landing behind Xiao Su to block the attack for him.

THUMP! THUMP!

Two sounds of flesh being pierced rang out in quick succession. The colorful spider froze. A large hole had been pierced through its forehead, with countless rays of light swirling within it.

CRACK!

In an instant, the spider's massive body shattered into countless pieces like glass. Xiao Su, who had been shielded by the spider, was also frozen in place. His chest had been pierced through as well.

How... how is this possible?!

With that, Xiao Su collapsed, his eyes wide open in death.

Patriarch Xiao was dead.

This scene drew the attention of nearly everyone on the battlefield. Li Xuan saw Li Lai standing with Lin Mu, their clothes fluttering in the breeze, giving them an almost ethereal air. But Li Xuan had no time to ponder. "Why haven't you left yet? Where's Li Xu?"

Suddenly, she noticed the two halves of a corpse on the ground, and her pupils contracted.

Li Xu, a warrior at the Late Stage of Inner Strength, was dead? And Xiao Su too.

"Granny, Mr. Lin killed Li Xu." Li Lai's voice still trembled as she pointed to Xiao Su's corpse in the distance. "He... Mr. Lin killed him too."

"What?" Li Xuan cried out. "Mr. Lin killed them?"

Everyone stared in shock at Lin Mu, who stood beside Li Lai.

"It seems this old woman judged a man by his appearance," Li Xuan said with a wry smile. "Mr. Lin, you have eliminated the traitors of our Bai Miao Village. This is a kindness we can never repay, and our village will never forget it. This old woman will be shameless enough to ask one more thing of you: please, take Lai Lai and leave. I, Li Xuan, will repay this kindness in the next life!"

"Repayment is unnecessary," Lin Mu said indifferently. "If it weren't for my disciple, I couldn't be bothered with whether you live or die."

Li Xuan's expression stiffened.

"Mr. Lin, I'm sorry. On behalf of my granny and the others, I apologize for their previous disrespect toward you," Li Lai said, bowing deeply.

"Forget it." Lin Mu waved his hand dismissively and slowly stepped forward. "Listen up, people of Heimiao Village! Surrender or die!"

His voice echoed across the area, and a hush fell over the battlefield. Everyone stared blankly at Lin Mu. One man, demanding that the entire Heimiao Village surrender or die? What unbelievable arrogance!

"Hmph! What an arrogant brat!" Patriarch Long and Patriarch Zhao of the Zhao Family snorted coldly. "Even if you killed Xiao Su and the others, our Heimiao Village still has the High Priest! Once he arrives, you are dead for sure!"

"Heh. It would be better if he did come. It would save me the trouble of finding him." Lin Mu's gaze fell upon Patriarch Zhao. "It seems you were the one who told that so-called High Priest about the Sky Star Grass. In that case, you can die too."

As his words fell, Lin Mu gestured with his hand. "Blade, come!"

From a distance, Li Xiaotian, who was struggling to control the Heavenly Punishment Blade, suddenly felt his hand go light as the weapon flew out of his grasp and into his master's.

"It's a fine blade, just too wild. It needs to be tamed." Holding the Heavenly Punishment Blade, Lin Mu flicked it with his finger.

CLANG!

A crisp, metallic ring echoed. Faintly, the crowd seemed to hear a plaintive wail, as if something were begging for mercy.

"Wouldn't it have been better to behave from the start?"

After uttering these puzzling words, Lin Mu raised his arm and casually swung the blade toward Patriarch Zhao. The light of the blade flared as a fierce wind rose!

The next moment, a horrifying scene unfolded before their eyes. Patriarch Zhao's body was instantly shredded into fragments by the blade's light.

A calm voice clearly reached everyone's ears. "If anyone else refuses to submit, feel free to step forward."

Chapter 265: I Am Lin Wudi!

Is there anyone else who dares to challenge me?

If Lin Mu had said these words before, he would have been ridiculed for his arrogance and conceit. But now, no one dared to say such a thing. In fact, no one even dared to breathe too loudly. Lin Mu had already proven his strength with his actions.

"You... who exactly are you?" Patriarch Long stared at Patriarch Zhao's corpse, his entire body trembling.

Lin Mu's previous strike was simply like a divine miracle.

"Blade, come!"

Then, with a single slash, Patriarch Zhao was cleaved into pieces. This wasn't some scene from a movie or a novel. Where in the world could such a person exist?

"I am the master of the Chief of Bai Miao Village," Lin Mu declared, looking down on the crowd with an expression of utter indifference. "Of course, you can also call me Lin Wudi!"

The master of the Chief of Bai Miao Village? Lin Wudi?!

The crowd was shocked by Lin Mu's first statement, but his second left them somewhat confused. The people of the Li Clan lived secluded in the mountains and rarely had contact with the outside world, so naturally, they had no idea what that name represented. Even Patriarch Long, who often interacted with the outside world, was no different.

"Hmph, Lin Wudi!" Patriarch Long took a deep breath. "I don't care if you're invincible or not. You killed people from my Heimiao Village, so today, you must die!"

He pointed confidently at the countless Heimiao Village warriors behind him and proclaimed, "My Heimiao Village has more than two thousand warriors! Killing you will be as easy as turning over my hand!"

"Family Head, you mustn't!"

Just then, an old servant stepped forward from behind Patriarch Long. He looked at Lin Mu with a nervous expression. "You... are you really River City's Lin Wudi?"

Lin Mu remained silent.

The old servant stared intently at him before exclaiming in horror, "It's you! It really is you!"

The old servant suddenly took a large step back, his face turning deathly pale.

"Dragon Servant, what on earth are you talking about?" Patriarch Long bellowed furiously.

"Family Head, we must retreat! This is not a fight we can win! Otherwise, our Long Family will face utter annihilation!" The Dragon Servant was dripping with cold sweat, his gaze toward Lin Mu filled with fear and... reverence!

"Dragon Servant, is he that famous in the outside world?" Patriarch Long asked. The Dragon Servant was the Long Family's liaison with the outside world and was the most informed about external affairs.

"Family Head, he's not just famous, he's a legend!" the Dragon Servant swallowed hard and said with a trembling voice. "That man is the legend of River City, and even a legend in the entire Martial Arts World! It is rumored that Yun Xu, the True Immortal of Thunder Law from the Dragon Tiger Mountain Celestial Master Mansion, died at his hands!"

HISS!

The True Immortal of Thunder Law, Yun Xu, had died at this man's hands?

The people of the Li Clan might not have known about the Celestial Master Mansion, but Yun Xu's name was extremely well-known among the Thunder Mountain Li People. Yun Xu was revered as the True Immortal of Thunder Law precisely because he excelled in the Thunder Law. Many years ago, he had come to Thunder Mountain to comprehend the ways of the Thunder Law and had become acquainted with most of the Family Heads of the Nine Villages Eighteen Caves. They both feared and respected the old Taoist who could command lightning.

But Yun Xu had actually died at the hands of the man standing before them.

The extent of his strength needed no further explanation!

A Martial Arts Grandmaster!

In the vast Southern Sky, besides the mysteriously vanished Ye Nankuang, there wasn't a single Grandmaster in the entire Li Clan! For them, a Martial Arts Grandmaster was a being of legend, with power akin to the High Priest in Heimiao Village, whose magic was said to reach the heavens!

If this man truly was a Martial Arts Grandmaster, as the Dragon Servant claimed, then his two thousand Heimiao Village warriors would be no match for him.

"Mr. Lin... Mr. Lin is a Martial Arts Grandmaster?" Li Xuan felt as if her tongue were tied in knots.

Li Lai's eyes widened as she stared at Lin Mu, little stars twinkling in her gaze.

"Hmph, what nonsense about Lin Wudi!"

Just then, a cold snort echoed. An elder from the Zhao Family stepped forward, his eyes locked on the Heavenly Punishment Blade in Lin Mu's hand.

"The only reason he could kill the Head of the Xiao Family and our Patriarch Zhao is because he's relying on that blade!" the elder declared to the crowd. "Perhaps you don't know, but this blade is an ancestral treasure of an external branch of our Zhao Family. It is rumored to be crafted from the Tiger Soul Fragment, a weapon of the ancient Great God Chiyu. However, ordinary people cannot wield it, including our own Zhao Family. Now that it's fallen into this man's hands, he manages to harness a fraction of its power and dares to call himself invincible!"

"I, Zhao Qian, am the first to disbelieve it!"

As his voice faded, Zhao Qian pointed at Lin Mu. "Boy, hand over what belongs to the Zhao Family. If I'm in a good mood, I might leave your corpse intact. Otherwise..."

"Otherwise what?" Lin Mu said indifferently. "You think you can kill me?"

"Insolence!" Zhao Qian was furious. "You stole the Zhao Family's treasured blade and murdered our Patriarch! This is a blood feud! I will see you torn limb from limb!"

"Kid, are you Lin Wudi or not? I'm giving you one last chance!" Patriarch Long said, pointing at Lin Mu.

"No need." Lin Mu cut him off before he could finish. "Against a disorderly mob like you, what do I, Lin Mu, have to fear? Come on, all of you!"

He wants us to attack all at once?

This Lin Mu's arrogance was enough to devour the heavens. Was he really planning to take on everyone from Heimiao Village by himself? Even if he truly was a Martial Arts Grandmaster, he couldn't possibly kill them all! If they stood still and let him, his arm would go numb long before he finished!

"Mr. Lin, please don't be impulsive!" Li Xuan's expression changed. "The people from Heimiao Village are experts at using despicable and shameless tactics. If they..."

"If Mr. Lin truly wishes to fight, the men of Bai Miao Village also have the strength to battle!"

"There's no need," Lin Mu said lightly. "They're just a few pieces of trash. Killing them is as easy as crushing ants."

"Arrogant!"

"Today, I, Zhao Qian, will let you experience my might!"

Filled with rage, Zhao Qian's figure blurred. He stomped on the ground and shot toward Lin Mu.

"Come and meet your death!"

Zhao Qian threw a punch, the force so fierce it seemed capable of shattering boulders.

Li Lai took several steps back in fear. Li Xuan mobilized her True Yuan, preparing to intervene.

But Lin Mu simply waved one hand casually, as if shooing away a fly.

The next moment, Zhao Qian's body was sent flying backward as if struck by an invisible force. Before he even hit the ground, his body was torn asunder, and he died without so much as a scream.

A deathly silence descended upon the scene.

Just a casual wave of his hand, and Zhao Qian was dead?

This was the strongest expert in the Zhao Family aside from their Patriarch, yet he had been killed instantly by Lin Mu.

Patriarch Long's face changed dramatically, and he stumbled back two steps. The people of Heimiao Village were utterly shocked and retreated in unison.

"Excellent!" Li Xuan was so deeply shocked she couldn't help but cry out. "In the past, Guan Yu beheaded Hua Xiong while his wine was still warm. Today, Mr. Lin annihilates Zhao Qian with a wave of his hand! A truly great man indeed!"

Li Lai's beautiful eyes sparkled.

Lin Mu slowly walked toward Patriarch Long and the others, his expression calm.

The Dragon Servant swallowed hard. "Family Head, we should retreat."

"Retreat?" A miserable look crossed Patriarch Long's face. "Have you forgotten the High Priest's order? If we can't eradicate Bai Miao Village today, we will all be thrown into the Dragon Lair!"

The hearts of the other leaders trembled. It seemed the thought of being thrown into the Dragon Lair was even more terrifying than facing Lin Mu.

"If that's the case, then we fight!"

The various leaders and chiefs of the villages steeled their expressions with grim resolve.

"Prepare the formation! Begin the Gu ritual!"

Chapter 266: One Man Defeats a Thousand!

BOOM!

The moment his words fell, Patriarch Long shot into the sky. The remaining Family Heads and Clan Leaders of the Nine Villages Eighteen Caves let out a unified roar and soared into the air one after another.

At the very peak, Patriarch Long stood on the shoulders of two men. Below him, those two stood on the shoulders of three. This continued down the line, ultimately forming a human pyramid.

At the same time, the two thousand warriors from Heimiao Village sat in a circle around them. Some spat out snakes and insects, while others opened pouches to release mice and ants. In short, each of these two thousand men brought forth their own Lifebound Gu.

After releasing their Lifebound Gu, they all shouted in unison, spitting a mouthful of blood onto the Gu Insects. The countless Gu Insects shrieked as one, instantly taking flight and landing upon the human pyramid.

BOOM!

The aura of the dozen or so men in the pyramid suddenly swelled, and a brilliant green light erupted from them. From a distance, the human pyramid looked like a gigantic centipede.

"Mr. Lin, that's the Nine-Linked Centipede Formation from Heimiao Village!" Li Xuan's face paled as she warned him urgently. "It requires nine people to establish, but it has many variations. The more people involved, the stronger it becomes!"

"This centipede formation can even rival a Grandmaster!"

"Boy, I don't care if you're the real Lin Wudi or not," declared Patriarch Long, who controlled the nexus of the formation—the centipede's head—as he looked down from his lofty perch. "I'll give you one last warning: get out of here and don't meddle in the affairs of the Li Clan!"

His voice was so thunderous that it caused many in the crowd to spit up blood.

"Since you know I am Lin Wudi, you should kneel and await your death!" Lin Mu stood alone with his blade before the centipede formation. "Besides, even if you hadn't come for me, I would have come for you!"

"Mr. Lin, don't underestimate them!" Li Xuan reminded him. "With nine people, this Nine-Linked Centipede Formation is as powerful as a hundred men!"

"As powerful as a hundred men?" Lin Mu's expression was indifferent. "So what if it's as powerful as a thousand? I'll kill them all the same!"

"Today, none of you will escape!"

As his voice faded, Lin Mu moved, his foot slowly descending.

THUD!

Though it was a simple step, the moment his foot landed, the entire ground trembled violently.

"Heavenly Emperor Nine Steps—One Step, Rivers Shatter!"

Unlike the Heavenly Emperor Nine Steps previously used by Li Xiaotian, Lin Mu **was** the Heavenly Emperor. His single step instantly disrupted the flow of the Great Array's energy.

"Not good!" Patriarch Long bellowed. "Change formation!"

Immediately, the human pyramid transformed, and the giant centipede shifted along with it, rearing its head to spew a cloud of green mist.

"Be careful! That mist is highly toxic!" Li Xuan shouted another warning. Li Lai and the others clenched their sweaty fists in suspense.

"Petty tricks." Lin Mu sneered. Holding the blade in his right hand, he made a light grasping motion with his left. "First Form of Demon Slayer—Demonslaying Hand!"

RUMBLE!

A colossal black hand, crackling with immense and terrifying power, materialized and seized the centipede by the scruff of its neck.

"Rise!"

With a soft cry from Lin Mu, the massive centipede was effortlessly lifted and hurled away.

SPURT! SPURT! SPURT!

Patriarch Long and the others spat out mouthfuls of blood in unison. Just as they were about to reform the formation, a giant foot descended from the sky.

"Heavenly Emperor Nine Steps—Terrify Ghosts and Gods with the Second Step!"

The sole of the foot came crashing down. As if made of paper, the centipede was instantly obliterated. Many of the Family Heads forming it were tragically crushed to death by the stomp.

Patriarch Long coughed up a huge mouthful of blood, his face a mask of shock and despair. He never imagined that the formation they had painstakingly assembled would be shattered by just a few moves.

"Go! Split up and run!" Patriarch Long no longer had time to worry about being thrown into the Dragon Lair by the High Priest. Staying here meant certain death!

"Escape!"

The surviving Family Heads scattered and fled. As they fled, the Heimiao Village warriors, their faces pale from the formation's backlash, also began to scramble away in a panic.

"Trying to escape?" Lin Mu's eyes narrowed. "I said that none of you would get away."

He flicked the Heavenly Punishment Blade in his hand.

"If you don't want your souls to be utterly destroyed, then kill for me!"

As his voice fell, an endless white light streamed from Lin Mu's body, pouring into the Heavenly Punishment Blade.

ROAR!

After entering the blade, the once-white light turned a deep crimson. A spectral image emerged from the blade, hovering in the air. It was a colossal tiger!

Witnessing this, everyone was shocked into silence, gazing at Lin Mu as if he were a deity. In that moment, he was almost no different from the Great God Chiyou, the ancestor of the Li Clan.

"Go."

Lin Mu waved his hand. The giant tiger in the sky roared at the heavens before its form instantly dispersed, transforming into hundreds, even thousands, of tiger phantoms. The moment the phantoms appeared, they shot off in every direction.

Each phantom was a streak of blade energy!

Patriarch Long, already hundreds of meters away, instinctively glanced back and witnessed a sight he would never forget. Amidst the howling phantoms, the bodies of the Heimiao Village clansmen were pierced through one after another.

Blooms of blood blossomed in the air as life after life was mercilessly reaped. Patriarch Long and the other Family Heads could only let out a final, horrified scream before the tiger phantoms pierced their bodies, ending their lives and scattering their spirits.

Within a few short breaths, every last person from Heimiao Village was dead.

ROAR!

With a final roar, the tiger phantoms converged, reforming into the giant tiger before diving back into the Heavenly Punishment Blade and falling silent.

For a moment, the entire field was silent. Only Lin Mu stood with his blade in hand, his clothes rustling in the wind. All eyes were fixed on his figure, the shock in their hearts lingering.

The formidable forces of Heimiao Village—two thousand warriors from the Nine Villages Eighteen Caves—had been dismantled by Lin Mu alone. What was the difference between such a man and a god?

And yet, his methods were so ruthless! Over two thousand people, all dead.

As they stared at his back, the same two lines surfaced in everyone's mind:

"A glorious Heavenly Being, descending upon the mortal world!"

An overwhelming killing intent, that not even the heavens can conceal!"

"Mr. Lin, please accept this old woman's bow!" Li Xuan walked over and bowed deeply to Lin Mu. "If it weren't for you today, Mr. Lin, our Bai Miao Village would have been annihilated. Your immense kindness... I..."

BOOM!

Just then, a clap of thunder echoed from the sky above.

Everyone looked up sharply. There, hidden within the dark clouds, was the face of an old man. He looked like a celestial envoy, his cold gaze sweeping over all creation.

Finally, his gaze settled on Lin Mu.

"You've gone too far, Lin Wudi!" The old man's expression contorted, his words brimming with overwhelming hatred. "You first killed my disciple and my junior martial brother, and today you've annihilated my people. This feud will not end until one of us is dead!"

"I will be waiting for you in Heimiao Village. If you don't come, I will personally go to River City. I will slaughter your family and friends, and use their blood to appease the spirits of my fallen clansmen!"

Chapter 267: The High Priest of the Black Miao!

"High Priest of Heimiao Village!"

"Li Xiaofeng!"

"It's that beast!"

The people of Bai Miao Village were instantly enraged, yet a hint of fear lingered beneath their anger. The High Priest's fearsome reputation had truly seeped into the very bones of every member of the Li Clan.

"Since you're seeking death, I'll be happy to send you on your way," Lin Mu said, glancing at the sky before casually throwing a punch toward it.

BOOM!

The projection of the High Priest was shattered with a single blow. Faintly, an enraged roar echoed from the distance.

"Lin Wudi, I swear I will kill you..."

Lin Mu simply curled his lip and said nonchalantly, "If threats were effective, your Heimiao Village would have unified the Li Clan long ago."

Seeing Lin Mu shatter the High Priest's projection with one punch, the people from Bai Miao Village erupted in cheers. In their hearts, Lin Mu was now a god.

"Master, I will go with you tomorrow!" Li Xiaotian said earnestly as he approached.

"Good."

「Dawn had just broken.」

On a mountaintop dozens of miles from Bai Miao Village, Li Xuan and her companions stood with tense expressions, gazing in a certain direction. Standing before them was a slender young man with a calm demeanor.

"Mr. Lin, that's Heimiao Village over there," Li Xuan said, her tone heavy as she pointed to a distant village.

The stakes had been made clear to Lin Mu: Xiao Su and the others were dead, and the High Priest had issued a challenge via a projection in the sky. But Lin Mu remained unfazed. Thus, she had no choice but

to lead the able-bodied youth of Bai Miao Village, those who could still fight, to follow him. The conflict between Heimiao and Bai Miao had already reached a dire point. It was time to risk it all.

With his hands clasped behind his back, Lin Mu surveyed the location of Heimiao Village. He noticed that above the mountains behind the village, the clouds were dense and grim, lingering without dissipating.

Lin Mu's lips curled into a smirk. "These clouds are quite interesting," he said, as if he had found something amusing.

Immediately, Lin Mu began walking towards Heimiao Village, and Li Xuan's group hurried to keep pace. Along the way, however, they discovered that the village was completely unguarded. It was as if the entire population of Heimiao Village had vanished into thin air.

"Master, be cautious. It could be a trap," Li Xiaotian warned.

"He's right. That beast Li Xiaofeng is incredibly treacherous. Everyone, be careful," Li Xuan added.

"It doesn't matter," Lin Mu replied with a faint smile. "In my presence, all schemes are shattered with a single punch."

His expression was calm. He had dared to accept the invitation because he was supremely confident in his own strength. Li Xuan and the others, however, did not dare to be so careless, and their nerves were stretched taut. They did not possess Lin Mu's overwhelming power, which was capable of Shattering Thousand Laws.

The group delved deeper into Heimiao Village. Aside from the faint scent of blood hanging in the air, they didn't see a single soul. The source of the blood was a great hall within the village—though calling it a "great hall" was an overstatement. It was merely a rudimentary stone house.

As the group approached the hall, a sight that made their pupils constrict appeared before them. The hall was piled high with corpses of all kinds: human, animal, snakes, insects, and other vermin. The bodies were in a horrific state, like desiccated corpses, as if all their flesh and essence had been devoured.

At the very center of the pile of bodies sat an old man in a black robe. His head was bowed, his long hair obscuring his face. In his hands, he cradled an ancient, small cauldron.

"High Priest!"

Upon seeing this man, the expressions of Li Xuan and the others turned incredibly grave. Li Lai let out a frightened cry and subconsciously moved closer to Lin Mu.

"So, you're Lin Wudi?"

An ice-cold voice arose as the old man slowly lifted his head, revealing a face completely covered in tattoos. His face was a canvas of so many overlapping patterns that it was impossible to distinguish what they depicted. The only clear features were his eyes. They were sunken, harboring two bead-sized flames that emitted a cold, spectral glow. He looked like a Ghost.

"You are the High Priest of Heimiao Village?" Lin Mu asked, stepping into the hall and looking at the old man indifferently.

"Heh heh. You've finally come!" the High Priest sneered, his voice dripping with venom. "My disciple and junior martial brother both died at your hands, and now you've killed my clansmen as well. This hatred is so deep that not even all the waters of the Yellow River could wash it away."

"I don't know who your disciple and junior martial brother are, but looking at you, they couldn't have been good people. Killing them was no loss," Lin Mu replied nonchalantly.

"Good! Very good!" the High Priest laughed in a fury. "In that case, I'll make sure you die knowing the reason! My junior martial brother's name was Ding Fengqiu, and my disciple's was Yuwen Jing. They were killed by you, were they not?!"

Realization dawned on Lin Mu.

"What an unexpected bonus on this trip," Lin Mu smiled. "It seems you're also with the Dark Web."

"Dark Web? I know nothing of it!" the High Priest sneered. "But all my kin died at your hands, so you must die as well!"

"Li Xiaofeng, I think you've truly gone mad!" Li Xiaotian stepped forward and declared, "All those years ago, you led a rebellion and committed the abhorrent acts of patricide and betraying your clan. What right do you have to say such things now?"

His hatred for the High Priest seeped into his very bones. He had come this time with the intention of killing the man with his own hands.

"Li Xiaotian?" The High Priest seemed to have just recognized him, and a grotesque smile twisted his lips. "Excellent. Since you've all come, then all of you shall remain."

As his words fell, he slapped the small cauldron in his hand.

CLANG!

The cauldron's lid flew off, and a skeletal scorpion shot out from within. Its tail quivered, letting out a sharp, piercing scream.

As the sound rang out, everyone felt an unnaturally cold aura wash over them, flooding their minds. Their heads spun, and many of them staggered, unable to stand firm. At the same time, streams of black mist seeped from the countless corpses on the ground, coalescing into spectral faces contorted in silent screams.

"This is... the Soul Devouring Gu from the Li Clan Ancestral Code!" Li Xuan's face paled, and she retreated in horror. "It's rumored this Gu is incredibly difficult to cultivate, so destructive to the natural order that our ancestors sealed it away. I can't believe you secretly cultivated it!"

The Soul Devouring Gu could control ten thousand Gu—even ten thousand ghosts! It was the true Gu King of Gu Kings!

"So that's it!" Li Xiaotian suddenly understood, his voice filled with hatred. "You betrayed the clan all those years ago just to refine the Soul Devouring Gu, and now you've even slaughtered the people of Heimiao Village! Li Xiaofeng, you are utterly heartless!"

He finally understood why everyone in Heimiao Village was dead. They had been killed by their own High Priest.

"Hahaha, so what?" the High Priest jeered. "A general's success is built on a pile of ten thousand bones. It is their honor to contribute what little they could to my Soul Devouring Gu!"

"Madman!" the crowd cursed, but the sound from the Soul Devouring Gu was becoming too much for them to bear.

Li Xiaotian spat out a mouthful of blood and collapsed to the ground. "Master, go, quickly! This Soul Devouring Gu attacks the soul directly! There's no way to block it!" he yelled, urging Lin Mu to escape while enduring the agony racking his soul.

"That may not be the case."

Lin Mu smiled faintly. His qi sank into his Dantian. His lips moved slightly, and then he let out a powerful roar.

"Heavenly Dragon Eight Sounds!"

Chapter 268: Mr. Lin Truly is a Marvel!

ROAR!

A dragon's roar burst forth from Lin Mu, like ten thousand dragons roaring at once, shaking the heavens and the earth. Visible dragon shadows swept out from him in all directions.

Along their path, all Gu Insects and remnant souls exploded.

The Gu Insects dissolved into a blood-red mist!

The remnant souls vanished completely!

CRACK!

The great stone hall groaned under the unbearable strain, swaying as if it might collapse at any moment.

Everyone's expressions changed as they frantically fled the hall.

The High Priest was no better off. The Golden Scorpion Gu King floating before him was caught in the dragon shadows, and its body crumbled into dust as if weathered by a thousand years.

PFFT!

As his Lifebound Gu died, the High Priest suffered a backlash. He vomited a mouthful of fresh blood and was sent flying backward by the shockwave.

BOOM!

The High Priest slammed into the hall's wall. Unable to bear the strain, the entire structure collapsed with a final, deafening roar, burying him under the rubble as dust and debris filled the air.

When the dragon's roar faded and the shockwaves ceased, Li Xuan and the others stared at the scene, their mouths agape. Their entire worldview had just been shattered.

The mighty Great Priest of Heimiao Village had used the lifeblood of his entire tribe to cultivate the Soul Devouring Gu, only for it to be reduced to nothing by a single roar from Lin Mu? Even the High Priest himself had been sent flying?

"Cough, cough!"

A pained cough echoed from within the ruins.

BANG! Debris flew as a figure burst from the wreckage, landing atop the rubble.

It was the High Priest! He no longer possessed his previous imposing air. Instead, his hair was a mess, his clothes were in tatters, and he looked utterly wretched. His face was also streaked with blood. He had clearly suffered significant injuries from the sonic attack.

"How is this possible? How can this be possible!" Staring at the ruined hall and the empty cauldron, the High Priest let out a wail and spewed another mouthful of blood.

The Soul Devouring Gu was something he had painstakingly cultivated. In terms of potential and power, it was easily the equal of a Martial Arts Grandmaster. Furthermore, the High Priest had sacrificed his entire tribe for the sole purpose of cultivating this Soul Devouring Gu for his future plans. But now, it had been obliterated by a single shout!

"Who exactly are you?" the High Priest demanded, staring at Lin Mu with a mixture of resentment and horror. "You're no ordinary Martial Arts Grandmaster!"

"Who I am is unimportant," Lin Mu said calmly, his hands clasped behind his back. "You only need to know that I am the one who has come to kill you."

Taking deliberate steps, Lin Mu slowly advanced on the High Priest.

The High Priest suddenly gritted his teeth and kicked a massive boulder.

BOOM! The rock, weighing several hundred pounds, shot toward Lin Mu like a cannonball, generating a terrifying gust of wind.

Lin Mu simply shook his head. "This is useless against me."

Without any discernible movement from him, the boulder disintegrated into fine gravel just before it could strike. Lin Mu remained completely unaffected.

The High Priest's pupils shrank. External Power Martial Artists could release their True Qi, and Inner Strength Martial Artists could control it to kill, but a Grandmaster's control over True Qi was said to have reached the Transformative Realm. Yet he hadn't felt the slightest ripple of True Qi from Lin Mu just now. This man was no ordinary Martial Arts Grandmaster!

Taking a deep breath, the High Priest moved quickly, kicking boulder after boulder toward Lin Mu. He knew it was a futile attack, intended only to stall for time.

As expected, Lin Mu merely waved his hand. The boulders, each weighing several hundred pounds, were effortlessly swept aside and sent flying back toward the High Priest.

At the same time, the High Priest let out a low roar and scrambled backward toward the mountain wall, as the great hall had been built right against it.

CRACK!

The High Priest pressed his palm against a specific spot on the rock face. With a sharp click, a hidden passageway was revealed. He shot Lin Mu one last cold glare before diving inside.

BOOM!

The stone door slid shut just as the air filled with the sound of whirring projectiles.

"Get down!" Lin Mu's eyes narrowed. The area was rigged with hidden traps.

SWISH! SWISH! SWISH!

Countless arrows rained down from all directions, mixed with shells that burst to release clouds of poison smoke.

The people of Bai Miao Village dove to the ground, but some reacted too slowly. They were either pierced by arrows or caught in the poison shells, dying instantly.

Li Lai was pale with fright, frozen to the spot and unable to react.

"Lai Lai, get down!" Li Xuan cried out, her expression changing drastically. She moved to protect her granddaughter, but an arrow flew straight at her.

Li Xuan caught the arrow out of the air, but a volley of even more arrows and poison shells immediately whistled toward her, threatening to overwhelm her.

Seeing this, Lin Mu shook his head slightly. With a single movement, he vanished from his spot.

The next moment, Li Lai felt a strong hand wrap around her waist. She cried out in shock and was about to resist when a familiar voice sounded in her ear.

"Don't move."

The familiar voice and the masculine presence instantly told Li Lai it was Lin Mu, and she immediately went still.

The assault of arrows and shells lasted for several minutes before finally ceasing. In that short time, more than a dozen people from Bai Miao Village had died, and many more were injured.

Worse, the projectiles were laced with deadly poison. If not treated promptly, the consequences would be dire. Fortunately, the people of Bai Miao Village were also experts in medicine and could treat the wounds once they returned to their village.

"Grandmother, are you alright?" Li Lai cried, seeing an arrow protruding from Li Xuan's palm. She immediately broke free from Lin Mu's arms and ran to Li Xuan's side.

"I'm fine," Li Xuan replied. She calmly pulled the arrow from her palm and asked, "What about you?"

"I... I'm fine." Recalling being held in a man's arms just a moment ago, Li Lai's cheeks flushed red. "Mr. Lin saved me."

"Thank you, Mr. Lin." Seeing her granddaughter's reaction, Li Xuan sighed inwardly. "We intended to lend you a hand, Mr. Lin," she said aloud, "but it seems we nearly became a burden instead."

Lin Mu shook his head. "It's nothing."

Seeing the heavy casualties among the people of Bai Miao Village, Lin Mu said, "You should take your wounded back first. I will pursue the High Priest."

He had just scanned the area with his Divine Soul but had not detected the Sky Star Grass. It must be on the High Priest's person. Besides, that small cauldron he carries... it looks somewhat familiar.

"But..." Li Xuan hesitated.

"Master, I'm going with you," Li Xiaotian said, gritting his teeth. "I won't rest until I see Li Xiaofeng dead with my own eyes!"

"We will as well," Li Xuan added quickly.

"Suit yourselves." Lin Mu shook his head and walked toward the stone door.

"Mr. Lin, this door is made of solid iron. It won't be easy to break through," Li Xuan said helplessly. "The mechanism has been destroyed. Even if we could open it, the High Priest would be long gone."

"Stand back. I'll give it a try." Lin Mu glanced at the door, then focused his True Qi in his Dantian and slammed a fist against it. "Break!"

The punch, carrying immense weight and force, shattered the iron door instantly.

The people of Bai Miao Village stared, mouths agape, their minds deeply shaken.

"Mr. Lin is truly a divine being!"

Chapter 269: Tread the Heavens, One Strike, Slay the Dragon!

"Master, allow me to go in first."

The stone gate shattered, revealing the passageway behind it. A cold wind blew, sending shivers down everyone's spine. Who knew what dangers lay hidden beyond this passageway.

"There's no need."

Lin Mu shook his head and walked straight into the passage. Behind him, Li Xiaotian and the others hurriedly followed.

As expected, the passageway was riddled with traps. But before Lin Mu, they were all useless; he disarmed every single one. The group once again witnessed Lin Mu's immense strength.

The passage continued upwards, and it seemed like it would take a long time to reach the end.

"You all follow slowly. I'll go on ahead."

The longer he delayed, the greater the chance the High Priest had to escape. Lin Mu didn't want to waste any more time. He increased his speed, dashing toward the depths of the passageway. His speed was so immense that no one behind him could keep up. Moving at his top speed, Lin Mu emerged from the tunnel in just a few minutes.

The end of the passageway opened out onto a mountaintop. Here, vegetation was sparse and boulders were strewn about. The ground was littered with countless ominous white bones. In the center of the mountaintop was a deep Cold Pool.

At this moment, the High Priest stood beside the Cold Pool. Seeing Lin Mu had caught up so quickly, the High Priest's expression changed drastically.

"How did you get in?"

After all, that gate was made of cast iron. Even if Lin Mu is a Martial Arts Grandmaster, it should have taken him a considerable amount of time to break it down and disable all the traps along the way.

"High Priest, it doesn't matter how many tricks you have. I can break them all with pure force," Lin Mu said, shaking his head. "Now, if you have any schemes left, feel free to use them."

The High Priest's expression flickered, and finally, he gritted his teeth. "You forced my hand!"

Then, he knelt by the Cold Pool and cried out, "Divine Dragon, I beg you to act and save my life!"

Divine Dragon? So this Cold Pool is the so-called Dragon Lair of Heimiao Village. Lin Mu now understood.

"ROAR!"

Following the High Priest's cry, a roar filled with brutality and cruelty emanated from the depths of the Cold Pool.

The High Priest was overjoyed. "Divine Dragon, I beg you to save me!"

After speaking, he gritted his teeth, snapped off his own arm, and tossed it into the Cold Pool.

"ROAR!"

Another roar echoed from within the Cold Pool as a massive figure, more than twenty meters long, burst from the water's surface. It was a giant python covered in dark scales. Clutched in its massive jaws was the severed arm. It towered in the Cold Pool, its body exuding a terrifying, cold, and bloody aura.

Li Xiaotian and the others, who had just emerged from the passageway, were so shocked by the scene they were rendered speechless. Some of the tribespeople collapsed to the ground, overwhelmed with terror.

This is the Divine Dragon that Heimiao Village faithfully worships? Even if Mr. Li is that powerful, can he really defeat this thing?

"Divine Dragon, this man killed my people, and now he wants to kill you! Kill him! Kill him quickly!" the High Priest yelled, looking at the giant python with an adoring expression, his tone incredibly respectful.

"ROAR!"

As if it understood the High Priest, the giant python fixed its fierce gaze on Lin Mu. Its lantern-like eyes flickered with a bone-chilling killing intent.

"Heh, just a mere beast, and you dare call yourself a Divine Dragon?" Lin Mu scoffed. "Today, I will slay you myself and stop you from harming anyone else!"

The giant python reeked of blood, and judging by the white bones scattered on the ground, it had clearly devoured many people.

"Impudence! How dare a commoner like you insult the Divine Dragon?" the High Priest raged, pointing at Lin Mu. "Divine Dragon, please, strike down this faithless man!"

"ROAR!"

The giant python, apparently provoked by Lin Mu's words, roared and spat out a cloud of foul, poisonous mist.

"Hmph!"

Lin Mu waved his hand, and a sudden gust of wind scattered the mist completely.

"Godslayer Finger!"

Lin Mu's assault didn't stop there. He extended a finger, gathering spiritual energy at its tip.

"HISS!"

A sound sharp enough to pierce eardrums rang out. The spiritual energy on Lin Mu's finger whistled forth, instantly transforming into a colossal finger that jabbed toward the giant python.

Witnessing this, Li Xuan and the others were once again speechless.

So, Li Zhou and the others weren't lying. Mr. Lin really did kill Li Yin with a single finger. But will it be useful against the Divine Dragon?

"ROAR!"

The giant python bellowed, opened its cavernous mouth, and swallowed the finger of condensed spiritual energy in one gulp. As soon as the finger was swallowed, it exploded into pure energy, rampaging wildly inside the giant python's body.

"BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!"

The giant python's body thrashed violently, causing the very ground to tremble.

"Hahaha! Lin Wudi, it's useless!" the High Priest laughed maniacally. "The Divine Dragon's power is immense; you are no match for it!" He knew the Divine Dragon's capabilities all too well.

"Is that so?" Lin Mu said with a faint smile. "Even if you were a real Divine Dragon, I would still slay you today!"

As his words fell, everyone gasped in shock, their mouths hanging open.

Slay a dragon?

"Mr. Lin, you mustn't!" Li Xuan's face paled. "This Divine Dragon is too powerful! You can't defeat it!"

However, Lin Mu was unmoved.

"He's gone mad! Completely mad!" Li Xuan trembled, wanting to flee.

The High Priest, however, looked at Lin Mu with a venomous expression, as if staring at a dead man.

Just as Li Xuan grabbed Li Lai, about to turn and flee, she suddenly heard a crisp sound. It was the sound of a blade being drawn from its sheath.

"CLANG!"

The Heavenly Punishment Blade on Li Xiaotian's back flew from its scabbard and landed firmly in Lin Mu's palm.

"BOOM!"

Then, a scene unfolded that stunned everyone. Holding the Heavenly Punishment Blade, Lin Mu took a step forward. His foot didn't land on the ground but in mid-air, as if he were climbing an invisible staircase.

"Treading the Heavens?!" Li Xuan screamed, then quickly covered her mouth, her body trembling with excitement.

The High Priest looked as if he had seen a ghost.

Lin Mu ascended step by step, his figure slowly rising higher. At the same time, a powerful might erupted from his body like a volcano. The red glow of the Heavenly Punishment Blade in his hand grew increasingly brilliant, overshadowing all other colors.

"Heavenly Emperor Nine Steps—Four Steps Stars Tremble!"

The world shook. Within the Starry Sea, countless stars quivered, altering their courses. Lin Mu seemed to be walking on a path of stars, finally coming to a stop high in the air, less than two meters from the giant python.

He gripped the Heavenly Punishment Blade tightly. The blade's aura instantly swelled by dozens of feet, becoming a blade of tyranny, a blade of a Demon Slayer! An astonishing blade intent condensed on the Heavenly Punishment Blade, which let out a roar as if quivering with excitement.

The giant python seemed to sense the danger as well. The overwhelming killing aura caused its scales to stand on end. Its body thrashed violently, and amid the trembling ground, the python tried to retreat back into the Cold Pool.

"Slash!"

Lin Mu's expression was icy. The Heavenly Punishment Blade in his hand erupted with a world-shaking light that spanned across heaven and earth. Everyone instinctively shut their eyes, feeling as if that single strike could tear the very fabric of reality.

The next second.

The blade light sliced through the giant python standing in the Cold Pool. An agonizing, despairing roar echoed across the land.

"SPLASH!"

A shower of blood rained down as the giant python was cleaved in two.

The python's corpse crashed into the Cold Pool with a THUD, sending water splashing everywhere.

Everyone's eyes snapped open just in time to witness the python being slain and falling into the water. For a moment, they all stared blankly, the only image in their minds that of Lin Mu standing aloft in the air.

Tread the Heavens, One Strike, Slay the Dragon

Chapter 270: Mountain and River Cauldron, Sky Star Grass!

"Tread the Heavens, One Strike, Slay the Dragon!"

Everyone's vision froze at this moment, which became the most unforgettable memory of their lives. Many even fell to their knees, prostrating themselves in worship before the airborne Lin Mu and proclaiming him a Heavenly God!

Li Lai's small mouth fell open in disbelief, but the adoration in her eyes was impossible to hide.

"No!"

The High Priest watched as the Divine Dragon's body was split in two, and he let out a piercing, desperate scream. He truly couldn't believe what he was seeing, but the reality was undeniable.

The Divine Dragon was dead, sliced into two halves by a single strike.

Blood rained down, splattering across the entire mountaintop. The warm liquid splashed onto his face and body, making the scene all the more real.

"Lin Wudi, you killed the Divine Dragon! You will surely be cursed!" the High Priest shrieked, his face contorted with venomous hatred. "The Heavens will not spare you, and neither will the Great God Chiyu!"

"Pah!" Li Lai couldn't stand her idol being cursed like this. "High Priest, you betrayed the Great God Chiyou and the ancestral teachings of the Li Clan long ago! If anyone deserves retribution, it's you!"

Li Lai's voice echoed in the ears of the crowd, and their expressions began to shift.

Yes, the High Priest was the traitor who had betrayed the Great God Chiyou. He had violated the ancestral teachings of the Li Clan. He committed patricide and matricide! He slaughtered his own kin! He practiced the forbidden techniques of the Li Clan! These were all his crimes!

The people of Bai Miao Village began to shout in unison.

"That's right, the High Priest is the traitor!"

"You will face retribution!"

"Hahaha!" The High Priest suddenly burst into laughter. "Retribution? Betrayal? You fools are nothing but frogs in a well! You violated the clan's rules by bringing an outsider here, so you will face retribution as well!"

BOOM!

The moment the High Priest's voice fell, a thunderclap that echoed for thousands of miles ripped through the Nine Heavens.

CRACK!

Immediately after, a massive bolt of lightning, visible from all across the Southern Sky, struck deep within Thunder Mountain. The roar was deafening, the spectacle astonishing. Countless people cowered on the ground, trembling as they prayed for the Heavenly God's forgiveness.

「Heimiao Village.」

Everyone stared, their mouths agape in shock, as the thunderbolt incinerated the High Priest.

The High Priest is dead? Killed by a lightning strike? Is this retribution?

At this thought, everyone turned to look at Lin Mu in the sky. Their gazes were fervent, their cheers thunderous.

Lin Mu, however, simply shook his head. That thunderbolt was merely the Thunder Dragon, which had just awakened. It had spat out a single bolt of lightning that killed the insolent High Priest. As for the misunderstanding among the people from Bai Miao Village, he couldn't be bothered to explain.

Instead, his gaze suddenly turned toward the Cold Pool, his eyebrows slightly raised. With a wave of his hand, a white pearl the size of an infant's fist flew out from the giant python's corpse.

This vile creature's cultivation level wasn't weak. It actually managed to form an inner core. Lin Mu shook his head. What a pity. Although the giant python formed an inner core, its methods were crude. That's why I could kill it with a single strike. If it had truly been on the path of daemon cultivation, even I would have needed to expend some effort to slay it.

His brow suddenly furrowed. But... why does this daemon core feel so strange? It's as if...

"Drain the Cold Pool!" he ordered, turning to the dumbfounded Li Xuan and the others.

「Half an hour later.」

The water from the Cold Pool was drained. When everyone saw what was inside, their eyes narrowed, and Li Lai let out a cry of alarm.

The Cold Pool was filled with piles of skeletons! Though it was over a hundred meters across, the entire basin was packed with innumerable bones. Some were crushed to fragments, while others remained eerily intact. There were human skeletons mixed with those of various animals, and some bones were of creatures nobody could identify.

"Vile creature!" Li Xuan couldn't help but curse. A single glance at the skeletons in the pool revealed the horrifying number of lives this so-called Dragon Lair had consumed. The others reacted with similar horror and disgust.

Only Lin Mu's gaze was firmly fixed on the depths of the Cold Pool, where a skeleton a dozen meters long lay. The skeleton had long since decayed, but it still emitted a towering presence and a thick Evil Qi. Beneath it lay a row of head-sized eggs, though most were now just hollow shells, as if whatever was inside had hatched long ago and left.

Lin Mu glanced at Li Xuan. "Is this place often hit by thunderstorms, with weather so severe it seems apocalyptic?"

Li Xuan looked surprised but answered honestly. "Yes, that's true. Before the Li Clan split, this area was plagued by constant thunderstorms and torrential rain, year-round, even during the day. Many times, our people believed it was a Divine Punishment from the heavens, a sign of the apocalypse. In my lifetime, I've encountered it twice, and other instances are recorded in our ancestral texts. That is why this place is known as Thunder Mountain."

Lin Mu pointed at the skeleton at the bottom of the Cold Pool. "It's all because of that!" he said. "If I'm not mistaken, this skeleton belonged to a Jiaolong that had achieved considerable cultivation but failed in its attempt to transform into a dragon.

"During the founding of the nation, the Grand Ancestor himself decreed that no creature may achieve sentience. As the ruler of the nation, he held the Mandate of Heaven. His word was law, a heavenly edict! Therefore, in this realm, any creature that attempts to gain spiritual power will face the ruthless suppression of the Heavenly Dao.

"As this Jiaolong's power grew, it periodically drew the attention of the Heavenly Dao, which is why this place suffers from frequent heavenly lightning. Ultimately, when the Jiaolong could no longer postpone its draconic transformation, the power of the Heavenly Dao surged exponentially. The Jiaolong could not escape and was annihilated.

"However, the Jiaolong's death attracted other creatures from the surrounding mountains. That giant python must have seized the opportunity to enter the Cold Pool and cultivate, using the Jiaolong's residual spiritual essence to form its own inner core.

"The High Priest must have struck a deal with the giant python. He would faithfully serve his 'Divine Dragon,' and in return, the beast would help him control Heilmiao Village and, eventually, unify the entire Li Clan. A pity for them that I was the one who ended up killing it."

Li Xuan and the others listened, utterly dumbfounded. They never imagined such a complex history lay hidden here.

"The High Priest got what he deserved!" Li Xuan said, unable to restrain herself. "With so many bodies in the Cold Pool, who knows how many people he harmed!"

Li Xiaotian also wore a sorrowful expression. It was now clear that the High Priest's betrayal of the clan had been instigated by this so-called Divine Dragon.

Lin Mu shook his head. The High Priest had brought it all on himself; his death was not worth pitying.

He handed the Heavenly Punishment Blade back to Li Xiaotian. With a sweep of his Divine Sense, his eyes suddenly lit up. He sensed a potent fluctuation of energy coming from the Jiaolong's skeleton.

With this thought, Lin Mu turned his gaze back to where the High Priest had stood before.

There, on the ground, lay a small cauldron. Beside it was a nine-leafed grass emitting a faint, star-like glow.

"The Mountain and River Cauldron and the Sky Star Grass!"