

War God 331

Chapter 331: Are you talking about this garbage?

River City.

Qin Zhu Courtyard.

Lin Mu was watching TV.

"Next, we'll bring you an international news update."

Seeing the images on the TV, Lin Mu's eyebrows rose slightly.

"Last night, a massive explosion occurred in the upper-middle reaches of the Amazon River, with shockwaves affecting a wide area. After expert discussions, it is suspected to have been caused by a volcanic eruption. Numerous bodies of soldiers were found at the site, likely belonging to a secretive military unit..."

Looking at the images of smoke billowing from the mountains and the countless bodies laid out on the ground, Lin Mu knew these were members of the Blood Rat Mercenary Corps.

However, he frowned slightly, not seeing the person he was looking for.

"Last night, in a hotel in a small town overseas, a man was shot dead. The investigation revealed that the deceased is named August, supposedly a local bank employee..."

The scene immediately shifted, and the TV showed a handsome man in his thirties with an especially prominent hooked nose.

"August?"

Lin Mu suddenly sneered and dialed Li Xiaotian's number. "I need you to do something for me."

"At your command, Master!"

「Three days later.」

Along the Amazon River.

In a dangerous jungle, several figures were fleeing at high speed, their faces etched with exhaustion.

"Rest here for ten minutes!"

The man in the lead signaled, and after a cautious look around, he heaved a sigh of relief.

"Yes, boss!"

His subordinates breathed a sigh of relief, each taking out their prepared food and beginning to eat.

"Boss, have some." A white man with a gun approached, holding a piece of charred meat.

Fighting off fatigue and hunger, the leader licked his cracked lips and asked, "Bill, how are the others?"

Bill's eyes suddenly reddened. "Less than ten of us are left," he said through gritted teeth, "and... two are seriously injured. They won't last much longer."

The man closed his eyes, then snapped them open as a flash of hatred sparked within them. "Jack and Ba Di, I, August, swear I won't rest until I have your lives!"

The man was indeed August of the Blood Rat Mercenary Corps.

The one who died in the hotel was just a decoy.

A month earlier, the Blood Rat Mercenary Corps had suffered heavy losses in Huaxia. To avenge them, their leader, Jack, had made a bet with August and Ba Di: whoever brought back the target's head would become the new leader.

Ba Di's forces were formidable, so August knew that to claim the title, he had to get to Huaxia as quickly as possible.

Moreover, he had dared to accept the bet because one of his subordinates hailed from Huaxia.

The Doctor!

Upon inquiring, August was delighted to discover that the Doctor was in River City.

Thus, August immediately decided to have the Doctor lead the team, with Alice assisting, to retrieve the target's head.

Just three days ago, Alice had arranged to meet him at a hotel, claiming she had something to discuss.

August assumed the plan had succeeded. Overjoyed, he let his guard down and went with her.

To his surprise, shortly after he arrived at the hotel, his base was attacked.

An earth-shattering explosion erupted. All the work August had poured in over the years went up in smoke.

At that moment, August could only watch helplessly on television.

By the time he realized what was happening, it was too late.

If it weren't for a skilled protector by his side, August would have died right there in that hotel.

After regrouping with his organization, August searched far and wide, eventually finding Bill and a few dozen other subordinates.

August, hell-bent on revenge, led his men to infiltrate the Blood Rat base, ready to take his vengeance. But it wasn't until then that August discovered Jack and Ba Di had teamed up—and that Alice was Jack's niece.

This revelation infuriated August, forcing him to make the humiliating choice to flee.

With Jack and Ba Di's combined forces, he stood no chance.

And so, as he fled, his group had dwindled to just these few people.

"Boss, should we..." Bill glanced at August's face. Thinking he was considering other matters, he made a subtle gesture.

August was stunned for a moment, his eyes flickering. He then gritted his teeth and declared, "You are all my brothers. I will not abandon you!"

He clapped Bill on the shoulder. "Bill, you're the brother I trust most right now. I need you to do something for me!"

Deeply moved, Bill replied, "Boss, just give the order!"

August ground his teeth in resentment. "That bitch Alice is probably on her way to Huaxia by now. You must kill her, no matter what!"

When he thought of Alice, all August felt was pure hatred. If it weren't for her, how could he have ended up in this situation?

"Boss... what about you?" Bill was shocked.

He's asking me to hunt down Alice? Without my protection, can the boss survive on his own?

August sneered, "Don't worry. As long as Jack is alive, I can't die!"

"But if Alice doesn't die, I'll never be able to accept it!"

That woman... daring to betray me. She can go to hell!

Before Bill could say more, August growled, "Bill! That bitch Alice betrayed me and got so many of our brothers killed. Don't you want to get revenge with your own hands?"

Bill's eyes were bloodshot. "I want to drink her blood and eat her flesh! But boss, why don't you go yourself?!"

August gave a cold chuckle, a bloodthirsty light gleaming in his eyes. "Because I'm going to personally slaughter Jack and Ba Di!"

「That very night.」

August took seven or eight men and sneaked into Old Jack's lair—a base built on a cliffside.

The base wasn't large and was usually manned by just a few dozen people.

Normally, August wouldn't have dared to target this place, but things were different now.

He had already sent someone inside for a coordinated attack.

Five o'clock in the morning was the agreed-upon time.

Suddenly, a light flashed on the cliff, and a rope was thrown down.

August gave a signal. Two of his men rushed out, grabbed the rope, and began to climb.

Over ten minutes later, inside a cave on the cliff, August looked down at Old Jack lying on the ground, a ferocious smile on his blood-stained face.

"Old Jack, you didn't expect me to find you here, did you?"

August felt a gratifying rush of vengeance as he grabbed Jack by the hair, pressed a gun to his head, and said menacingly, "You wanted me dead, so don't think you get to live!"

BANG!

He pulled the trigger, and the leader of the Blood Rat Mercenary Corps fell silently into a pool of his own blood.

August holstered his gun and looked coldly at the men kneeling on the ground. They were all Jack's subordinates.

"Kill them all. Leave no one alive."

A series of gunshots rang out, and soon, everyone was dead on the ground.

August turned and walked out of the cave. Seeing the silhouette at the entrance, he said respectfully, "Thank you, Divine Envoy, for helping me get my revenge!"

The figure nodded slightly. "Your fall was a consequence of serving the organization."

August said nervously, "But I still failed to kill the target."

"Don't worry. The organization has already sent someone to Huaxia to take his life."

The man gave a cold smile, but before he could finish, another voice cut in.

"Are you talking about this piece of trash?"

Chapter 332 Li Xiaotian's Decision!

"Who?!"

August startled, his gun trained on the surrounding darkness, his heart pounding with shock. This base was built atop a cliff, and the only exit was a path carved through the cliffside. He had it under lockdown. To get in, an intruder would have to kill all his men first.

But August was confident that his men would have sent a signal before anyone could make a move. Moreover, even the Divine Envoy hadn't sensed the slightest anomaly.

"Hehe, who am I?"

A light chuckle floated through the air, followed by a sharp whistling sound. August was still confused, but the Divine Envoy beside him suddenly shot backward.

"Be careful!"

After they fell back some distance, August finally managed to steady his nerves, only to make a horrifying discovery: an extra head now lay on the ground. The man's face was frozen in an expression of pure terror, as if he had witnessed something horrifying in his final moments.

"A Silver Guard!" August cried out, his voice trembling.

Silver Guard was a rank of strength within the Divine Envoy's organization. Below the Divine Envoy were Gold, Silver, and Bronze Guards, with the weakest rank being the Hidden Guard. Even August himself was only slightly stronger than a Hidden Guard, still a great distance from a Bronze Guard. A Silver Guard was already a formidable existence among the Knights, yet this one had just been decapitated.

"Stop playing tricks and get out here!"

Seeing the Silver Guard's head, the Divine Envoy's expression turned grim. He had just dispatched this Silver Guard to Huaxia to assassinate that man. He never thought he'd be slain just moments after departing.

As the Divine Envoy finished speaking, he thrust a palm toward a certain direction. A brilliant light beamed from his hand, drifting forward. It looked gentle and powerless, but it contained tremendous force.

"The Divine Envoy's power!" August gaped, his eyes filled with fear and envy. This was the power bestowed upon the Divine Envoy by God.

"Such trifling magic, and you dare embarrass yourself in front of me!"

The words had barely faded when a fierce beam of blade energy came whistling through the air, striking the Divine Envoy's light. A grating sound that set one's teeth on edge rang out as the light instantly melted away like snow under a scorching sun. However, the blade energy continued unabated, howling toward the Divine Envoy. It tore deep gouges into the ground and shattered stone wherever it passed.

"This..." The Divine Envoy's pupils shrank, and he backed away frantically. But there was a wall behind him; there was nowhere left to retreat.

A cold glint flashed in his eyes. He reached out, grabbed August, and shoved the man in front of him as a human shield.

"No..." August screamed in terror, but he couldn't break free.

The beam of blade energy descended, instantly slicing August's body in two down the middle. Blood sprayed everywhere, drenching the Divine Envoy. But he had no time to wipe it away and scrambled toward the cave entrance.

"Hehe, now that you've run into me, where do you think you're going?"

A disdainful sneer echoed through the air, followed by the crushing arrival of a terrifying force.

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

As the voice fell, the entire cave trembled. A figure emerged from the depths of the cave, catching up to the Divine Envoy in the blink of an eye.

"You're not leaving!" As soon as the man appeared, he clawed at the Divine Envoy's back.

Sensing the rushing force behind him, the Divine Envoy's face filled with terror, and he turned to throw two black grenades.

"Hmph, mere child's play!"

The man snorted coldly, twisted his wrist, and swung his long blade, neatly slicing both grenades in half.

"This..." Staring at the bisected grenades, the Divine Envoy's eyes finally filled with terror. But what shocked him even more was his opponent's appearance.

"You're an Easterner?!"

He had only one arm, and in his hand, he held the Heavenly Punishment Blade. It was none other than Li Xiaotian, who had traveled thousands of miles from his homeland!

Li Xiaotian smiled faintly. "You have some insight."

Although he was smiling, his speed was anything but slow. The Heavenly Punishment Blade slashed out, aiming straight for the Divine Envoy's head. His original mission from his Master was to travel overseas and take the head of Jack from the Blood Rat Mercenary Corps. He never expected to run into this so-called Divine Envoy, who was plotting to have his Master assassinated. Li Xiaotian could never allow such a thing to happen. The moment the Silver Guard had departed, he had decapitated him with a single stroke.

These so-called Silver Guards were only on par with a Huaxia Martial Artist at the Initial External Strength level. As for this Divine Envoy, even with the strength of the Internal Energy Peak, he stood no chance against Li Xiaotian, a Half-step Grandmaster.

The Divine Envoy's heart was filled with horror as he retreated frantically. But he had underestimated Li Xiaotian's strength, and even more so, he had underestimated the Heavenly Punishment Blade.

"HA!" The Divine Envoy let out a low shout, his body erupting with a radiant glow. The glow gathered in his palms, and he clapped his hands together, attempting to catch the Heavenly Punishment Blade between them.

CLANG! He successfully trapped the Heavenly Punishment Blade, but before he could rejoice, a terrifying power surged from the blade itself.

The Divine Envoy screamed, trying to release his hands, but a sizzling sound erupted where they met the blade. To his horror, he found he couldn't do it. He felt as if all the strength in his body was being siphoned away by the Heavenly Punishment Blade.

"What kind of Demon Blade is this?!" the Divine Envoy shrieked, his face a mask of terror.

"This blade is called Heavenly Punishment!" Li Xiaotian smiled proudly. He flicked his wrist, and the Heavenly Punishment Blade sliced upwards.

The Divine Envoy's body shuddered, and he froze in place. Then, a thin line of blood appeared on his forehead. His body abruptly split in two and collapsed, lifeless.

Li Xiaotian sheathed his blade, looked coldly at the corpse on the ground, and with a great stride, flew directly out of the cave entrance.

Some ten minutes later, a few survivors in the cave slowly staggered to their feet. They ran to the entrance and peered out into the vast darkness, but there was no trace of Li Xiaotian. The survivors exchanged glances, then hastily knelt and kowtowed in the direction Li Xiaotian had left, calling him "Divine Envoy."

「At the Blood Rat Mercenary Corps base」

Li Xiaotian held a phone, speaking respectfully to the person on the other end. "Master, the matter has been taken care of."

Ba Di and his men were kneeling on the ground, trembling, too afraid to even raise their heads.

"Hmm, now that things are done, come back," Lin Mu's voice came from the other end of the line.

Li Xiaotian hesitated for a moment. "Master, I'd like to train here for a while."

Worried his Master might be angry, Li Xiaotian quickly explained, "I've reached a bottleneck in my cultivation. Training here for a period of time would greatly help my breakthrough to Grandmaster."

Upon arriving, Li Xiaotian had discovered this was the ideal training ground for him, which was why he decided to stay.

"Good!"

On the other end of the line, Lin Mu said only that single word, signifying his agreement.

Li Xiaotian was overjoyed that his Master had agreed. This boosted his confidence. He was certain that if he trained here, he could step into the Grandmaster realm within three years.

He suddenly remembered something and quickly added, "By the way, Master, there's one more thing. A woman named Alice seems to have already gone to River City, apparently for you."

"Hmm?" Lin Mu showed no surprise. "I know."

After hanging up, Li Xiaotian looked down at the kneeling Ba Di and said indifferently, "Are there any formidable people nearby?"

Ba Di: "..."

Chapter 333: What If I Don't Agree?

After hanging up Li Xiaotian's call, Lin Mu smiled with relief.

Ever since Li Xiaotian had become his disciple, his training pace had never slowed; he was incredibly diligent.

But he was already a Half-step Grandmaster. To take that final step, both opportunity and perseverance were essential.

If he stayed by Lin Mu's side, he could probably ascend to Grandmaster in the shortest time possible.

But ultimately, that was not a path Li Xiaotian could call his own.

So, Lin Mu was very supportive and pleased with Li Xiaotian's decision to stay and train overseas.

He believed that with Li Xiaotian's current Cultivation Level, while he wouldn't be invincible overseas, he was more than capable of protecting himself.

Moreover, the lands overseas were full of crouching tigers and hidden dragons, with countless experts.

Only in a life-or-death struggle could Li Xiaotian push his Martial Way to the next level.

With such a hardworking disciple, Lin Mu certainly couldn't slack off himself.

He had already decided to enter seclusion but hadn't come up with a suitable location. However, Li Xiaotian had just given him a hint.

I was about to look far and wide when the answer was right in front of me.

Lin Mu smiled faintly. When he thought about a place suitable for seclusion, the first location that came to mind was Southern Sky Thunder Mountain.

That was his territory.

The greatest taboo during seclusion was being disturbed. A minor interruption would render all previous efforts useless. A major one could cause him to suffer a qi deviation, severing his path to the Great Dao and leading to madness.

But in Southern Sky, with millions from the Li Clan standing guard, he believed no one would dare disturb his seclusion.

Once he made up his mind, he spent the next two days at home with Qin Luoli, making it up to her.

In the business world, Qin Luoli now controlled half of River City's industries, including Boheng Pharma. It could be said that no other company dared to contend with her.

In terms of security, with Cheng Bugui, the Liang Family, and others guarding River City, he didn't have to worry about Qin Luoli's safety.

Moreover, before leaving, Lin Mu also took the time to craft several protective talismans for Qin Luoli, Su Ke'er, and others close to him to wear. These talismans would allow them to survive several crises.

And with Elder Guan around, he believed no one would dare to harm Qin Luoli.

With all his arrangements made, Lin Mu prepared to depart for Southern Sky early on the morning of the third day.

On the night before his departure, Lin Mu suddenly received a call from Su Ke'er.

"Lin Mu, do you have time now?"

Lin Mu frowned slightly.

Su Ke'er rarely calls me by my name. She must have run into some kind of trouble.

"What's wrong? Tell me," he said.

I'm free right now anyway, and Qin Luoli has gone to work, he thought. It'd be good to see Su Ke'er and discuss some company matters at the same time.

"Clear Lotus Bar. I'm here... AHH!"

Before Su Ke'er could finish, a scream came through the phone, as if she had run into trouble.

Lin Mu frowned, hung up, and rushed toward Clear Lotus Bar.

Clear Lotus Bar used to be one of Dao Wuming's properties. After Lin Mu eliminated him, all of his forces had been absorbed by Cheng Bugui. Now, Cheng Bugui was the undisputed strongest boss in River City's underworld.

Of course, all of this was thanks to Lin Mu.

Because the bar's decor was upscale and its prices were high, it was generally frequented by a high-income clientele. At the moment, soothing music was playing, making the atmosphere not just quiet, but pleasant.

Because of his connection to Lin Mu, Cheng Bugui had even issued a standing order forbidding anyone from causing trouble in the bar. And with his current status, no one dared to do so.

But tonight, it seemed there was an exception.

In a corner, a woman with a top-notch figure and looks was drinking while on the phone. But before she could finish her call, her phone was snatched away.

"Xue Lang, what do you think you're doing?" Su Ke'er glared angrily at the man who had snatched her phone—it was Xue Lang.

Xue Lang chuckled, waving the phone in his hand. "Not much. Just wanted to buy you a drink."

He laughed lightly. "Ke'er, you're not going to refuse me, are you?"

"Give my phone back!"

A wave of disgust washed over Su Ke'er at the sight of Xue Lang. This guy had constantly visited the hospital while she was admitted, showering her with zealous attention. If Su Ke'er had been an ordinary woman, she would have been moved beyond words by now.

But she didn't fall for such tactics. In fact, she felt no affection for Xue Lang; on the contrary, she was utterly repulsed by him.

"Ke'er, what's that supposed to mean?" Rejected, Xue Lang grew displeased. "I kindly invited you for a drink, and you refuse me like this? What? In your eyes, am I so contemptible?"

Su Ke'er's expression turned frosty. She stared coldly at Xue Lang and said, "I'll say this one last time. Give me back my phone!"

Xue Lang seethed with annoyance and glanced at the number she had just been calling.

Lin Mu! It was Lin Mu again!

A flash of rage crossed Xue Lang's eyes as he slammed the phone on the ground. SMASH!

"Su Ke'er, I'm trying to be polite, so don't be shameless!"

The shattering phone startled the other patrons. A security guard came over and asked in a stern voice, "What's going on here?"

Xue Lang forced a smile. "It's nothing, just a little argument with my girlfriend."

"Xue Lang, what nonsense are you talking about? Who's your girlfriend?" Su Ke'er was furious and wanted to lash out, but she felt it wasn't worth arguing with someone like him, so she decided to stand up and leave.

Xue Lang sneered, "Su Ke'er, if you leave now, I guarantee you'll regret it."

"What do you mean?" Su Ke'er spun around, staring at him.

Xue Lang sat on the sofa, swirling a glass of wine. He said to the guard, "We're fine here, officer. You can get back to it."

Seeing that Su Ke'er didn't say anything, the security guard decided not to meddle. As long as no real trouble broke out, it wasn't his business what guests got up to.

After the guard left, Xue Lang put down his glass and pulled out a piece of paper.

"Take a look."

With a confident smile, he said, "This is the money your mother borrowed from me. All told, it adds up to several million."

Looking at the IOU on the table, Su Ke'er's expression changed.

My own mother borrowed this much money from Xue Lang?

After scrutinizing it, she had to accept that it was real.

"Xue Lang, I never thought you could be so despicable! To use such a vile trick to make my mom borrow money from you!" Su Ke'er felt a mix of anger and sorrow. She was angry that Xue Lang was using this to threaten her, and heartbroken that her own mother would trap her daughter like this.

"Now, that's not exactly how it was," Xue Lang said nonchalantly. "Your mother likes to play cards. She lost all her money and wanted to win it back, so I just helped out a little."

He did more than "help." This was a trap he had laid for Su Ke'er's mother from the very beginning. It started with a few thousand, then tens of thousands, and finally hundreds of thousands, even millions. It was all part of his plan. His goal was to get leverage over Su Ke'er's mother so he could threaten Su Ke'er.

"Your mother promised me she would pay back the money by an agreed-upon date," Xue Lang sighed. "But it's been so long, and now I can't even find her. Ke'er, if I don't come to you, who else can I go to?"

"I'll pay you back the money!" Su Ke'er took a deep breath, suppressing the grief in her heart. "But I don't have that much right now. You need to give me some time."

Although she was the general manager of Boheng Pharma, she hadn't saved much money over the years.

Besides, the money Xue Lang lent her mom was over three million!

A faint smile touched Xue Lang's lips. "Of course you can. However, the longer you take, the higher the interest will be."

Su Ke'er looked at the IOU again, and her face went pale.

It's a loan shark's IOU! The interest doubles every day it's late!

"You... This is extortion!" Su Ke'er raged. "I can sue you!"

"Go ahead," Xue Lang said, seeming completely unafraid. "Besides, your mother also signed another agreement with me. If she couldn't repay the debt, she would use you to settle it."

"Shameless!"

Su Ke'er shot to her feet, her body trembling. "Xue Lang, I will never agree to your shameless demand!"

Xue Lang smiled confidently. "It's in black and white. You don't have a choice."

Just then, an indifferent voice suddenly cut in.

"What if I don't agree?"

Chapter 334: I want to see you in person within five minutes!

"Who do you think you are? You say you don't agree and that's supposed to... to be it?" Xue Lang retorted instinctively. But when he turned his head, he saw a young man walking slowly toward them.

"It's you!" Hatred flared in Xue Lang's eyes as he glared daggers at the newcomer.

This person was none other than Lin Mu!

Seeing Lin Mu, Su Ke'er felt a mixture of pleasant surprise and grievance. Her eyes reddened as she said excitedly, "Lin Mu..."

With his hands in his pockets, Lin Mu walked over unhurriedly. "Don't worry. With me here, no one would dare touch you."

Lin Mu glanced at Su Ke'er and sighed inwardly. With his current strength, he had heard their conversation even while still outside, so he understood everything clearly. Heavenly Emperor's Sight and Hearing was a profound mystical art, allowing him to perceive all activity within a radius of several miles. He could even hear an ant stretch its legs.

"Lin Mu, and who do you think you are?" Hearing Lin Mu's rather arrogant words, Xue Lang sneered, holding up the IOU in his hand. "I have an IOU right here, signed by Su Ke'er's mother herself!"

At his words, Su Ke'er's expression darkened.

He's right. That's my mother's signature, there's no denying it. To think she'd been sold out by her own mother... Su Ke'er felt a pang of both grief and anger.

"An IOU?" Lin Mu glanced at the note in Xue Lang's hand, a small smirk playing on his lips as he blew a soft breath of air.

RUSTLE.

Xue Lang felt the IOU tremble violently in his hand, making it hard to keep his grip. His face changed. What's happening?

Just as Xue Lang moved to grab it with both hands, a shocking scene unfolded before him. The characters on the IOU began to lift off the paper, one by one, dissolving into the air.

"There. Now it's gone," Lin Mu said, looking at Xue Lang with a placid expression.

Blowing a breath to create a gust of wind was one of the most basic mystical arts. Erasing ink from a page was even simpler.

Staring at the now-blank piece of paper, Xue Lang was dumbfounded for a moment before letting out an infuriated roar, "Lin Mu, what did you do?"

It wasn't just him; even Su Ke'er's jaw dropped, her eyes wide with shock. The words on the IOU had vanished with just a single breath from Lin Mu.

This has to be magic! Xue Lang refused to believe it. He rubbed the paper, breathed on it, and even tried using his spit and some alcohol, but the characters didn't reappear. Instead, the paper just became a crumpled, torn mess.

"You... You change it back right now!" Xue Lang lunged forward, reaching for Lin Mu's collar.

"Get lost!"

However, Lin Mu just uttered a single, indifferent word. Xue Lang felt an invisible hand shove him backward. He stumbled and fell flat on his rear, knocking over the drinks on the table and sending them crashing to the floor.

The commotion immediately drew gasps from the other patrons and alerted the security guards.

"What's going on?" The same guard from before came over, casting a cold glance at Lin Mu. Several other guards also headed in their direction.

"Security! This bastard ruined my property!" Xue Lang's face was flushed with rage as he pointed at Lin Mu. "Grab him! I'm going to make him pay for this!"

The security guard glanced at Lin Mu, then at Su Ke'er. He knew exactly what was going on; he had seen the whole thing. It was obvious Xue Lang had been bullying the girl. As for how Lin Mu had made the words on the paper disappear and sent Xue Lang flying without touching him, he also chalked it up to some kind of magic trick.

"Hey, kid, you should get out of here," the guard said quietly. "This guy knows our boss. If he decides to make a real scene, nobody can help you."

The security guard was young and not the type to judge a book by its cover. He didn't favor Xue Lang for his designer clothes, nor did he hassle Lin Mu for his casual outfit. Still, his expression was troubled. He was clearly siding with Lin Mu out of a sense of justice, but he knew he would get an earful from his boss for it.

"Thanks." Lin Mu smiled and nodded at the guard's kindness. Looks like Cheng Bugui hasn't followed Dao Wuming's example and hired a bunch of idiots, at least.

"Thinking of leaving?" Seeing the guard letting Lin Mu go, Xue Lang flew into a rage. "I know Security Chief Wei! If you dare let him go, I'll make sure you lose your job!"

"I..." the guard stammered, his expression tensing as his heart sank with uncertainty.

"But you were the one bullying her! You even broke her phone," the guard insisted, his youthful sense of righteousness not yet stamped out.

"So what?" Xue Lang scrambled to his feet and pointed a finger at the guard. "If you don't take this guy down today, you better believe I can have you fired right now!"

Although the guard was afraid of losing his job, he stood his ground in front of Lin Mu. "But you can't just bully people!"

"Fine! Fine!" Xue Lang laughed with rage and pulled out his phone to make a call. "Security Chief Wei, I've run into some trouble at your place. Yeah, some little security guard has the nerve to push me around."

"Okay, okay, I'll wait for you." Xue Lang hung up and shot the guard a sinister smile. "Just you wait, kid!"

The guard grew extremely nervous. He knew his boss's personality; he was definitely going to be fired. Seeing this, the other guards didn't dare to step forward.

Soon, a man with slicked-back hair and a cigar clamped in his mouth strode over, followed by two burly guards. This was the bar's security captain, Security Chief Wei.

"Manager Xue, are you all right?" Seeing Xue Lang's disheveled state, Security Chief Wei was slightly startled and asked with concern.

Xue Lang was a regular who often brought his friends here, giving them a lot of business. Over time, the two had developed a good relationship.

"Why don't you ask this subordinate of yours," Xue Lang said, pointing at the young guard with a sneer.

"Security Chief Wei, what actually happened was..." the young guard began to explain, but Chief Wei slapped him hard across the face.

"Are you tired of working here, you little shit?" he roared. "If you are, then get the hell out! Is Manager Xue someone you can afford to offend? He's a senior executive at Qin Corporation!"

At the mention of the Qin Corporation, an expression of deep respect appeared on Security Chief Wei's face. In River City today, everyone knew of Qin Luoli, the President of Qin Corporation. She was the undisputed Empress of River City. This kid must have a death wish, daring to offend an executive from Qin Corporation.

"Security Chief Wei, even if he's an executive from Qin Corporation, that doesn't give him the right to bully people," the young guard said stubbornly, clutching his swollen face.

"Bullshit!" Security Chief Wei shouted, aiming a kick at the young guard. "Who the hell do you think you are? Are you trying to teach me how to do my job?"

However, before his foot could connect, a large hand shot out and grasped it firmly.

It was Lin Mu.

Lin Mu's hand tightened slightly. A sharp crack of breaking bone echoed from Security Chief Wei's ankle before a shove sent him sprawling to the ground.

Watching Security Chief Wei howling in agony, Lin Mu took out his phone and dialed Cheng Bugui's number.

"Clear Lotus Bar. I want to see you here in person. You have five minutes."

"Fail, and you will atone with your death."

Chapter 335: Chop it up and feed it to the dogs!

After hanging up the phone, Lin Mu turned to the young security guard. "Are you okay?"

The guard replied in a daze, "I'm... I'm fine. But you guys should hurry and leave. Once Security Chief Wei gets angry, you're as good as dead!"

The security guard knew he couldn't stay here any longer. Having just joined the team, he had managed to offend a high-ranking executive from Qin Corporation and talk back to Security Chief Wei. He understood that not only would he be fired, but he probably wouldn't even get his last paycheck.

"Don't worry, he wouldn't dare do anything to me," Lin Mu said, giving the young security guard a hearty laugh.

He quite admired this young guard. He was principled without being arrogant, and he had a pure heart.

"You..." The security guard was at a loss for words, stunned that Lin Mu could still say such things after everything that had happened.

Meanwhile, Security Chief Wei was helped to his feet. He limped over, pointed a shaky finger at Lin Mu, and snarled, "Kid, you dare lay a hand on me? Are you tired of living?!"

"If you don't want to die, you'd better shut your filthy mouth," Lin Mu replied, glancing at him with utter indifference.

"You want to kill me?" Security Chief Wei let out a harsh laugh, but his expression quickly turned grim. He pointed at Lin Mu and commanded, "Men, chop his hands off!"

"You dare to touch me on my own turf? I'll show you the true meaning of cruelty!"

Following the order, several security guards advanced on Lin Mu.

Lin Mu just smiled faintly, showing no fear. Instead, he casually sat down on the sofa, crossed his legs, and said, "I'd advise you to wait a little longer. Otherwise, you'll regret it before you even know what's happening."

The guards hesitated, genuinely thrown off by Lin Mu's composure. His calm and collected demeanor made it seem as though he had some powerful backing.

"Security Chief Wei, don't waste time with this guy. Cripple him first!" Xue Lang interjected coldly. He had wanted to teach Lin Mu a lesson for a long time and had even paid Gao Xing to do it. But to his annoyance, the company had recently undergone a massive expansion, and both he and Gao Xing were swamped with work. If he hadn't gotten his hands on Su Ke'er's weakness and seen this as an opportunity, he wouldn't have had the time to come to a place like this.

"Your name is Xue Lang?" Lin Mu looked at him with a faint smile. "From Qin Corporation?"

"That's right! I'm from Qin Corporation!" Mentioning the company, Xue Lang's face filled with pride.

"Kid, our President Qin is the empress of River City's business world now. If you don't want to die, get on your knees and kowtow to me, then hand Su Ke'er over. Otherwise, with a single word, I can make it impossible for you to survive in River City!"

A cold, sinister smile spread across Xue Lang's face. He was confident that Lin Mu would make the wise choice. As Qin Corporation grew stronger, the status of executives like him rose accordingly. He could say with certainty that on his word alone, not a single company would dare to employ Lin Mu. Most smaller companies wouldn't even think about it. Such was the authority of Qin Corporation now.

"Oh?" Lin Mu raised an eyebrow, finding the situation deeply amusing. Since when did Luo Li become the empress of River City's business world? And funnier still, this guy was trying to use the Qin Corporation's name to intimidate him? That was a new level of courting death.

"What are you laughing at?" Seeing Lin Mu's smile, Xue Lang flew into a rage, feeling as if he'd been profoundly insulted.

"I'm laughing at how you're the one whose neck is on the line, yet you still talk so big," Lin Mu said, shaking his head slowly, his face a mask of ridicule.

"You shameless braggart!" Xue Lang sneered. "Kid, I'll show you what talking big really means!" He turned to the security chief. "Security Chief Wei, do it now! Cripple this kid, and all future gatherings for Qin Corporation will be held right here at your bar!"

Security Chief Wei's eyes lit up, his heart pounding with excitement. If he could use this to get in with Qin Corporation, who in River City wouldn't have to show him some respect? With that thought, he immediately ordered his men, "What are you waiting for? Take this kid down!"

"You dare!"

At that moment, a furious voice laced with killing intent ripped through the air.

Amid a flurry of shocked gasps, a middle-aged man stormed into the bar, leading a massive entourage. He moved at a near run, his face slick with sweat and his eyes wide with terror.

It was Cheng Bugui.

He had been dining with several business partners when Lin Mu's call came. Without a second thought, Cheng Bugui had bolted from the table, leaving his companions stunned. He'd even tripped on his way out the door. It took him five minutes of nonstop driving to get here. To save time, he'd made one call to have his men clear a path for him, throwing several of River City's streets into chaos.

Seeing Lin Mu, Cheng Bugui shivered and scrambled over, about to drop to his knees in front of him.

"Who the hell are you?" Security Chief Wei roared, seeing the massive crowd. He jabbed a finger at Cheng Bugui's nose. "Are you here to smash the place up? Do you know whose territory this is? This belongs to Third Master Xia Shanhu!"

Cheng Bugui froze. The dozens of men he'd brought with him froze. Even Lin Mu paused for a second before shaking his head slightly. I've seen people court death before, but never quite like this.

As expected, after a moment of shock, a grin that was equal parts anger and amusement spread across Cheng Bugui's face. "And do you know who I am?"

"I don't give a damn who you are!" Security Chief Wei said with disdain. "This is the Third Master's territory, which means it's my territory! Here, if you're a dragon, you'd better coil up, and if you're a tiger, you'd better lie down!"

The statement overflowed with arrogance and bravado. Wei was feeling smug, thinking he had intimidated the newcomer, when he noticed the countless men behind Cheng Bugui looking at him with pity. Many were subconsciously shaking their heads and sighing.

Hmm? Could this guy actually be someone important? Hmph! So what? My backer is Third Master Xu Shanhu, and behind the Third Master is the biggest name in all of River City!

"Good. Very good. Excellent," Cheng Bugui said through a grim smile, then suddenly roared, "Where is Xu Shanhu? Isn't he here yet?"

His shout was deafening, thick with a chilling murderous intent. Everyone shivered, feeling as if Cheng Bugui had become a ferocious tiger about to pounce.

"Insolent!" Seeing Cheng Bugui dare to use the Third Master's full name, Wei was outraged. He pointed at Cheng Bugui's nose and cursed, "You're asking to die! You think you can just say the Third Master's name like that?"

"I think you're the one asking to die!"

Just then, another furious voice, dripping with killing intent, cut through the crowd. The mob of people parted, and a pale-faced, bald man wearing nothing but his boxers came running over.

It was Xu Shanhu.

"Third Master, you're finally here! This guy, he dared to—" Security Chief Wei began, overjoyed at the sight of his boss, but was cut short by a vicious slap across the face.

SLAP!

The blow was so forceful that it knocked several of Wei's teeth out.

Xu Shanhu's eyes were bloodshot as he roared with all his might, "Chop this bastard into pieces and feed him to the dogs!"

Chapter 336: Now, It's Your Turn!

Chop into pieces and feed to the dogs?!

The whole venue was shocked by Xu Shanhu's words. Many guests sensed that something was wrong and quietly left. It was clear that something big was about to happen; anyone who stayed would surely get caught in the crossfire.

With a wave of his hand, Cheng Bugui had his men quickly usher the guests out and then shut the massive doors.

BOOM!

The loud bang of the closing doors jolted Security Chief Wei awake.

"Third Master, what's going on?" Security Chief Wei pointed at Cheng Bugui and said, "It was him! He dared to speak your name directly! I was just standing up for your honor!"

"Tsk, tsk. Xu Shanhu, Third Master?" Cheng Bugui looked at Xu Shanhu, his eyes narrowed. "Since when am I not allowed to say your name?"

Xu Shanhu was startled and didn't dare to reply. Instead, he grabbed a steel knife from a subordinate and swung it fiercely.

SLASH!

With a tragic cry, one of Security Chief Wei's hands fell to the floor.

The bloody scene terrified Su Ke'er. She screamed and quickly hid behind Lin Mu.

"Ah, my hand!" Security Chief Wei clutched his arm, his face twisted in agony. "Third Master, what did I do wrong? What did I do?!"

Rolling on the ground in pain, his blood stained the floor red.

"What did you do wrong?" Xu Shanhu strode toward Security Chief Wei, his eyes bloodshot and filled with murderous intent. "Do you have any fucking idea you almost got me killed?!"

He swung the knife again, chopping off the man's other hand.

"ARGH!" Security Chief Wei's eyes bulged from the pain as he began to babble, "Third Master, spare me! Spare my life..."

Watching Security Chief Wei writhing on the ground, both Xue Lang and the other security guards were terrified. Xu Shanhu is ruthless!

After chopping off both of the man's hands, Xu Shanhu's murderous aura didn't diminish in the slightest. Instead, it was tinged with a crazed intensity.

"Do you know who you messed with? That's my big brother! The real boss of the Clear Lotus Bar!"

Xu Shanhu's words made Security Chief Wei's screams stop abruptly, a look of confusion crossing his face.

"The real boss of the Clear Lotus Bar?" Security Chief Wei said in disbelief. "Boss Cheng? He's Boss Cheng!"

Realization, fear, and despair crawled across his face. He turned over and began dragging himself toward Xu Shanhu with his elbows. "Third Master, please, save me! I didn't know! I really didn't know..."

Regret, fear, and despair completely overwhelmed him. All he could do now was beg for forgiveness.

However, Xu Shanhu simply took a deep breath. "It's useless."

Security Chief Wei was one of my most capable subordinates. Despite his minor flaws, he was loyal and easy to command. But today, he provoked someone he absolutely should not have. Forget me, even Cheng Bugui can't save his life now. That's the Venerable Master! The most powerful being in all of River City! An Immortal-like figure beyond the imagination of ordinary people!

"If you don't want your family to die with you, then your life is forfeit," Xu Shanhu said, looking at Security Chief Wei with no trace of emotion.

"No!" Security Chief Wei cried out. "No, Third Master, you can't do this to me! I've been completely loyal to you! You can't just discard our history!"

Xu Shanhu kicked him away. "Idiot! If I didn't care about our history, it wouldn't just be you dying. Your entire family would have to be buried with you!"

Security Chief Wei froze, his face filled with despair as his eyes turned hollow. He knew his fate was sealed. With this thought, he opened his mouth and glanced at Lin Mu, as if wanting to say something.

"Ugh..." Suddenly, his eyes rolled back. Blood trickled from his mouth as he collapsed to the floor, dead.

CLANG.

Xu Shanhu dropped the steel knife and said coldly, "Someone drag him out, chop him up, and feed him to the dogs!"

Even though the man was dead, the order would be followed to the letter. This was not only to vent the terror in his own heart but also to appease Cheng Bugui and Lin Mu.

A few security guards came over, dragged Security Chief Wei's body away, and left quickly.

"Lin Mu..." Su Ke'er couldn't bear to watch. As a young woman, she wasn't accustomed to such bloody and cruel scenes.

Lin Mu shook his head and said dispassionately, "The underworld has its own rules. If he had only offended me, I could have let him go. But to challenge his own boss—that's a major taboo."

Su Ke'er opened her mouth to speak but stopped. Looking at Lin Mu's calm expression, her heart jolted. I almost forgot. The man beside me is the coldest, most ruthless person of all. At that thought, Su Ke'er sighed softly to herself.

After dealing with Security Chief Wei, Xu Shanhu suddenly fell to his knees before Cheng Bugui. "Boss," he said, his voice trembling, "I didn't know my man had offended you. Please punish me!"

"Idiot!" Cheng Bugui roared, kicking Xu Shanhu. "What good is kneeling to me? The Venerable Master is still here!"

Then, to the astonishment of everyone present, Cheng Bugui dropped to his knees before Lin Mu with a thud. "Venerable Master," he stammered, "I have failed to manage my subordinates. Please deliver your punishment!" His voice was filled with a profound fear.

When it came to Lin Mu, Cheng Bugui was scared to his very bones.

He wiped out the Fang Family! Half of River City's most powerful figures knelt at the Qin Family Old Residence to confess their sins! The son of the city's richest man, Qiao Tianhao, was killed by the Venerable Master, yet not only did Qiao Tianhao not dare to seek revenge, he became one of the Venerable Master's subordinates! And the most powerful woman in River City is the Venerable Master's wife!

These were the sources of Cheng Bugui's terror. He didn't dare to beg for forgiveness; he only hoped the Venerable Master would spare his life.

As Cheng Bugui knelt, everyone else in the bar dropped to the ground, their faces pale with fear. They stared in shock. If even Third Master and Boss Cheng were kneeling, standing would be a death wish.

Su Ke'er's beautiful eyes widened in utter disbelief. Xue Lang, meanwhile, stared at Lin Mu, his entire body trembling with fear.

"Venerable Master, this is all my fault. Please don't blame the boss," Xu Shanhu pleaded, his voice trembling as he pressed his forehead to the floor. Last time, when Chen Minghu offended the Venerable

Master, I had to cut off several of my own fingers to slowly appease his anger. This time, if I can't satisfy him, my life is over. That's why I had to kill that guard.

Lin Mu sat on the sofa, watching everyone with an indifferent expression. No one could tell what he was thinking. Sweat dripped from Cheng Bugui's forehead, stinging as it ran into his eyes, but he didn't dare wipe it away.

"Alright, get up," Lin Mu finally said. "I'll spare your life, but you won't escape punishment. I'll fine Cheng Bugui one year's share of the profits."

Hearing this, Cheng Bugui nearly collapsed in relief but forced himself to remain composed, afraid of angering Lin Mu further. He quickly kowtowed. "Thank you, Venerable Master, for sparing my life!"

After waving for Cheng Bugui and the others to leave, Lin Mu turned his gaze to the pale-faced Xue Lang. "Now," he said calmly, "it's your turn."

Chapter 337: The Empress's Man!

"I..."

Xue Lang was so frightened that his face went deathly pale, and he lost control of his bladder and bowels.

"You... what do you want? You can't possibly kill me, can you?"

As if a horrifying thought struck him, Xue Lang's face grew even paler. Just a few minutes earlier, Security Chief Wei had both his hands chopped off, and his corpse was dragged away to be minced and fed to dogs.

"No, Lin Mu, you can't kill me!" Xue Lang suddenly recalled something and shrieked in terror, "I'm with the Qin Corporation! You can't kill me, you can't!"

Hearing this, Cheng Bugui and the others exchanged strange glances. Does this idiot not know that the President of the Qin Corporation is this man's woman?

Su Ke'er's expression shifted slightly. Of course, she knew of the Qin Corporation. She had even seen Qin Luoli a few times. That was a woman who made men flock to her and her fellow women feel inadequate.

Right now, the rumor circulating throughout River City was that this woman controlled industries spanning more than half the city. The former richest man, Qiao Tianhao, had been called Qiao Banchen, but that was just an exaggerated nickname. However, using the name Qin Banchen to describe this woman was no exaggeration at all. It was said she had established a foundation where she was the chairwoman and Qiao Tianhao was the vice-chairman.

If even the richest man, Qiao Tianhao, could only serve beneath her, what chance did anyone else have?

The underworld and the business world were different. While both were rife with trickery and power struggles, those in the underworld tried to avoid provoking business people. This wasn't an absolute rule, but there was logic to it. After all, the business world was closely tied to the local government. If a high-ranking executive from the Qin Corporation had an "accident," the matter would be difficult to resolve.

This was precisely why Xue Lang was so certain that Lin Mu wouldn't dare to kill him.

"You don't dare to kill me?" Lin Mu laughed. "To kill you, I don't need to lift a finger," he said with disdain.

Xue Lang was terrified, trembling uncontrollably with fear and despair. "You... you can't just do whatever you want..."

He shook his head, looking utterly shattered. Lin Mu might not kill him with his own hands, but with so many people calling him Venerable Master, why would he need to? Still, Lin Mu would ultimately be held responsible.

"With a single phone call, you'll no longer be an executive of the Qin Corporation. At that point, why wouldn't I dare to kill you?" Lin Mu sneered, looking at Xue Lang as if he were an idiot.

"You?" Xue Lang was stunned for a moment, then couldn't help but retort mockingly, "So what if you have a prestigious status, Lin Mu? Do you really think..."

His words caught in his throat as he saw Lin Mu take out a phone and dial a number.

"Honey, is there someone named Xue Lang in your company?" Lin Mu asked with a smile. "It's nothing serious. He was just using your name to throw his weight around a bit."

"Alright, I know what to do."

Lin Mu handed the phone to Cheng Bugui, who quickly and respectfully took it with both hands and held it in front of Xue Lang.

The moment Xue Lang saw the contact name on the screen, his face turned three shades paler.

Honey! The President is actually Lin Mu's wife?

Unwilling to believe it, Xue Lang scoffed, "Lin Mu, do you think you can scare me with such an obvious lie? I don't believe a word of it!"

"Xue Lang, you have some nerve!"

Just as he finished speaking, a cold, furious female voice crackled through the phone.

Xue Lang collapsed to the floor. "President... President Qin?"

He knew that voice. He was all too familiar with it. During every meeting, he felt an indescribable fear toward its owner. Recently, as the Qin Corporation had grown more powerful, her aura had become increasingly formidable. No one in the entire company dared to meet her gaze!

"Xue Lang, as of this moment, you are no longer an employee of my Qin Corporation!" Qin Luoli's icy voice declared. "From now on, you can go die wherever you please!"

"No..." Xue Lang cried out, shouting into the phone, "President Qin, you can't fire me! On what grounds can you fire me?"

"On what grounds?" Even over the phone, everyone could practically envision the woman on the other end, sitting in her seat of power, her tone frigid and domineering. "Because you offended my man!"

Xue Lang was rendered speechless.

"Lin Mu, come home early. Stop fooling around outside all the time!" Qin Luoli's voice came through again, now laced with displeasure and a hint of resentment.

"Okay, honey, I'll be home right away," Master Lin, the man who could decide life and death with a single word, meekly agreed, like an obedient little lamb.

"Good. Bye."

With Qin Luoli's curt response, the call ended.

The line went dead. Listening to the dial tone while looking at Lin Mu's docile and anxious expression, the corners of everyone's mouths began to twitch. The feeling was most profound for Cheng Bugui.

Is this really the same Venerable Master who would exterminate an entire clan over the slightest disagreement? What an eye-opener.

Su Ke'er's beautiful eyes widened as she stared at Lin Mu, as if trying to see right through him. Although she had heard some things from Qin Yan, seeing it confirmed with her own eyes was still hard to believe. Lin Mu really is married. And his wife is the most powerful woman in River City.

A strange emotion swelled in her heart, only to subside moments later. No matter how hard she tried, how could she ever compare to Qin Luoli?

With a Qin in the world, why was I, a Su, even born? With a long sigh, a forlorn look clouded Su Ke'er's eyes.

In stark contrast to Su Ke'er's complex feelings, Xue Lang was consumed by terror. He had been fired. Moreover, Lin Mu didn't just wield terrifying power, treating a mob boss like Cheng Bugui like a dog to be trained. He was also Qin Luoli's man!

Xue Lang was now truly, deeply afraid.

He looked at Lin Mu, then at the faces around him. Everyone was staring at him as if he were an idiot, their expressions a mixture of pity and indifference. The sight sent a roaring crash through Xue Lang's mind.

"Ugh..." His eyes rolled back into his head. White foam frothed at his lips as his body went limp and slumped to the ground.

Xue Lang had literally been scared to death.

Seeing the now-lifeless man, Lin Mu stood up. "Let's go."

Su Ke'er quickly rose and followed behind him, staying close but maintaining a slight distance.

Lin Mu suddenly stopped and looked at a young security guard who was still kneeling on the ground in a daze. He offered a gentle smile. "What's your name?"

The young guard was pale with fear but managed to force the words out. "My name is Shi Potian."

"Shi Potian?" Lin Mu was momentarily startled. His gaze softened, which only made Shi Potian's heart pound with greater apprehension. "I like that name," Lin Mu patted Shi Potian's shoulder with a smile, "but I like you even more."

"I..."

Before Shi Potian could finish, his expression changed, and he fainted dead away.

Xu Shanhu's face fell, a flicker of embarrassment in his eyes. This kid actually fainted from fear?

Lin Mu offered no explanation. Instead, he instructed, "Find a place for him to get some proper sleep. Let no one disturb him."

Startled, Xu Shanhu quickly replied, "Rest assured, Venerable Master! I will have men guard him around the clock and ensure he is not disturbed!"

Lin Mu nodded. "When he wakes up, have him go to the Qin Family Ancestral House. I'll make the arrangements."

"Let's go."

With his instructions given, Lin Mu left slowly with Su Ke'er.

Only then did Cheng Bugui, Xu Shanhu, and the others finally breathe a collective sigh of relief. That man's presence alone was enough to scare a person to death.

Glancing at the unconscious Shi Potian, Cheng Bugui said with undeniable envy, "Take good care of him. His future accomplishments will be beyond our imagination!"

"Yes, Boss!"

Chapter 338: Delivering the Punch!

"Lin Mu..." Su Ke'er began as they walked out of the bar, but she trailed off. She bit her lip, then finally asked, "Did you really get married?" She wanted to hear the answer directly from him.

"Yes, I did," Lin Mu confirmed, a smile involuntarily touching his lips as he thought of Qin Luoli.

"That's wonderful." Su Ke'er forced a smile, though it was tinged with bitterness. Suddenly, she tilted her head and looked at him. "Lin Mu, could you walk me home?"

A pleading look crossed her face as she held up a single finger. "Just this once."

Remembering that Su Ke'er had also been frightened that evening, Lin Mu agreed.

"Thank you." Su Ke'er appeared delighted, a genuine smile finally emerging on her face.

She was beautiful when she smiled. Combined with her tall, perfect figure, she was, to be honest, one of the most stunning women Lin Mu had ever seen.

Of course, she still couldn't quite compare to Qin Luoli. After all, in his heart, Qin Luoli was irreplaceable.

They didn't take a car, walking along the main road instead while they chatted about company matters. Boheng Pharma was now on the right track. It had launched various projects, developed several new drugs, and received countless accolades. For that, Su Ke'er was very proud.

"By the way, Liu Zijian is now the company's deputy manager," she said. "He's very capable, and that position will allow him to better utilize his talents."

Of course, Su Ke'er left out the most important point: Liu Zijian was extremely loyal to Lin Mu. This was clear from the last incident, where Liu Zijian had allowed himself to be beaten half to death rather than let anyone harm Boheng Pharma. Nowadays, most people in the company both feared and respected Lin Mu, so no one dared to say a word about Liu Zijian's exceptional promotion.

"Mhm. Since I'm not around much, you two can just handle things at the company," Lin Mu said. He knew he didn't have much time to manage the business. He felt much more at ease with Zijian there.

Of course, Su Ke'er was also competent and capable, but she was, after all, a woman, and there were many matters that were inconvenient for her to handle personally.

With that in mind, Lin Mu took out a bracelet and handed it to Su Ke'er. "Wear this bracelet and never take it off, no matter what you do."

This was a Defensive Magical Artifact Lin Mu had refined. He had made several before; Qin Luoli, his mother, and Zijian each had one. Since Su Ke'er managed the company for him, her hard work and contributions were undeniable. Lin Mu wasn't a stingy person, so giving her a Defensive Magical Artifact was no big deal.

"Is this... for me?" Su Ke'er's eyes lit up, her heart filled with excitement. This was the first gift Lin Mu had ever given her.

Lin Mu explained, "Keep it safe. At a critical moment, it could save your life."

Clearly, Su Ke'er didn't take his words to heart. She eagerly put the bracelet on, gave it a little shake, and looked up at him to ask, "Does it look nice?"

Lin Mu found it somewhat amusing. The bracelet was just made from ordinary cat's eye stones, but he had inscribed several Formations on it that would automatically activate in a crisis. This Magic Artifact would make countless powerful Martial Artists green with envy. Yet for Su Ke'er, the only thing that seemed to matter was whether it was pretty.

When Lin Mu didn't respond, Su Ke'er muttered to herself, "Anyway, I think it's very pretty. Since it's a gift from you, I'll definitely take good care of it."

Lin Mu didn't bother explaining further. In time, Su Ke'er would understand the item's importance.

And so it was. During a later crisis, just when Su Ke'er thought she was about to die, the bracelet on her wrist suddenly emitted a glow that enveloped her and saved her life. Only then did Su Ke'er realize just how precious the gift Lin Mu had given her truly was.

「Half an hour later.」

"Alright, you're home. I'll head back now," Lin Mu said, stopping in front of her residential complex with no intention of going inside.

Su Ke'er was still basking in the joy of receiving a gift from Lin Mu and only realized they had arrived when he spoke. For the first time, she found herself wishing her home was further away. She felt a pang of discontent but didn't know what to say.

"So... would you like to come up for a bit?" Su Ke'er's beautiful eyes sparkled with a hint of nervousness and anticipation.

Lin Mu shook his head with a smile. "No, my wife is waiting for me at home."

His meaning was clear without needing to say more.

Her eyelids drooped for a moment before she looked up at him again and suddenly did something that shocked him.

She rose onto her tiptoes, her red lips brushed against the corner of Lin Mu's mouth, and then she pulled away as fast as lightning. Her glistening eyes held a trace of shyness as she quickly jumped back.

"Don't... don't get the wrong idea. I'm just thanking you for helping me today." Su Ke'er's face was as red as an apple, and she bowed her head, not daring to meet his eyes.

"Alright, you should go in." Lin Mu smiled, instinctively ruffling her hair with a gentle expression.

Su Ke'er shuddered and lifted her beautiful eyes to look at him.

Lin Mu felt that staying any longer might be dangerous; it was better to leave. "Okay, hurry and get inside. I'm off."

Waving, Lin Mu turned and slowly walked away.

Watching his retreating back, Su Ke'er suddenly felt an emptiness inside, a sense of loss. She cupped her hands around her mouth and shouted, "Lin Mu, I wish you happiness!"

With his back still to her, Lin Mu waved an arm to show he'd heard.

"Lin Mu, I like you..." Covering her mouth with her hand, a faint smile graced Su Ke'er's lips.

「...」

A figure slowly emerged at the entrance to the residential complex, just as the lights in Su Ke'er's room flicked on.

Lin Mu waited for a few minutes before his gaze fell upon a dark corner.

"Come out."

Under the dim streetlight, the dark corner remained still.

"What? Do I have to invite you out personally?" A chill crept into Lin Mu's voice.

"Don't be nervous. I mean no harm."

From the empty corner, a figure slowly walked out. He was a young man dressed in ordinary casual clothes, with a simple and somewhat dopey look on his face as he scratched his head. It was hard to tell if this was just his personality or if he was embarrassed about being discovered.

Lin Mu's indifferent gaze went past the young man to the corner behind him.

The young man moved to block Lin Mu's line of sight. "Don't worry," he said. "They won't wake up for a while, and they pose no danger to the woman upstairs. There's no need to kill them."

In the corner lay several unconscious thugs. From the looks of it, they had all been taken down in a single move.

Gao Xing had sent these men on Xue Lang's behalf to teach Lin Mu a lesson. They were lying in wait beneath Su Ke'er's apartment when the young man discovered them and knocked them all out.

"I don't like leaving loose ends. So why should I trust you?" Lin Mu remained unmoved, the killing intent in his eyes not diminishing in the slightest.

He knew perfectly well why those men were here; it was the very reason he had come back—to deal with them himself. He was surprised that this young man had acted in an instant, effortlessly subduing a dozen or so thugs. This made Lin Mu curious.

This person had followed him all the way from the bar, yet Lin Mu couldn't sense any killing intent from him. He clearly wasn't here to kill him. So what did he want?

"You'll believe me." The young man scratched his head with a goofy expression. "I'm here to deliver a message."

"Of course, before that, I have something for you."

As soon as he finished speaking, the simple-looking young man slowly advanced on Lin Mu, wearing his trademark goofy smile.

Lin Mu raised an eyebrow. "What is it?"

"My fist, of course!" The young man let out a foolish laugh and suddenly threw a punch.

The single blow seemed to make the air thunder

Chapter 339: With Fervent Passion, Protect Our Rivers and Mountains!

A seemingly ordinary punch, but the moment it was unleashed, it seemed to carry the force of mountains and seas.

This punch is strong! That was Lin Mu's first impression.

However, his expression remained completely unchanged, and there was no trace of worry. This was because he felt no killing intent from his opponent's fist. Therefore, this person was not here to kill him. But, since the man had come to offer a punch, then he might as well accept.

With a light chuckle, Lin Mu stood his ground. Just as the opponent's fist was about to smash into him, he slowly raised his hand and threw a punch in return.

The other person had simply used a technique, without employing any True Qi or Internal Energy. Lin Mu, likewise, threw a punch relying purely on his physical strength.

The two fists made contact in an instant.

BANG!

A muffled sound echoed out. Lin Mu's body shook for a moment, but he immediately regained his stability. In contrast, the young man took half a step back. As his foot landed on the ground, the solid stone slab beneath it cracked.

"Not bad!" A rare fighting spirit suddenly ignited in the young man's otherwise calm eyes, and his entire aura transformed. He was like a tiger breaking free from its cage, a Jiaolong emerging from the sea.

A force like a landslide or tsunami surged forth as an even more ferocious punch came thundering down.

"Try and take another one of my punches!" the young man shouted, channeling all his power into his fist.

Lin Mu's eyes narrowed slightly. He felt an immense pressure from this punch.

"Strike!" the youth roared as his fist descended.

THUD!

The moment the fist appeared before him, Lin Mu's expression changed for the first time. The force of this punch had actually solidified. With its momentum alone, it could instantly kill all the Grandmasters Lin Mu had ever seen.

Exhaling slowly, Lin Mu surprisingly didn't counter. Instead, he braced himself and took the punch directly with his chest.

BANG!

The fist slammed into his chest, emitting a soul-quivering thud. The two of them remained frozen in their positions, their faces unreadable.

CRACK!

A nearby streetlight suddenly went out, followed by the lamps on both sides of the road extinguishing one after another. Even the rows of sycamore trees rustled violently, shedding countless leaves.

"You..." The young man stared dumbfounded at Lin Mu, never expecting him to neither dodge nor counterattack, but to simply block the punch with his body.

However, before the youth could finish his sentence, a sense of unease crept over him. A faint smile curled the corners of Lin Mu's mouth.

"A nice punch, but it's missing something."

The young man looked at Lin Mu strangely. Is this guy giving me pointers? He should know that even without using True Qi, just with my pair of iron fists, no one in the Capital would dare claim they could beat me. Back then, weren't the Four Grandmasters chased all over the world by me like stray dogs, fleeing from my strength? Even now, the mere mention of my name, Han Xiaochuan, is enough to send the Four Grandmasters running in terror! And this guy? He's only just appeared on the scene, beaten Yun Xu, and killed Western Poison Little Ouyang, one of the Four Grandmasters, and he's already this arrogant?

Just as the young man was about to withdraw his fist, he suddenly felt the pressure against it vanish. Lin Mu had taken a deep breath, his chest caving inward. The young man's eyes widened; it was too late to pull back.

THUD!

A sound like muffled thunder erupted from within Lin Mu's body. A force like a tidal wave surged outward, blasting the young man away.

"It would be impolite not to return the gesture. Now, you try and take a punch from me!" Lin Mu laughed heartily, his figure shooting out like lightning as he threw a punch.

The wind howled and the clouds churned; the world itself seemed to change color.

A look of pure horror filled the young man's eyes, knowing full well he couldn't withstand this blow.

"I concede!" he blurted out, his face flushing red with shame and his heart filled with bitter frustration.

WHOOSH!

The fist stopped a mere inch from his forehead. If he had spoken a moment later, his head would have been smashed to pieces. A few strands of his hair slowly fluttered down, and the young man's pupils contracted sharply.

The aura of his fist formed a blade! What kind of monster is this guy? At such a young age, he has actually refined his fist intent to a state of natural perfection, reaching a realm where he can turn the intangible into the tangible, solidifying it into Sword Qi?

The youth broke out in a cold sweat. The way he looked at Lin Mu changed for the first time. The Commander sent me to test this kid, and I'll admit I underestimated him. I thought he was just a young upstart with a bit of strength who was turning the Martial Arts World upside down. But after trading fists with him myself, I realize his strength is barely less than my own!

Even so, Han Xiaochuan still believed Lin Mu was his inferior. Refining one's fist intent to mastery only proves he might become a great boxing expert one day. But in a true life-and-death battle, I'm confident I could kill him within ten moves! Still, this kid is undeniably a prodigious talent. After all, my own rank on the Heaven's List is quite high.

Lin Mu tilted his head. "Are we not fighting anymore?"

"No more, no more! You're a total freak," the young man said, retreating two steps with a bitter smile. I've lost a lot of face this time. I can't imagine how the Commander is going to mock me when I get back.

Lin Mu smiled and withdrew his fist. "Alright, since we're done fighting, I'll be on my way if there's nothing else," he said, waving his hand as he prepared to leave.

"Wait," the young man called out. After Lin Mu stopped, he took something out and tossed it over. "Keep this safe. It could save your life at a crucial moment."

Lin Mu caught it. On closer inspection, he saw it was a small yet heavy Token. It was purple-gold, with a nine-clawed Golden Dragon engraved on it. It had an ancient, imposing aura and was clearly no ordinary object. Furthermore, on the Token were two characters written in bold, powerful strokes: Protector of the Dragon.

Beside these words was a line of smaller characters: "With burning blood, protect our nation!"

Though just a short phrase, it stirred a boiling passion within him.

Lin Mu raised an eyebrow slightly. "I don't think I need this to save my life." He believed only in his own strength. Besides, this Token was clearly some kind of pledge, representing a certain responsibility.

Just as he was about to toss the Token back, the youth spoke hurriedly. "Lin Wudi, I know you're powerful. The fact that you could withstand my punch means your sixteenth rank on the Heaven's List is well-deserved."

"But that's not enough!" the young man said with a solemn expression. "You've seen the Heaven's List. You know that everyone ranked below tenth, without exception, is in the Grandmaster Realm, their strength not to be underestimated. If they are all like that, what about the top ten?"

Lin Mu's brow furrowed slightly. "What are you trying to say?"

The young man sighed. "There isn't much time left before your challenge with Zhang Daoyun, is there?"

Only eight months of the year remained.

A rare look of fear crossed the young man's face. "I'll be honest with you. As confident as I am, if I were to fight Zhang Daoyun, he could kill me in a single move."

Lin Mu's mind stirred. He, too, would only need one move to kill this man, though he would be injured in the process. The fact that Zhang Daoyun could also do this meant he was not to be underestimated.

"But that is ultimately my affair," Lin Mu said, truly unwilling to accept the Token. The item would likely bring him considerable trouble. Most importantly, it would place too many restrictions on him.

The young man looked at Lin Mu seriously and emphasized, "Lin Wudi, do you really think your fight with Zhang Daoyun is just a matter between the two of you?"

"In this battle, we don't ask you to win, but you absolutely must not die!"

Chapter 340: Ten Years Later, A Grandmaster For Sure!

"The goal of this battle isn't to win, but just to survive?"

Lin Mu slowly shook his head, not wanting to speak.

Seeing Lin Mu's somewhat perfunctory gesture, the young man said seriously, "Although this Dragon Guard Order can't help you defeat Zhang Daoyun, it can ensure your survival!"

Lin Mu raised an eyebrow.

This guy has absolutely no confidence in me.

"Lin Wudi, there's not much time left. You must seize the moment to enhance your cultivation level," the young man continued. "The rumors claim Zhang Daoyun was seriously injured in his battle with Sword God Shen Lang, forcing him to seclude himself for a year before challenging you. But that was merely time that someone fought to buy you."

The young man paused, his eyes deep as he looked at Lin Mu, and said in a pleading tone, "Lin Wudi, I'm begging you, you must not die!"

He bowed deeply to Lin Mu, his voice tinged with sadness. "Because his time is running out."

Sensing the atmosphere had grown heavy, the young man smiled. "Don't feel pressured. With your exceptional talent, losing this battle isn't a death sentence. After all, there's no shame in losing to Zhang Daoyun! We value your potential far more than anything else!"

Lin Mu gave a wry smile.

Pressure? To be honest, I don't feel much pressure for this battle. Zhang Daoyun might be strong, but does that mean I'm weak? The outcome is uncertain until we fight.

"Rest assured, you don't need to worry about anything before your decisive battle with Zhang Daoyun. Someone will take care of everything for you," the young man explained earnestly, seemingly determined to alleviate any pressure on Lin Mu. "You only have one job right now: improve your strength as quickly as possible."

"You must keep this Dragon Guard Order safe. It's not convenient to disclose its specific functions right now, but there is one aspect that might help you," the young man said proudly. "As long as you hold this Dragon Guard Order, you can mobilize three thousand troops anywhere!"

Mobilize three thousand troops? This Dragon Guard Order is that powerful? It seems this was a gift from some big shot in the Military Department.

The young man said, "The Dragon Guard Order has many other functions, so you must keep it safe and never, ever lose it! The token and the person are one! That's the rule!"

Having said so much, the young man felt his mouth was dry. He sighed helplessly and said, "It's such a hassle just to deliver something. I'm off. Oh, by the way, my name is Han Xiaochuan. If you're ever in the Capital, you can look for me."

...

Lin Mu didn't snap back to reality until long after the young man had left.

Zhang Daoyun chose to challenge me a year from now because someone bought me that time? And that person is running out of time?

Lin Mu suddenly felt the token in his hand weighed a thousand pounds.

His palm slowly closed over the token. Lin Mu smiled faintly and thought, "Since they came all this way to deliver it, I might as well accept it."

With a flip of his hand, the Dragon Guard Order disappeared, stored away in his Mountain and River Cauldron.

"The affairs in River City are more or less settled. It's time to go into seclusion."

Lin Mu glanced in the direction of the Capital, a faint smile touching his lips. "This battle is just about survival? A pity. What I want is to win. Not just to win, but to win beautifully!"

...

「The Capital.」

Elder Xiao was brewing tea while Han Xiaochuan stood by, his face etched with anxiety.

"Have a taste." Elder Xiao pushed a cup of tea toward Han Xiaochuan, his face radiating a kind smile.

"Ah." Han Xiaochuan took the cup and gulped it down.

Elder Xiao watched with a pained expression. "Like a cow chewing a peony. A complete waste of good tea."

"Commander, I..."

Elder Xiao said plainly, "I know. You lost."

Han Xiaochuan's jaw dropped. That's not what I was trying to say, is it? And how did I even lose?

"But it doesn't matter," Elder Xiao said cheerfully. "As long as the item was delivered, that's all that matters."

Han Xiaochuan wanted to cry but had no tears. My Commander, is that really what I meant?

"Commander, I mean the Dragon Guard Order's locator signal has disappeared," Han Xiaochuan said urgently.

"Disappeared?" Elder Xiao was stunned. Every Dragon Guard Order was equipped with a tracking system that could pinpoint the exact location of its holder.

"Yes," Han Xiaochuan said. "Commander, should I make another trip?"

He was shaken. Lin Mu actually had a way to block the Dragon Guard Order's tracking system. How were they supposed to monitor him now? What if something happened to him?

"No need." Elder Xiao poured a cup of tea, changing the subject. "Xiaochuan, what do you think of him?"

Han Xiaochuan thought for a moment, then said seriously, "He is a prodigy of divine talent. Given time, he will definitely become a Grandmaster!"

"Good!" Elder Xiao's eyes lit up, and he drained his teacup in one gulp.

Drinking this tea was like downing strong liquor!

Han Xiaochuan stared, dumbfounded. Commander, what was that you just said about me?

Elder Xiao sighed, his voice wistful. "A Grandmaster... how long has it been since we last had one? Ten years? Twenty? Or a hundred?"

"The nation grows stronger by the day, but the strength of our Martial Artists is in decline." Elder Xiao thumped his knee and muttered to himself, "Of the top ten on the Heavenly Ranking today, the Ancient Martial World accounts for more than half. The rest are all getting on in years."

Han Xiaochuan pouted. "Commander, when you say things like that, could you please consider my feelings?"

Elder Xiao gave Han Xiaochuan a strange look. "You never used to talk this much. What, did that kid get to you?"

Han Xiaochuan crossed his arms and huffed, "That kid? I could beat him black and blue with a few punches."

Elder Xiao laughed heartily, pointing at him. "You punk. If you lost, you lost. What's so hard to admit? Just listen to his moniker, Wudi. Invincible is as invincible does."

Han Xiaochuan's face stiffened. The memory of being so intimidated by a single punch that he conceded defeat filled him with a complex mix of feelings. "Hmph, so what if he's invincible? Can he beat Zhang Daoyun?"

At his words, the smile vanished from Elder Xiao's face, replaced by a deep sigh.

Realizing his mistake, Han Xiaochuan quickly tried to console him. "Commander, don't worry too much. That guy's talent is terrifying. Even if he can't win this time, give him ten years, and he'll have a place on the Heavenly Ranking for sure!"

Elder Xiao was deeply moved and said solemnly, "You're right. In ten years, he will become a Grandmaster!"

...

「Zun City, known as the ancient city.」

It was a famous tourist destination in Southern Sky. Now, in the heart of a clear summer, countless tourists flocked to Zun City to enjoy its unique, old-world charm.

"Boss, another bowl!"

In a cool alley, Lin Mu set down his empty bowl and called out to the busy owner.

"The usual! Extra chili and vinegar!"

Lin Mu's words made the customers at the other tables stare in shock. This was already his tenth bowl. Even if it was just cold jelly noodles, that was way too much to eat.

"Alrighty!" The owner, however, thought differently. He had been making these noodles for decades and knew they wouldn't cause a stomachache no matter how much a person ate. Besides, the more his customers ate, the better his noodles must be!

The owner was a short man in his sixties, his face carved with the deep lines of time. He had worked hard for years to raise several daughters, putting them through college, watching them get married and buy homes. Though his body was still robust, his hands and feet were no longer as nimble as they once were.

"Boss, hurry up! How long have I been waiting?" a customer complained, his face a mask of impatience.

"Yes, yes! Coming right up!" the owner replied cheerfully before carrying a bowl of noodles over to Lin Mu.

"Damn it, old man! What's the meaning of this?" The angry customer shot to his feet, kicking his stool away. "Coming up, coming up! Do you even want to stay in business?"

At this scene, the other customers quickly got up, put their money down, and hurried away. These men clearly spelled trouble, and it was best not to get caught in the crossfire.

Soon, the only person left in the alley was Lin Mu, who was still eating his cold jelly noodles, savoring every bite to his heart's content.