

I Am Loaded 221

Chapter 221 – Xu Xiaoshou made His Move, Messing with the Heart of a Beauty and Taking the Sword

“Pffttt!”

The conversation had changed direction quickly, and Qiao Qianzhi was so startled that he sprayed the tea from his mouth.

Cheng Xingchu was aghast. But before he could speak, Xu Xiaoshou continued.

“If you win, you will gain both Ms. Zhiwen’s and my respect. If you lose, I suppose I could take your sword as a prize?”

He extended his hand toward Yu Zhiwen, who was by his side, and she glared sullenly.

What did the competition have to do with her?

“A contest of the physical body then?”

Despite looking like he was about to turn into a raging monster, Cheng Xingchu still retained his intellectual capacity to reason. After all, had he been an ordinary person, would he have gotten to where he was at present?

The word, “physical body,” reminded Cheng Xingchu of the rumors he had been hearing in the Outer Yard of late.

Xu the Three-headed, Xu the Six-armed, Xu the True Dragon.

He had heard the rumors about the famous Big Brother Xu of the Outer Yard—the one who had the uncommon Innate Level Physique. He wondered if they were referring to Xu Xiaoshou.

Jiang Bianyan and Yu Zhiwen wondered about it as well. Both of them looked at each other with questioning eyes.

In a doubtful tone, Cheng Xingchu then asked, “So, you are the one with Innate Level Physique, then?”

Xu Xiaoshou said nothing, and it was a silent confirmation of his ability. Cheng Xingchu smirked in response.

So, Xu Xiaoshou had Innate Level Physique. So what?

No matter how resilient his body was, he would not survive a thrust of my sword, anyway.

“Alright, the rules sound fine to me, although they lean to your benefit. But the stakes?”

What’s this about winning or losing? Yet, what’s at stake is my sword?

Cheng Xingchu gave him a sardonic look. He shook his head and retorted, “Are you taking me for a fool?”

Xu Xiaoshou nodded.

The place fell silent for a second.

“Pfft!”

Qiao Qianzhi blew out the hot tea he had in his mouth again.

He put the cup down right away and did not dare to take any further sips. He figured that drinking tea was ill-suited whenever Xu Xiaoshou was present.

The veins on Cheng g Xingchu’s forehead popped and throbbed.

He glowered at the young man standing across him with a stern look on his face. Cheng g Xingchu was panting heavily and seemed to have lost all capacity for speech.

“How about this then?” Xu Xiaoshou added, seeing that Cheng g Xingchu was not saying a word. “If you dislike it, I will change the rules a bit. Let us have a contest of swordsmanship, but the stakes remain.”

Cheng g Xingchu was still at a loss for words.

He stood there dumbfounded, feeling like he was being toyed around with like a monkey.

“Alright, let us do this then!”

Despite appearing like he was shouting out impulsively, Cheng g Xingchu had already given a lot of thought to it.

He instantly thought that the youth across from him had a death wish. Why would he give up his advantage of having the Innate Level Physique and settled for a contest of swordsmanship instead? Xu Xiaoshou must have thought that he could overwhelm him in all areas. What else could it be?

“Let us take a seat.”

Xu Xiaoshou gestured for Cheng g Xingchu to take it easy. He waited until the other man had seated again before continuing. “The path of the sword comprises two words—sword and path.”

To avoid doing unnecessary damage to both of us, let us not get to dueling. We will do it with words instead. We will allow your sword to decide which side it chooses to follow—it would do this totally at its own will.”

How about it?”

Everyone looked stunned. Probably only the prominent Elders from both parties may have seen such a competition take place before. So, everyone present was quite surprised at the suggestion.

However, Cheng Xingchu looked amused.

He was the master of the Spirit Sword. He had experienced firsthand how Xu Xiaoshou could rile someone up with words alone. But could this lad persuade his sword?

“Haha, haha! Xu Xiaoshou, do you think you could manipulate the laws in your favor with just words alone?”

“Alright! I, Cheng Xingchu, take up the challenge!”

Give it your best shot!”

He held onto his Spirit Sword and turned around dismissively. “I would like to see how you can persuade my...”

SHING...!

The sword in his hand rang and trembled before he finished talking, immediately surprising him.

Slivers of white sword aura emanating from his sword—was it what he thought it was?

“Sword Will?”

His eyes flew wide open. He immediately realized that not only did Xu Xiaoshou possess Innate Level Physique, the man also had Innate Sword Will.

Across the entire continent, it was exceedingly rare to come across practitioners who excelled in swordsmanship and had physical prowess. As it turned out, Xu Xiaoshou, the lad who was standing in front of him, was someone like that.

Cheng Xingchu was all flustered, not expecting that things would turn out that way at all.

It was like when someone who remembered the name of the tallest mountain suddenly finding it difficult to name the second tallest mountain.

But any person should be capable of doing so. However, the said person, despite having little else to do, might have felt bored.

But Cheng Xingchu was not such a bored person. And despite knowing that there was someone in the Spirit Palace who possessed Innate Level Physique, he did not bother to find out who the person was.

Had the thought not occurred to Cheng Xingchu, then he would not have known Xu Xiaoshou was the one everyone talked about—the Big Brother of the Outer Yard.

At that point, Cheng Xingchu could do nothing but hold his sword down as hard as he could.

He never even got to Acquired Sword Will level. Cheng Xingchu was the type who depended on spiritual techniques, not will.

“You duped me?”

Cheng Xingchu’s eyes were bloodshot. Despite being the master of the sword, he had to do his best to hold on to the weapon to prevent it from leaving him. It was a grave insult to him.

“Since when did I dupe you?”

Feigning astonishment, Xu Xiaoshou promptly retorted, “Even if this is a life and death battle, do you expect your opponent to declare all their trump cards? After all, ours is only a competition fought with words alone.”

Cheng Xingchu immediately sensed something was wrong with how Xu Xiaoshou had worded it. But he did not have the luxury of time to wonder what went wrong.

He did his best to use his bursting spiritual source to keep down his fifth-grade sword.

SHING! SHING!

Xu Xiaoshou looked calm and carefree, yet the sword kept shaking vigorously.

This was what made those who relied on Will so powerful. If they were to fight with those who relied on spiritual techniques alone, the latter could do nothing at all if they did not act instantly.

Xu Xiaoshou looked at Cheng Xingchu, who appeared increasingly desperate, and said, "No attacking."

Cheng Xingchu's face was all ashen.

If he were to continue with what he was doing, there would be no way for him to keep his sword under control. In that case, it would be better to just cut Xu Xiaoshou's trick down with a blast of spiritual technique.

His eyes widened as he drew his sword.

A blast of sword aura seemed to be about to shoot at Xu Xiaoshou. But, at that moment, Xu Xiaoshou tilted his head to look at Yu Zhiwen, whose slender finger became stiff just as she was about to point.

With a flap of Xu Xiaoshou's sleeve, Cheng Xingchu flew into the air.

"Sword!"

CLANG!

With a single word of command, the spiritual technique which was about to burst out was shattered. The blast of sword aura dispersed spiritual mist that rained down in a mist.

The Spirit Sword immediately flew out of Cheng Xingchu's hand like it heeded a command from the Gods. In glee, the sword swished around, drawing perfect strokes. Then it shot into Xu Xiaoshou's right hand like a jeweled beam.

THUD!

The stifled sound of the sword landing in his hand was a steady thump.

The wind that blew as the Spirit Sword flew into his hand ruffled some of the hair on Xu Xiaoshou's forehead. The hair flapped into Yu Zhiwen's face, who was sitting right beside him.

Xu Xiaoshou grinned and then flirted in a hushed tone.

"No interrupting a fight between men, young lady."

Yu Zhiwen got bewildered by what she saw.

The grace he showed with the sword command and the way he caught the sword without turning his eyes around was impressive!

All of that, plus the spiritual mist raining down behind him, had automatically blurred everyone around them out.

At that moment, there was only her and Xu Xiaoshou in some paradise.

Thump! Thump!

Her increasingly rapid heart rate caused her to tremble, making her push back the chair she was sitting on. She immediately tried to distance herself from Xu Xiaoshou.

CREAK!

The high-pitched screech reverberated right through the entire hall. But Yu Zhiwen did not care about it.

It was embarrassing enough that her set-up under the table got exposed. The look in Xu Xiaoshou's eyes when he turned around was another matter.

Too close!

She could almost feel his face up close.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

The spirit mist then settled.

The man and woman sitting right across from Cheng Xingchu were looking into each other's eyes, and he erupted in a jealous rage.

"Die!"

He rose, no longer paying any heed to the rules, wanting only to crack open Xu Xiaoshou's skull with a punch and retrieve his Spirit Sword.

"Sit!" Xu Xiaoshou shouted without even turning his head around.

BOOM!

A rumble rang out as a blast of sword aura punched Cheng Xingchu's body as soon as he got up.

Not only did the blast shatter the chair he sat on, but it also forced him into a sitting position in midair, with his legs bent.

Xu Xiaoshou turned his eyes away from the blushing Yu Zhiwen to face the man who resorted to violence.

Xu Xiaoshou held onto the sword as he rested his hand on the table and continued speaking in a casual tone.

"Such contests take place with the participants seated."

"How are we going to continue if both of us are not in our seats?"

Chapter 222: Origin Residence

There was pin-drop silence in the hall.

Not a sound. Everyone just stared in awe at how Xu Xiaoshou executed his moves.

"Innate Sword Will..."

Jiang Bianyan was bedazzled by what he saw. With that one move, Xu Xiaoshou literally made himself into a weapon. It was more than enough for anyone to see how profound Xu Xiaoshou's comprehension of the Sword Will was.

Such a level of powers meant he did not just recently gain such a skill. It was something that could only have come from being steeped in this path for many years.

But...

"Innate Level Physique and Innate Sword Will. Where did he find all the time to train in both?"

"Is this kid some old veteran who just looked unbelievably young?"

It was no surprise why Jiang Bianyan suspected it to be so. Those two paths were extremely difficult to train in, and it was unbelievable to get to see both types of powers in one person.

Ye Xiaotian and Qiao Qianzhi looked at each other and grinned.

While the news was very shocking to outsiders, both of the masters had by now gotten used to it.

However, what was most terrifying about Xu Xiaoshou wasn't the fact that his combat prowess was more than what it seemed, but the weird antics he would come up with all the time.

Truth to be told, they too were surprised at how quickly he won the duel.

They knew that Cheng Xingchu was going to lose, but they had never expected that he would suffer such an overwhelming defeat.

Arrgghhhh!

The sword aura that punched through Cheng Xingchu's body stayed in there for only moments before Xu Xiaoshou recalled it, leaving the young man wincing with bloodshot eyes.

"Seniors, I'd say the duel has now been concluded."

Xu Xiaoshou then asked, "if there is nothing else that requires my performance, may I take my leave?"

Performance...?

Cheng Xingchu spat out blood right there and then.

Cursed, Passive Points +1.

Xu Xiaoshou feigned shocked.

"Are you alright?"

"I wasn't doing much back there..."

"You!" Cheng Xingchu pressed his hand against his heart and his eyes looked like they were about to pop.

Huh! not doing much? You did this on purpose!

Keeping still without doing much at all? You must be proud of yourself now!

Resented, Passive Points +1.

“Xu Xiaoshou!” Ye Xiaotian called, noticing that he was about to say something again.

He glared at Xu Xiaoshou. Kid, stop talking already! If you were to just keep talking and the other guy gets annoyed to death, then things would reach a point of no return.

“What do you think, Hallmaster Jiang?” Ye Xiaotian finally felt relieved after preventing one of his own from doing more damage.

The corner of Jiang Bianyan’s mouth twitched. Everyone witnessed what happened, and Xu Xiaoshou had indeed won. There was nothing else he could say about it.

He couldn’t just weasel out of it, as he still had to save face.

However, the whole thing felt like a mockery with Cheng Xingchu losing in such a manner.

The two slots he had hoped for vanished just like that.

Hmm, and there’ was also the sword too...

“I object!”

Cheng Xingchu stood up and shouted angrily.

“Spiritual cultivators fight against the heavens and the Great Path. How could the outcome of a duel be decided by just sitting down?”

“If we had a physical duel, Xu Xiaoshou would not have been able to win against me!”

Zhao Xidong slapped his forehead quietly, having anticipated that it would turn out exactly like that.

Xu Xiaoshou begged to differ and spoke in a soft voice. “The fact remains that you lost. Had this been a fight to the death, losing would have meant you’d be dead.”

“Therefore, you should be lying down instead of standing up. The dead don’t speak after all.”

Cheng Xingchu was speechless.

Damn it!

Could you just shut the f**k up!? I don’t wanna hear you talk!

Resented, Passive Points +1.

Xu Xiaoshou remained unfazed and even felt like laughing.

He observed Jiang Bianyan, who looked like he was about to speak, yet said nothing. Xu Xiaoshou then added, “However, I believe that life is not all about tragedies...”

“If you were to have something else that you could bet on, you could choose to continue the duel, I guess.”

He dropped the line and slowly put the fifth-grade spirit sword he held into his space ring.

His actions taunted Cheng Xingchu... Come on, young man.

Money will allow you to change your fate. You wanna get resurrected? You wanna beat me?

Get another sword, then...

Cheng Xingchu's face was ashen-faced, wondering if Xu Xiaoshou thought his pockets were bottomless.

The opportunity was truly right before his eyes, yet he hesitated. Instead, he began wondering if he could even beat someone who possessed Innate Sword Will.

Despite being at Upper Spiritual Level, yet such Wills could sometimes allow a cultivator to defeat those of higher levels. Besides, Xu Xiaoshou had Innate Level Physique...

It would be very possible for Xu Xiaoshou to bridge the gap spanning over the Voidness Level and Upper Spiritual Level, and to defeat him eventually.

Ye Xiaotian grinned and asked, "What do you think, Hallmaster Jiang?"

Truth to be told, Jiang Bianyan was feeling rather tempted.

That was their last chance, and they had to seize it.

He shot a look at Cheng Xingchu and then said something telepathically. Everyone then saw Cheng Xingchu's eyes lighting up.

"Alright! I agree!"

Qiao Qianzhi almost burst out laughing again, quickly pulling the cup to his mouth to cover his smile before taking a sip.

"Ah, this tea is nice..."

"You still have a sword, then?" Xu Xiaoshou asked with a greedy look in his eyes.

Cheng Xingchu took a deep breath and slowly pulled out a jade scroll. "This is the Cheng family's upper level..."

"Spiritual technique?"

Xu Xiaoshou' frowned and pouted as he said, "I'm not interested in spiritual techniques. Next."

Cheng Xingchu was speechless.

How did you know before hearing everything I said?

How would you know what it is?

"This is..."

"Next!"

"Huff," Cheng Xingchu exhaled and took out a grey piece of rock.

The piece of cobblestone was of the size of two fists and had black array patterns on it. The strokes didn't seem like much, yet it seemed to harbor Great Path, containing an immense power of unknown proportions.

Yu Zhiwen, who was beside Xu Xiaoshou, gasped as soon as Cheng Xingchu revealed the rock. "An Origin Residence?"

Cheng Xingchu looked at the veiled girl with pride and said, "Indeed."

Even the seniors from both sides were rather stunned to find that Cheng Xingchu possessed something like that. Not even Jiang Bianyan had expected it.

Why would you take something like this out?

Xu Xiaoshou noted everyone had a shocked look on their faces and was baffled. "What is an Origin Residence?"

Cheng Xingchu chuckled mockingly, deeming him as one who had been living under the rock.

"Extra-dimensional spaces appear on the Shengshen Continent all the time. Some of these spaces are extremely unstable and cannot remain for long before they decay."

"When these spaces collapse, it would naturally mean that nothing within it would survive. Yet the Great Path acknowledged some of these extra-dimensional spaces, and they would take the form of such sealing stones when they collapse. And that is what is known as the Origin Residence.

"Such treasures like the Origin Residence are scarce—you could say that they're one in a million, which indeed makes them priceless treasures."

Xu Xiaoshou then asked, "Well, what can the Origin Residence be used for, then?"

"Hmph!" Cheng Xingchu snorted with a contemptuous look on his face, and said, "When put to good use, you could unravel the seal on the rock, thus gain a small space of your own."

"A small space of my own...?"

Xu Xiaoshou thought of the space ring reflexively, but if the Origin Residence were to be as miraculous, then...?

"Could it contain living beings?"

"It could, indeed."

Xu Xiaoshou's eyes glinted right away. A manor that I could bring along with me? Or even a moving castle?

That is a treasure like no other!

However, excited as he was, he realized that something was amiss.

"So, you're willing to let me have one such treasure?"

Let you have it...?

What Xu Xiaoshou said riled up Cheng Xingchu right away, causing him to yell, “since when did I say about just letting you have it? If you lose, you’ll have to give me my sword back!”

However, Xu Xiaoshou still found something fishy about the whole deal. A fifth-grade spirit sword was not a famed sword, and he wondered what prompted Cheng Xingchu to take out such a treasure to wager on.

At that moment, Ye Xiaotian, sitting in the master’s seat, interjected calmly and said, “if I’m not mistaken, this is probably an Abrogated Origin Residence, is it not?”

Cheng Xingchu’s rage dissipated right away as he stood there feeling awkward.

“Abrogated Origin Residence?” Xu Xiaoshou asked with a puzzled expression.

Chapter 223: A Bet with Severely Restrictive Rules

Ye Xiaotian tilted his head to look at Xu Xiaoshou, and said, “Like its namesake, this Origin Residence got abrogated.”

For some reason, the world within this Origin Residence lost all rules for sustaining life. With the loss of its life source, even if you were to unravel the seal on the stone, you would merely get a space ring with a larger space.”

This thing is not even worth a ninth-grade Spirit Sword. How do you suppose it could be worth trading with a fifth-grade item?”

Xu Xiaoshou remained somewhat intrigued. Honestly, he did not care for the fifth-grade Spirit Sword. The way he looked at it, his Hiding Pain was already enough for him.

The Origin Residence fascinated him. He wondered if he could restore the piece of trash into an article of treasure.

“There is nothing absolute in this world. So, there are ways to repair it, right?” Xu Xiaoshou asked.

“It is indeed reparable, but the cost might be very steep.”

“You need a Grandmaster versed in space-type spiritual arrays. Then you have to get the unparalleled treasure of life type. If you are lucky enough, you may have the chance to get it repaired.”

Ye Xiaotian sighed. While he and Qiao Qianzhi could both do something about the space part, he could not help with the life-type treasure.

There was such a kind of treasure in the Spirit Palace. But it was inside the Tianxuan Gate with the Sky Tree. It meant that there was no easy way to extract it for such use.

There was little they could do now after that world ended up collapsing.

Anyway, they could not simply hand it to Xu Xiaoshou even if they could extract that piece of treasure.

Unfortunately, the Abrogated Origin Residence was nothing more than a white elephant.

Xu Xiaoshou became increasingly enthusiastic as he heard them all. Space, Grandmaster, and a treasure of life.

All three were available to him.

He almost fished out the Spirit Mark of Life from his robe in his excitement. He wanted to ask those two other living, walking treasures seated before him if Spirit Mark of Life could be of any use.

However, his common sense suppressed his impulse.

“Are you kidding me? You are toying with me with this piece of trash?” Xu Xiaoshou said, pretending to sound displeased.

Cheng Xingchu sheepishly scratched his head. He looked a little deflated as soon as his trickery was exposed. But he quickly recovered and continued to speak.

“Does the Spirit Palace not have someone at Sovereign Stage with space powers and a Grandmaster at spiritual arrays?”

He gestured at the two seated at the prominent seats and said, “You already got two prerequisites at hand. You only need to get some life-type treasure to work with it. You might ultimately see miracles happening.”

“Who are you trying to dupe here? You offer an Origin Residence that is already a piece of trash. And then, you want me to look for resources to fix it?”

Xu Xiaoshou then smirked and continued, “Do you think it is so easy to come across treasures with life-type powers? I bet something like that would almost be of equal value to a complete, working Origin Residence.”

“A complete, working Origin Residence?” said a fuming Cheng Xingchu. “If I were to have such a piece, do you think I would trade it for my sword?” he retorted.

“Makes sense...” answered Xu Xiaoshou with a thoughtful expression.

He seemed to have successfully persuaded Xu Xiaoshou, who slapped his thigh and finally said, “Alright, that settles it. You can bet using this thing.”

Huh?

Cheng Xingchu looked baffled, not expecting it to be so easy.

He wondered how it suddenly got so easy to persuade Xu Xiaoshou.

Cheng Xingchu became a little apprehensive, thinking that there was a catch somewhere. But Xu Xiaoshou played his cards well enough to prevent Cheng Xingchu from catching on to his plans.

Xu Xiaoshou even made everyone think he was at a loss while considering the bet.

Ptui!

Why the hell was he worried about the guy? Was he nuts or something?

Zhao Xidong felt puzzled when he saw the frustrated expression on Xu Xiaoshou’s face.

Xu Xiaoshou was not someone who would fall for something like that. Had he not always been racking up riches with no one else knowing?

Had he changed?

However, both the hearts of Ye Xiaotian and Qiao Qianzhi sank when they heard Xu Xiaoshou agree to the bet.

But they were not about to believe that Xu Xiaoshou would be content with getting the short end of the stick. It meant that there was only one explanation for his action.

Did Xu Xiaoshou dig the Spirit Mark of Life out? Qiao Qianzhi asked telepathically.

Ye Xiaotian responded by saying that it was impossible. He had seen Xu Xiaoshou at the Black Cliff that day. He would not have enough time to do it. Even if he were to make it in time, what was he doing at the Senluo Woods, anyway? Ye Xiaotian was not convinced.

Qiao Qianzhi then casually sighed and reminded Ye Xiaotian that Mu Zixi was of the wood element and was Xu Xiaoshou's little sister-in-training.

Ye Xiaotian was speechless.

Crack!

The armrest of Ye Xiaotian's chair shattered, and everyone turned to look at him.

"What is the matter?" Jiang Bianyan asked with a pleased look on his face.

He assumed Ye Xiaotian was not pleased with Xu Xiaoshou getting the short end of the stick. But since they had agreed on the stakes, there was little they could do to change it. Not while he was watching.

"It is nothing."

Ye Xiaotian shook his head. He finally realized why Elder Sang wanted to make a bet with him that day. He wondered if Elder Sang had known that Xu Xiaoshou would get more than a piece of the world-stabilizing treasures.

The damned old geezer!

"The stake is fine. I shall now bear witness with this piece of wood here, and make it official that this bet is on," said Ye Xiaotian as he raised a piece of the shattered armrest.

Xu Xiaoshou felt his skin crawl as Ye Xiaotian glowered at him. He turned his eyes away and asked, "So, how do you want to do this?"

"Will I still be the one deciding the rules of this wager?"

Cheng Xingchu shook his finger and said, "That would not do. I will do it this time."

"Oh, you are finally getting serious?" Xu Xiaoshou mocked.

He then jibed, "Are you not at the pinnacle of the Innate level? Are you not giving any handicap to a bug like me, who has just got to Innate level?"

Cheng Xingchu gave no response to the remark.

: Cursed, Passive Points +1.

“Alright then, how do you want to do this?”

Xu Xiaoshou spread his hands dismissively after making the sarcastic remark. It looked like Cheng Xingchu was afraid, after all.

“First, we shall duel with nothing related to swords, and that includes Sword Will, swords, as well as sword techniques.”

“Heh!” Xu Xiaoshou could not help chuckling as he added, “I am only at early Origin Court level, and you are already going this far?”

Cheng Xingchu gave no response.

He paid no heed to Xu Xiaoshou. When he had decided on the bet, things like saving face did not come into consideration.

In such a situation, it became an utterly worthless virtue.

It was not like he could get his fifth-grade Spirit Sword back by saving his face.

“Second, we duel using only spiritual source. Any party who can break through the other party’s defense shall be the winner,” Cheng Xingchu said.

Xu Xiaoshou had a shocked expression on his face, seeing how the man in front of him no longer cared about his honor.

All the rules he had laid out were specifically designed to work against Xu Xiaoshou.

“But what about my physical body?” asked Xu Xiaoshou.

“We shall consider it as a passive attribute of yours. Since you cannot turn it off at will, consider it your advantage.”

Cheng Xingchu then flung his hands out wide and continued speaking without waiting for Xu Xiaoshou to say anything. “But, given that you have Innate Level Physique, it would be unfair if I do not have any defense.”

“So, both of us can use defensive spiritual weapons, but not offensive ones.”

Xu Xiaoshou looked shocked.

The jerk called this fair?

“What do you think?”

Cheng Xingchu’s face looked flushed after he finally finished talking.

Yu Zhiwen turned her head away, feeling too ashamed to stay around any longer.

Cheng Xingchu had an excellent defensive spiritual weapon on his person. There was no way that Xu Xiaoshou could match it, and he went all out to curb Xu Xiaoshou. He even went to the extent of overwhelming Xu Xiaoshou with his superior wealth as well.

It was a battle between a disciple at Upper Spiritual Level and a disciple at the Origin Court Level.

Was there a need to go so far?

Jiang Bianyan appeared unfazed. To rise to where he was at present had meant that his face was as thick as the city walls.

“Sure,” Xu Xiaoshou answered with remarkable calm.

“Well then, I would like to add another condition on top of the rules you have laid out. Hopefully, it will prevent things from going too far.”

You and I both throw a single punch. The one who gets repelled furthest away loses. How about it?”

Cheng Xingchu’s eyes lit up. He thought Xu Xiaoshou had gotten too arrogant and deemed himself invincible because he had Innate Level Physique.

“Sure.”

“Make your move then,” Cheng Xingchu said as he graciously offered his opponent the first move.

Xu Xiaoshou shook his head.

“You first. If I went first, I would send you flying with my punch.”

Chapter 224: Could We Fix This?

“Huh, bragging again!”

The look in Cheng Xingchu’s eyes glinted dangerously. He might be far weaker in a duel with Sword Will, but things would be very different if he were to make use of his spiritual source.

Cheng Xingchu felt that if he were still to lose using his spiritual source, he might as well kill himself by smashing against a block of tofu!

His finger unconsciously traced lightly over the piece of jade tucked in his waist.

After Lei Shuangxing smashed through a piece the other day, Cheng Xingchu was down to his last jade piece.

Just how could Xu Xiaoshou get to the Master level from Origin Court Stage, eh?

Cheng Xingchu found it hard to believe.

“If you are letting me go first, do note that I will not be pulling my punches.”

He was not in the mood to chat any further with someone as pompous as Xu Xiaoshou. He gathered his might and burst into action.

The rage of his spiritual source at the peak of the Upper Spiritual Level finally manifested and made itself known. For such power capable of fighting toe-to-toe with the veteran 33. Instantly, it caused the surrounding space to tremble.

The first of the three levels in Master levels was the Astronomical Level.

Spiritual cultivators could gradually touch the Great Path by studying the path through their innate powers. It would then allow them to use the powers of the laws of the world.

It would be a sign that they were getting into the realm of Master levels.

The surrounding space shook as soon as Cheng Xingchu made his move. His movements clearly showed that he had touched the threshold of Master level.

The people of the Spirit Palace had concerned expressions on their faces.

For the man was someone who came from the Holy Divine Temple. While his attitude and mindset needed further restraint, there was no doubting the strength of his powers.

All of them turned to look at Xu Xiaoshou, waiting to see how he would negotiate the attack.

Naturally, Xu Xiaoshou did not intend to underestimate what was coming. He was in his most serious frame of mind and wanted to take on the attack with his full powers.

But his powers did not allow him to do so.

He had nothing but passive skills. And it was infuriating, given that there was nothing to activate.

Besides, he had little defensive spiritual techniques and spiritual weapons. The most he could do was to mobilize his spiritual source to erect a barrier.

So, other than striking a Wing Chun stance, he did nothing else to prepare.

“Come on!”

Everyone was dumbfounded, wondering why he acted so indifferent when his opponent was coming at him with a force almost as powerful as that of the Master level.

Did he have a death wish or something?

What good would the pose do for him?

Come on, go all out!

Fight with all you have got!

: Doubted, Passive Points +5.

Strangely, Cheng Xingchu was greatly disturbed by Xu Xiaoshou’s casual, indifferent attitude, and found his state of mind dithering almost at the brink of collapse.

Damn this guy! He’s trying hard to piss me off!

Cheng Xingchu roared angrily and cranked up his powers to the maximum.

He gathered his spiritual source in his palm and conjured a vague shadow of the Black Tortoise behind his back.

“Black Tortoise Strike!”

He charged as he launched his strike, and in his mind, he could already see Xu Xiaoshou getting crushed.

The Master level spiritual technique was not his most forceful attack, but it contained a tremendous force that could shatter anything.

Even if Xu Xiaoshou were to survive it, he would be thrown back and sustain severe injuries, possibly even crippling him.

Even if you had Innate Level Physique, so what?

It’s still just Innate level!

“A Master level spiritual technique?” Xu Xiaoshou mumbled as he saw Cheng Xingchu charging at him.

With restrictions on the use of Sword Will, it meant that Xu Xiaoshou could not use techniques like the 10 Sections of the Sword Finger.

Well, I suppose I will have to do this then...

He slowly pushed his hands out, conjuring a fire seed between his palms just as Cheng Xingchu’s hand was about to smash into him.

“Lesser Fireball!”

“What kind of spiritual technique is this?”

Cheng Xingchu immediately had a bad feeling about it, but he thought he would simply crush whatever it was.

Then he saw Xu Xiaoshou looking anxious and conjuring another compressed fire seed up between the palms of his hands.

The energy soon became unstable and was on the verge of getting out of control. When the aura of devastation leaked out, Ye Xiaotian immediately stood up in dread.

This is a new hall, boy! Do not do it, Xu Xiaoshou!

Ye Xiaotian’s immediate thought was to surround the two of them with a space barrier. But then Xu Xiaoshou, who had looked hesitant for a bit, conjured yet another two fire seeds!

It left ye Xiaotian wide-eyed with horror.

“Cannot afford to be careless... He is coming at me with a Master level spiritual technique,” mumbled Xu Xiaoshou, nodding solemnly to assure himself.

Cheng Xingchu suddenly looked frightened beyond description.

The best way of using such a terrifying aura of destruction was to detonate it from afar. But this guy had conjured the seeds so close to him!

Did Xu Xiaoshou go nuts?

Was he not afraid of being blown up as well?

But, given his the attack was already in motion, there was simply no way Cheng Xingchu could pull out in time.

He could do nothing else other but face it head-on. He increased the power of his strike.

If I don't succeed, I'll be dead meat!

Nah, impossible for me to fail here!

BOOM!

Suddenly, Ye Xiaotian beamed the two duelists into the sky outside the hall, and he was just in the nick of time. The loud rumble in the sunny sky caught the attention of everyone within earshot.

Everyone turned to look up at almost the same time.

It was an explosion that not even the soundproof array could shut out. The people wondered if it was another invasion.

The shock wave swept across the place and it felt as if a meteor had just crashed into the ocean. Green and white spiritual power clashed with each other, and it looked like the two opposing powers were tied.

However, the deadlock did not last for long as the white force suddenly overwhelmed the opposing force.

Scorching bright white energy took over as far as the eye could see.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Five consecutive explosions erupted, and one mushroom cloud after another shot up the sky. The disciples of the Inner Yard all watched in awe.

They stirred, feeling the phenomena brought back familiar memories.

The faces of everyone in the hall twitched, for they seemed to have predicted what just happened.

Swoop!

As expected, a bloodied figure was thrown from the explosion and crashed onto the newly laid out rock-hard ground. He was completely unconscious.

Meanwhile, Xu Xiaoshou remained hovering in midair.

His clothes billowed around him from the impact of the explosions, but he emerged unscathed.

There was fresh blood dripping from his hand. But of course, the blood was not his. It was the blood of his opponent, Cheng Xingchu.

"Um... Oh, it looks like I do not need to make my move anymore."

Xu Xiaoshou wiped his hands and looked at Cheng Xingchu, sprawled on the ground and completely unconscious.

The reason the explosions came, one after another, was because the “Seeds on All Five Fingers” technique only generated the seeds one by one before detonating them. Had it been otherwise, Cheng Xingchu would end up being shredded to bits.

Even though his opponent had done his best with the Black Tortoise Strike and unleashed all his force in his strike, he still could not hurt Xu Xiaoshou at all.

Eternal Vitality at Master level enabled Xu Xiaoshou to recover from the injury he sustained in a blink of an eye.

As for how Cheng Xingchu was sent flying off in such a horrific fashion...

Using Recoil alone would not have been able to nullify the Master level spiritual technique of Cheng Xingchu. Passive skills were not techniques to be executed on their own.

Xu Xiaoshou’s Master Physique had been backing up all the other passive skills in the background.

His Recoil skill was only still at Innate level. However, because of the parameters of his powerful physical body, the recoil effect of the passive skill was amplified twice over.

Everyone had gotten out of the hall and now stood at the entrance. Xu Xiaoshou slowly descended in a dashing manner before them all.

Xu Xiaoshou saw that everyone was still in shock and asked hesitantly, “Um, should we not go save the man right now?”

Zhao Xidong quickly snapped out of his shock and immediately flew off. He shot a glare at Xu Xiaoshou.

That kid sure knows how to mess things up!

Cheng Xingchu cannot die here, man! Or it would cause massive trouble for us all.

He should be fine. Cheng Xingchu still had the defensive spiritual weapon, after all.

However, Zhao Xidong spotted the shattered jade hanging on the waist of the unconscious man as soon as he landed.

Huff!

He pulled the man up and searched for his pulse. He was still alive! However, the right arm that executed his attack was gone. The man was in a coma.

“He is still alive.”

Zhao Xidong lifted him and carried the man off in the presence of everyone. It was the only thing he could say after deliberating for a while.

Xu Xiaoshou was speechless.

He remembered that Cheng Xingchu had a formidable piece of defensive jade and wondered why it had turned out like this.

He pointed at Cheng Xingchu's right arm, which was no longer there, and hesitated before he spoke.

"Um, could we fix this?"

: Cursed, Passive Points +5.

"It... um... I did not intend to do this much damage. I just thought that he had some powerful defensive spiritual weapon on him and yada, yada, yada..." Xu Xiaoshou continued blabbering non-stop.

Hallmaster Jiang's face turned notably glum.

Chapter 225: Tempting the Reaper

Ye Xiaotian shot a furious look at Xu Xiaoshou, signaling to him it wasn't the time for him to keep talking.

"Hallmaster Jiang..."

"Cheng Xingchu wasn't his match. We admit that much." Jiang Bianyan eased his temper, picked Cheng Xingchu up, and walked away.

There was no longer any way they could get the slots they were after.

You people from the Tiansang Spirit Palace are quite something.

That young lad, Xu Xiaoshou...

He finally realized why that masked man had extended his invitation to the kid. That kid was a monster!

It seemed like he didn't even need to do much to deal with Cheng Xingchu and even left him unconscious.

Seeing how casually he did it, Jiang Bianyan wondered just how much of his power the lad had put into it.

70 percent?

90 percent?

Jiang Bianyan's mind was a scattered mess. If such a young man was now part of the spirit palace, that would mean that the place would become even more prestigious.

"Master Ye, Master Qiao... I shall take my leave as well."

Yu Zhiwen bade the men farewell and walked behind Hallmaster Jiang.

After the guests left, only the four of them remained in the hall.

"Xiaoshou, you've gone too far this time!" Qiao Qianzhi remarked.

"Would he be coming to kill me for this? You know, like the old guy behind the little guy standing up for the little guy who got beaten up good?" Xu Xiaoshou said, looking rather uneasy.

“Probably wouldn’t happen. It’s the Holy Divine Palace we’re talking about here, after all...”

“What about Cheng Xingchu then? Could there be like a Cheng family and such seeking revenge?”

“...”

No one knew what else to say.

“There is,” Zhao Xidong said with a stiff nod, feeling quite amused. He enjoyed watching Xu Xiaoshou take a stumble.

Xu Xiaoshou walked past all of them with a look of despair on his face. His steps were heavy as he walked back into the hall like he was crying without shedding tears.

“I’ve bled for the spirit palace, I’ve rallied to the side of the spirit palace, yet here I am, suffering all this unknown pain all on my own...”

Ye Xiao and Qiao Qianzhi looked at each other, and the expression on their faces showed some compassion.

“Relax, kid. The spirit palace will undoubtedly protect you. And all the rewards that you’ve promised are yours to keep.” Ye Xiaotian declared as he stepped into the hall.

Before they knew it, Xu Xiaoshou was taking the cobblestone-like ‘Origin Residence’ from inside the hall with a gleeful look on his face. He then took out a stamp which was of the size of a fist and handed both items over to the elders.

“Masters, please do me a favor and fix it for me. I plan to hide inside if those people come looking for me.”

Ye Xiaotian, “...”

Qiao Qianzhi, “...”

Zhao Xidong sighed in resignation and nothing surprised him anymore with this lad.

Cursed, Passive Points +3.

“So, you have dug the Spirit Mark of Life out then, eh?” Ye Xiaotian’s eyes kept twitching. His face was completely ashen.

“Indeed, Master Dean. You promised me before that if I were to win this, you would not go after what I had taken out of the Tianxuan Gate.”

Xu Xiaoshou then wore an innocent look on his face and said, “Hmm? Is there something wrong with the mark?”

Huh...!

And I thought what I’ve promised was just that Black Scabbard and nothing else!

Ye Xiaotian took a deep breath. He suppressed that fury inside him and spoke in a kindly tone. “It’s fine, all of it is yours, so...”

“Did you take anything else out of the place?”

Xu Xiaoshou racked his brain to recall if he did, then shook his head slowly. “That’s all.”

“You sure about that?”

Ye Xiaotian wasn’t buying that.

He felt that maybe the collapse of the Tianxuan Gate had nothing to do with the spies at all, and maybe it was all the work of Xu Xiaoshou alone.

“If you do not declare any of them now, then they will not be considered part of what I’ve promised when they are discovered in the future.”

Xu Xiaoshou paused and hesitated.

That look on his face told the three of them all they wanted to know. There was indeed something he was hiding.

Ye Xiaotian’s face became somewhat ashen, and his body shuddered in exasperation, wondering what else the lad had in store for them.

“Take it out!”

“Umm...”

Xu Xiaoshou then fished out a white ring slowly, feeling rather apprehensive about it.

Ye Xiaotian thought the ring looked quite familiar and wondered if that was the thing Xu Xiaoshou had used to seal the sword aura on Lei Shuangxing when he snatched Zhou Tianshen back from him.

Hang on!

Sealing?

“You dug the ‘Sealing Stone’ out and then forged it into something else?” Ye Xiaotian’s face turned red and that was a clear sign he was furious.

“Um... yes, you could say that.”

Xu Xiaoshou said sheepishly. He thought about it for a moment and eventually decided not to rat Mo Mo out.

He figured he would talk to Elder Sang about it later, and given Ye Xiaotian’s current state of mind, the latter seemed unable to take in such overwhelming information anymore.

Ye Xiaotian looked like he was about to blow up. Of all the eight all-powerful, world-stabilizing treasures he had searched all over the continent, Xu Xiaoshou already had three of them in his possession.

Is this kid some kind of treasure hunter?

Just how did he manage to find all of those in such a short amount of time?

“So...” the young man with silver hair said, trying to calm himself. But his expression was ice-cold as he said, “So, do you have a fourth treasure on you right now?”

“None. Not even half of a treasure.”

Out of concern for his safety and the emotional wellbeing of the dean, he hid Jie’s presence.

“Ma Ma!”

Suddenly they heard a rather irked voice coming from his chest, and it startled all four men.

Jie was angry.

All the other treasures got proper introductions, yet despite waiting so long to get introduced, Xu Xiaoshou did not let it out.

Xu Xiaoshou’s face was ashen.

Despite all of his calculations, he had forgotten that Jie was something that had developed some form of human nature and wisdom. It could understand the conversations between Xu Xiaoshou and everyone else.

I’m done for...

I’m so, so done for...

“Jie?”

Qiao Qianzhi said, and his eyes widened as he suddenly recalled what that was.

He even dug that one out?

The look on his face when he looked at Xu Xiaoshou was one of terror.

Is there need to be that frightened? Xu Xiaoshou saw how the other two looked so terrified and immediately explained, “Okay, this one’s not on me. It wanted to come out on its own!”

“Back when I was out saving the world and saving Zhou Tianshen along the way, I just happened to encounter it...”

Qiao Qianzhi and Ye Xiaotian looked at each other and eventually just sighed.

It was indeed as they had speculated.

Zhao Xidong was similarly stunned. Four world-stabilizing treasures! Man, Xu Xiaoshou is quite something...

“See, I’ve told you all! Xu Xiaoshou is the biggest spy of them all,” he mumbled like he was possessed, and shot up right away.

“Die, you thief!”

Tap!

Ye Xiaotian caught Zhao Xidong’s arm and pressed it down.

“Why?”

Zhao Xidong was shocked, wondering why they would just let him go after he admitted to stealing four treasures.

Is Xu Xiaoshou a ba**ard of yours?

Ye Xiaotian’s mind was rather blank at the moment. He didn’t know what to say any longer.

Elder Sang...

You are one sly old man!

Four treasures. I lost four treasures in one go!

Damn you, old geezer... You just wait!

He panted like he had asthma, and his lips were already turning white. He then yelled, “Get out of my sight right now, at once!”

Xu Xiaoshou’s hand trembled from fright, leaving right away with all the treasures.

But before he could get far, he returned and stuffed both the cobblestone and the stamp into Qiao Qianzhi’s hands.

“...”

Cursed, Passive Points +3.

“Thanks!”

Xu Xiaoshou shuddered as he took a peek at the silver-haired dean and felt all hairs on his body standing on ends.

“Get lost, right now!”

He shot outside right away, activating “Agility,” and was out of sight before long.

CLANG...

A light clang could be heard, and the three looked down with puzzled expressions.

The rolling white ring kept clinking away in the silent hall like it was laughing out loud and feeling very pleased.

Xu Xiaoshou was flustered.

It was only after he had run quite a distance that he realized he had been so nervous that he dropped the ring. He took a deep breath and went back.

There was a look of disbelief in Ye Xiaotian’s eyes. His eyes trembled as he looked in disbelief at the young man who just returned.

After the young man came and kept within a safe distance from the dean, he gradually squatted and extended a leg out...

He then searched and pricked, dragging the ring back to his side.

“Xu-Xiao-Shou!”

The rumbling roar reverberated to the heavens, so much so that even the mystic sparrows in the air found their legs had snapped.

Summoned, Passive Points +1.

“I’ll disappear right now, and you’d never see my face again.”

Xu Xiaoshou picked the ring up and disappeared yet again.

He was suddenly afraid. He knew that if he stayed around any longer, he would end up being killed on the spot.

Zhao Xidong was all baffled.

He looked at Ye Xiaotian, who was fuming. That was the first time he saw the man being so angry after all these years.

Elder Qiao was just as baffled, eyeing the two treasures in his hand, and the whole thing just felt surreal...

“He’s quite something!”

That statement so shocked Zhao Xidong that his knees went limp and he dropped to the ground with a thump.

Impressed, Passive Points +1.

Chapter 226: Servant

Xu Xiaoshou ran for several kilometers before he finally stopped.

“Huff. Fortune favors the brave... and those who survive ordeals.”

Exposing all the four treasures he possessed to the dean was something that he didn’t even want to consider before.

He could only say that situations in this world are fluid and always shifting.

But then again, what just happened turned out to be in his favor.

The dean didn’t demand the return of all those things, which meant that he no longer needed to hide any of them.

His stolen goods had just been “laundered,” allowing him to wear and use them out in the open without fear from hereon.

“Nice!”

Xu Xiaoshou wore a gleeful smile as he pulled out the fifth-grade spirit sword from his ring again.

He slashed at one of the huge rocks by the roadside with it, and the sword cleaved the rock in half like butter. It was effortless, and the incisions looked incredibly smooth.

“Well, well...”

Xu Xiaoshou was very impressed and immediately took his Hiding Pain out to give it a go at the rock as well. But he found it took more force to achieve the same results.

“Rocks alone will not tell the difference between the two.”

Xu Xiaoshou was feeling rather befuddled. While the fifth-grade spirit sword was indeed far superior to his “Hiding Pain,” he didn’t know this sword intimately, like the back of his hand.

On the other hand, the “Hiding Pain” had been by his side the whole time and felt like an extension of his own body. It appeared to be more suitable to his style of fighting that predominantly used Sword Will.

Yet there was no doubt that he had just gotten himself a magnificent sword. And if he were to sell that sword, it would certainly fetch him an exceptional price.

Fifth-grade...

According to the way grades are categorized, fifth and sixth grades belong to the Master Level. So that would mean this thing here was probably considered the best among Master level spirit weapons.

“Cheng Xingchu is not only a rich kid. He’s a rich kid with a lot of stuff to offer. The sword plus the Origin Residence. Well worth it!” Xu Xiaoshou felt very pleased with himself.

He still had no clue if the Abrogated Origin Residence would become a usable treasure, but then again, he had little use of that Spirit Mark of Life, anyway.

So he deemed it was worth a shot, as there was still a chance of successfully reviving the abrogated mark.

Because he possessed Eternal Vitality, he had initially thought of giving the mark to Mu Zixi.

However, he was afraid of spoiling his little sister-in-training.

Xu Xiaoshou could still see that Mu Zixi had developed quite a respectable condition, and the amount of life-force she consumed was unbelievable.

If he were to put it lightly, he would say that Mu Zixi was prone to getting drunk on life-force.

If he were to put it seriously, it’d be that her state of mind could be corrupted by the condition, thus making her a devil in the truest sense.

Furthermore, she could unravel the illusions that Lei Shuangxing used to trap Ye Xiaotian with just a glare. It wasn’t something those that were not at the pinnacle of Origin Court could do.

So what’s her deal, anyway?

Xu Xiaoshou pondered and was convinced that everything that happened over the past several days was somehow connected in some way.

That lasting memory from his Sense kept playing in his mind repeatedly before it froze on the image of a masked woman whose spiritual powers he could not detect.

The image on her with only those starry eyes just seemed out of place in the larger scheme of things.

“The eyes...”

Xu Xiaoshou’s pupils dilated unconsciously. Yet before he could dwell on it further, a rumble not far away drew his attention.

He looked up.

A man and a woman.

“Zhao Qingteng? Lan Xinzi?”

It rather surprised Xu Xiaoshou, and he wondered why those two were approaching him together.

He looked around him and found that he had gotten increasingly far away from the hall before he knew it, coming to somewhere in the forest where there were many places of residence.

That place was not Lan Xinzi’s home, which he had seen before. That meant that Zhao Qingteng was staying among those units instead.

But given the situation, he wondered if Lan Xinzi was there looking for him instead.

“Tsk, tsk, I thought you were head over heels for Luo Leilei...”

Xu Xiaoshou felt it was quite odd, yet Zhao Qingteng had a cold, aloof look about him and it was not unusual for him to attract girls to his side, even if the said girl was someone older.

Then again, Xu Xiaoshou wasn’t some busybody, so he left right away.

Elder Sang was still waiting for him, after all.

Yet, he stopped midair just when he was about to leave.

“Zhao Shu?”

Xu Xiaoshou raised his eyebrows as soon as that name was uttered.

Since the range of his Sense was extended, he paid little attention to any information that had little to do with himself.

If he were to put his brain to work processing all information received within hundreds of meters radius all the time, it would simply be too exhausting, regardless of how strong his body was. It would just make him irritable all the time as well.

But it wasn’t like he simply let all that information slide all the time. Whenever someone brought up anything that had anything to do with him, that would certainly catch his attention.

He focused and his attention zeroed in on the conversation between the two, enabling him to hear every single word said.

...

"If you people from the Zhang family want Xu Xiaoshou dead so much, just go look for him yourself. Why bother looking for me?" Zhao Qingteng's voice was as ice-cold as ever.

"Huh, Zhao Shu got blasted like fireworks, and it does not faze you? He's your cousin, you know." Lan Xinzi snickered mockingly.

"What does that have to do with you?"

"I remember when we were kids, he used to take you to the Zhang family along to play, right? You were still wearing diapers back then."

"..."

The look in Zhao Qingteng's eyes was cold, and enunciating every word, he uttered, "Back then, you didn't dare to talk to me like you do now."

The smile on Lan Xinzi's face froze.

She finally realized that despite being in early Innate levels, he was still the eldest son of the Zhao family.

She, on the other hand, was but a servant of the Zhang family.

"That same old argument again, eh?"

Her fingernails dug into her palm and glared with a sinister look in her eyes. She suddenly lifted her chin and said solemnly, "This is the Tiansang Spirit Palace, not the Tiansang Prefecture!"

"Is that so?" Zhao Qingteng replied, grinning casually. "So, is this why you holed up in the spirit palace for seven years and dared not face the real world then?"

His words cast a chill in the air and he added, "The spirit palace, truth to be told, is little more than a prison to you."

Lan Xinzi's eyes glowered, and she had a menacing scowl on her face.

Zhao Qingteng waved dismissively and continued nonchalantly. "Don't bother looking for me anymore. I know very well why Zhao Shu died in the first place."

"Get a reality check. Some prisons can't be broken into no matter how powerful you have become."

After he spoke, Zhao Qingteng turned around and headed inside his home, leaving Lan Xinzi standing there in a daze.

...

"It's a small world indeed."

Xu Xiaoshou was quite baffled.

He wasn't all that clear about what was going on between the two of them, but he knew they had a score to settle. While he couldn't do anything about all such threats for lack of power and ability, he still needed to attend to this matter, as long as he was sufficiently powerful.

“That, um...”

What he said held Zhao Qingteng back from closing the door behind him. Xu Xiaoshou walked up to him and said, “I’d advise you two to get inside before talking about your business out in the open.”

Both of them turned around, surprised by his sudden appearance.

Xu Xiaoshou?

“So, you’ve heard all that then?” Lan Xinzi taunted, stressing every word she said.

“Do you think I’m deaf or something? You were being exceptionally loud back there.”

The two of them said nothing.

: Cursed, Passive Points +2.

Zhao Qingteng’s face turned rather ashen. If he had known that Xu Xiaoshou was around, he would have asked Lan Xinzi in before speaking aloud, or at the very least, they could have done so telepathically.

He wondered where that kid had just come up from.

If he were that close, I should’ve spotted him. If he were further away, then he wouldn’t have heard anything.

“You heard it? So what?” Lan Xinzi asked and smirked dismissively, unlike Zhao Qingteng, who was all flustered.

Seeing Xu Xiaoshou, devoid of any background, she seemed to regain her vigor again.

Xu Xiaoshou paused and cut to the chase right away.

“Are you both trying to kill me?”

Chapter 227: I’m Killing You, because I Feel like Killing You

Xu Xiaoshou’s accusation rather stunned both of them.

Faced with such a direct statement, they did not know how to give him an answer.

Xu Xiaoshou didn’t bother with Zhao Qingteng, for the man was far from his level and didn’t pose a threat to him.

He stared at Lan Xinzi and said, “The Zhang family... so you’re one of Zhang Xinxiong’s people, then?”

Lan Xinzi was rather intrigued—the look in her eyes suggested so. It hadn’t been that long since she had last seen Xu Xiaoshou.

And yet this kid dared to speak to her in such a manner now?

“Indeed,” she responded, nodding slowly, and asked, “Why? Do you want an autograph?”

“An autograph...?”

Xu Xiaoshou chuckled. He recalled the time when he wasn't as powerful as he presently was. He had thought of defusing a tricky situation by giving out autographs and it almost got him killed.

Would I ever think of resorting to such a ploy, I wonder?

"Feng Kong and Shao Yi were both sent by Zhang Xinxiong, correct?" Xu Xiaoshou asked in no uncertain terms.

Zhao Qingteng knew something was wrong as soon as he asked that.

Is he trying to pick a fight with us here?

Regardless of how they answered the question, he did not see how the situation could be de-escalated.

Zhao Qingteng took a step back, smartly leaving the two of them to face off.

At the corner of his eye, he could see that there were already quite many people coming up and gathering around them.

The news that Lan Xinzi was looking for him had spread like wildfire. But as it was an affair concerning someone among the Inner Yard Thirty-three, none of the people dared to come too close.

But as soon as Xu Xiaoshou showed up, everyone suddenly surged forward, unable to just stand idly about and drawn by news of their local champion.

Xu Xiaoshou was now undoubtedly a big deal, and by sticking around him they would get the following day's headlines on that very day itself—firsthand.

Everyone keenly awaited how Lan Xinzi would answer that question.

When the matter had been investigated before, the staff members from the Spiritual Law Division that were arrested had denied all accusations.

Yet at that moment, Lan Xinzi simply shook her head and looked like she feared nothing, even as she was being witnessed by many around them.

"Zhang Xinxiong did not send them. I was the one who sent them."

"And you are someone I have long been determined to get rid of!"

While everyone knew the events would take such a turn, it still caused quite a commotion when everything was being made so clear in the open.

"You admit it, then! Hey, where are the law enforcers? Get someone to arrest her, quick!"

"We have seen none around now. The place is now in turmoil as we try to defend against invaders. There are few men-in-black to be found in the Inner Yard."

"I pity He Yuxing though. He is presently being left out to dry in the Tribunal, I guess. Never thought Lan Xinzi would just expose herself up like that. Man, this is exciting!"

"Gosh, I'm so excited. Seems like there'll be a show today, after all."

“Tsk, tsk, tsk... Now I wonder what Xu Xiaoshou will do about it... Seems like the guy has never seen a day of peace ever since he joined the Inner Yard, don’t you agree?”

“He thought that he’s already damn powerful after getting into the Tianxuan Gate once, I guess. Hell, I’d say that he’ll be having quite a bad time this time around.”

“I don’t know how powerful Xu Xiaoshou has become, but Lan Xinzi is undoubtedly ready. She’s all riled up. Damn, I’m getting all excited over this now...”

“...”

Impressed, Passive Points +7.

Ridiculed, Passive Points +12.

Worried, Passive Points +3

“...”

The place was in quite a stir at the moment. More and more people came to the scene and the Information Bar kept refreshing.

Xu Xiaoshou saw that Zhao Qingteng already knew that things had taken a turn for the worse. He was backing away, getting behind the door, and was about to close it. Xu Xiaoshou went up to the door suddenly and shoved it open.

“Sorry but, you can’t leave just yet.”

Zhao Qingteng was stunned.

Cursed, Passive Points +1.

The crowd all burst out laughing. That was indeed something that they knew that XU Xiaoshou would pull after all. However, they were more curious about what the kid was trying to pull.

Was he trying to take on two who were at higher Innate Stage? One of them was a veteran 33, and someone who had just gotten into Origin Court Stage.

Was he nuts?

...

Xu Xiaoshou was far from going nuts. On the contrary, he was quite calm at the moment.

Given that he was out to settle scores, he figured he should just be thorough about it.

All those matters that he hadn’t been able to settle in a face-to-face manner were only because he hadn’t been powerful enough to do so.

At present, he already had Master Physique, and Jie was with him inside his robes.

After the dean’s promise, there was nothing he couldn’t bring out to the open at the moment.

He casually turned his eyes back to Lan Xinzi and said, “You’re honest. I’ll give you that. I like you.”

“Huh!” Lan Xinzi snorted.

“So, you already knew who I was back then?” She turned her eyes around and seemed to have realized something. “You were pretending all this while?”

Xu Xiaoshou nodded without hesitation. Given his current level of powers, there was no longer any need for him to put up any pretense.

“So, after you sent Feng Kong and Shao Yi, I assume you were the one who sent Zhao Shu too?” Xu Xiaoshou pressed on.

Zhao Qingteng straightened up. While he had speculated that was how it happened, he always wondered if he could get a straight answer from Lan Xinzi herself...

“Indeed,” Lan Xinzi responded, glaring at Zhao Qingteng and not denying it.

Crack!

Zhao Qingteng clenched his fists hard upon hearing what she said, then suddenly relaxed his hands.

Xu Xiaoshou sighed, thinking about how that could so easily have been him. He would be in Zhao Qingteng’s position without adequate powers.

The crowd was astonished by what they just heard, as there seemed to be something very wrong with Lan Xinzi that day.

“What the hell happened to her? Has someone just provoked her or something? Or is she just toying with them?”

“Hm, seems like it has something to do with what Zhao Qingteng said before, I guess. But, given that there were few people around and you all had not arrived, I dared not go too close to eavesdrop on them.”

“I did! It’s just like you put it. Zhao Qingteng was as brutal as he could be, so much so that he called her a serva...”

That person stopped when he saw Lan Xinzi tilting her head in his direction, glaring at him icily.

“I’m done for...”

“Stay alive, brother.”

...

Xu Xiaoshou could see that Lan Xinzi’s behavior was strangely off as well. She seemed far less composed than when he first met her and now appeared quite extreme in her manner.

However, it only worked in his favor, as she probably wouldn’t have told the truth had he confronted her at any other time.

He was still pondering about it when Lan Xinzi spoke again. She seemed to grin, but it came across as rather ominous.

“Truth to be told, Zhao Shu was but an accident. Yuan Tou was the one I sent instead, but that guy chickened out and didn’t make his move that night.”

“But, I guess you met him inside the Tianxuan Gate, correct? I’d say you had a hard time with him.”

Xu Xiaoshou eyed that pompous and rather sick-looking woman and answered deliberately, “I’m sorry but I never ran into him.”

That lost man had nothing to do with him.

Xu Xiaoshou remembered it very well.

“Yuan Tou...”

Lan Xinzi looked the other way and frowned slightly as she mumbled.

She noticed she had not seen him around lately.

She wondered if he was avoiding her because he had not finished his job yet.

Pfft!

Like any of that matters anymore. I don’t have any use for that chicken now; she thought.

She opened her hands, and the wounds caused when she dug her fingernails in before now gushed with blood. Yet her energy reserve raged, and it burned all the blood that flowed out.

Xu Xiaoshou looked away without making a sound.

This is one sick woman indeed.

“Why kill me? Is it all because of Wen Chong?” Xu Xiaoshou asked again, showing no signs of urgency.

“Haha, haha, haha...”

The shrill laughter made those within earshot cringe, and they felt their skins crawl. Lan Xinzi’s eyes drooped as soon as she laughed.

“Initially, it was indeed because of Wen Chong, but later...”

“I’ve yet to see anyone at Spiritual Cultivation Stage capable of killing assassins at Innate Stage before.”

“You’re an interesting specimen.”

She licked her bright red lips and delivered her next line telepathically. Her mesmerizing voice reverberated in Xu Xiaoshou’s mind.

“I’m killing you because I feel like killing you.”

Chapter 228: Frenzy

Xu Xiaoshou looked quite stunned. In a dazed manner, he asked, “Why are you telling me all this?”

“Why? Hehehe... why?”

Lan Xinzi's shoulder could not stop shaking, and she appeared unable to contain her crazy laugh.

Such a childish question?

Why?

Were there so many "whys" around this world?

Why did you not ask why I was born a servant, eh?

Why did I not dare to kill the kid from the Zhao family who dared to laugh at me, even though I became one of the Inner Yard Thirty-three, eh?

Why did I get to where I am now, something I could only dream of in the past, but still failed to get what I wish for?

The Spirit Palace—it was just like how Zhao Qingteng put it, had now become a prison for her.

Huh!

Lan Xinzi suddenly walked up to Xu Xiaoshou and lifted his chin. In a chilling tone, she said, "You tell me why I am telling you all of this, then."

Her emotional state instantly took a turn for the worse, and she howled in a shrilled voice. "Someone who's been caged can only remain silent and has no right to ask why!"

The surrounding atmosphere changed drastically the minute she uttered those words. The sound of rumbling came from above.

A storm was brewing, and Lan Xinzi no longer bothered hiding anything. Her raging spiritual source burst from her energy reserve, surging into her right hand, which held Xu Xiaoshou's chin.

From the moment she saw Xu Xiaoshou, she wanted to strike him down in the Spirit Palace.

The rules of the Inner Yard prohibited it. But she did not care.

Swoop!

There was another faint rumble in the air, and it halted the spiritual source that had caused the weather to change.

Everything suddenly froze at that moment.

A blood-stained black sword plunged through Lan Xinzi's chest and was sticking out her back. It drew itself out again from her body and then moved back to strike her once more.

Pfftt!

More blood splattered as the sword went right through her torso for the second time.

Xu Xiaoshou behaved casually and pushed her hand off his chin before taking a step back.

"You are sick."

To everyone around them, the remarkably calm voice sounded like it came from a grim reaper.

Lan Xinzi looked down at her body and could not believe what just happened.

The bloody hole in her chest was the size of two fists. It was a solid testament of why she was not the only one who wanted to kill Xu Xiaoshou when she first saw him.

He was trying to do the same to her.

She wondered what made him dare to make a move in the presence of everyone there.

She wondered how he broke through her defense so effortlessly.

Despite not having much of any defensive measures, she was still at the Upper Spiritual Stage. She was at the peak level.

The crowd immediately went crazy.

In the beginning, everyone thought the two were only teasing each other. Then the crowd saw Lan Xinzi's movements becoming increasingly erratic.

What they did not expect in the end was for Xu Xiaoshou to draw first blood... And he did it in the nick of time.

Had those two been trying to kill each other from the very start?

Every one shuddered, for their minds could not keep up with what was happening.

While everyone could see what Lan Xinzi had been trying to do, none saw what was coming from Xu Xiaoshou.

"Holy sh*t! Quick, someone, call the law enforcers!"

"Oh man, Xu Xiaoshou is so done for! Oh, my goodness! Someone get Young Master Zhang! They are going all out this time!"

"Not only Young Master Zhang. If the lunatic He Yuxing were to get here from the Tribunal, he would go crazy one more time!"

"Hmm, the way you put it..."

"Man, I look forward to it!"

"..."

: Impressed, Passive Points +12.

: Doubted, Passive Points +17.

: Resented, Passive Points +9.

"..."

None of the chatter made Xu Xiaoshou regret what he just did.

He had already killed several people who should not have died throughout his journey, and he never regretted it even once. The woman in front of him hardly a cause for any regret.

If someone were to ask him if there was someone whom he wanted to kill in the Spirit Palace, the answer would be obvious.

Zhang Xinxiong was at the top of the list, and among them, this crazy, guilty woman before him would be there as well.

Sometimes, the Lord of the Underworld was far less terrifying and far less hated than those who were out to do evil.

Xu Xiaoshou did not know if the one who sent killers to assassinate him was Zhang Xinxiong or the woman before him. Or could it be He Yuxing whom he had never met?

Whoever it was, he could tell that something was amiss with how the woman spoke.

The woman was a psychopath, through and through. She could kill people just for sport and without reason.

Just simply being displeased was more than enough to rile her up and make her determined to spill his blood on the spot.

No one could tolerate something like this.

They were both trying to ambush one another. However, Xu Xiaoshou's Sense had given him a decisive edge in predicting her attack.

He could sense the slight leak of spiritual source fluctuations and the bursting power of the muscles right before she was about to strike. It enabled him to time his move.

The way he saw it, the woman had a death wish coming.

"Still alive, huh?" Xu Xiaoshou suddenly asked.

Lan Xinzi held her hand against her chest and spat blood as soon as she heard his question.

Her eyes were filled with nothing but deep rage and resentment, but she relented.

Her spiritual source burst out, and she instantly cauterized her wounds, but it barely stopped the bleeding.

As soon as she took out a pill, it vaporized and scattered to the side.

Huh?

Lan Xinzi turned around in panic and immediately shivered. Standing at her immediate right was Xu Xiaoshou.

"What kind of pill is this? Seems like more than a grade higher than the Red Gold Pills," Xu Xiaoshou asked.

Lan Xinzi was speechless.

What kind of witchcraft was this?

Xu Xiaoshou could stop others from recovering?

Seeing that she was not about to answer him, Xu Xiaoshou then wore an apologetic expression on his face.

“I am sorry. But if you say nothing now, you will not have the chance to say anything forever.”

A white bathtub appeared in his hand as soon as he spoke. He immediately brought it down onto Lan Xinzi.

Everyone was shocked, watching him.

All of them could see that Xu Xiaoshou was not going easy on her at all. Bringing down such a massive cauldron on the woman convinced them he simply wanted to get rid of her on the spot.

Clang!

Then a loud noise resulting from the clash of two heavy objects made everyone cower and back away anxiously.

“A man in black!”

Xu Xiaoshou narrowed his eyes and saw that a law enforcer had arrived at the scene just in time to save Lan Xinzi.

He steeled himself and ignored the law enforcer. Xu Xiaoshou leaped high over the law enforcer’s head with the bathtub in his hand. Then he came crashing down on Lan Xinzi, who was frantically trying to escape.

“Xu Xiaoshou, stop!”

The shout from the enforcer sounded utterly helpless.

Everyone then saw Xu Xiaoshou bringing the law enforcer down, sinking him into the ground with only his head left sticking out. None of them knew what to say about his action against the law enforcer.

“Is Xu Xiaoshou a monster or something?”

“Doing serious injury to one of the 33 with two thrusts of his sword and pummeling a law enforcer into the ground with one blow from the bathtub?”

“Wait a minute, the last time I saw him, he was only a Spiritual Cultivation level nine, no?”

“What?”

“Okay, be clear here. Who was it at Spiritual Cultivation level nine again?”

“Xu Xiaoshou. Who else could it be? Me, you think?”

“...”

Clang!

Another loud noise rang through the air, silencing the chatter in the crowd and causing everyone to wince at what just happened.

What the hell, man? Yet another carrot got stuck in the ground, eh?

“Xu Xiaoshou, you cannot kill me! This is the Inner Yard! Killing is against the law!” screamed Lan Xinzi, who now looked exhausted and desperate. Looks of terror consumed her eyes.

“I know. So, it is now time to meet your doom!” replied Xu Xiaoshou.

He was getting rather anxious. Men in black were already coming in from all sides by then. If he were to delay any longer, he would miss the chance of killing this woman.

Lan Xinzi was one of the veteran 33, which meant that her movements were rather unpredictable.

Despite being severely injured, she could still turn around and run when he was just about to grab hold of her.

The men in black had stopped him just in time, twice.

Sh*t!

“Your movements are every bit on par with Master level Agility!”

Xu Xiaoshou frowned and thought that all those veterans were indeed wealthy.

Since he could not catch up with her, he gave up on the pursuit. He stopped and put down the bathtub, then extended his hand.

Lan Xinzi could no longer detect any movement behind her as she ran. She turned her head around right away to see what was happening.

What she saw made her skin crawl.

Xu Xiaoshou had conjured up five fire seeds in his hand. The raging energies from them were enough to make anyone’s legs wobble.

That was not all. Xu Xiaoshou seemed to look worried that the force from those five seeds would not be enough, so he extended his other hand as well.

Lan Xinzi did not know what to think or say.

Chapter 229: Big Game

“Xu—Xiao—Shou!”

A gritty voice came from behind him before he could release all the fire seeds conjured in both his hands.

Xu Xiaoshou turned around.

It was Zhao Xidong!

“Oh, why are you here?” Xu Xiaoshou asked, looking surprised.

“Why should I not be here, huh? Is it because you intend to stuff a few more law enforcers into the ground before I show up?”

Zhao Xidong was fuming as he angrily pointed to the two “carrots” planted into the ground. The ones who got stuffed into the soil felt so embarrassed that they felt like digging a deeper hole to hide their heads inside as well.

It was simply too embarrassing for the two law enforcers.

Xu Xiaoshou quashed the raging energies on his hand. If Zhao Xidong was already there, then there was no way he could carry out his plan any further.

“Oh, them? They wanted to be stuck inside, so I just helped to speed up the process.” He looked at the two men planted in the ground and asked, “Right?”

What?

The two men looked truly baffled, wondering who would have asked anyone to do that.

Now that Zhao Xidong had arrived, they were thinking of telling on Xu Xiaoshou. But after some consideration, they realized that Zhao Xidong could not be there every day.

However, Xu Xiaoshou was actually around them every day.

The two of them hesitated for quite a while.

Zhao Xidong became even more furious after noticing that the two men had chosen not to say anything at all. He then pointed at Lan Xinzi, who was behind Xu Xiaoshou. He asked, “What the hell is with her then?”

Despite what Zhao Xidong just said, he was rather shocked to see her there.

Lan Xinzhi was not someone who had been in her position for no reason. Throughout his years in the Spirit Palace, it was the first time he had seen the woman in such a haggard and disheveled state appearing before him.

“Her?”

Xu Xiaoshou turned around and saw Lan Xinzhi. She was already popping meds by then. He sighed and said, “She wanted to kill me. So, I was doing what I did out of self-defense.”

Lan Xinzhi immediately froze on the spot.

: Cursed, Passive Points +1.

Zhao Xidong burst out in a rage.

“So you retaliated in self-defense, eh? Do you mean to say that even the law enforcers had caused you to have to defend yourself then? What the hell is with the cauldron, huh?” Zhao Xidong pointed to the bathtub at Xu Xiaoshou’s side.

“Cauldron?”

Xu Xiaoshou looked stunned, not believing that Zhao Xidong could tell that the tub was indeed a cauldron.

Well, he had probably met Elder Sang before.

Xu Xiaoshou puffed out his chest and replied, "Well, you have said it yourself. It is a cauldron. So, I am undoubtedly doing alchemy with it. What? You think I could bash someone with this thing?"

The two stuck in the ground continued to look confused.

: Cursed, Passive Points +1.

The crowd almost burst out laughing because his explanation and his deeds did not go hand in hand at all.

Zhao Xidong cooled down and decided that he had done enough talking with Xu Xiaoshou for the day. If he were to keep talking, someone would get into trouble.

He then decided not to banter with the lad, and said, "Say no more. Come with me to the Spiritual Law Division."

Xu Xiaoshou was not about to comply with the instruction.

He had not yet killed the one he was out to eliminate. It would be a joke to get arrested for something he had not done.

"The Inner Yard does not forbid violence for personal reasons!" Xu Xiaoshou shouted.

"Huh, it seems like you know the rules well. But do you know that beating up law enforcers is an offense as well?" Zhao Xidong retorted with a smirk.

"It had nothing to do with me. That thing was the one doing it."

Xu Xiaoshou pointed to the bathtub by his side. Zhao Xidong was so angry that he was shaking all over.

Was Xu Xiaoshou blaming the tub then?

"Are you saying that it could hit someone without you using it to do so?"

"I am just standing around in the Inner Yard, and someone was trying to kill me!" Xu Xiaoshou retorted.

The grins on the faces of the crowd froze right away.

Although Xu Xiaoshou spoke and behaved funnily, there was little doubt that he was a troublesome character as well.

He somehow got on the wrong side of the most prominent person of the Inner Yard and had to live in fear every day.

They wondered if they could have lasted as long as he did if they were to be in his shoes.

Zhao Xidong instantly ran out of things to say, recalling the case with Wen Chong.

He knew that ultimately he would be the one responsible for any tragedies that occurred.

He felt perhaps he did not do a proper job as a referee on that day.

Huh?

Wait, no!

We were talking about Xu Xiaoshou beating up law enforcers here! Why were we deviating from the subject?

Zhao Xidong took a deep breath and saw the wronged look on Xu Xiaoshou's face. He felt the young man had toyed with him.

The kid knew how to play his tricks well.

"Well then, if you want to leave, fine. Hand over the thing you have been beating people up with. If you dare to do such a thing again, I will confiscate another thing from you!" Zhao Xidong said in a stern tone.

He did not believe that he could not somehow put the kid in his place.

"You want the tub?"

Xu Xiaoshou had a peculiar expression and said, "Honestly, this thing does not belong to me. It belongs to Elder Sang. So, you want to take it?"

Elder Sang?

Zhao Xidong felt a headache coming right away, wondering why it had involved Elder Sang again. Why was Elder Sang involved every single time?

However, when he inspected the tub before him, it looked very much like the one the Elder had used.

Other than being one size smaller, this thing was definitely of similar origin!

Zhao Xidong started recalling everything which had happened before. Every time he wanted to take action against Xu Xiaoshou, there was always a higher force getting in his way.

The intervention had come by coincidence or even a twist of fate, and at times, they were outright intervention from those holding higher authorities.

Sometimes, those with authority were people like Ye Xiaotian or Elder Qiao. And even the masked man.

Zhao Xidong felt like he had caught on to some leads, and he could probe further.

Did Xu Xiaoshou have something to do with Elder Sang?

Were they master and disciple?

Zhao Xidong looked surprised as those theories flashed through his mind. It was not the first time he had such thoughts. But Elder Sang already had a disciple.

Mu Zixi.

Hold on!

Zhao Xidong's pupils contracted.

Mu Zixi?

That's right!

Whenever he got to the point with his deductions, that innocent, insipid-looking presence would always interrupt his thoughts. Yet Xu Xiaoshou was the greatest mental block that disrupted his thoughts.

If Xu Xiaoshou had something to do with Elder Sang, then Mu Zixi would just be around as a cover of sorts!

His heart raced when he came to such a conclusion.

“But why?”

If Xu Xiaoshou was Elder Sang’s disciple, why could he not say so?

While the kid was indeed ridiculous, one cannot deny that he had exceptional combat prowess. His talents were almost at the very top of all the disciples in the Inner Yard. He was so good that one could say he was number one in the Spirit Palace.

Why was he hiding this, though?

It was indeed like how he had analyzed it. Zhao Xidong believed he had exceptional intuition because he had dated many girlfriends before. He was confident that he could sense something that felt fishy.

It was something that seemed bigger than the Spirit Palace itself and felt more like a big game that had yet to be played out. Xu Xiaoshou had yet to show what he was truly capable of.

If the young man standing before him was already so competent before he had reached his pinnacle to show his true mettle, then...

What happens when that game gets underway?

Huff!

Zhao Xidong suppressed his shock and turned to look at the young man who had a look claiming innocence to any wrongdoings.

Zhao Xidong knew what those old men were like from firsthand experience.

If it had not been for them, he might have been someone more prominent than a mere law enforcer in the Spirit Palace.

“Am I this pathetic?”

Sometimes, Zhao Xidong wished he was not as brilliant as he was. He could have been ignorant about things and enjoyed the bliss, but his mind had to get to work.

He decided not to get caught up with whatever was coming.

For now, he wanted to be as far away from the action as possible.

“Off you go, Xu Xiaoshou,” Zhao Xidong said, his voice sounding rather tired.

Xu Xiaoshou was almost ready to show Elder Sang’s token. But suddenly, the prominent figure from the Spiritual Law Division let him walk instead.

Flashes of the word “Doubted” appeared all over his Information Bar, making Xu Xiaoshou wonder what was going on in the mind of the law enforcer.

But then again, none of it mattered.

Xu Xiaoshou packed his things and pointed to the woman behind him. “She has injuries. I better help her out a bit.”

Lan Xinzi looked baffled.

The veins on Zhao Xidong’s forehead popped. He was furious at how the kid just kept going further.

“Xu Xiaoshou, do not get so cocky.”

“Xu Xiaoshou?”

A gentle voice interrupted Zhao Xidong. Everyone turned around to find a man who looked so huge that he could support the sky.

Gulp!

Everyone in the crowd froze and seemed petrified.

“He is here?”

Xu Xiaoshou turned around when he heard the voice. He saw a sturdy man, well over two meters in height, standing right behind him.

The man had a black, thick beard. His clothes fitted tightly because of the rippling muscles underneath his clothes. The long cape which draped on his shoulders billowed in the wind.

Xu Xiaoshou seemed to know who the man was at a single glance.

He went up and extended his hand in a friendly manner.

“Pleased to meet you.”

Zhang Xinxiong took out a piece of paper from his bulging pecs and looked down at Xu Xiaoshou, who was over one head shorter than he was. Then he slapped the paper onto Xu Xiaoshou’s chest.

The paper dropped to the ground with a thump.

Xu Xiaoshou’s portrait was on that piece of paper.

“The pleasure is mine.”

Chapter 230: Issuing a Challenge

“Zhang Xinxiong?”

The crowd gasped anxiously as soon as that enormous man with a cape appeared.

“Boy, this is intense. I wonder if Xu Xiaoshou can still mess around, now that the big brother of the Inner Yard has made his appearance.”

“Yeah, Young Master Zhang... I haven’t seen him fight in a long while. From what I heard, he was already halfway through his Master Level several years ago. I wonder if he had been suppressing his level the whole time.”

“Indeed. You could say Zhang Xinxiong is among the oldest in the Inner Yard. Only Enforcer Zhao who still hadn’t graduated back then was older than him, and that’s considering the whole damn frickin’ Inner Yard, man.”

“Enforcer Zhao... you mean Zhao Xidong?”

“Yeah.”

Hsss...

Many people heard what was happening and arrived at the scene soon enough. Regardless of whether they knew what was happening, everyone was chattering away in excitement.

The big brother of the Inner Yard had yet to show what he was capable of, and they knew little about his past.

However, they knew without a doubt that he and Lan Xinzi were close.

That woman, whom the outsiders saw to be like a taboo, was at the moment severely injured. There was no way Zhang Xinxiong would just let it slide just like that.

Based on how he got to the top in the Inner Yard years ago, what just happened meant that he definitely would not just let it slide even if Zhao Xidong was around.

Xu Xiaoshou looked up at that giant before him and was rather awed.

Before that, the tallest, stoutest man that he had seen was probably Zhou Tianshen.

Yet, when compared to Zhang Xinxiong, Zhou Tianshen was most definitely small.

Just look at those shoulders, the muscle definition...

Seeing that he wasn’t getting anything in return after extending his hand in a friendly manner, Xu Xiaoshou touched Zhang Xinxiong’s triceps curiously and asked, “Is this really muscle? How did you get this big? Protein or something?”

Crack!

The crowd felt like they had just been petrified that very instant.

Everyone was in a stupor and it was as if their jaws had dropped to the floor and shattered, and they could not pick them up again.

“The hell...!”

Impressed, Passive Points +32.

Envied, Passive Points +7.

Xu Xiaoshou’s bizarre antics even shocked Zhang Xinxiong.

Did he just...

Touch me?

That was a body that not even Lan Xinzi would have dared to touch.

“You’re brave.”

Encouraged, Passive Points +1.

Zhang Xinxiong snorted and walked up to him, hoisting Xu Xiaoshou up by the collar with a nasty look on his face.

“Your body has the smell of the Zhang family’s blood...” He tilted his head close to Xu Xiaoshou’s ear and asked, “Did you kill Yuan Tou?”

Zhang Xinxiong lifted Xu Xiaoshou off of his feet like a chick, and the sight of it made the crowd pity him.

“Couldn’t do anything to resist at all...”

“Yeah, the Xu Xiaoshou who acted like he owned the place finally met his match today.”

“You’re right. Technically, Xu Xiaoshou is only an Outer Yard disciple after all. I wonder how did someone who keeps messing around as he does, get to stay alive for as long as he did.”

“Huh, just get on the bad side of Lan Xinzi and see what happens next. Zhang Xinxiong aside, you think you could beat her?”

“Hell, who doesn’t know how to pull off an ambush. I’d be able to do that much if I were in his shoes.”

“Well, do it then.”

“I’d be able to do that much if I were to be in his shoes.”

“What are you waiting for...?”

“Shut up!”

“...”

Sympathized, Passive Points +12.

Envied, Passive Points +11.

“...”

Zhang Xinxiong had Xu Xiaoshou by the scruff, and there was nothing he could do about it. He then took a good look at Zhang Xinxiong before he answered, “Yuan Tou... what happened to him has nothing to do with me.”

Hmph!

Zhang Xinxiong wore a wry smirk on his face, but when he shot a glance at Lan Xinzi, who was all disheveled, anger burned in his eyes.

He didn't care about what happened to Yuan Tou.

Yet, when it came to one of his own...

Regardless of his conduct with Lan Xinzi in private, he deemed it off-limits for anyone else to touch her.

"Tell me, how would you like to die?"

Xu Xiaoshou's face seemed flushed from the choke. He then looked at Zhao Xidong with teary eyes.

"Master Zhao, he's threatening me!"

Zhang Xinxiong's mouth twitched.

He wondered why the man seemed rather different from what he had imagined the man to be.

Cursed, Passive Points +1.

Zhao Xidong felt his head hurt, thinking that this kid truly was crazy.

He was there to arrest Xu Xiaoshou, yet he somehow became like a shield to defend the latter instead.

However, as a law enforcer of the spirit palace, he could not just sit around when one of the veteran 33 of the Inner Yard threatened a mere Outer Yard disciple out in the open like that.

"You two want a fight, huh?"

"Sure, go into the Ring of Life and Death, then. I'd take you both there." He gave up resisting altogether.

Everyone was shocked. That was the first time they saw Zhao Xidong being so passive while on the job.

Shouldn't it be like, "I don't care who you are. Perpetrator or victim, you're coming with me to the Tribunal for a trial," instead?

What has gotten into him?

"If I were to be in his shoes, I'd feel tired too..."

The crowd sighed. After all that had happened, it would indeed render any man jaded from the constant effort of keeping order.

Had they been the ones to keep dealing with Xu the troublemaker all the time, they would have probably been in a worse state than Zhao Xidong.

While the crowd felt pity for that young man who was being hoisted, the person in question, Xu Xiaoshou, got excited instead.

"The Ring of Life and Death?"

"Is it the one where once we got in there, one of us has to die?"

Zhao Xidong then had a bad feeling about things.

What the hell is going on here...

I was just trying to intimidate you both, so why the hell are you so damn excited for?

He then recalled the scores between Xu Xiaoshou and Zhang Xinxiong, realizing suddenly that the kid might actually want to kill the other guy.

Could he win?...

No, it seems like a close match, and the fight may go toe-to-toe.

He recalled what happened to Cheng Xingchu and then Lan Xinzi...

Zhao Xidong was all baffled.

Something is wrong with this. This guy was only at Acquired Level just days ago. How would he suddenly be able to fight someone like Zhang Xinxiong, then?

Huff...

He took a long and deep breath, then spoke with a focused voice. "You heard wrong. The Inner Yard doesn't forbid resorting to violence to settle personal scores, but fighting to the death is forbidden.

Xu Xiaoshou then looked at the head above him.

The corner of Zhang Xinxiong's lips was lifted, and he glared at Xu Xiaoshou with ominous eyes, and asked, "you wanna issue a challenge then?"

No one in the Inner Yard knew the rules better than him. He was a man who had climbed his way to the top by winning fight after fight.

While settling personal scores through violence was permitted, the parties involved would still be severely punished if caught by the law enforcers.

And while fighting to the death was forbidden, yet those with deep-seated grudges could issue a challenge and apply to get into the Ring of Life and Death to fight to the death.

It was rather ironic that the very ring that no one would dare to get into was the one Zhang Xinxiong had been coming down from countless times till this very day.

"I'm not so sure about the process with issuing challenges..."

Xu Xiaoshou gave a puzzled look to Zhang Xinxiong. He paused and put on a serious look on his face, then said, "but if it means seeing you dead on the spot, I'm all for it!"

The crowd exploded.

The spectators who were sitting around them finally could not contain themselves. All of them jolted up right away with a disbelieving look on their faces.

The young man had just been picked up like a chicken. How dare he say such this while looking so frail and insignificant?

"Damn, Xu Xiaoshou, I don't know what else to say."

"I'd be sure to shine his grave next year because of what he just said."

Zhang Xinxiong was instead quite amused.

He saw Xu Xiaoshou being the living manifestation of the saying 'fledglings being the most fearless'.

He thinks that having killed several at Innate Levels and hurting several at Upper Spiritual Level, means that he could shoot for the stars, eh?

I'd like to ask...

Have you weaned?

Zhang Xinxiong focused his gaze and killing intent emanated all over him, causing the ground to crack and shatter.

The trees around rustled in the howling wind.

Several in the crowd who could not steady themselves in time wobbled and fell to the ground where they stood.

The crowd was cowed and back away immediately, losing the festive look on their faces. Some of them would have usually teased those who had fallen, yet there was nothing but utter silence at the moment.

Zhang Xinxiong... is getting serious here?

"You don't know the procedures, eh?"

Zhang Xinxiong flashed a grin and said, "Alright, I'd give you face and be the one to issue the challenge then. Don't say that I'm picking on the weak here..."

"You have one month to prepare. When the time comes, die!"

Xu Xiaoshou pinched on his nose and covered his mouth, flapping his legs about in the air. He then exhaled long and hard after finding that his legs were not reaching the ground.

"Sorry, but a month is too long. I don't intend to give you that much time."