

Refining the Mountains and Rivers

Chapter 25 – Zhang Zhang

The long-bearded old man nodded, “Rest assured I will handle this!”

With a wave of his sleeve the courtyard doors were torn open. He strode in with heavy steps, his eyes glaring around like a hawk.

“Who dares to stir up trouble in the Wang Family, come out to die!”

The madam followed close behind. She pointed a finger and screeched, “There is also that girl. She looks just like her mother; she must be a temptress slut too! Since she dares to collude with outsiders to cause trouble in my Wang Family, it’s time to sell her to a brothel!”

In the mourning hall, Qin Yu patted the back of a frightened Gu Ling’er. “It’s fine.” He rose up and stepped outside. “Senior-apprentice Sister, although I can’t recklessly slaughter mortals, killing the cultivator who insulted my loved ones should be possible, right?”

Ning Ling’s beautiful face was cold, “Of course.”

The long-bearded old man’s eyes shrank. “So it’s the same people as me.” The fluctuations coming from Qin Yu and Ning Ling’s bodies couldn’t fool him. After a moment of thought, he sneered and said, “Tell me your name. If we share some origins, then perhaps I might spare you death today!”

“Big brother!” The woman anxiously cried.

The long-bearded man shouted, “I have my own standards.” Qin Yu’s aura was weak so he didn’t care for him, but the aura coming from Ning Ling was faintly oppressive; it was likely she was at the Foundation Establishment realm.

Qin Yu’s eyes turned blood red, “The dead don’t need to know anything.”

The long-bearded old man smiled in anger. “What a brave junior, to think you are actually so arrogant. Then, show me just how you’ll kill me!”

Bang –

Aura erupted. This person possessed a sixth level Foundation Establishment cultivation.

Qin Yu's feet struck the ground and he raced forwards like a galloping horse, his speed so fast it nearly produced afterimages. The aura of the third level Foundation Establishment rose up, causing dust to fly in the air.

The long-bearded old man was startled. He lifted his hand, gathering magic power in his palm to form a saber phantom and cut down! But, the moment he was about to cut out, he keeled over with pain twisting his face and that magic power in his palm scattering.

With Spirit Stab hitting its mark, Qin Yu immediately approached and punched out.

Bang –

The long-bearded old man was sent flying backwards, his chest sunken in as he flew through the courtyard doors. He spat out several mouthfuls of crushed flesh and blood, giving one last gasp as he died!

A sixth level Foundation Establishment cultivator had been killed in a direct confrontation.

A light cracking sound emitted within Qin Yu's body. His robes began to flutter about as his aura grew further, his thoughts surging. Killing the long-bearded old man and releasing his anger and frustration had unexpectedly triggered his cultivation to rise to a new level, causing him to step into the fourth level of Foundation Establishment!

Ning Ling's brilliant eyes overflowed with tears. As she looked at his back, she was filled with surprise and acclaim.

The entire courtyard fell deathly silent.

Qin Yu glared at the madam. "And who did you say you were going to sell to the brothel?"

"Ahh!" The madam screamed in horror as her eyes rolled back and she fainted. A horrid stench began to drift from her body; she had been so frightened she had defecated in her clothes.

Ning Ling stepped forwards, “Qin Yu?”

Qin Yu nodded. “Rest assured, Senior-apprentice Sister Ning.” A deep look of loathing filled his eyes. “Drag this woman away so that she doesn’t dirty my family’s ground again!”

Wang Gui and the other servants all felt their limbs turn cold. None of them dared to move.

Wang Changge suddenly sighed. He waved his hand, “Take the madam away.” Then, two servants, still shivering, dragged the madam away as if she were a dead dog.

He looked at Qin Yu. “Are you the child from back then? I never imagined you would be like this today. It seems Lady Gu’s eyesight was much better than mine.”

Qin Yu sneered, “She has already died, so what’s the point in saying all this?”

Wang Changge lowered his head. After several breaths of time, he bitterly smiled. “You are right. She has already died, so it will always be too late no matter what I do.” In a short period of time he seemed to age countless years. “It was I who was unfair to her. Then, kill me. She didn’t die too long ago; perhaps I can catch up to her.”

Qin Yu gnashed his teeth. “Don’t think that I won’t kill you!”

Gu Ling’er cried out. “Mother always hoped that you would see her before she died. When she held my hands she said that you would have to bury her no matter what. No matter where she ended up, she would always be a person of the Wang Family.”

Tears fell down Wang Changge’s wizened face. “Lady Gu, I was unfair to you! But, I had nothing I could do. My wife’s family had a cultivator and our family needed his support. If I didn’t treat you coldly and callously, then she would have never allowed you and your daughter to leave! Lady Gu, it was I who made you suffer in your life!”

He knelt on the ground and cried towards the coffin.

“Divorce that vicious woman. I want Aunt Gu to be honorably buried in the Wang Family’s ancestral grave with the status of the family’s madam. I want

her memorial tablet to be placed in the ancestral hall.” Qin Yu coldly ordered. “Your Wang Family must bow before Aunty Gu’s coffin and send her on her final trip!”

Wang Changge nodded. “Yes, this is what I owe her.” He tore off a piece of cloth and bit down on his finger, using his blood to write a letter of divorce. “Lady Gu, from this day on I divorce that horrible woman and marry you!”

The entire Wang Family held a great mourning ceremony, walking for ten miles.

Gu Ling’er held her mother’s memorial tablet as 32 people carried a massive coffin behind her. Many people flung paper money into the air, causing it to scatter upon the ground.

Everyone in the town came out, crowding both sides of the street. Awe flooded their eyes; they had never seen a funeral on such a grand scale before.

Qin Yu lifted the coffin. Without any magic power, he allowed the heavy pressure to fall upon his shoulders. He led the way, one step at a time. As a breeze blew past him it left the paper money fluttering past his face. With a slightly rough feeling, he gently stroked the coffin when he laid it down.

“Aunty Gu, rest in peace.”

She had been gloriously buried!

The night air was cool like water. In front of the giant newly built grave, there were only three figures left. Qin Yu pulled Gu Ling’er up and wiped away the tears from her red and swollen eyes. “Ling’er, don’t cry. Aunty Gu wouldn’t want to see you sad.”

Gu Ling’er shook her head, “Big Brother Yu, I am not sad, I am happy, happy for Mother! She waited her entire life, suffered her entire life, and finally achieved her wish. I know that she must be very happy right now. Thank you Big Brother Yu, thank you!”

Qin Yu held onto her. “You silly girl. I am your big brother. No matter what happens, you never need to thank me. Let’s go back and rest for a day, there are some things I will tell you tomorrow.”

Gu Ling'er's eyes dimmed. "I don't want to go back. I don't want to return to the Wang Family. I want to stay here with Mother..."

Qin Yu nodded. "Okay, then let's accompany Aunty Gu here."

After several breaths of time, she fell into a deep sleep.

Qin Yu hugged her as they sat in front of the grave mound. As he looked at the burning incense and candles, he suddenly asked, "Senior-apprentice Sister, why do you cultivate?"

Ning Ling was startled. After a moment of thought, she said, "Because I want to control my own destiny."

Qin Yu shook his head. "To me, destiny is too vast and empty a concept. In the past I had no idea why I cultivated, but now I have a goal. I hope that I can protect those close to me so that they aren't harmed. I hope that I will never be sad again."

As Ning Ling looked at his back, her eyes shined but she didn't speak.

The night passed and the sun rose up. Gu Ling'er opened her eyes, timidly saying, "Big Brother Yu."

Qin Yu smiled. "You're awake." He took out some fasting pills. "Eat these."

Gu Ling'er obediently ate the fasting pills. Her small and pale face immediately filled with a bit more color.

"Ling'er, what do you want to do now? If you want, you can follow me. I will take care of you." Qin Yu earnestly said.

Gu Ling'er thought about it. Then she quietly said, "Mother's wish has been fulfilled and I don't want to have any relationship with the Wang Family anymore. In truth, before Mother left, she had already arranged plans for me. Big Brother Yu, do you remember Big Sister Zhang Zhang? Mother gave me to her and asked if I could be her maid. Big Sister Zhang Zhang agreed."

Qin Yu frowned. "Ling'er, I can take good care of you!"

"Big Brother Yu, now is not the same as the past. I know you will be good to me, but if you keep me by your side I will only drag you down!" Gu Ling'er

seemed a bit depressed but she immediately smiled. “Big Brother Yu, don’t worry about me. Big Sister Zhang Zhang has always been good to me. If I am by her side I will be safe.”

Ning Ling said, “Junior-apprentice Brother Qin Yu, Ling’er is right. You have officially entered the road of cultivation, so bringing her along with you might not be good for her.”

Qin Yu was silent for a long time. He nodded. “Alright. Then I will take you to the Zhang Family.”

After saying his farewells to Aunt Gu and leaving this sorrowful place, the atmosphere improved a great deal. Gu Ling’er also smiled much more.

“Big Sister Ning, do you know? Big Brother Yu and Big Sister Zhang Zhang are engaged!”

Ning Ling’s heart skipped a beat, but she maintained her composure. She asked, “Then Junior-apprentice Brother Qin Yu is seeing his fiancée?”

Qin Yu waved his hand, wryly smiling. “Senior-apprentice Sister Ning, please don’t listen to Ling’er’s nonsense. It’s just things children do when they don’t know anything, and we haven’t seen each other for so many years so how could anyone possibly count that as an agreement?”

For some unknown reason, hearing him say this made Ning Ling feel a bit more relieved. A little blush began to spread across her cheeks and she quickly turned to speak to Gu Ling’er.

Qin Yu narrowed his eyes as he began to recall memories of the distant past. He remembered a little girl with pigtails chasing him around.

Zhang Zhang...in the blink of an eye, so many years passed. She was a beautiful little girl in the past, so she must have become a graceful young woman now.

Would she still remember him?

A small smile lit up the corners of Qin Yu’s face.

Soon, a hundred miles passed and they arrived at Little Olive City.

Seeing the residence that was several times larger and more grandiose than the Wang Family's and also filled with an imposing atmosphere, Qin Yu discovered that Zhang Zhang had lived much better than he had imagined. He immediately frowned. If the Zhang Family was doing so well, how come they didn't help Aunt Gu these past years?

Seeing the happy Gu Ling'er, Qin Yu didn't say much. As long as she was happy then he was sure Aunt Gu would be happy in her eternal rest.

"We're here. I didn't think that Big Sister Zhang Zhang's family was so large. No wonder Mother wanted to send me to her." The little girl looked at the wealthy and opulent family residence, hesitating after a moment of joy.

Qin Yu smiled. "I'll go knock on the door."

Soon, the doors opened from within. Although the gatekeeper had an arrogant stance, when he heard the people arrive and their purpose, he didn't delay his steps and immediately left to pass on a message.

Ning Ling's eyes flashed. "I'm not going in. I'll wait here."

Gu Ling'er was a bit reluctant. Qin Yu could faintly guess her worries. He nodded, "Okay."

Ning Ling patted Gu Ling'er's small hands, whispered a few words to her, and then moved to the side.

Not long after, the gatekeeper returned with a maid who brought them into the mansion. Along the way, a maid glanced at Qin Yu and quickly left. A blue-clothed servant placed the two in a reception room, brought them some tea and snacks, and waited outside.

But when that maid left, she hurried away into the rear mansion where the women lived. She entered an elegantly decorated courtyard.

"Miss, I carefully observed him. He's a young man similar to you in age, and I also heard Gu Ling'er call him Big Brother Qin Yu."

Listening to the maid speak, Zhang Zhang was immediately happy. "It's really Qin Yu!"

But soon she began to waver.

She bit her lips, saying, “Shao Shao, do you think I should see him? After all, he is my childhood friend.”

Shao Shao was a beautiful woman who had particularly shapely curves that caught the eyes. However, her voice and tone were acerbic and rude, just like a little hot pepper. “Miss, you cannot be softhearted. If he sees you and is charmed by you, what if he keeps mentioning that engagement matter of the past? If that happens, even if you were to reject him it would be ugly for everyone involved. If this matter were to spread out, it would harm your reputation!”

Zhang Zhang hesitated, as she found it hard to make a decision. “But if I don’t see him, isn’t that too heartless?”

Shao Shao arrogantly raised her head. “Miss, did you forget what your current status is? Master’s cultivation has advanced and he recently condensed his Golden Core. You will also enter the Rainbow Sect to cultivate. Just what sort of honored figure are you? Agreeing to give shelter to Gu Ling’er is the same as changing her destiny. It’s more than enough to repay the friendship of the past.”

“Not seeing Qin Yu is good for him, otherwise he will develop thoughts he shouldn’t have. Miss has the heart of a buddha, so you won’t haggle with him over this, but the master’s disciples might not let him off. This will put his life in danger!”

Zhang Zhang sighed. “Shao Shao, you’re right.” She brought out a sachet from her clothes. The sachet’s embroidery was dull and faded. She took a round jade out from it. The jade was ordinary and cloudy, with a slight gloss on its surface. It was obvious that it was often played with.

A brief flash of unwillingness lit up her eyes. Zhang Zhang grit her teeth. “Give this jade back to Qin Yu and say that what happened before was just the ignorance of children. Speak to him in a gentle tone so that you don’t hurt his pride. Moreover, prepare a gift for him.”

Shao Shao received the jade in both hands. “Miss, rest assured that I will do as you wish.”

As the maid left the room, Zhang Zhang held onto her chest, feeling suddenly empty and disappointed, as if she had lost something. She had a faint urge to call Shao Shao back, but in the end she simply sighed. Perhaps Shao Shao was right, and this was the best choice for Qin Yu and her...