

The Sacred Ruins

#Chapter 11 - Read The Sacred Ruins Chapter 11

Chapter 11: Home Sweet home

There was a peculiar look on Zhou Quan's face. He looked somewhat faltered and bashful. There was something on the tip of his tongue, but he seemed reluctant to let it out.

Then, with a silly simpering look, Zhou Quan nudged Chu Feng lightly with his knee and quietly whispered, "Do you reckon that the person who had grown a full pair of wings would soar and hover in the blue sky?"

"Maybe." Chu Feng nodded, then he felt a bit amused. "It's not you who became the winged creature reported in the news, so why did you look all faltered and shy?"

"Don't you remember that I also have one of those glittering red fruits I took from a weed?" Zhou Quan carefully unwrapped a paper ball as he spoke. Inside was that stalk of weed that had been dug out earlier. Its fist-sized fruit was like a beautifully wrought carved agate with a rich aroma.

"If I put my life on the line and nibble away this fruit, what do you think I can grow?" Zhou Quan asked. Now, he looked even more shilly-shally than before.

This time, Chu Feng did not crack a smile, instead he had a solemn expression on his face. This would not have been much of a deal if they had never learnt about the potential of such a fruit. Now as they looked at it, they realized how much of a transformative metamorphosis it could bring.

"I reckon we should wait for more updates on that winged man in the future. We need to be certain about any potential risks that associate with it," Chu Feng said.

"What an aromatic fruit you have there. What fruit is it?" asked the middle-aged man who had offered them the ride.

The car was speeding away from that small town, flying on the highway towards the end of the horizon.

"It's a wild fruit. No ideas what species it belongs to, so I don't really dare to eat it myself," Zhou Quan answered.

Indeed, Zhou Quan dared not to eat it. Just in case that what would grow on him was eventually not a wing, but rather some horns or tails, by then, he wouldn't even have the chance to regret it.

"Right. Don't eat it if you don't know about it. Nothing could be more troublesome than food poisoning at a time like this," the middle-aged chauffeur kindly reminded, then, he gave vent to a deep sigh.

He was worried about his family.

Hell seemed to have broken loose almost overnight. Strange occurrences cropped up almost everywhere across the country. Especially after personally experiencing it, he had never been so terrified in his life before. He only wished to get home as soon as he could, so throughout the journey, the car seemed to be going at a lightning speed.

One had to admit that this middle-aged man drove quite adroitly. The ride felt alarmingly dangerous, yet the thrill it brought was unparalleled by even the wildest adventure. It was quite an experience, but not much for Zhou Quan.

"Impressive! What a breathtaking joyride! Woo Hoo!" But soon, the continual jolting, rocking and tossing made Zhou Quan realize that this was not the thrill his body wanted. Carsickness soon developed into nausea and retching. He then gradually fell into a torpor.

The car was moving in full throttle. Even Chu Feng felt a bit dizzy by looking through the window at the speedily receding scenery outside. He was worried that driving so fast might lead to a severe accident.

He looked back and saw that bush of verdant vines still shrouded the vastness of the sky. Despite hours of speedy advance on the country road, they were still under the watch of this enormous cluster of vines.

It was suspending in mid-air. Its main body was kept distant to the ground. It looked like a green castle of sky-high stature. At the same time, it also looked like the outline of an undulating mountain range, grand and magnificent.

Deity Biomedical Group... what a name! Chu Feng mused. He used to think that this name might have just been randomly blurted out by Lin Naoi's father when he was in his high and vigorous spirits.

Now as he thought about it, he realized that the name might have carried certain specific implications beneath it. Judging by Lin Naoi's strange demeanors at times, he firmly believed that this family must have some insights into the truth that had been hidden away from the general public. She must have been anticipating something otherworldly to happen for a long time.

He finally comprehended that uniform look of indifference and aloofness on the faces of all her family members when all he wanted was to kiss her goodbye after graduation. It was the look of despise and contempt, and it was also his status as an ordinary outsider that made him unworthy of any forms of interaction with Lin Naoi. In the end, all he deserved was a wave of hand to farewell what had never belonged to him.

“What’s the matter brother? Why do you look so dumbstruck?” Zhou Quan asked as he saw Chu Feng staring out of the window with unseeing eyes.

“Thinking about my ex,” Chu Feng thoughtlessly blurted out.

“Did you break up with her? And now in a train of regret?” Zhou Quan asked with a smile.

“No. It was her. She broke up with me,” Chu Feng answered forthrightly and honestly. To him, it was nothing disgraceful to be frank about it.

“Did you let go of it so fast?” Zhou Quan was surprised then began to wail mournfully. For him, his first love could never be deleted from memory easily. He was all heart-broken for almost two years. He felt that he could never let this die in his memory. His latest visit to Tibet was to actually cherish the memory of his first love and to let go of all his grief and misery.

“She had always been flat with me,” Chu Feng replied, “There wasn’t even a high incidence of us walking abreast. It had started plain as water, and then it ended in a prosaic way.”

“Why? What happened between the two of you?” Zhou Quan curiously asked.

Chu Feng shook his head wearily. He had let it out, but understandably, he was also coy about the details of his insipid romance. He wanted to say no more.

At last, after hundreds of li of endless journey, the middle-aged man was nearing home. Chu Feng and Zhou Quan could no longer take this lift. They had to be dropped off somewhere before their destination.

“Those vines are out of sight now!” Zhou Quan realized that the blue sky was no longer clouded by the overgrowth of vines. This out-of-darkness moment made him feel ever so relieved.

Under the shade of the overbearing vines, there was an inexpressible feeling of constraint.

Half an hour later, they entered a neighboring city. They came to an inter-city bus station where they would then catch a bus heading northwards towards Taihang Mountains.

After the bus had been successfully dispatched, they felt a burst of ease and relief. They had been fearing that the current situation might perhaps hinder the buses from dispatching, but now it proved that their worry was redundant.

“To me, it is highly likely that this area has not encountered any strange occurrences so far. I think all the strangeness was only happening in that particular part that we just went through. I reckon everything that has happened so far was all thanks to that cluster of vines overhead!” Zhou Quan seemed indignant.

This coach’s final destination was a metropolis in the north that had been the ancient capital of six dynasties.

During its trip, it would stop by the foot of Taihang Mountains.

“If everything goes as planned, we will get home before the sun sets,” Chu Feng said.

There were only eight hundred li between that northern metropolis and where they departed, so even if they ran into a congested traffic, they would still arrive before the sun set.

Strange things occurred in succession at many places, so naturally, these occurrences became the most discussed topic in the coach.

“It is said that missiles have been used to bombard some of the stuff that have been floating in space.”

“Yeah, I heard about that too. But I’m yet see any official reports from a reliable source, so I can’t decide if this rumor is trustworthy or just bogus.”

The voices of debate in the coach were all in a muddle. Discussions were mixed with a jumble of different opinions.

Chu Feng and Zhou Quan looked at each other at a loss for words. They had immediately come to think about that vine-like plant floating in mid-air. They thought it was crucial to bombard it at once.

Time flew as the coach smoothly drove on.

Zhou Quan sighed. He tried to search for more news on his communicator, but his search was futile until he finally found a picture of the winged man. It was him being picked up by the staff from the Deity Biomedical Group.

That was his last sighting. No more follow up reports could be found after that.

“Are they going to give that man inspection or are they using him as a publicity stunt?” Zhou Quan resentfully contended. In the photo, there was a convoy led by an array of luxury cars loaded with all the top executives from the Lin family.

Chu Feng glanced at the photo, but he left with no comments.

Nowadays, everyone’s communicator had been flooded with all sorts of reports. A new report on the latest strange occurrence cropped up every now and then, making those who read them ever so anxious.

Chu Feng gave those headlines a fairly cursory reading. He then closed his eyes for rest before he finally fell asleep.

“Hey man, wake up! We’ve got a problem here.” Zhou Quan roused Chu Feng from his slumbers.

Chu Feng looked a bit confused as he first regained his consciousness. It was afternoon already. The sun was almost down.

“What’s the problem?” Chu Feng asked.

“The driver seemed a bit anxious. He said that he had been driving more than a thousand li, and he has yet to see the destination. He said that he had just seen the guidepost indicating that there were still a few hundreds of li left to cover,” Zhou Quan explained.

Besides, many sections of the highway seemed to have also been torn apart by some unexplainable forces. At times, they had to endure some rather unpleasant moments filled with bumpy rides as the bus had to veer off the broken highway and onto the rugged dirt road.

This caused Chu Feng to wake right up, because to him, the story had sounded ever so familiar. Perhaps it was the same phenomenon as the one that had happened in the district where the cluster of vines had claimed its domination. Was the ground here also expanding, or was it being stretched by some forms of mysterious force?

Some passengers felt like the blame should have been on the driver himself. The possibility that perhaps the driver had been going the wrong way seemed more logical than Chu Feng’s theory. But the driver swore that as an adept coach driver that had been taking years of itinerary travelling on this line, he would never make such an inadequate mistake.

The coach drove in the exact direction suggested by the roadside guideposts.

“The Deuce! Alright, I’m done. I quit. Fxck this.” The driver was a man of hot temper. As he was being surrounded by whirls of complaints from his passengers, telling him that

he had been going the wrong way, he decided to throw up his job. "What on earth is happening? I guess it must be somehow related to all those strange occurrences reported in the news. I want to live. I don't want to die yet!"

"Uh?" Someone raised his head and looked straight ahead.

There was a mountain towering into the clouds. Its appearance was sudden and abrupt. It situated itself right beside the highway, only inches away from blocking it.

"This mountain wasn't here just seconds ago. What happened?"

"Driver, please hurry! Take the wheels and get us out of here!"

Shrill shouts rang from within the bus.

The driver took a quick look at the situation around him, and without another word, he stomped onto the clutch. The coach hastily accelerated, going like a bat out of hell. He promptly acted because he was quite frightened too. He witnessed the unexplained appearance of that mountain in action.

"I really shouldn't have set myself on this long journey." He remorseful. His face was pale as a sheet as he desperately tried to accelerate.

Within the coach, many people were anxious.

Chu Feng and Zhou Quan had been through a lot, so in comparison, they were staying relatively calm.

However, Zhou Quan's composure could not last long before he could no longer trust himself, so instead he turned to his prayers. With eyes closed, his mouth murmured, "God bless me! God bless us! God let us arrive home safe and sound!"

The coach almost felt like it was being driven by a madman. It charged and swerved between lanes and lanes; they had too many narrow escapes from a severe accident.

In fact, one could see with ease that all the other cars had also been speeding. Obviously, the passengers on those cars were just as frightened.

"Thank God. We finally made it."

As the sky finally turned indigo blue, and a great many stars were shining, Zhou Quan gave vent to a sigh of relief. He saw recognizable sceneries. The unbroken line of the undulating prodigious hilltops of Taihang Mountains felt ever so familiar and intimate to him. It was there, his hometown, finally becoming gradually visible.

Chu Feng felt more and more eased in mind. It was only a matter of few li before he could reach home. He could easily walk there from here if he had to.

However, before the passengers could even learn to appreciate the smoothness of their ride, the coach came to a sudden halt. Many passengers crashed their faces and upper bodies into the seats in front of them, instigating another pandemonium as the passengers cried in pain.

“Do you even know how to drive?” someone cursed.

But soon, the coach returned to silence.

There was a lake forming under the canopy of glittering stars. Plumes of mists rose from the surface, mingling with the serene moonlight; it looked as if it had added a layer of chiffon to the facade of this tranquil lake.

The lake was a big one. It gleamed with the glittering shadow of stars, lighting up the darkness of the night. Everything was in harmony with one another. All represented elegance and grace.

“What’s happening? How comes the road has already ended here? And what’s this? A lake?” Zhou Quan was astounded. They were not far from where he lived. He had been living in this district since his early childhood, and he had never spotted a lake here during all those years.

The road ended here too!

“Hurry up! Let’s get off and go around it!” Chu Feng urged.

The cause for the abrupt appearance of this lake and the mountain were the same in essentials, while differing only in minor points. They were both due to the rapidly expanding earth on which they were located.

Some landforms of mountains and rivers that had been previously unknown to the world was now emerging before people’s eyes!

The passengers were quite divided. Some suggested to take a circuitous route around the lake, while others insisted on remaining in the coach and waiting for the dawn to break.

It was a long trudge home for Chu Feng and Zhou Quan. They trekked for four hours along the circumference of the lake before they could see a small village up ahead.

It was a country town called Shun Ping. Zhou Quan’s house was right in that town.

Yet, it would be another ten li for Chu Feng.

“Home sweet home!” Zhou Quan was glorying in the success of his homecoming journey. Although it was not an easy one, but it was, for sure, unforgettable and inimitable.

“Uh? What is that?” Chu Feng was facing the Taihang Mountains, when suddenly, the sound of rumble incessantly lingered on. Many towering mountains abruptly emerged.

“How majestic!” The mountains had an altitude of at least thousands of meters, if not tens of thousands. The mountains’ ridges twisted and twined, stretching endlessly. Hundreds and thousands of them emerged in the blink of an eye, dwarfing all those that had come before them.

Chu Feng stood, revelling in the glittering view in front of him.

Chapter 12: The Holy Mountain of Taihang

The silence of the night was punctuated by the distant rumble as thousands of grand mountains abruptly rose from the ground. They emerged out of the void, yet their imposing stance against the backdrop of the dark night formed a grand vista.

Some of these freshly formed mountains were tens of thousands of meters tall. Their altitudes ascended into the vault of heaven, like a divine sword jabbing into the sky. Their cliffs were so steep and vertical that even the most skilful mountaineers would find themselves incapable of clambering.

Some of these mountains were broad and extensive. They looked like Mahisha, the mythological creature that exuded grandeur and composure.

“Is this still the Taihang Mountains that I knew?” Zhou Quan was astounded. He bit his lip to assure that this was not a dream world.

The changes were so extreme that it felt like heaven and earth had been overturned.

Those extraordinary sights and wonderful views were awe-inspiring and surreal.

Chu Feng was dumbstruck. He was in a bit of trance.

In front of Chu Feng, it was a never-ending undulation of great mountain ridges. They appeared out of thin air, then they claimed their pre-eminence over the original Taihang Mountains with their towering stance.

The Taihang Mountains became much broader, more vigorous and more forceful than before.

Both Chu Feng and Zhou Quan had spent their entire childhood growing up in this region. No one could be more familiar to the makeup of this district than they were. The changes before their eyes were on a magnificent scale. It was chaotic yet sumptuous. It was beauty blended with disorder, resulting in an imposing surrealistic artwork.

This was both astonishing and terrifying.

“Do you think there are any deific fruits in these mountains? Or what about a cave dwelling of some celestial beings?” Zhou Quan had quite a lot of leaps in his thoughts, but one had to admit that his mind became exceptionally active when it came to these whimsical ideas.

There had been news reports about the strange occurrences that had happened on Mount Song, Wangwu Mountain and many other places. It had been reported that purple light was seen streaming down even the most ordinary rocks.

That winged-man who had swallowed a strange silver fruit by accident was also living near the Wangwu Mountains.

Zhou Quan was lost in a reverie. Strange and impractical thoughts thronged his mind. He, too, wanted to acquire the ability to enable him to soar overhead in a great height.

Chu Feng, by contrast, stayed relatively cool-headed and composed. “Wake up!” Chu Feng said, “It’s dangerous to be overly optimistic about these things. These mountains could be short of anything but ferocious beasts. It will basically mean the death of us once we dare ourselves to set foot on one of them. So let’s not kill ourselves in the process of trying to realize your unrealistic dream of becoming an immortal.”

Chu Feng’s words made Zhou Quan’s heart skip a beat. He was right; in a world that was muddled with chaos and disorder, the chances of acquiring death was just as feasible as him acquiring a desirable power.

“Roar....”

Like a testament to Chu Feng’s words, a beastly roar echoed from deep within the mountain. It was the sound of a behemoth howling into the air, full of fire and fury.

Zhou Quan’s hair stood on end. He raised his head and looked up at the mountains, carefully searching for the source of the sound.

“It... it is from that mountain. Am I seeing... a gri... griffin howling at the summit?” Out of shock and terror, Zhou Quan speech was slurred.

The mountain which Zhou Quan referred to was distant. But faintly, Chu Feng could see a globe of fire jittering about. It looked like a red-haired beast staring into the distance, roaring. Then, it started gulping and spitting the essence of the sun and the moon.

It was indeed a griffin, and this vicious beast resided right near the location of their houses. It posed a real threat to all the local villages.

Blood drained from Zhou Quan's rubicund face. He looked pale as a sheet.

Chu Feng and Zhou Quan had only just returned from a calamitous journey, then immediately after, their lives were on the line again. Can we not take a break, thought Zhou Quan, Or do we have to run for it again?

"Sigh..."

The wind was rising in the distance. A dark cloud sailed by, then landed in the mountains.

"A giant bird?" Chu Feng's eyelid involuntarily twitched. How monstrous of a bird was that!

"Did I... did I see it right?" Zhou Quan's voice trilled with terror. He swallowed hard and shook his head.

That giant bird had a greyish body. It landed somewhere deep in the mountains.

"No one would possibly escape from its clutch if that thing decided to come out and hunt for men outside these mountains." Zhou Quan sighed. Those were the birds of prey, wild and ferocious.

Before the sound of his voice had even died away, a vicious bird clad in purple feathers fluttered its wings and flew towards them from within the mountains. It was somewhat smaller than the one that had just flown by, but its size was still plenty above par.

It had a very distinctive look. Its feathers were shining with glittering luster. It seemed as if the bird had been cast in gold.

"Oh crap. I'm such a jinx. Look! One of them is coming for us." Zhou Quan regretted so much that he wanted to give himself a slap on the face.

Both of them had their skin prickled with apprehension. They hastily ran for cover behind a tree by the road. The thought that they might become that bird's first feast of the night made them quail.

The luster emanated from that bird made a drastic contrast against the dark backdrop of the night. It flew like a purple lightning, briskly traversing across the sky. The bird was yowling in a delighted manner. It seemed excited. Perhaps it was longing for something thrilling.

Boom!

Suddenly, its body became a sphere of purple flame, burning ablaze and illuminating the night sky.

This was a heart-trembling moment.

This kind of blazing flare was a terrifying sight even to those who were observing from a far distance. It brought daylight into the night sky and sent episodes of searing heatwaves down to the ground, making both Chu Feng and Zhou Quan all sweaty and wet.

The purple bird of prey was like a purple sun hanging in the vault of heavens, rendering the world especially bright and resplendent.

“I swear, I have never ever seen anything ever so frightening in my life. That’s clearly a demonic bird. It could only take one of them to destroy an entire town,” Zhou Quan murmured, his mind full of puzzlement and bewilderment.

Chu Feng was also lost for words, because only god knew how many of these devilish beasts and birds of prey were residing in the Taihang Mountains. By a conservative estimate, if one assumed that there was only one for each mountain, then thousands would emerge just then.

However, a wretched tweet, which echoed from the sky, utterly astounded the two.

The two looked into direction of the sound, and they saw that giant bird scorching in a purple flame. It struggled and gave a plaintive whine before it dropped out of the sky and fell into its demise.

How was this happening? Chu Feng and Zhou Quan stared blankly at each other.

Just then, it was full of imposing vigor. As it fluttered its wings, the bird was poised for the height of the sky. They thought that those beams of radiance was a show of its power and capability, but who would have guessed that it was a mere self-ignition for a suicidal purpose.

Puff!

It was a sound of explosion coming from mid-air. That purple bird of prey had disintegrated into millions of pieces before its body touched the ground. After a blinding blaze, the pieces became ashes, drifting profusely and disorderly.

Did it just die like this? Chu Feng and Zhou Quan kept to their muteness for a long while.

“Bless us, the Holy Mountain of Taihang!”

At last, Zhou Quan broke the silence. He clenched a fist in the other hand and moved them about at his chest as a form of worshipping. He also made a bow with hands folded in front as a way to send his prayers. Zhou Quan had become increasingly superstitious thanks to all kinds of strange occurrences that had happened lately.

Suddenly, the Taihang Mountains became astir again. A monstrous looking beast came in sight with a body radiating an eerie red luminescence. Its body resembled a standing crocodile, but it had wings that could flutter. It flew right in their direction.

Boom!

As it approached near the outer bound of the mountains, it blasted into a globe of blazing flames. It gave out screeches of shrill cries that indicated its profound agony. It fell from the sky, degrading into ashes.

“Down goes another one!”

Chu Feng and Zhou Quan started to realize a certain pattern. “So it was not an act of suicide. It’s that no matter what, they cannot pass the outer boundary of the mountains.”

The two stared at each other in uncertainty.

“Should we go take a look?”

Drastic changes had brought the world a plethora of the unexpected. They knew that the world from now on would perhaps become drastically different from what they had been familiarized with. If they had the courage and nerves to take the initiative, they might perhaps run into some ineffable opportunities at the start of this episode of major mishaps and acquire abilities beyond mankind’s capability.

Of course, as the old saying went, “no pain, no gain”. There were great risks that associated with their intent to exploit this opportunity; the risk of losing a limb or two or even death.

It was not to say that they didn’t have the courage to step into the unknown, but they were certainly concerned. However, though they would not enter the mountains just yet, nothing at this point could hold back their urge to walk a few miles towards the mountains. They wanted to be sure what caused the incineration of those beasts.

It did not seem far at all, but it took them 6 li to reach the outer boundary of these mountains. The ground was plentifully bestrewn with ashes, broken bones and marks of scorch on the animal’s fragmented tissues and feathers. Those were the parts that had partly survived the inferno blaze.

Clueless as to why, Zhou Quan could not stop his legs from shivering. His calf muscle cramped and felt enfeebled. Zhou Quan could barely stand still.

Chu Feng also felt uneasy. He felt like being watched by some beasts creeping behind his back. His body stiffened, his hair stood on end, and his eyelids twitched involuntarily.

The two took a deep breath and continuously retreated from the site. They now felt how simple and stupid their initial idea was. They started to come to realize that these mountains were no longer the ones that they were once familiar with. These were the mountains that no one should ever come close to.

Only moments later, after they had hidden themselves in the dense forest, they suddenly spotted many globes of lights, the size of lanterns, emerging one after another at where they just stood. Some appeared bloodily red, some were in an ominous blue, some were golden with a piercing shine, but all share the same biting cold look.

Their numbers were overwhelming, thickly dotting the place.

“Eyes! Those are eyes! Whoever belonged to them want to come out!” Zhou Quan made an unearthly cry under his breath. He was blind with terror.

Oddly, that particular place was extremely dark. While some of the deeper sections of the mountain range were lustrous with reflection of the starry sky, for that one specific site, it seemed as if all lights had been absorbed and none could be reflected. Only those hollow and terrifying eyes were visible.

“Pong!”

Suddenly, something bustled out of the darkness into the opening. It trembled the ground and shivered the forests. Leaves were rustling down. It was a rather horrific scene to behold.

However, just like that of the previous few times, as soon as it stepped out of the outer boundary, its body ruptured and disintegrated, then it burst into flames, degrading into nothing but ashes.

“Are they purposely doing this to kill themselves? How stupid!” Zhou Quan mumbled. He sounded like he was at ease, but in fact, both of his legs were still shivering in fear.

Soon afterwards, a streak of deafening roar sounded before another string of animals beastly charged towards the outer boundary of the mountains. There were even silver spiders in the size of a house crawling in towards Chu Feng and Zhou Quan. But all died the same death; all degraded into the same pile of despicable ashes.

Nothing could come out alive.

“Oh, the Holy Taihang Mountain!” Zhou Quan almost kneeled down to express his gratitude. He felt ever so blessed.

At long last, a hush fell on the pitch-black opening that every one of those celestial beings had taken as an exit to freedom to the outside world. Little had they known, it was an entry to hell.

Although it was quiet and serene with the prevailing perfect silence, those eyes of evil spirits still persisted by the exit point.

Tranquility lingered until rays of golden glow suffused the vault of the heaven. A golden aura emerged to suggest the incoming of something divine and sacred.

It was a calf with a golden body. Its lustrous hair glowed in the darkness. The calf seemed as if it had been cast in gold. Even its pupils and pair of tiny horns were gleaming with gold.

It did not have the clumsiness typical of a bovine animal. It exuded an atmosphere of intelligence and spiritualism. One would have already known that this was indeed an otherworldly and extraordinary animal even at first glance.

At the very least, no one would have ever seen a golden calf born in nature.

It was dreadfully quiet at the exit. Many pairs of biting cold eyes fixated themselves onto the golden calf. They wanted to see the calf leaving unscathed.

One step, two steps... ten steps... one hundred steps!

That calf was intact throughout the process. It was unharmed, uninjured, and most importantly, it survived through its daunting attempt to escape.

The calf was very much excited. To their surprise, it had the ability to express its mood and sentiments, just like a normal human being. Its courage greatened. It started picking up speed, becoming bolder and bolder.

Zhou Quan cursed under his breath. He was a bit worried, but he was also tempted. “This must be a bull god. Just look at its pure golden body. It must have its own subtlety that can help us. Look how small it is. Can we capture it?”

Chapter 13: Out of Bound

Chu Feng shook his head in disagreement.

Despite the calf's seemingly harmless size, it was clearly not a mere innocuous baby cow. Rashly committing to an unplanned attempt to capture it would perhaps prove to be a very dangerous maneuverer.

The golden calf seemed very delighted. Having successfully crossed the deadly boundary, the calf shimmied its head and wiggled its tail, then with a single leap, it hopped into the air. Its excitement then culminated in a cheerful moo.

The world outside the mountains seemed ever so bizarre to it. There were many plants and vegetation. Many of them had a full blossom of a breathtaking beauty.

For the calf, the outside world was full of the unknown. Its excitement soon dissipated and gave rise to fear and anxiety. The calf meticulously managed each of its steps, guarding itself against all possible dangers. Evidently, the calf was yet to feel any real sense of security in this brave new world.

It slowly paced forward, then it halted near a batch of wild flowers. The calf lowered its head, gently breathing in the scent of flowers; then, it stood still.

A while had passed before it was confident that the scent was harmless to its body. Only then did it begin walking towards the area with more luxuriating plants.

"Pollen. Catalytic agent," Chu Feng murmured; he was absorbed in thought.

He could clearly see that the calf was gulping and swallowing pollens, as if it was probing something. It made a full circle around the area, touching a number of wild flowers.

In recent days, as the world was undergoing drastic changes, rapid multiplication and proliferation of flowers and plants was one of the most prominent scenes. Plants gave birth to large areas of flowers with very unordinary buds.

Having made a full circle, the calf's body was ablaze with golden flames!

"Moo..."

The calf growled and trembled. It looked ever so frightened. To the eyes of the beholders of the previous few incidences, the sign of a golden flame could well mean the death of the animal. The calf might not, after all, escape his demise either.

By the outer bound of the mountains, the eyes were still watching.

"Is it going to die too?" Zhou Quan was surprised.

The blazing flame wreathed its body. The calf was in profound dread and panic, but it seemed unreconciled to resign to its death. It vigorously quivered its fur and its body, as if it was his attempt to get rid of the flame.

However, this time, the scenario ended differently. The calf was not incinerated into ashes. The fire only just started before it was put out. The calf remained unscathed and unharmed.

“Roar!”

Suddenly, the mountains echoed with a symphony of bestial roars. The restless beasts and birds of prey were on the boil again behind the mountain’s boundary line. They wanted freedom, they wanted to escape.

Chu Feng covered his ears to keep the noise out, but he was still afflicted by the shockwave of the deafening roar. For Zhou Quan, the situation was even worse. He was all dazed and dizzy. He slumped back, gulping for air.

Having passed the gate of hell, the golden calf seemed no longer frightened or nervous. It stomped and tramped its hooves heavily on the ground, venting out a victorious moo.

Provoked by the calf’s success, half a dozen of otherworldly creatures rushed out from their hidings. Some spread their wings, while others sprinted on their hooves. A flurry of wind whistled and gusted, shaking the forest and rustling the leaves.

However, their attempts did not end well at all. As soon as their bodies crossed the invisible boundaries, their torsos and limbs disintegrated into piles of ashes.

At last, it went quiet again. No beasts nor birds could be seen in sight.

Meanwhile, the golden calf was still happily alive. It wiggled its tail, showing its elation at its unique accomplishment. But the action it then took astonished both Zhou Quan and Chu Feng.

The calf had an almost human-like behavior. It slumped down on the ground and sat cross-legged with its back hooves. Although the constant vacillating and staggering made it seem like an awkward and uncomfortable posture, the calf handled it with grace and poise.

Then, it raised its front hooves, with one of which pointing into the sky and the other pointing down. Its mouth kept mumbling with an inaudible bellow, “Moo, moo, moo...”

“What is it doing? Is it gorging itself on some invisible Buddhist Sutras?” Zhou Quan had a look that indicated his profound astonishment.

“I can’t believe that this goddamn thing is making a ‘Buddha descending’ gesture. Just look at it, one hoof pointing up, the other pointing down. ‘I alone am honored in Heaven and Earth.’ And that”-Zhou Quan pointed to the calf-“was the exact goddamn gesture for this saying.”

Seeing how a calf could pose such a gesture was as equally shocking and amusing to Zhou Quan.

Zhou Quan gently nudged Chu Feng with his elbow, whispering, “I think we should be able to capture it. After all, it’s only a calf, which I reckon has made capturing it so much easier for us.”

Before Zhou Quan could hardly finish his sentence, the golden calf scrambled to its hooves and shook itself before leisurely coming towards the two who were hiding in the bush.

“Oh crap, we’re spotted!” Zhou Quan was taken aback.

“Wait for my order. Don’t act rashly,” Chu Feng adjured. He always had a feeling that for a deity animal like this, its power could be immense and unpredictable. Their status as an infant could always be a beguiling veneer over its true devastating power.

The golden calf moved at an irritatingly slow pace while its nostrils closed and opened, walking straight towards Zhou Quan. Then, it suddenly gripped Zhou Quan’s bag with its teeth, forcibly snatching it away.

“You kiddin’ me, right? Are you seriously trying to rob me, you bastard? No one smuggles my stuff!” Zhou Quan cursed under his breath. With a sudden jerk, he pulled his bag back, then he shielded it with his back. Zhou Quan then nimbly flipped over backwards onto the calf’s back in an attempt to subdue it.

Unfortunately, he was no match to the calf. The calf was obviously nimbler than the chubby old Zhou Quan. It vigorously shook him off its back, then, as it stood on its hind hooves, it threw punches like a boxer straight at Zhou Quan’s face. Without even making a sound of groan, he stumbled and slumped back.

Zhou Quan was muddled. He could not fathom how a calf could have possibly developed any boxing skills. What he found even more unacceptable was that as a six-foot man, he was knocked out by an infant calf almost in an instant. Fuelled by anger and shame, Zhou Quan scrambled to his feet.

“I’m coming to get you, you bastard!” Zhou Quan charged straight at the calf. He gripped it by its horns, challenging it in a duel.

To Chu Feng, this was a rather speechless scene. He had already drawn out that black dagger, prepared to help Zhou Quan to win the fight.

But now he decided not to. He noticed that the calf was in no intention to kill. Its glittering pair of innocuous eyes made it even more celestial and spiritualized.

To Chu Feng, the calf did not look like a wild beast. It behaved in a relatively civilized way when confronting an advanced primate like Zhou Quan.

However, the idea of putting his feet up while watching Zhou Quan getting beaten up simply couldn't sit right in this situation. As such, Chu Feng hastily rushed to grab the calf by its horns in an attempt to bring it under control.

"This bastard probably came for that weed fruit in my bag!" Zhou Quan shouted.

The golden calf had well exhibited its immense strength in the fight. Standing on its hind hooves, it latched its fore hooves on Zhou Quan, wrestling him with all its strength. Meanwhile, Zhou Quan seemed to be in a very rough shape. He got up then fell, then he got up and fell again.

Zhou Quan was furious. He wouldn't have been so mad if all he suffered was just been a punch in the face. But right now, this scene had become a bloody wrestling match between him and the calf, and each round only ended with him suffering from an even more overwhelming defeat. As a man with dignity, he could not just accept a shameful loss, so every time he tumbled, he stood back up.

Chu Feng came to help. He exerted himself to grip the calf by its horns, pulling it away from Zhou Quan.

He knew that if the calf went berserk, it could easily pierce a gaping hole in Zhou Quan's body with its penetrating horns. But fortunately, such ill blood did not seem to run in the veins of this golden calf. It had stayed relatively conservative in its attack throughout the wrestling fight.

Even so, Zhou Quan was still in a towering rage. He saw the calf smiling at him with a foolish grin on its face.

"Damn you, you bastard!" Zhou Quan was fuming in rage. "What do you want? Look, you've already pinned me down, and now what, are you going to laugh at me? Huh? Is to win the fight itself not satisfying enough for you? Is it also necessary to humiliate my dignity altogether? Let me tell you, 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned'. I'm no woman myself, but I'm sure as hell going to fight you to death if you keep that stupid smile on your stupid face!"

The calf did not seem to mind Zhou Quan's raging words at all. Instead, it dug its mouth into the Zhou Quan's backpack, searching for that scented red fruit.

This put Zhou Quan into a fit of panic. He did his utmost in trying to push away its head. Although he had always been in doubt about the potential outcome that this fruit might

cause as a result of consumption, he never wanted to give it up without a try. That winged man, no matter how strange one might think he looked, was undeniably an utter superhuman with his own unique power. Being more powerful than others could never be undesirable.

Chu Feng also lent his helping hand. He went for its neck, putting forth his strength in trying to lift its head up. Although he had been against the idea of Zhou Quan consuming the fruit, he certainly wouldn't sit back and watch someone else snatch it from his poor old pal.

The golden calf, on the other hand, was quite obstinate. He just simply could not be stopped.

“Puff!”

That bright red fruit was out of its red skin, spilling rays of red light into the world around it. It immediately filled the atmosphere with a tangy savory smell.

Chu Feng was overcome by surprise when he thought that the calf had swallowed the fruit.

However, when he looked down at Zhou Quan with an apologetic look, he noticed that he was lying on the ground, fiercely coughing. His face had turned all rosy and red; he was using his hand to continuously beat his chest.

At that crucial moment, Zhou Quan was exceptionally valiant. He popped the entire fruit into his mouth. After only a single mastication or two, he swallowed it down without giving it a second thought. He did not even have the time to spit out the seeds of the fruit before he realized that he almost choked himself to death.

The golden calf put down its fore hooves. It was no longer interested in wrestling with Zhou Quan. It stood on its ground, looking all fumed and bristled, since that fruit was such an allurement to it.

Fortunately, it was not a ferocious animal. Despite that everything had turned out to be such a disappointment, the calf chose to stay poised and composed.

“Water! Give me water!” Zhou Quan yelled for help.

Chu Feng pulled him up from the ground, gave him a bottle of water and clapped him on the back. At last, Zhou Quan's breathing returned to normal.

“Come and get it! What? You can't see it anymore? That's right! Because I've eaten it! It's all here! IN MY STOMACH!” Zhou Quan shot the calf a dark and scornful glance. At the same time, he was still fuming in rage. “You little bastard. How dare you wrestle with me? You are such an irritant!”

“Hey, hey, hey! There is no point shouting at a calf. How is the fruit? Tasty? And how do you feel right now?” Chu Feng asked. His eyes were wide with pity and concern.

“The juice was luscious, but I didn’t get to carefully savor the subtlety of its flavor. What a shame!” Zhou Quan remorseful.

“But I do feel that my body is getting a bit cold. I feel as if there is a force rampaging within my body.” Zhou Quan closed his eyes to appreciate the feeling.

At the same time, the golden calf was glaring down at Zhou Quan with a peevish expression on its face. Then, its focus shifted to the glittering green weed in his hand. This should have been just an ordinary weed, but all seemed to have changed since it gave rise to that red fruit. Now, it seemed more vigorous than ever with a very lively breath of life.

“Do you also want to steal this from me?” Zhou Quan glared back at the calf. As he spoke, he pitched the leaves off the stem, forcefully masticating the leaves with his grinding teeth.

“Those were just grasses. It’s quite inedible actually. Just calm down, man. There is no need for you to bring up a sense of rivalry between you two in every possible way,” Chu Feng reminded him.

“Pooh! Pooh! It’s so bitter, so unpalatable!” Zhou Quan felt like that intense wrestling battle had given him a head trauma, otherwise, why would he commit to such a stupid idea. He would have never eaten grasses without any cause or reason.

Across the way, the golden calf was still glaring down at him with a peevish expression. White fumes effused from both of its nose and its ears. Clearly, Zhou Quan’s childlike demeanors had set the calf on edge.

“Right! Stay there! Don’t you charge at me! Will you be happy if I willingly give this to you?” Zhou Quan had a guilty conscience. He handed over that glittering green weed to the calf.

“Munch!”

The golden calf swallowed half of the weed in one gulp, almost getting a bite on Zhou Quan’s hand. Zhou Quan was taken aback; he loosened his grip on the grass in a hurry. Then, he hastily retreated.

“You’ve eaten that grass, so stop glaring at me. And also, stop rising those white fumes from your nose and your ears. What are you angry for? I’m the one whose limbs were almost out of joint because of you.”

The golden calf regained its peace.

“Do you understand what we are saying?” Chu Feng wanted to communicate with it. He wanted to know more about the changes that had been brought to the Taihang Mountains. This calf came out from within the mountains, so naturally, it would know most of the truth.

The golden calf did not nod or shake its head. On the contrary, it started measuring him with its eyes.

“It doesn’t understand you. You need to be like me.” Zhou Quan pulled up a grip of grasses and slowly approached the calf with a smile that made him look like someone who was up to no good. “Hey, little one. Come, eat. Let’s build up some intimacy between us, can’t we? I can feed you all day long with these fresh grasses, so someday in the future, you let me ride you. How about that?”

The calf raised its head, casting a sidelong glance at him. The look on its face really made Zhou Quan start to question his life and his existence.

It was a condescending look full of despise and disdain.

“Can you see it?” Zhou Quan asked Chu Feng. “Why do I somehow have this funny feeling that this son of a bxtch is despising me? Why does it look at me in a way that makes me feel like a bloody idiot?”

“Yes, indeed.” Chu Feng nodded.

“Did I just get contemned by a goddam cow?” Zhou Quan burst into a furious rage.

He then pointed at the calf and said, “You have already eaten my grass, didn’t you. So from now on, you are obliged to be my ride. Do you hear me?”

“Whoosh!”

Before Zhou Quan could even react, the golden calf had already emerged behind Zhou Quan’s back. Then, it stood straight up and leaned its fore hooves on his shoulders. In the end, it even twined its chubby legs around Zhou Quan’s neck.

“What the...” Zhou Quan was ablaze in furious rage. “What’re you doing? I wanted you to be my ride, but what are you doing now?” Zhou Quan was burning in a frenzy of rage.

“It seems like it wants you to be its ride.” Chu Feng laughed.

Zhou Quan wondered for a moment, then he realized that this was indeed the case.

Especially as he turned around, he saw the calf grinning foolishly right at him. It even went so far as to nod its head to express its agreement with Chu Feng’s suggestion. In

the eyes of Zhou Quan, the look on the calf's face could not be more abominable and loathsome.

"Get off me!"

The forest buzzed with noise for quite a while.

A quarter of an hour later, Zhou Quan was now running at the front, puffing and panting, while being chased by a little golden calf pursuing after him. At times, it even stood up and started running on its two hind hooves. It leaned its fore hooves on Zhou Quan's shoulder, wishing that he could perhaps carry it on his back.

"Help! Help me!"

Zhou Quan had been completely flattened. Having struggled for so long in a failed attempt to domesticate the calf, he finally realized that he was no match with the calf's strength and ability. Far from being domesticated, the calf had instead domesticated Zhou Quan, turning him into its personal ride.

"I don't know where you come from, but I know that this ever changing world of ours seems infinitely seductive to you," Chu Feng said.

Suddenly, the golden calf halted its pursuit. It turned to look at Chu Feng.

"Even as you all know that entering our world could potentially mean death, but judging by the ruthless behaviors of all those beasts and birds who had given up their lives in trying to enter our world, I can tell how powerful of a seduction our world is to you," Chu Feng continued.

He had successfully drawn the calf's attention, making it return to a state of calm and composure.

Chu Feng was all sweaty and wet. He heavily sat down on the ground beside Zhou Quan.

"I can't believe that I've been bullied by a cow. How shameful!" Zhou Quan cursed under his breath. He kept his voice low since he dared not to instigate any more commotions.

At the same time, he was also drawn to Chu Feng's words.

"After our world had mutated in many peculiar ways, even a weed at a roadside could give rise to a strange fruit. There was even people hovering high above us in the sky after consuming one of those peculiar fruits. I bet that there are fruits with more potent and more drastic effects, and I think this is the reason you come here," Chu Feng said.

They then went on making conjectures, "I guess this is only the first stage and also the most intense stage. There is an equal opportunity for anyone to acquire ability and become... the king? And this is why you came."

"King" was a euphemism Chu Feng chose to use. He knew that this was a term that the golden calf should understand.

The golden calf had become quieter and quieter.

"So, tell me, where are you actually from?" Chu Feng whispered.

Chapter 14: The Demon Ox

The golden calf displayed a certain reticence. It did not moo, nor did it nod or shake its head. It attentively looked at Chu Feng with a thoughtful look on its face.

"I feel like we'd better back off. Your pushy persistence will probably make it furious instead of giving you the answer you wanted. I do reckon this calf is way too odd and eerie for anyone's good," Zhou Quan said. He was speaking from the standpoint of a fearful man who had just undergone profound suffering, both mentally and physically, of a trauma that was caused by the calf.

"Pollen. Catalytic agent," murmured Chu Feng.

These words were vaguely heard from the mouth of the Lin Family when they came to pick up Lin Naoi from her graduation ceremony.

As he spelt out these words, the golden calf's eyes glowed with a sense of agreement. It nodded to him as a form of response.

It could understand Chu Feng's words, and specifically, those particular words had touched its nerve.

Chu Feng was in a bit of a trance. He thought that perhaps the so-called strange fruit might not be the most important aspect of everything; instead, the pollen on some of the strange flowers might perhaps be the key to certain things. He yielded such a conclusion.

Even so, as Chu Feng wanted to probe deeper for more additional information, the calf returned to its usual reticence. No responses, no signs of agreement or disagreement.

"I have once seen a bronze mountain on the Tibetan Plateau. There, on the peak of it, was a strange plant. Its blossom had an unmatched fragrance even when smelt from far away. Its scent gave people a pleasant high, making those who had breathed it in

feel light as a feather,” Chu Feng said. He wanted to see how the calf might react to his words.

Zhou Quan was in a bit of a trance, too. He was quietly sitting beside the calf, meticulously picking up every word from Chu Feng’s mouth.

Just as Chu Feng had anticipated, his story about the flower and the scent raised the calf into an excited state. It inclined forward towards Chu Feng, ardently nodding its head to urge Chu Feng to keep going.

Chu Feng was bewildered. “Is that flower that important,” he thought. He had touched it once before, but apart from a strange stream of warmth flowing in his veins throughout his body, nothing significant happened.

But judging by the calf’s enthusiasm, its desire for the blossoms was clearly far more passionate than for that fruit of Zhou Quan’s.

“There, I also saw a golden vulture, a mastiff, and a black yak” Chu Feng spoke as he carefully observed the calf’s facial expression.

The face of this golden calf was as expressive as a human being. It had a grin on its face, a grin that encompassed both astonishment and anxiety. Evidently, Chu Feng’s story seemed to mean a lot to it, and the calf was obviously eager to know how the story would end.

“In our world, neither yaks nor mastiffs could be counted as top primates, because they possessed no intelligence. But those that emerged at the bronze mountains were obviously in a league of their own. They seemed even more intelligent than humans.”

Chu Feng paid close attention to its reaction as he spoke in order to deduce what this calf knew and what it didn’t.

A solemn look soon emerged on the calf’s face as Chu Feng mentioned the appearance of those otherworldly creature he saw in the Kunlun Mountains.

“Their intelligence surfaced before the world had even started to change. Even as the world was still the way it was, these beasts had already become invincible and unmatchable. So I assume that as the world gradually mutates into a completely different one, these creatures will perhaps become more sanctified, more holy in our world. They may even become sages.”

The golden calf seemed enthralled. It involuntarily nodded its head. Obviously, it was an unconscious expression of agreement with Chu Feng’s assumption.

The calf stood riveted to the ground. It took it a while to collect itself, then it returned to its usual poise and composure. It showed no more of its emotional undulation and revealed no more of its thoughts through facial expression.

However, Chu Feng had clearly seen the calf's reaction, and that proved some of his initial conjectures.

"I think that after our world completes its cycle of change, is there going to be, perhaps, a preliminary stage right before the new world order establishes? And in this preliminary stage, is it easier for... sages to appear?" Chu Feng carefully worded to describe those he deemed as the unknowns.

The pupils of the golden calf drastically constricted. Clearly, these words had touched its heart.

"You guys risk your lives to come here, one after another. This can well mean that the so-called preliminary stage is way more significant than I thought. Are you all seeking ways to become sages?" Chu Feng said.

At first, Zhou Quan was astounded, then he could not help but begin to admire the exceptional deductive skills that Chu Feng possessed. He marvelled at his ability to draw the outline of a future world solely based on careful observations on details of events happening around him.

Now, even Zhou Quan started to get ahold of the trend of things. He also began to make all sorts of conjectures along Chu Feng's line of thoughts.

The way the golden calf looked at Chu Feng seemed a bit more intimate. A sense of respect was written all over its face.

It was already past midnight. The mountains were quiet and serene. There had been quite some distance between them and the mountains' outer boundary, so they felt no longer enshrouded in the grim and ghastly atmosphere brought by the beasts and birds of prey.

Moonlight flowed like streams of water in the mountains amongst the woods.

"Is the tree that you found at the bronze mountain summit really that mystical?" Zhou Quan asked, "if all the three beasts managed to get ahold of it, why didn't you manage to bring back something with you?"

"I did manage to catch four petals with my hand," Chu Feng replied.

"Did you actually?" It was only a casually asked question, and Zhou Quan did not expect Chu Feng to give such an answer. To him, it was already a miracle that Chu

Feng had managed to leave the place alive in the presence of a mastiff and a golden vulture.

At the same time, the golden calf seemed very excited. It charged straight at Chu Feng, then it gently rubbed its head against Chu Feng's palm. Its eyes were wide opened, in search for something.

"Sorry, buddy. It's been too many days now. The petals were already gone," Chu Feng said with an apologetic smile.

However, the golden calf still seemed unwilling to leave. It circled around Chu Feng with a rather strange look in its eyes. In the end, it even stood up on its hind hooves, reaching out one of its fore hooves and pointing it at Chu Feng. It had a complicated look on its face that could be both read as excitement and regret.

"What on earth do you actually know? Hurry up and tell us!" Zhou Quan glared at the calf.

"Moo!" the calf responded with a single lowing.

Zhou Quan was so bitter that he wanted to cuff the calf on the side of its head, but he dared not to.

Zhou Quan and Chu Feng walked in front and the golden calf followed. It did not leave, and it seemed quite likely that it wanted to follow them all the way down.

They were walking in the direction of that town called Shunping. Zhou Quan's family lived in the village. They would have gotten there hours ago, had they not lingered around at the mountains' boundary.

"Hey little cow, do you have a name? Since you have decided to loyally follow us, we better call you something other than just baby cow," Zhou Quan said.

Just like that, Zhou Quan, all of a sudden, became an enthusiastic delegate for naming the calf.

"Seeing how little you are and how much of a bastard you've proven to be, and plus the fact you are from another world... I think the name, Demon Ox, may perhaps be the best and most fitting name for you. It encompasses both power and prestige." Zhou Quan exerted himself to try to convince the calf to accept his suggestion.

"Pong!"

Just as everyone would have expected, nothing could ever turn out well between Zhou Quan and the calf. Zhou Quan's benevolent effort to name it did not receive the treat he might deserve, but instead he got kicked right in the head.

“Damn you! You Demon Ox!” It took Zhou Quan a long while before he struggled to get up.

At last, they entered the little town. It was already late at night. The streets were all dark and quiet. Only occasionally, a cat or two made a hurried scurry across the street.

Chu Feng bid his farewell to Zhou Quan. He still needed to walk for another ten li before he could arrive home.

Zhou Quan tried his best to keep Chu Feng in his company for the night. He didn't want him to leave until dawn broke through.

Chu Feng shook his head. He was a bit concerned that overnight, a ten-li journey might suddenly increase to an arduous trek of a hundred li. Nowadays, everything had become ever so unpredictable.

“Take care, brother. Wait 'till I settle down, and I will come for you in just a day or two,” Zhou Quan said.

Zhou Quan knew that in the near future, the whole world would become completely different. Whether the changes were to be for better or worse, Chu Feng was undoubtedly a valuable friend to know and to keep.

But he then became all fumed in rage again as he saw the golden calf chose to keep its company with Chu Feng without even giving it a second thought. Its obliviousness to his existence fired him with fury.

“What an ungrateful bastard! You ate my grasses, but then I even gave you a name. Now as we part ways, aren't you even gonna say a word?” Zhou Quan gritted his teeth in anger.

Having heard his raging words, the calf turned around and faced Zhou Quan with its bottom. It rocked its tail in profound pride, then it wiggled it right in Zhou Quan's face.

Zhou was struck dumb with astonishment. He had never seen a bull rocking its tail, so this was clearly its way to show its contempt for him.

“Piss off! You bastard!” Zhou Quan said sulkily.

He wanted to find a car for Chu Feng, but his proposal was rejected. Since the calf's golden body stood out like a sore thumb, it became Chu Feng's arduous task to keep both of them a low profile in most places.

Right now, Zhou Quan wanted nothing but sleep. He felt like his body was being secretly transformed in a sort of way that made him drowsy ever since he had eaten that fruit.

“I will see you later then!”

It was already late at night, but darkness seemed to have failed to take over. A bright full moon lit up the night with its glittering silver light.

Under the gleaming moonlight, the golden calf glittered with a profound shine.

On their way, Chu Feng became curious. He tried to stroke and fondle the skin of the calf. He realized that it was indeed furs that were soft and smooth like silk. It was not metal, but the calf's horns were cold and firm.

Qingyang Town was his destination.

Chu Feng was born here. He lived in the town with his parents until the age of ten when his family decided to move into that metropolis two hundred li out in the north.

Shuntian was the name of the metropolis. It was the capital of six dynasties, and it was the largest city in the north.

However, in recent years, he and his family still frequently paid homeward visits together every year during holidays. They always felt that this was the only place they could call home.

Although it was late, Chu Feng still could not resist the urge to turn on his communicator to make contact with his parents. Soon, the call was picked up.

They had already made contact during the day. From the call, Chu Feng learnt that they were still in the city of Shuntian.

Now, since he had already witnessed the great changes that had befallen in the Taihang Mountains, he warned them about the latent danger incubating in this area. It would be disastrous if, by chance, some of the beasts also managed to come out of the mountains and wrought havoc in the local villages. Thus, he hoped that they might consider to delay their return for a few more days.

To Chu Feng, Shuntian was a metropolis after all, and that meant higher level of protection and better security.

Their call lasted for a long while, and at last, he finally persuaded his parents to wait at the metropolis.

The night was quiet, and he finally got home.

It was a two-storey situated in the east of the town. It had a reasonably sized yard that was directly connected to a large area of orchid farms. Standing in the yard, one could look into the distance and revel in the breathtaking view of the Taihang Mountains.

This was one of the reasons that his family liked to pay their frequent homeward visits here.

It was already late at night. It brought the calf into the yard, and then he just left it there. He was all weary and stale.

He climbed up the stairs to his room, then soon, he fell asleep.

Morning sunshine flooded in through the open curtains. The sun rose with a lively and vigorous morning glow.

The first thing in the morning for Chu Feng was always to turn on his communicator. He wanted to check if there were any sensational breaking news. Mutations took places nationwide, so naturally, there would be all kinds of reports on strange occurrences flooding in daily.

“The king of the gods?” He was astounded as he saw this piece of news on the internet. Only in two days, three cases of human mutation.

Moreover, it had also been certified that all three possessed rather terrifying supernatural abilities. Someone simply called them “the king of the gods”.

One of the articles had conducted all sorts of analysis on the matter. It said if things were let to go on like this, more people would naturally acquire supernatural abilities. Together, they would perhaps unlock a new era for humanity.

And those who acquired their abilities before the others would be highly likely to become the leaders of a new world order. It had even been prospected that one day, some would be addressed respectfully as the kings of the gods.

The young man who acquired his ability to fly, for instance, would perhaps possess infinite power in the near future.

Chu Feng put down his communicator and went downstairs to the yard.

But he was immediately stunned. He saw the golden calf taking a morning bath under the resplendent morning glow. Its posture in the bathtub was ever so eerie.

It was sitting cross-legged in the tub like a human being. It naturally extended its fore hooves out of the tub, lazing in the warmth of the water. The calf faced the rising sun, breathing in and out the lights of the rosy dawn.

This was a bizarre scene to behold. It was a calf, but it somehow had the set of demeanors of a human being. It sat there, cross-legged, rhythmically breathing in and out.

Chu Feng sensed that the way it breathed in and out had a rather bizarre rhythmic pattern.

He was curious, so he stared at it for a long while. Then, he followed the rhythm and tried to breath in the same way.

Chapter 15: The Mystical Breathing Exercise

The breathing was kept in a rather strange rhythm. At times, it was loud and jarring, at some other times, it became faint and feeble. Its tempo unpredictably varied. Overall, it had a rather complex system.

Chu Feng was a man of exceptional sagacity, but initially, he still struggled with keeping up with the pace. At times, the irregular breathing rhythm gave him feelings of drowning, leading him to a prolonged episode of acute coughing.

The golden calf opened its eyes and saw Chu Feng's ineptitude in handling the breathing pattern. A grin emerged on its face. The calf was making a mockery of him.

"What're you laughing at?" Chu Feng glared at it. He finally had a first-hand experience the exact feeling of Zhou Quan. Mocked by a calf, he was tempted to clobber it.

The morning glow was glittering with a blinding shine. It had an exuberant vital essence. The golden calf sat in its tub, in a balanced, cross-legged position. In and out, it breathed the mystical elements that flowed in the air, gathering the essence of the sun and the moon.

As the calf exhaled and inhaled in this peculiar fashion, its body became increasingly gleaming and lustrous. Its body seemed as if it had been casted with pure gold that had become more and more extraordinary.

"Moo!"

Along with a growling sound, a fume of white mist vaporized into the air from its nostrils. Then, accompanied by an explosive sound, the white mist blasted in mid-air. It sounded like a deafening thunderclap, both terrifying and startling.

This sudden outburst gave Chu Feng a start. If that sphere of white mist had been projected onto a man, he thought, he or she would have been blasted miles away upon impact. As to whether the body would be blasted into a mess of flesh and blood, it was anyone's guess.

"You're good, baby cow!"

Chu Feng was astounded. This was only an exhale of a calf, yet it had already proven to be deadly.

“Can you teach me your breathing pattern?” He was passionate and expectant. “The breathing exercises you just did seemed have led up to this fatal blast of air. Am I right?”

The golden calf was heaved with joy. It raised its head in a sense of profound confidence and pride.

Since he had witnessed the extreme pride that the calf had taken in his breathing exercises, Chu Feng’s instinct told him that this breathing exercises must be something terrific and something highly extraordinary.

“Are there any back stories to this breathing exercises?” Chu Feng asked. He knew that for a calf this small, it was almost impossible for it to come up with a whole set of breathing exercise.

The golden calf suddenly seemed rather nervous. It looked vigilant and alerted all of a sudden.

Was this going to be more mystical than he thought? Seeing how nervous it had become all of a sudden, Chu Feng was surprised.

“Can you teach me your way?” He asked with a pious look.

He always had an underlying apprehension that one day, when hell broke loose, he could possess some sort of power for self-defence. He did not want to be helpless.

It was evident that human was the only species left on earth that was yet to evolve in this episode of chaotic changes. Even vines had grown into a lawless monstrosity that could pull off a satellite from space.

In days to come, the world would be filled of an all-pervading sense of gloom and danger.

And this was only the tip of an iceberg.

Therefore, Chu Feng had a sense of emergency. He wanted protection and security. He wanted to live in this ever-changing world. This golden calf was a magical creature, and this gave Chu Feng hope.

The golden calf was a bit irresolute. It continued to sit there in a cross-legged position with a pondering look.

“You know that I can bring you to that strange little bush I saw on the bronze mountain one day,” Chu Feng said with a smile as he attempted to allure it into agreement. “But the premise is that I have the power to ensure my life in this world of chaos,” Chu Feng added.

“Moo!”

The golden calf seemed to have made up its mind almost in an instant. It sounded a growl, then it solemnly nodded its head.

Chu Feng was delighted. He did not expect that the calf could agree with him so promptly.

He had been worried that the calf might perhaps obstinately persist on some stubborn tempers that would result in him being completely ignored by the calf.

The golden calf pointed towards the sun with one of its fore hooves, then it beckoned Chu Feng with the other hoof, signing him to also face east. Together, under the glittering morning glow, they resumed that strange breathing rhythm once again.

Chu Feng was a fast-learner. This time, it wasn't a disappointing exception either. He mimicked the breathing pattern of the calf. He breathed in and breathed out in a passable imitation of the calf. The breathing was loud and jarring at times, then it diminished to something weak and feeble. Again and again, it formed a seemingly harmonious cycle.

However, it was nothing substantially harmonious for Chu Feng. He almost choked himself for a few times with a stuffy feeling in his chest. After a while, he felt dizzy and had a headache.

This was clearly an abnormal occurrence, since his laborious struggle had been dramatically juxtaposed by the calf's ease and relief.

The calf's eyes were closed, displaying a great sense of relaxation and leisure. There was even a scent of pleasurable fragrance emanating from its body.

Chu Feng stopped because he realized a serious question. This breathing pattern might be something otherworldly and something extraordinary, however, it might not be suitable for all human beings. Forcible application might end with serious or even deadly outcomes.

The golden calf sensed the eeriness in the air. It opened its eyes with a dubious look. It seemed as if the calf was questioning why Chu Feng had ceased his action.

Chu Feng was straightforward. “I'm a bit worried. I'm not sure if this practice is a suitable for us humans.”

To his surprise, the golden calf nodded before giving it a second thought. It was a very definite affirmation.

Chu Feng wanted reassurance, so he asked, "Are you sure it's going to be alright? What system does this breathing pattern belong to? How is it applicable to every species?"

The golden calf was surrounded in a haughty atmosphere. The calf raised its head and had a grin on its face like a Cheshire Cat. Its posture was evident of its great pride and conceit. It behaved as if it had possessed the greatest magic and power in the world.

The golden calf sat in the tub with one of its hooves pointing above and the other pointing down. "Moo, moo, moo..."

"Ok, ok. I know. 'You alone are honored in Heaven and Earth'," Chu Feng hastily said.

He sat down and gave the breathing exercises another try. He managed to match his breathing pattern exactly with that of the golden calf, but the effect was still minimal. He felt nothing queer or marvellous.

Chu Feng adhered to the exercise unremittingly, refusing to give up.

Although the system followed a strange and complex rhythmic pattern, he still managed to memorize the whole set of this exercise. He had done nothing amiss, but effects were yet to appear.

Nothing seemed to have taken effect, yet nothing seemed to go awry either. Until suddenly, another rumbling sound of thunder shattered this seemingly perpetual silence. That golden calf made a deafening bellow that carried some sort of strange forces and strengths.

At this very moment, everything started echoing in unison.

A lightly scented fragrance suffused the atmosphere. A sphere of white mist enveloped the entire place while the rumbling thunder still sounded.

Chu Feng heard continual ringing in his ears, then he felt his body, his mind and his spirit all resonated with the vibration in the air. He could hardly hear anything but a faint hissing sound.

The hissing sound gradually crescendo, then he realized it was following the exact breathing rhythm of the golden calf.

The pattern perfectly synchronized with the pace of the calf's breathing rhythm.

He could even hear the sound of the calf's flowing blood. Its sound acoustically resonated with its breathing pattern. He realized that only as the two sounds functioned together in harmony could any extraordinary effects be given rise to.

Bellow, thunder and mist appeared all at once. Chu Feng could feel a sense of godly essence coming into his body.

Chu Feng opened his eyes. The mist had dissipated, then all went into the body of the calf. He nodded at the calf as a form of gratitude.

Chu Feng now understood. Until just then, he was only practicing the superficial "form" of this very breathing pattern as he tried to imitate the action of the calf. It was only now that he started to take in the essential "spirit" of this breathing system.

The "spirit" of a breathing system had been passed to him by the golden calf through a very special means. This "spirit" deserved to be called as an esotericism, since in practice, form without spirit was worth nothing.

He started to keep his mind on resuming the practice of this breathing pattern, and now, after he had taken in the "spirit", everything started to feel different. The effects were immediate. Bathing in the rising sun, he felt both vigorous and spirited.

He had been experiencing an unprecedented feeling of relaxation and comfort on this particular morning. Every single one of his pores felt loosened and relaxed. He felt a stream of warmth surging within his body.

Chu Feng kept his body unmoved, fully immersing himself in the breathing pattern. The golden morning glow scattered on his body, casting a layer of faint golden luster on his face.

The golden calf was wide-mouthed and surprised. It gazed at Chu Feng for quite a while until Chu Feng finally opened his eyes again.

The sun had risen high and above. Chu Feng felt that his body was full of strength and vigor. Although he had only slept for less than three hours last night, he still had an unspeakable feeling of leisure and relief.

"How magical!" Chu Feng exclaimed in admiration.

It was a sense of comfort and contentment that he had never felt before. His body was permeated with a glittering luster. His vigor was abundant and plentiful. He felt his body and his core had become a grand reservoir to provide himself an endless source of strength and energy.

He wanted to continue, since to him, these exercises felt like heaven.

However, the golden calf stopped him, hinting that no more was needed for today.

“Only this much for a day?” Chu Feng seemed surprised.

The golden calf nodded.

This, to Chu Feng, came as a surprise.

Chu Feng then went inside the house and did a thorough cleaning and dusting of the room that had been vacant for years. His housekeeping was then followed by him going out for shopping.

To his surprise, the shopping center was quite empty. He had to walk some extra miles before he could finally gather some necessities that could last for at least a few days.

Clearly, all the recent reports on all kinds of strange occurrences had made everyone quite jittery. People had rushed to collect and stock up on the necessities needed in case of an apocalypse.

“Zhou Quan was right. I reckon we should give you a name. Otherwise, I don’t know what to call you.” Chu Feng had been considering to ask the calf for its original name, but the calf only replied with a few bellows. Those, to Chu Feng who clearly could not speak the words of the bovine language, meant nothing.

“Demon Ox could be a good name,” He advised.

But his suggestion was soon welcomed by the golden calf with a disdainful look, partly because it always thought that Zhou Quan was an overwhelmingly idiotic person, and as such, the calf could not care less about the name suggested by him.

In the end, Chu Feng had to invent a few more arbitrary names for suggestions, but amongst them, the calf seemed rather delighted when hearing the name, “Yellow Ox”.

Chu Feng was astounded. There were still some other creative names on top of Chu Feng’s mind, but none of them seemed to be able to shake the calf out of its fond with the name, “Yellow Ox”.

Chu Feng had a rather strange look. He wondered how Zhou Quan would react to this name when they meet next time. Zhou Quan had exerted himself in finding the name, “Demon Ox”, but who would have thought that this calf would rather be plainly called as “Yellow Ox”, a bleak and barren name that could even seduce yawning from the most boring person in the world.

“How about we think of another one?” Chu Feng suggested.

“MOOOOO!” The Ox glared with a look that suggested its discontent.

Its body was shining with a golden luster. This was its treasure as well as its pride. "Are there any more facts that the calf wishes to hid?" Chu Feng conjectured. For instance, gold might have flowed in its internal vessel in which the blood and qi circulated, and this made it especially fond of the name that encompassed the word, "Yellow". "Can this possibly be the case?" Chu Feng questioned.

It was noon. Chu Feng prepared some fresh straw for Yellow Ox along with some pears and apples. He also fed himself with some simple dishes.

Then, he carefully withdrew a stone box from his bag. The box was the same three-inch cube that he had found at the foot of Kunlun. It was still simple and unsophisticated.

The yellow ox showed an unusual look in its eyes when it saw the stone box. It quietly crept up to Chu Feng.

"Don't! This is not something you want to eat!" Chu Feng warned it.

Yellow Ox stared at those seeds in the box. One of them was black as a charcoal, the other was flattened, and the last one looked all shrivelled and pathetic. Having seen the state of those seeds, Yellow Ox instantly put on a disdainful look on its face.

"Don't scorn them." Chu Feng was purposefully trying to sound mystical. "These are not some ordinary seeds."

He knew that the more he talked in this way, the less Yellow Ox would be interested in the seeds themselves. Otherwise, there was of every likelihood that Yellow Ox would just come over, gulp and swallow all three seeds down its throat. In that case, no one would be able to prevent the inevitable death of these seeds.

"Moo!"

Yellow Ox shook its head as it scornfully laughed at Chu Feng.

Chu Feng dug a hole in the yard, then he said, "Ok, let me tell you. I want this first seed to become Hsi Wang Mu, the second to be the Fairy of the Ninth Heaven, and the third... hmm... leave me for now to think about it."