

The Sacred Ruins

Chapter 2: Post-Civilization Era

The badly startled livestock almost broke out of their fences; the usually ferocious Tibetan mastiffs were all whimpering restlessly on the ground. The shepherds were shouting and trying to keep the animals in check.

The women were busy comforting the crying children.

Some of the shepherds were praying with great piety. Later on, they even prostrated themselves towards the great mountain and kowtowed with great solemnity.

The shepherds weren't alarmed by Chu Feng's arrival since strangers frequently passed by and would sometimes ask to stay the night in one of their tents.

The commotion receded only after quite a while.

After washing himself with warm water, Chu Feng sat drinking the strong butter tea and felt all his tiredness slowly disappear. He then gifted all the sweets on him to the numerous children of the settlement.

The faces of these bashful children were all rosy as was normal for the Highlanders, their smiles simple and honest. These happy and content children dispersed swiftly after the distribution of sweets.

Chu Feng was curious as to what had happened in the mountains recently. Did those eerie blue spider lilies also grow here?

The elderly shepherd in the tent was already completely white-haired and his face was lined with numerous deep wrinkles. He was obviously concerned about something as he gazed toward the distant mountain range.

Very soon, Chu Feng found out that the blue mist had indeed appeared here and enshrouded this mountainous region. The startled livestock had become restless and almost escaped.

But there were no sightings of the blue flowers, and the mist was apparently much thinner here.

"Why were you prostrating toward the mountains?" Chu Feng asked.

“That is the direction of the sacred mountain,” the old shepherd replied.

The Kunlun Mountain Range had always been home to divine peaks and was also known as the sacred mountain. It had been recorded in various classic literature from the <Mountain and River Classic> to the <Huai Nanzi> and the <Records of the Great Historian>.

Previously, the area around the settlement was only covered by a thin layer of blue mist but some people witnessed dense clouds of blue mist in the direction of Mount Kunlun.

Apparently, the mist there was surging out torrentially and glowing with a translucent radiance. It became increasingly intense until, later on, they were like blue beams of light shining vigorously through the cloudy haze.

It was as if a dazzling blue sun was floating within the dense mist. Even from a great distance, its rays were akin to bolts of blinding lightning.

The view was incomparably mysterious, the resplendent blue dancing constantly in the distance.

As such, with no further thoughts, some old shepherds prostrated themselves piously in prayer.

Evidently, the strange phenomenon here was astonishing—the blue mist refused to disperse and was likely even more vigorous than in the great desert.

“Just what gave rise to these unusual phenomena?” Chu Feng pondered.

He considered the possibility of a mountain earthquake.

In the past, similarly mysterious cases had happened before; that valley suffered unusually frequent lightning strikes targeting living beings therein.

An earthquake in the mountains induced magnetic field abnormalities which affected the electric charges in the clouds. This induced the lightning strikes and colorful auroras, making that place an extraordinary lightning field.

Chu Feng wasn't superstitious. Rather, he believed that everything that had happened was a type of natural phenomenon.

But the old shepherd wouldn't believe him no matter how he tried to explain. He became quite mad at Chu Feng's blasphemy and almost drove him off right then.

There were indeed some parts which were quite difficult to explain reasonably. Even Chu Feng himself couldn't quite understand, for example, how the charming blue flowers came to bloom in the desert.

He sighed softly. There were many baffling things in this “post-civilization era”. People were trying their best to explain things conventionally, but the world was seemingly becoming harder and harder to comprehend.

In the distant past, war had destroyed the greater half the planet and nearly turned Earth into a wasteland. Although the earth’s vitality had been mostly restored after the long period of recovery, it was quite difficult to rebuild civilization to its former brilliance.

Countless enigmatic events had happened during this lengthy post-civilization era, but despite their widespread effects, most remained a mystery.

Dawn. The red sun had leaped up from over the horizon and the morning rays were creeping resplendently over the distant hills. The radiance spilled over the grasslands and onto the tent, painting scene of surging vigor.

Chu Feng bade his farewells to his hosts and, once again, set out on his journey.

He traveled due west toward the highlands.

Along the way, he discovered that the area affected by the blue mist was rather large and covered at least the whole scope of his journey.

“Could it be a mysterious phenomenon?” he murmured.

The few times such events had taken place in the past always resulted in great commotions with no definite answers found to date.

The Tibetan sky was especially blue, adorned by the purest white clouds floating so close to the ground that one could seemingly reach out to touch them. The desert, mountains, and pastures were all tranquil like a sacred land standing aloof from worldly affairs.

Chu Feng heard numerous rumors along the way.

Some shepherds claimed that the Sacred Mountain had revived and was thus flowing with blue radiance amidst the encompassing mist.

Some claimed that the Vajrapani Bodhi Tree was growing and would soon bear fruit.

“The true mastiff is about to come into being!” some exclaimed.

To the locals, their domesticated canines weren’t true mastiffs. True mastiffs that lived in the wild were said to be able to contend with tigers and lions. There was a certain legend describing a true mastiff which would appear once in hundreds of years. It was extremely powerful, and it could even subdue demons.

Days later, Chu Feng arrived in the vicinity of the sacred mountain.

He found out that all the regions along the way were affected by the blue mist. It was highly likely that another of those historical mysterious phenomena had appeared.

At the same time, this signified that most likely no one will be able to explain the reason behind it.

Perhaps most people wouldn't even know of its consequences.

The Tibetan autumn was usually chilly, but Chu Feng felt an odd sense of warmth along the way.

The ground should've been covered by withered yellow leaves, but it was not—it seemed as if the remaining leaves on the trees had recovered their vitality, preventing them from withering and falling off.

This was especially true for the regions closer to Kunlun. The trees, grass, and shrubs along the way were all sparkling with vitality under the warm weather.

The late autumn was devoid of its characteristic bleakness.

“The weather has become warm. Could it be caused by the recent changes?” Chu Feng mused.

Finally, he arrived before Mount Kunlun.

He felt a sense of suppression even from a distance.

The lofty and towering mountain range was stretched continuously in a majestic and imposing manner as if it was the spine of heaven and earth.

The strength and vigor of this great ancient mountain knew no parity and was shrouded in countless myths and legends.

Chu Feng originally had planned to embark on his return journey after reaching Tibet. But after hearing the countless odd incidents related to Mount Kunlun along the way, he increasingly became curious that he wanted to approach the mountain for a look.

“It should be here.”

Chu Feng arrived at this destination and stood at the base of the mountain. The tremendous mountain was like a giant divine city sitting upon the western land—its boundless vigor was especially eye-catching.

This was just a small section of Mount Kunlun. A few days ago, many people living in the vicinity witnessed this whole area surging with blue lights, but few people dared to truly venture closer these days.

Chu Feng entered the mountain and began to climb.

The mountain was tall and precipitous with gigantic rocks strewn across its difficult trails. Plants and trees were growing verdantly along the way a scene out of the ordinary for this late autumn season.

“Could there have been an earthquake recently?” Chu Feng observed.

Large cracks could be seen on its surface along with large rocks and broken cliffs which had fallen from above.

Even this colossal mountain was affected by the unusual phenomena.

“What’s this?”

Chu Feng saw a gigantic rock with words carved deeply upon it but most of it was hidden underneath the rocks.

Small portions of the mountain had collapsed and slid down after the earthquake, revealing this rock from deep below the ground.

The large rock was covered with a layer of green which looked like dried moss.

“West... Queen!”

Chu Feng rubbed the dirt off the words and recognized the two words inscribed in bronze. They were ancient characters often carved on cauldrons during the distant era.

Normal people would have a hard time recognizing them.

Chu Feng was momentarily lost in thought, why these two words?

Seeing the two words “Queen” and “Mother” reminded him of the ancient Queen Mother of the West. Could it be that she really existed?

“Perhaps the ancients came here and left this for remembrance?” Chu Feng shook his head and thought.

“That’s not right either!”

He was suddenly startled because the “dried moss” wasn’t what it seemed.

“Copper Patina!” This finding shook his heart.

It was likely that this tablet had been buried deep within the ground through the millennia and only saw the light of day after this great earthquake. It shouldn't have any moss on it at all.

It was made of copper!

But such a huge block of copper was a rare sight indeed.

“Even the Simu Cauldron excavated from within the ruins of Yinshang City was only a mere 1000 kilograms in weight. Even so, it is known as the largest copper item to date. As for this tablet...”

Chu Feng removed some of the rocks and earth covering the tablet and conservatively estimated it to be at least 3000 kilograms in weight—what a shocking number! This was definitely a rare treasure during ancient times.

It was covered by green patina and obviously an antique buried for countless ages.

Chu Feng thought it was a stone tablet erected here as a memorial, but now, he was not so sure after discovering that it was made of copper.

Who, during the ancient times, would expend such a large amount of resources just for a memorial?

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“Dong!”

The clear sound of bronze was tainted by the vicissitudes of time.

Chu Feng put down the rock in his hand, certain that the tablet was indeed made of bronze. He could hardly believe that an ancient bronze antique, thousands of kilograms in weight, existed here. This was no small matter.

A great commotion could be expected if news of this was spread.

Two words “Queen” and “West” were visible on the surface. The aged words were simple and unadorned but also somewhat mystical, easily drawing one's attention. The era from which it originated remained a mystery, however.

“Who could've buried it deep within Mount Kunlun?”

Chu Feng knocked on the bronze tablet, eliciting continuous metallic vibrations. Unfortunately, he was no archaeologist and he had no idea how to appraise it.

“Perhaps a magnificent bronze civilization existed here many eons ago,” he mused.

He was never quite believed in superstitions despite the many legends surrounding Mount Kunlun. Even after seeing the words queen and west, he still quite skeptical of the myths.

Chu Feng felt that even if the Queen Mother of the West did indeed exist, she was perhaps just a powerful tribal leader during ancient times, and this was probably just an ancient relic.

“The great earthquake causing magnetic field abnormalities in addition to the large piece of protruding bronze may have attracted lingering lightning and electricity.”

Chu Feng felt that this might be the actual reason.

He really wanted to dig out the whole bronze tablet and observe in greater detail, but he was powerless to do so without specialized equipment.

After walking around the area for some time, he decided to continue upwards.

The cracks up in the mountain were quite deep. Its interior was a dark and frightening scene of destruction.

There were no trails to speak of, and the topography was fraught with danger. Large boulders lay scattered in disarray, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to progress.

Walking alone along the vast mountain allowed one to appreciate its majesty. It oddly reminded Chu Feng of the many legends surrounding this place. He glanced into the distance where the mountain was seemingly touching the sky. It was quite the grand panorama.

He continued upwards for over a thousand meters. The post-earthquake hike was indeed difficult, and the loose rocks posed a considerable danger.

There were heaps of earth and stone before him where the mountainside had recently collapsed.

Chu Feng spotted something abnormal from a distance and revealed an astonished expression. He approached swiftly and climbed up to verify what he had seen.

“It appears to be bronze!”

From the distance, he had seen a large area of mottled and corroded green within the collapsed cliff. It wasn't just a small piece but a whole area.

He finally arrived at his destination and clearly witnessed it.

"Just as I thought!"

This was even more alarming than the bronze tablet he had seen earlier.

The long-hidden truth, positioned close to the main mountain, had finally been revealed after the collapse of the huge cliff.

A patch of green was leaning against the stony mountainside. An ancient and mysterious bronze architecture revealed itself gradually through the collapsing mountainside.

Three simple and quiet bronze buildings were built into the stony walls of the mountain. Some parts of it were still buried within the earth, but most of them were already visible.

The design of these bronze buildings was ancient, and their grandeur was suffused with the solemnity of history.

Neat rows of bronze tiles covered their rooftops making them appear, from a distance, as if they were covered in green scales.

Chu Feng truly was astonished, and he could hardly calm down.

It was a sensational discovery. He had found large bronze equipment and numerous bronze architecture buried deep beneath Mount Kunlun.

What era were these things from? Who had constructed them?

He believed this place was definitely hiding the remains of a whole area of brilliant bronze civilization from the distant ages, an era not even recorded in history.

But he was as puzzled as he was apprehensive.

The Simu Cauldron was known as the largest bronze craft to date, but it seemed smaller compared to the bronze tablets and houses here, the antique almost failed to appear heavy at all.

Doubtlessly, the difficulty in building such houses was much more difficult than casting cauldrons.

These houses cast from bronze appeared majestic, solemn, and somewhat mysterious.

If this finding was announced to the outside world, it would be considered priceless treasures as no one had ever discovered such large bronze antiques before. It was definitely a new discovery.

Even as a normally calm person, Chu Feng subconsciously felt extreme excitement upon discovering these astonishing bronze relics.

He tried pushing the bronze door open with some force and was able to get it open amidst grinding metallic sounds.

He didn't go in immediately but instead observed from the outside for a while before cautiously stepping in. The somewhat isolated interior was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop. The interior was quite bare with barely any furnishings.

Similarly, nothing noteworthy was found in the other two houses; the floors and walls were all undecorated. Without a doubt, they were all empty.

Chu Feng exited the buildings with more questions than he had before he entered. Were these buildings used as a residence or perhaps for sacrificial ceremonies?

These ancients were simply too extravagant!

Historical records stated that the Simu Cauldron of the Shang Dynasty was cast, with great difficulty, by several hundreds of bronze artisans working together.

How difficult would it be to construct such gigantic bronze architecture?

Realizing that he had spent quite a bit of time here, Chu Feng decided to continue upwards. Sweating and huffing, he finally arrived close to the peak after a few hours; only a few hundred meters remained.

Chu Feng was tall, strong, and possessed good stamina, but after climbing such a large mountain, he was still left rather exhausted.

As he approached the summit and gazed into the distance, he saw rising mountain ranges and vast lands as far as the eye could see. The view made one feel as small as a speck of dust.

He stood on the great mountain and raised his head to gaze at the blue dome above. He felt quite comfortable as if he could forget all of his worries, all honor, and disgrace. Everything else seemed relatively insignificant.

Chu Feng was baffled to see that there was no snow despite the altitude and even grasses and trees could be seen.

"Traces of lightning strikes!"

Chu Feng noticed some charred marks which signified a lightning strike. All vegetation within that area had been burnt and charred.

Moreover, some large rocks had been cleaved open and the many parts of the mountainside had collapsed.

This further reinforced Chu Feng's theory that the dense mist and blue lights should've been caused by the lightning. This whole area had suffered lightning strikes.

Chu Feng had to take a detour because the road ahead was blocked large piles of rocks.

But as he circled around to the other side of the peak, his body froze in place and his pupils constricted. This was the first time he had been this overwhelmed.

He didn't react this way even when he discovered those bronze houses.

The collapsed mountainside had produced a large defect, revealing the metal within.

It's a bronze mountain!

The scene uncovered by the collapse of the mountainside was truly astonishing.

This mountaintop might actually be made of bronze concealed within the mountain!

It wasn't just a small area. The whole region up to the summit several hundreds of meters away was made of bronze.

This gave one the solid impression that the true mountain was made of bronze within and covered up by earth and rocks.

This was absolutely unimaginable!

The actual truth, however, is yet to be confirmed, but at least the 200-meter summit was indeed made of bronze, a number sufficient to shock the world.

Chu Feng was startled. This bronze mountain of the Kunlun Range had toppled his ingrained concepts of size and history.

He had always been quite skeptical of mysterious folklore and legends.

But he could hardly explain the peculiarity before his eyes.

The lightning strike had revealed the truth of the bronze mountain.

It was definitely a shocking discovery!

Chu Feng continued upwards and was a mere hundred meters away from the summit. The bronze terrain here was quite precipitous, making it difficult to proceed.

At the same time, he noticed a sudden fragrance drifting in the wind.

But the cold ground was made of bronze and devoid of all vegetation.

Chu Feng thus looked around in detail and eventually found a plant growing on the bronze cliff!

It was at the peak of the mountain. Chu Feng tracked back to find another way to approach the flower. He wanted to observe in greater detail.

He finally found another path which gave him a better view despite not being able to take up further upwards.

The verdant little tree, about 150 centimeters tall, was rooted firmly on the bronze cliff. There was a single flower blooming on it.

Chu Feng glanced again in order to make sure there was no mistake—there truly was no earth under the tree—the shocking plant was rooted on the bronze cliff.

Such a thing was as astonishing as it was inexplicable.

He moved to another place where he could climb upwards and get a closer look at the little tree rooted in bronze.

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