

The Sacred Ruins

Chapter 6: Stone Box

The silence within the tent that night was broken by this sudden sound. Chu Feng's hands froze in place.

How could this square stone make such a sound?

The answer came in the form of a small line on the stone which grew into an opening.

Chu Feng put it down for fear of some unforeseen event and continued to observe for a while. He was extra cautious after all the odd incidents he had gone through today.

"A stone box?!" He was surprised.

The crack was hidden within patterns surrounding the stone box and only became visible after opening it slightly.

The box fit seamlessly and appeared like a single body while the patterns on the surface made it difficult for the observer to find anything odd with this "stone".

Who would've thought it was a square stone box? It was three inches tall, appearing simple and unadorned.

As things stood, Chu Feng was filled with anticipation. This somewhat mysterious box was picked up from the foot of Mount Kunlun. What appeared like an ordinary stone was not as simple as it seemed on the surface.

Chu Feng placed the bronze basin in front of him to use as a shield and slowly opened the stone box.

"Click!"

The stone cover moved free without any dangerous surprises.

Only then did Chu Feng feel some relief and proceeded to look into the interior.

He had some expectations. Just what kind of item might be sealed within?

The space within the stone box was fairly small and only consisted of some shallow indentations. It was almost impossible to store anything within and obviously, there weren't any bright pearls or fine jades.

However, there were indeed items inside.

Within the indentations were three dried and shriveled seeds which took up the entirety of the available space and nothing else.

Chu Feng was rather disappointed. He had picked up this stone box from the foot of Mount Kunlun and was thus hoping to find some secret treasures. But the reality wasn't as he had expected.

One of the seeds was jet black and had long since shriveled up. It was even somewhat deformed and devoid of vitality.

Another one was as large as a fingernail, violet brown in color and somewhat flattened as if it had been squashed.

Only the final seed was relatively normal and was still full despite the wrinkles on its surface. At least, it wasn't shriveled. It was only a bit dried up and yellow.

Chu Feng was startled. What kind of seeds were these? Two of them were already dried and deformed beyond recognition. This was truly... too different from how he had imagined it.

He was originally expecting something good from this mysterious stone box he had picked up from the foot of Mount Kunlun. But the results were too ordinary.

He put the three seeds in his palm and observed them closely but found nothing special about them.

How long has this thing been buried under the ground? It was too difficult to tell but it was apparent from the box that it was quite ancient. Even the patterns on its surface had faded a fair bit.

Was it an item from primordial times?

If the three seeds were indeed from an archaic era and hadn't rotten away until now it could be that they were quite special.

Some sealed underground antiques would be ruined immediately after seeing the light of day.

Chu Feng studied them time and again but couldn't recognize what type of seeds they were. He had never seen them before and couldn't guess their parent plants at all.

He was somewhat dumbfounded after realizing that he had been staring at three shriveled seeds instead of the treasures he'd previously been expecting with great enthusiasm.

"I should find a chance to plant this and see what kind of plant it grows into," Chu Feng pondered.

But Chu Feng was worried whether they could still sprout after experiencing the distant passage of time. Two of them were thoroughly shriveled.

"I'll be happy as long as it doesn't grow into poison grass. If it does grow, even if its a bean or a vegetable, it's sure to be an ancient species of plants." He smiled at the thought of this.

The starry skies of the Tibetan Plateau seemed relatively close to the surface of the earth. The stars twinkled brilliantly and the moonlight was akin to clear water as it showered down on the desolate and somewhat overgrown land.

The night was exceptionally silent.

Chu Feng could vaguely make out the roars of large beasts from the direction of Mount Kunlun. The sounds reverberating throughout the mountain range roused him from his dreams.

His lodgings were far away from the mountain and yet one could hear the muffled roars of wild beasts. It was truly astonishing.

It was obvious that something was happening within Mount Kunlun but it didn't sound like the roars of the mastiff or the yak. Other beasts had probably appeared to join the fray.

The mountain range even appeared to be trembling somewhat. The whole area seemed to have become increasingly restless as the tremors were transmitted even to where Chu Feng was.

Some of the shepherds awoke in shock and proceeded to pray in due piety. They prostrated themselves toward the mountain, chanting unknown prayers.

Chu Feng also walked out of his tent and heard one of the shepherds say.

"The Living Buddha has really awoken within the mountains."

Chu Feng didn't understand how these beast roars could be related to an ancient monk.

"You don't understand; this is a Tibetan Legend. I suggest you leave as early as possible tomorrow," said the old shepherd.

“Are those monsters within the mountains about to appear?” A middle-aged man inquired.

According to folklore, there were a few ancient beasts sleeping in the depths of the Holy Mountain. Some of them were comparable to deities and possessed infinite strength. Some of these fierce beasts were able to subdue demons or even cause disasters.

Chu Feng pondered momentarily after hearing this. Although he didn't believe all of it, he felt that the shepherd's words were not completely impossible.

After all, he had personally experienced the incident on the bronze mountain and had encountered some unusual beasts.

For example that golden bird of prey with a wingspan of over five meters which, during ancient times, might've been considered a golden roc.

The jet black yak was over three meters long and even the panthers and wolves had to fear his boundless strength. Its every step caused the bronze mountain to tremble slightly. It would surely be worshipped as a demon ox during ancient times.

Most ancient folklore were greatly exaggerated to become legends and myths. This was especially true of these ancient records most of which tend to overstate things.

The vast highlands finally returned to silence during the latter half of the night as the beast roars from the distant mountains receded.

The clear moonlight showered down like a thin curtain of smoke. The land, seemingly connected to the starry skies, was suffused with hazy tranquility.

The shepherds were finally able to sigh in relief.

Chu Feng also returned to his tent and entered a state of deep sleep.

Chu Feng rose early the next day and set out on his return journey, proceeding towards a large city in the western region where he would board the train bound for home.

Although the post-civilization era never quite caught up to the brilliance of the yesteryears even after extensive rebuilding, the difference wasn't too drastic either. Various transport facilities could be considered quite convenient.

Chu Feng had lost contact with the outside world during this long period of being out in the wilds. This made him feel as if he had arrived in a different world after returning to the city.

He had to turn off his communicator during his travels through the highlands, deserts, and mountains. Many notifications arrived in succession as he turned it on once more.

His parents were reminding him to be careful on his travels and to prioritize safety. Some classmates were asking him when he would return and some were still waiting for his reply.

Chu Feng replied to them one by one until it was time to board the train.

He had brought very little baggage along with him apart from the large batch of snacks he had just purchased. Most of the things had been disposed of along the way.

He found his seat and secured his belongings before browsing through the latest news on his communicator. He was momentarily amazed by what he saw.

Various regions throughout the country and even those in other nations experienced episodes of dense mist. Some of them were blue, some red and even purple.

Some theorized that it was caused by the residual radiation from the great war.

But professionals dispelled the rumors. They announced that it was naturally caused mist that would leave no residual negative effects and that there was no need to panic.

Public opinion poll put forth another opinion which suggested that this might be a widespread upheaval similar to those recorded in history.

No one made effort to refute this possibility because such an event wasn't the first to happen since the post-civilization era. These incidences had always been surrounded by mystery.

"What's this?! Plants appearing in midair? Now that's really weird."

A fatty approached and sat down near Chu Feng just as the train started moving. He was roughly the same age, possessed average build but with an added belly, which was by no means small. His face was round with big ears and eyes that close into a single line when he smiled, almost like the Maitreya Buddha.

There was a festive air about him and appeared exceptionally amiable when he wasn't speaking. His constant smile added to his resemblance to the Maitreya Buddha.

Chu Feng immediately broke into a smile. This person definitely didn't invite any form of dislike.

"Brother, where are you headed?" The fatty greeted with natural familiarity.

"To the foot of Mount Taihang," Chu Feng replied with a smile.

"We're not fellow townsman, are we? Where exactly are you from?" Fatty chuckled.

The two found that they were indeed headed to the same area and immediately became quite close.

The fatty was called Zhou Quan, quite the “safe” name[1]. He had previously studied in Western China and had returned this time for a trip down memory lane.

Chu Feng also noticed the strange news Zhou Quan was talking about. It was being reported quite frequently during the recent days about how certain odd plants were found floating in the sky.

“I don’t understand how they keep themselves afloat!” Fatty Zhou grumbled.

Chu Feng was also quite puzzled after seeing the news.

“Is something big about to happen?” Zhou Quan ground his teeth.

“I just hope everything remains peaceful. This world is becoming increasingly difficult to understand.” Someone commented from the side.

“Indeed, peace is the best. These incidents make me feel uneasy.”

Many people chimed in with words of agreement.

“I reckon something is about to happen soon—many inexplicable and mysterious incidents have been happening in the recent years—rumors are flying all around.” Someone said in a hushed tone.

The place became quite lively with everyone expressing their opinion.

Two hours into the journey, Chu Feng and Zhou Quan had become quite familiar. They were, after all, people from the same region and shared a kind of natural familiarity.

He squeezed over and whispered mysteriously, “One of my relatives knows an eccentric who claims that the world is about to undergo a great change.”

“What sort of change?” Chu Feng inquired.

“Certain secretive and mysterious events.” Fatty’s voice was very small.

“I feel you’re the one being most secretive about it.” Chu Feng laughed.

“I’m speaking the truth. Do not doubt it! My relative is normally very dependable and isn’t one likely to speak nonsense. The people he in his circle are on a completely different level compared to us.” The fatty glared.

Chu Feng shook his head with a smile.

The fatty's confidence somewhat deflated, "Actually, I'm not too inclined to believe it either. This eccentric spoke a great deal of fragmented nonsense like how the Western Mythological Characters were actually plants and that ours are not different."

"Pfft!"

A person sitting beside them was drinking water when he heard this. He sprayed all the water out of his mouth and couldn't stop laughing.

"Damn, what's so funny?! I'm not going to say anymore!" Fatty felt quite embarrassed.

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[1] The name Zhou Quan means — Thorough, Comprehensive and, to some extent, Perfect