

Walker 1051

Chapter 1051 - A Darkness Within

Xukong skimmed through the shared memories and saw what Lin Mu had done. Knowing that these were not his normal actions, he knew something was wrong in that moment.

"What happened?" Xukong was a bit confused, but then felt a strange aura from the Altar in the distance.

"Of course!" Understanding that the altar must be related to it, he rushed to the altar and saw the scene there.

In front of him, several pitch black runes formed above the altar. They were the same as the ones that had appeared before and started to shrink soon after forming. They would shrink to the size of a needle before shooting into the sky and disappearing.

~shua~

A faint aura would rise from the altar whenever this happened and Xukong could feel it.

It made him feel uncomfortable as well and alarmed his instincts.

"What is this now? Is another part of the Nine Divine Heart Sutras about to be awakened?" Xukong wondered.

By now, he had understood that there were certain triggers and requirements for a sutra to awaken. Lin Mu had possibly fulfilled them and it might be time for it to awaken. But then Xukong saw something else in Lin Mu's memories.

It was nothing but Daoist Hua touching him and the eerie laughter that was echoing. The effect of the gaze and the laughter suppressing Daoist Hua's aura was also seen by Xukong. It was this that alarmed him the most, knowing nothing good would come out of it.

Xukong had understood by now that the Nine Divine Sutras were very powerful, but they also had side effects that could be very dangerous at the same time. This was both for Lin Mu and anyone else that might be present near him.

Another factor being that the sutras wouldn't be controllable by Lin Mu right away, either. Thus, the effects of every new sutra were unknown and potentially fatal.

"LIN MU STOP!" Xukong shouted, shaking the very space itself.

Out in the real world, Lin Mu shuddered as a shout echoed in his mind. Thankfully, his mind had not blocked out the link between Xukong and him, allowing him to still hear him.

"What?" Lin Mu's expression changed that to of confusion as the deep darkness in his eyes disappeared as well.

~step~step~

Daoist Hua too snapped out of his state and quickly took a few steps back.

~huu~huu~huu~

He didn't even realize that he had started panting and his hands were trembling as well.

'What in the name of heavens was that?' Daoist Hua was lost.

He could recall seeing the strange figures that looked rather... malevolent as well as the eerie laughter. His very soul was crying out to run, but he was unable to. It was as if he had been stuck to Lin Mu, until the moment he woke up as well.

"Are you okay?" Lin Mu asked Daoist Hua, not realizing what had happened.

"I-" Daoist Hua saw the entirely different expression of Lin Mu and understood that this might not be something Lin Mu even knew he did.

Adding it to what Lin Mu had done before and the ferociousness he had displayed earlier against the Dao Treading realm Gu Legion Members, he held back on saying anything about it.

In fact, there was a fear in his mind that if he said something, that thing might happen again.

"I'm fine. It's all over now." Daoist Hua replied quickly.

"Over?" Lin Mu looked around and saw the scene of gore.

"They're dead?" Lin Mu was a bit lost until his memories resurface.

His brows furrowed as he realized what he had done.

'Why did I do that?' Lin Mu thought to himself.

This level of cruelty was not something he would show or even attempt. Especially since his goal here was to save the Noon Grass sect and stop the attacks. Normally he wouldn't spend any time on the enemies once they were dead and would rather check the other places for more threat.

"Another part of the Nine Divine Heart Sutras might be awakening soon... your earlier actions might have been due to it." Xukong spoke.

"What? Really?" Lin Mu was shocked.

Lin Mu didn't even stop a moment before disappearing in front of all the elders.

"Where did he go?" The elders were confused.

Elder Sun noticed the strange state of Daoist Hua and approached him.

"Are you fine, Patriarch?" Elder Sun questioned.

"Did you get injured somehow?" Hua Langya asked.

"No... I'm fine... at least physically." Daoist Hua replied.

One of the elders couldn't help but gaze at the 'artwork' Lin Mu had made on the ground and swallowed his saliva in nervousness.

"Does anyone know why he did this? The man was dead after the first couple of attacks." One of the elders asked.

"Yeah... Alliance Leader Lin Mu... became different." Elder Sun spoke.

"He... has changed... or something changed within him." Daoist Hua stated.

"What happened there, patriarch? I saw that when you touched him, you went rather still. Your aura too... its reduced." Elder Sun asked.

"I don't know... I saw somethings... terrifying things... heard them too..." Patriarch Hua replied.

Hearing this, Hua Langya was reminded of something.

"Patriarch... you might want to know this..." He said before whispering his and Elder Pigu's experience from the past.

"Ten golden eyes? No... what I saw was nothing like that. I couldn't even tell properly what I saw... all I remember are vague figures, claws, horns and teeth. And that laughter... I've never heard a laughter like that before... at least I don't think any human can laugh like that." Patriarch Hua Shuddered after remembering it all again.

Hua Langya furrowed his brows and looked at the place where Lin Mu was standing earlier.

"Whatever it may be... something has changed within Lin Mu. Only time will tell, if its good or not." Hua Langya stated.

"Indeed... there is a darkness within him... perhaps it has been there since the start and only showed itself now..." Daoist Hua agreed.

Chapter 1052 - Not Ready

Unaware of the conversation between the elders and Patriarch Hua, Lin Mu appeared in the space of the ring. Appearing in the dark yet 'starry' space was always a surreal experience.

The silvery streaks of spatial energy continued to move around, fading in and out of existence, while the Ethereal altar's glow could be seen in the distance. The glow was like a long pillar of light that was gently radiating out of the light.

Lin Mu flew towards the altar, knowing that Senior Xukong was waiting for him there. Upon reaching there, Lin Mu saw the strange phenomenon that was taking place there. Or more like he was forced to see it.

The strange aura coming from the altar was hard to miss. Especially the pitch black runes that kept on materializing and turning into thin needles that shot up and disappeared.

"What is going on, senior?" Lin Mu asked.

"I have no idea... but seeing as the altar is possibly doing this and your state before, its likely to be another part of the Nine Divine Heart Sutras." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu furrowed his brows and approached the altar. He was the only one who could actually get close to it, and even Xukong was unable to break through the barrier. It was on an entirely different level and he had no confidence to do it even if he used his main body.

Approaching the barrier, Lin Mu tried to go past, but was unable to.

~thud~

"Huh? Why is it stopping me?" Lin Mu was lost.

The barrier had always existed, but Lin Mu could pass through it with ease. But now he was unable to.

"Is it not ready?" Lin Mu wondered.

He stayed there watching the altar, trying to communicate with it. But even after five minutes of trying, he got no response. The ring too was silent and didn't show any signs of response either.

It only made Lin Mu more confused. He had always been able to get the ring to respond at least on certain level, but this was like ignoring him entirely.

"Seems like it might be preparing something. It's hard to tell what exactly though. It could be both a new skill or the next part of the Nine divine sutras. Since it's not responding to you at all, it might be something not permitted to you right now." Xukong said after analyzing.

"Hmm... it does seem like that." Lin Mu nodded his head.

This was a new aspect of the ring that he was seeing for the first time. The ring had always been mysterious and even Xukong couldn't tell its origins or how it was made. Even with the great power his main body had, he could barely influence it.

At most, Xukong was only able to restrain the spatial fluctuation that always came out of the ring passively.

Lin Mu watched the pitch black runes forming and shooting into the sky for a few more minutes before shaking his head.

'I'll have to wait for when it's ready. But if what I had done earlier is linked to this, then... it might not be something that is easy to use.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

With the power that came with the nine divine sutras, there was also a great cost. The calming heart sutra, the severing heart sutra and the nurturing heart sutras were perhaps the milder of the sutras.

The Burning heart sutra was the perfect example of how terrifying its power could get. Another thing Lin Mu had noticed was that the ring only gave him sutras when it reckoned he could bear it.

For example, Lin Mu guessed that the burning heart sutra was only given to him because he already had the calming heart sutra to balance and control it. He didn't even know what would happen if there was no calming heart sutra.

Lin Mu reckoned that there was a great chance he would end up killing himself if he didn't have it.

'If that pattern stays true... then either I lack the way to counteract this new part, or it is far stronger than what my body can simply bear on its own.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

With this done, Lin Mu had his thoughts on line and decided to take a leave. He took a glance at the grey egg that was calmly resting on a pillow near the barrier and saw that the aura coming from it had increased as well.

"Just wait a bit more little guy, I'll find a way to hatch you..." Lin Mu muttered to himself before leaving the ring.

He had already reached the limits of how long he could stay in the ring, anyway. The more his cultivation base grew and his senses got better, the more Lin Mu understood how inhospitable the environment of the ring was.

The shredded Dao Embryos of the Dao Treading realm Gu Legion members he had sent here had already been eradicated by the spatial energy here.

'Now that I remember it, putting the Dao Embryo's here forcefully was also rather exhausting. It used up quite a bit of my spirit Qi... almost twenty percent.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

This was a massive amount of spirit Qi since he barely needed any for most things. If he was forcing someone into the ring, they would resist and Lin Mu would need to use more spirit Qi.

And since the Dao Embryo was still part of a living person, that too a very strong Dao Treading realm expert, the cost would be equally high. Lin Mu remembered the first time he had to forcefully put a servant in the ring. It had almost drained all of his spirit Qi.

Compared to then it was certainly an improvement.

'Though I now have a way to deal with Dao Treading realm experts too... as long as they reveal their Dao Embryos, I can seal them off here and disable the experts..' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Chapter 1053 Weakness And Desire

With slightly better understanding of the ring and a new method to battle the Dao Treading realm experts, Lin Mu returned to the real world.

"You're back!" Elder Sun spoke, seeing Lin Mu.

Lin Mu gazed at the injured old man. Elder Sun was someone he didn't have as much of an interaction with before and only had a few sentences exchanged. Lin Mu looked around and saw that only Elder Sun was waiting here for him.

Lin Mu sensed Little Shrubby as well and found him to be near some disciples, helping them. Little Shrubby had easily killed the Dao Treading realm Gu Legion member that it had tackled.

"The others went to check up on the disciples and nurse their injuries." Elder Sun informed, guessing what Lin Mu must be thinking of.

"I see... what are the... casualties?" Lin Mu asked with difficulty.

~Sigh~

Hearing this, Elder Sun let out a tired sigh, but still spoke.

"Most of our disciples are still alive, with less than two hundred actually perishing. This is all due to the better formation arrays and upgrades we did in the last two years. But despite that, we have lost our elders.

Elder Ni, Elder Jala, Elder Wedian and Elder Pigu being the more prominent ones we lost." Elder Sun answered.

"Elder Pigu died?!" Lin Mu was shocked.

He recalled the portly elder who had helped him a lot before.

"Yes... he made the greatest sacrifice... using his life in exchange to kill a Dao Treading realm Gu Legion member, as well as hundreds of weaker members." Elder Sun stated.

Hearing this, Lin Mu felt his heart getting heavier. He knew that this was the cost of a battle, but losing even one person was significant. To him it meant, that he was still weak and needed to grow stronger.

~Crack~

Lin Mu clenched his fists, his knuckles popping in the process. A new drive appeared in him, this time like a searing fire. It made him feel an itch, a discomfort, an urge... to get stronger.

"Come, let's go see the others." Elder Sun spoke, knowing that it will take a while for Lin Mu to get on terms with it all.

Lin Mu silently followed behind the man and they reached the peak where the disciples of the Noon Grass sect had held back the assault. There, he saw the scene of devastation and death.

Even if it was mostly the bodies of the Gu Legion members, there were still the bodies of Noon Grass disciples mixed in it. Due to the collateral damage to the area, most of the bodies had been crushed and damaged beyond recognition.

Only from the shredded fabric pieces that were left behind from the robes of the disciples could it be made out that they were indeed here. Otherwise, the flesh and blood of all mixed together, making it seem like a slaughterhouse.

~huh~

Lin Mu breathed in the slightly salty air, filled with the scent of blood and felt an anger sparking within him again.

Silently chanting the calming heart sutra, he stabilized his mind and focused on the task at hand.

"Look! It's alliance Leader Lin Mu!" The disciples of the Noon Grass sect spotted him.

Elder Sun and Lin Mu landed and were soon surrounded by the disciples. Lin Mu also felt Little Shrubby appear there. The beast took off several disciples from his back and dropped them off in the care of others before going to get more.

There was a lot of excited chatter going around, and a lot of words spoken to Lin Mu. He answered them almost mechanically, not knowing he even did it. His mind was elsewhere and he couldn't bring himself to speak to them fully.

"Disciples, let us leave for now. Alliance Leader has more things to attend to. You all should also rest for now. We shall have an announcement for a meeting later on." Elder Sun stated.

The disciples calmed down after that and let Lin Mu and elder sun proceed. The two of them went up the peak and reached the main building that was at its top. Lin Mu could feel the spirit Qi fluctuation of the remaining elders there along with the high elders and Daoist Hua.

The people inside too felt Lin Mu.

~Creak~

The door of the hall opened automatically and the people inside saw Lin Mu. Everyone could tell the change in Lin Mu. It was subtle, yet it was enough for these experienced elders to sense.

'Its like the soldier who returns home from his first war...' Daoist Hua could tell that change.

He was after all in the same position once upon a time and had gone through it several times since then.

"We are greatly indebted to you, Alliance leader Lin Mu." Supreme elder Hua Langya spoke.

"Indeed, if it were not for you, we all would have possibly perished." The other elders joined.

Lin Mu kept his silence and didn't know what to say to it. He felt like he could not accept these words. He had missed out on helping them in the correct moment that they needed him in.

Several thoughts came to him at that moment.

'What if he had delayed going to the Ancestral ground for just a couple of more days?'

'What if he had waited longer?'

These questions echoed in his head, and the answer to that was both known and unknown to him.

After thinking over it, Lin Mu realized that it all came down to one fact; the fact that he was lacking power. It was power for which he went to the ancestral land of the Ji clan so that he could have more allies.

The elders went silent too, seeing that Lin Mu was not responding to them.

"Is there something wrong?" Daoist Hua asked.

"I've made a decision." Lin Mu said, his voice rather calm.

"What?" they all asked.

"I've realized I can no longer wait... I need to grow stronger faster... many times faster than I am right now." He replied, his tone growing heavier.

Chapter 1054 No Seclusion

Lin Mu's words were both a bit concerning as well as understandable for the elders and Daoist Hua. They too felt like they were weak and their foes were getting stronger, way faster than they were.

This gave them an urge to get stronger, too. Though it still made them wonder how Lin Mu was about to do this.

"I understand that, and what will you be doing for that? Going to enter seclusion?" Patriarch Hua questioned.

"Seclusion? No... the time for seclusion is long gone... and if I enter it again, I might not come out for who knows how long." Lin Mu replied. "I do not wish for a repeat of this again." He added.

Hearing Lin Mu's answers, the elders and Patriarch didn't know what Lin Mu was going to do. There were limited ways to increase one's power rapidly, and entering seclusion and cultivation with full focus was the most accessible one.

There were these such as using some alchemical pills, spirit herbs, spirit fruits, or other fortunate encounters. But those weren't something that could be used whenever one wanted. Even obtaining them was greatly dependent on one's fate.

If one was not fated, they would not gain them. And even if they did, they might not gain any benefit, perhaps even getting injured from it.

Thus, seclusion was the usual option for most. Though the location of the seclusion could greatly vary and depending on the arrays used, it could be on the same level as that of a fortunate encounter.

This is what Daoist Hua had thought. And the place in their minds was none other than Kong plane.

It had a higher concentration of spirit Qi than most places and even had untouched resources that could greatly help one. It would make sense for Lin Mu to go there for seclusion. He had already done this before after all.

But seeing that he was not speaking about that, they were confused.

"If not seclusion, then what are you going to do, Alliance Leader Lin Mu?" One of the elders asked, unable to figure it out.

"It is something I wanted to prevent at first... but I hope you all can forgive me..." Lin Mu answered.

"Huh? What do you—" Daoist Hua wanted to ask more, but before he could do that Lin Mu disappeared.

The elders looked around, unable to find. They even spread their spirit sense, but didn't sense Lin Mu anywhere within a few kilometers.

"Let it be... he's gone too far for even me to sense him." Patriarch Hua said, as his expression fell.

"Patriarch... what is he..." Elder Sun was a bit afraid.

Lin Mu's current expression combined with the earlier display was very concerning for them now.

"Whatever he is doing, it will be fine. And if it is not... that will just have to be a cost we bear. He's already done more than enough for us. It is our time to support him now." Daoist Hua spoke. "Besides..."

I think the time to hold back is gone as well. If the Gu Legion is taking such an aggressive approach, then we need to match it as well." He added.

"What are we to do then, patriarch?" Hua Langya asked.

A few ideas were already in his mind, but he didn't want to be mistaken.

"For now, we hold the fort and inform our allies. Then, we make sure that nothing else happens until Lin Mu returns." Patriarch Hua replied.

"Very well, we shall do as you instruct." Hua Langya replied.

Daoist Hua nodded his head and looked out of the windows. His gaze went to the bottom of the peak where a certain beast dropped off more disciples. The beast paused for a second as his ears perked up.

Then in the next second, it disappeared in a blur heading to the north of the sect.

'I bid you luck in your endeavors Lin Mu. May you reach the heights we never could and save this world...!' Daoist Hua prayed in his mind.

...

~ROAR~

A thunderous roar echoed across the forest as a herd of beasts were scared away by it. As soon as they scattered, a red blur passed through where they were before. The beasts shuddered as they saw the trail left behind by the beast, scared.

Little Shrubby traveled at great speed, heading to where Lin Mu had called him. He had sensed his master leaving his vicinity and wondered where he was going without it. But as soon as he heard his call, he knew it was time to leave.

He had already brought all the disciples of the Noon Grass sect that were scattered around and injured to the peak and had left them in the care of others. With his task finished, Little Shrubby had no need to stop anymore and could go to Lin Mu.

'Master does not seem happy...!' Little Shrubby thought to himself.

He could tell that Lin Mu had changed in the battle before and there was a hint of angry aura around him now. Little Shrubby felt angry too because of it and wanted to get rid of whatever had made his master like that.

If his master was not fine, he wasn't fine either.

Little Shrubby covered several kilometers in the matter of seconds and finally reached the place where Lin Mu was.

This place was a solitary hill about a hundred kilometers north of the Noon Grass sect. There was nothing around him other than some trees and an empty circle of about a kilometer was present as well.

It was a landmark used by many while traveling and was an important location.

~WHOOSH~

The wind blew as Little Shrubby arrived at the top of the hill. Lin Mu was standing there as well, staring in the north western direction, his face calm and cold.

"What are we doing, master?" Little Shrubby asked.

"We are going to take a few trips... time to cull some cattle that have become a pest now." Lin Mu replied, his eyes glinting in a fierce light.

Chapter 1055 The West Ocean Sect

On the western coast of the Great Zhou continent existed a sect.

This was named as the West Ocean Sect and was one of the top ten sects, being ranked ninth in the rankings, just above the Noon Grass sect. Along with this, it was also the member of the Zither Wind Alliance and its higher ups were under control by Gu Yao.

The disciples of the sect were going about their day, and everything was normal there. There was no sign of any conflict or anything unusual there at all. It wasn't as if the alliance they were part of had just launched a full offense against the Noon Grass sect.

It almost seemed like a dream.

Some distance away from the border of the sect, a man and beast stood in the sky.

Lin Mu's eyes scanned the sect, which was built along a long cliff. The cliff extended for over five kilometers and some buildings of the sect were hanging from its side, while the rest were built on the other side of the cliff.

Additionally, a large building was built upon the water, just half a kilometer away from the rest of the sect. This was the grand hall of the West Ocean sect and was where the high elders and patriarch of the sect resided.

"Clueless and conceited... but not for long." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Lin Mu took a step forward and rapidly fell from the sky like a cannonball. But instead of crashing into the ground, he entered it like it was water. Little Shrubby stayed behind in the sky, and hid in the clouds, waiting for further orders from Lin Mu.

Though his senses were fully alert as well, and his aura seething around him, ready to act at any moment.

Upon entering the ground, Lin Mu's spirit sense extended and quickly entered the sect. The formation array protecting the sect was still there, but before it could detect the spirit sense, it disappeared.

"Fade..." Lin Mu disappeared along with it as well, and when he reappeared, he was already within the limits of the sect.

He stayed underground and let his spirit sense spread, scanning each and every person that was present inside the sect. His instincts had already felt a few auras that he knew exactly what they were, but he needed to know more than that.

"Got the locations... under the ocean huh..." Lin Mu said as he opened his eyes.

Lin Mu rapidly moved underground and continued falling even deeper before finally moving to the west towards the ocean side.

~blub~

When he left the cliff, he was inside the water. The armor of the mortal strengthening scripture was already active and prevented any water from actually touching him or his robes.

A few beasts were detected by him, but they quickly ran away upon sensing danger. Lin Mu didn't even need to act for these aquatic spirit beasts, had a great instinct for danger.

The water rippled and bubbles appeared in the water, left behind in the trails of the beasts.

Lin Mu didn't care for this though and looked towards where his goal actually was. The water here was dark, and the visibility was reduced to merely a few meters in front. But that was nothing to Lin Mu's spirit sense that could observe for him.

Tens of spirit sense tendrils mapped out the topography of the underwater area for Lin Mu and gave him the route he needed to take.

Some distance away from him was actually an underwater mountain. It was on the top of this mountain that the grand hall of the West Ocean sect was built. It was built such that it appeared to be floating, but it was not.

Additionally, illusory formations prevented others from seeing the mountain under the water too. If not for Lin Mu's spirit sense, it would appear invisible to others even if they were standing right next to it and illuminated the path with light.

This mountain was the biggest secret of the West Ocean sect and also their treasure trove.

After all, there would have to be a great reason for a sect to make their grand hall in the dangerous waters of the ocean, instead of the safety of the land.

And the reason was that there were three Spirit stone mines hidden in the mountain.

Spirit stones could be found in many locations around the world and weren't just present on land. They could also be found underground and deep under water as well. This mountain was one such example of it.

This information was not known by anyone other than the higher ups of the sect, and not even the disciples knew it. They thought the sect owned mines were somewhere else inland. Which was true, but that wasn't all of the spirit stone mines. And neither were they the best ones either.

The best ones were hidden underneath the great hall of the West ocean sect, underneath the ocean.

Lin Mu's targets was this place, and he quickly made his way there. The formation arrays on the mountain were of least concern to Lin Mu, as he could simply take another path. After all, the people of the West ocean sect couldn't cover the entire ocean floor, could they?

Simply finding another location some distance away from the mountain, Lin Mu looped around and entered the mountain.

Once inside the mountain, Lin Mu saw the vast and wide tunnels that took one to the depths of the ocean floor. It was obvious that this area had been mined clean, but from the traces of spirit Qi here, it was evident that this place once contained a lot of resources too.

Lin Mu imagined it to be the same as the mountain they had excavated in the fragment of the minor plane of the Ripple Mist sect.

This was not his goal though. Lin Mu rapidly fell through the ground using phase and reached the very depths of the mountain. He was now official below the ocean floor!

Chapter 1056 Three Spirit Stone Mines

Wading through the solid rock, Lin Mu finally entered the area that was the greatest treasure of the West Ocean sect, the three spirit stone mines!

~shua~

Lin Mu left the ground and could breathe in dry air again.

The entire area was filled with spirit stones and various crystals embed in the ground and the ceiling. There wasn't even a clear place to walk and one would feel afraid to damage the spirit stones.

Lin Mu looked around and scanned the area, finding that this spirit stone mine was certainly many times bigger than the one he had excavated with Jing Luo in the past. And this was simply one of the three.

Currently, Lin Mu had no information about this place or what this place held. But that could be solved easily if he found the right person.

"Hmm... there are actually people here." Lin Mu sensed the presence of others.

There were nearly forty people in this mine, but they were beyond several walls made of solid spirit stone. Lin Mu was actually in the very depths of the mine where no one had ever gone.

It was like the empty space inside a geode and was blocked by all sides. If not for Phase, Lin Mu would not be able to enter this place easily. At least not without breaking the walls.

"Since they are in here, they should have a better idea... at least have maps for the mine and a bit more information." Lin Mu muttered and disappeared.

Blinking several times in a row and using phase to traverse the walls, Lin Mu finally appeared in a chamber that was mostly mined out. There were barely any spirit stones left here and only a few isolated segments were left, which would probably be mined out later too.

Lin Mu observed using his spirit sense and saw that the people here were not weak at all.

"They aren't from the sect... that muddy aura... Gu Legion here too? No, wait... they have probably inflated their power with the pills of grace." Lin Mu guessed.

Having found out about this, Lin Mu didn't care for them anymore.

~shua~

Appearing behind a man, Lin Mu stabbed out with his short sword, piercing the man's skull. A stream of spirit Qi also spread through the man, breaking his nascent soul along with it. The others didn't even sense the anomaly, letting Lin Mu continue his work.

One by one, the number of cultivators starting decreasing.

"Guo Min! Guo Min! Look, I found an Aquamarine Spirit jade!" One of the cultivators suddenly shouted.

He held a small crystal in his hand that shone in a blue light. It was barely the size of a fingernail but still looked rather brilliant.

"Guo Min?" The man said again, not hearing any response from his companion. "Huh?" looking around, he didn't see any of his companions there.

The mining area was separated into several smaller chambers and he was in one of the middle ones. There were about three more people with him, but they were not there anymore.

"Where did they go?" The man wondered and walked to the entrance of the next chamber.

But as soon as he peeked into it, he saw a stunning scene.

"WHAT!?" in front of him, one of his companions was being stabbed.

~shing~

The edge of the short sword reflected the light from the floating lamps and created a stunning contrast with the blood on it. Holding the sword was none other than Lin Mu, his expression still.

He looked at the man who had just appeared, without caring that he had been found.

"Who are you!?" The man questioned. "No, how did you get in here?"

Several questions popped up in the man's head. He couldn't understand how someone could enter a high security area like this. Even the people of the west ocean sect didn't know about it other than a few.

Even they were only allowed in here after they used special contracts to bond their lives. Without that they would have never been allowed in here.

Unfortunately for the man, his questions were not going to be answered.

~shua~

Lin Mu disappeared and reappeared right in front of him.

~CRACK~

A fist hit his chest, directly breaking through the flesh and bone, before piercing out the back.

~cough~

~splat~

Copious amounts of blood spilled from his chest and mouth as the man tried to come to terms with his situation.

~shua~

Lin Mu released some flames that burned the insides of the man's body while also eradicating his Nascent soul. He could never let them escape.

Storing the body into the ring, Lin Mu checked all the items he had gained. With just a thought, all the spatial storage treasures and other items these men were using were summoned in front of Lin Mu.

He looked through them and quickly found the information he was looking for.

"I see... out of the three mines. One is a peak grade spirit stone mine and the other two high grade mines. The west ocean sect had barely used ten percent of the first mine and only when Gu Yao arrived did he start to use more of them.

So the west ocean sect has been a major source of spirit stones for him, huh..." Lin Mu read through the manifests and directives the men had.

All of them were at the Nascent soul realm and were given orders to mine for spirit stones. They were also not from the Gu Legion and were truly disciples of the West ocean sect. But they had been given pills of grace to increase their cultivation base forcefully.

And since they were disciples who weren't as talented and were stuck at the core condensation realm for a long time, they gladly accepted it while also binding themselves to a contract.

With this assurance, they were made to mine in the spirit stone mines.

"The more pain for Gu Yao, the better..." Lin Mu stated before starting his work.

Meld!

Chapter 1057 Abrupt Chaos

Everything was going fine in the West ocean sect until chaos abruptly broke in the formation array control hall of the sect.

"ELDERS! THE ARRAYS! THE ARRAYS ARE FAILING!" A senior disciples shouted.

"WHAT? HOW!?" The elders were stunned.

They had been cultivating as they normally would while the disciples handled the day-to-day tasks. Only when some issue arose would they act. And now they were given a rather rude shock.

They looked at the screens and saw the runes that were going haywire.

"This... this isn't a failure... the arrays are shutting down!" The elders realized.

"Shutting down?" the disciples were confused.

He could understand the arrays failing due to some damage or error, but them shutting down was not possible unless it was done manually.

"Did any of you mess with the activation formation?" one of the elders asked, his eyes blood shot.

That was the only way it could happen if someone accidentally closed the formation.

"N-no elder... we can't even access that part." The disciples said, feeling scared.

"DON'T YOU DARE LIE!" The elder shouted, startling the disciples.

"Wait, the disciple is not lying." Another elder spoke.

"What? How is that possible if these imbeciles didn't mess up something?" The enraged elder asked.

"Look at the sensory formation... the concentration of spirit Qi... it is almost gone." The elder answered, his voice shaky.

The enraged elder looked at the said formation and was stunned. It was all true, the concentration of spirit Qi had almost reduced to zero. Now it was barely a fraction of what one percent output would give them normally.

"This is impossible! Utterly impossible!" the enraged elder yelled.

The other elders were trying to analyze the problem, but were unable to come up with anything.

"Won't this only happen if... if... if the spirit stone mines were depleted?" an elder spoke while stuttering.

The very thought of it was terrifying to them. But at the same time, it seemed absurd to them as they knew very well, the spirit stone mines wouldn't be depleted like this. Even with the rate of mining they were doing, it would take decades before any issue happened.

And that was IF they did unreserved mining and damaged the source vein of the mines. Usually the core of the mine would be left untouched, so that the spirit stones could grow back again.

This way, the sect could rotate among the three mines over multiple years and ensure that they didn't mine too much.

"ALERT THE PATRIARCH! WE NEED TO GO TO THE DEPTHS!" The enraged elder ordered.

...

Lin Mu was unaware that his actions had caused utter chaos in the West ocean sect. Though that was part of his goal in the end too. He wanted to remove the pests that had gotten troublesome and remove their base.

"That should be the last of it." Lin Mu said as he stored another large chunk of source vein into the ring.

He had cleared out all three mines and along with it the other resources that were present there too. After all, spirit stone mines didn't just contain spirit stones, they actually nurtured other materials too.

For example, any metal ores or gemstones that were present in the area round the mine would be affected by the rich spirit Qi and transform over time. This was the case for materials that already existed.

Along with this, new materials such as spirit jades that were used in various spirit tools like communication jade slip were also born in the mines.

With this done, Lin Mu decided on his next course of action.

"This should remove the base of the West ocean sect and weaken Gu Yao's influence." Lin Mu said, "but its not enough!"

His eyes gazed up at the ceiling and his spirit sense pierced through it all, directly going into the sect. Without caring for all those that sensed it, Lin Mu scanned everything, every location that was in the sect, and everyone that was there as well.

From an unranked servant all the way to the very patriarch of the West Ocean sect, Lin Mu probed them all.

"WHO DARES!!!!!" A loud shout was heard echoing across the sect.

The shout came from the great hall of the sect that was located on the water.

"WHAT AUDACITY!" The other elders felt it too and were enraged.

In their sect, only those higher ranked than them could probe them like this. And if that happened, they would know. But there was a limit to that. Especially since even the patriarch was probed.

~BOOM~

An explosion happened as an old man wearing blue, and white robes appeared from the great hall. He had just gotten the report that the formation arrays of the sect had stopped working and had tired of contacting the miners down there.

But he received no response from them. This gave him a very bad feeling, and he was about to order some elders to go and check it out when he felt the spirit sense. It came out of the depths and spread all the way around the sect.

It both enraged and alarmed the patriarch, for he knew what it meant. If there was someone this bold as to use their spirit sense in the sect, they would need to have the strength to back it up.

The west ocean sect's area wasn't that big and even some of the elders could cover the area with their spirit sense, so that wasn't the problem either.

"What is happening?"

"Why are the elders enraged?"

"Was that the patriarch!?"

The disciples were all startled and running around like headless chickens.

While all this was happening through, the suspect behind it all had already left his previous location.

"This should be the vault of the sect." Lin Mu said as he appeared in the middle of a secured room. It was located in the great hall of the west ocean sect and was several floors below the main court.

"WHO!?" The guards noticed a stranger appearing and were startled.

Chapter 1058 Against The Patriarch

This was the vault of the West Ocean sect. It was the most secure place in the sect, at least openly. Not many knew about the mines below the sea. No one would think that any person would dare to even think of infiltrating this place.

And yet, against all conventions, the guards saw someone actually there, right in the middle of them all. It frankly made them feel as if they were dreaming or maybe seeing an illusion.

But the spirit Qi fluctuations coming from the man confirmed it all. It was a real person.

"WHO ARE YOU!? HOW DARE YOU INTRUDE UPON THE VAULT HALL OF THE WEST OCEAN SECT!?" The guards shouted.

Lin Mu could care less about them, though. He simply waved his hand and summoned several spirit tools that killed all the guards in a matter of seconds.

~shua~

With another wave of the hand, all the spirit weapons returned, with the corpses still attached to them. Lin Mu stored them back in the ring and took a glance inside, finding that these corpses didn't actually melt like before.

"Hmm... so not all of them that took the pills of grace will melt. The cultivators that were mining down there melted though..." Lin Mu noted.

He was sure that these cultivators had taken the pills of grace since they too had that same aura caused due to the muddy spirit Qi.

'Perhaps there is another addition to those pills?' Lin Mu wondered.

So far, the ones who had melted were all in sensitive positions that could be taken advantage of if they were captured. It made sense that the Gu Legion would make it so that they could not be taken as prisoners of war.

In the case of these guards though, there was no such issue. Even if they were guarding the vault of the West ocean sect, they were still mere guards. Additionally, they had been guarding since before the Gu Legion rose, so there was no issue for them to use that.

"At least little Shrubby can have an extra meal." Lin Mu reckoned and continued towards the vault.

~HONG~

A barrier appeared in front of him, blocking his path. The vault's formation array was independent from the sect's main array so that it couldn't be breached even when the sect fell.

But for Lin Mu, that didn't really matter.

Coating his hands in spirit Qi, Lin Mu stabbed them directly into the array.

~CLANG~

A metallic clang was heard as the golden skin of Lin Mu's body struck the barrier.

~CRACKLE~

The barrier did its best to stop it, but Lin Mu didn't stop. Exerting more force, he ripped into the layer and directly tore the runes apart.

~BOOM~

Unable to handle the sudden instability caused due to the breaking of runes, the layer of the barrier exploded. To any other cultivator, this would greatly injure them, but Lin Mu came out of it unscathed and did the same to the other barriers that stopped him as well.

In less than a minute, he had broken apart ten such barriers and was in front of the vault door. The door itself was a simple wooden door that opened without an issue. It didn't have any restrictions or formations on it and neither was it made from any rare tough materials.

After all, the formation arrays that Lin Mu had broken earlier were already enough to make it one of the toughest vaults here.

~CREAK~

The door of the vault opened and the contents of it were visible to Lin Mu. The vault was basically another large hall that was filled with tens of thousands of items. There were shelves upon shelves of items, as well as boxes and chests kept.

Then there were piles of spirit stones just lying around on the ground in the open. Several spirit weapons were also present here, with the majority being mid to high grade spirit weapons. There were no peak grade spirit weapons here, though.

Lin Mu quickly went through the vault and cleared it out.

While he was doing this though, the people of the West Ocean sect were searching for the intruder.

"WHERE IS HE!?" The patriarch of the West ocean sect questioned.

He looked around but couldn't see anyone suspicious. He wondered if the intruder was hidden.

~BOOM~

That was, until he heard an explosion coming from the great hall.

His expression fell and he couldn't believe his eyes.

Flames burned on three floors of the great hall and the figure of a certain person rose through them.

"YOU!!!! DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE!?" The Patriarch yelled, flames of rage burning in his eyes just like the great hall.

Lin Mu looked at the man rushing towards him with a still face and calmly spoke, "crippled your sect."

Hearing the words of Lin Mu, the patriarch of the West ocean sect couldn't hold back.

"AAAAHHHHHH!!!! I MA JUN HAVE NEVER BEEN HUMILIATED LIKE THIS BEFORE!" The patriarch screamed in madness.

His spirit sense had already checked the great hall, and he knew that the vault was absolutely destroyed and along with it, two more floors were destroyed. These floors contained various Qi skills, and cultivation manuals, along with other documents and books as well.

With how intently the flames were raging, he knew that all of them were reduced to ashes already, not knowing that Lin Mu had taken them all away.

This was understandable too, since even the higher capacity spatial storage tools would not be able to keep all the contents in them. To the patriarch, it was clear that this person had come here to destroy their sect.

Feeling furious, the patriarch directly withdrew a whip from his spatial storage treasure. The whip was long and emanated strong spirit Qi fluctuations, clearing on the level of a peak grade spirit weapon!

"Shark Punishing Whip, GO!" The patriarch controlled the whip and lashed out at Lin Wu.

The whip expanded in the air, elongating as if it had no limit, and struck towards Lin Mu.

Chapter 1059 Facing A True Expert!

The patriarch's angry shouts and attack had already pulled the attention of almost everyone in the sect.

"Who is the patriarch fighting?" An outer court disciple asked.

"Heavens! I've never seen the patriarch this angry before." A frightened disciple said.

"That should be the intruder they were shouting about earlier." One of the more informed disciples spoke.

The elders of the sect had also noticed it and were gathering around, ready to mount an offense against Lin Mu in support of their patriarch.

"WHOA!" someone exclaimed. "The patriarch took out the Shark Punishing whip! Isn't that our sects best spirit weapon?"

"Indeed. It's a peak grade spirit weapon, that was made by combining the tendons of ten nascent soul realm beasts. The patriarch had made it when there was a Dao Shell realm shark beast attacking the sect hundreds of years ago.

He had used that very whip to kill the beast and then used the teeth of the sharks to reinforce the whip. That is how it got its name." One of the more informed disciples explained.

"That intruder is dead. No one can go against the Shark Punishing whip." The disciples were feeling very confident.

And understandably so since the patriarch was at the Dao Treading realm and was the strongest expert of their sect. Not only that, but he was also using a peak grade spirit weapon to attack, thus his power was great.

The shark punishing whip glowed in a deadly light as the sharp shark teeth embedded in it threatened to cut apart everything.

~BOOM~

The whip finally struck Lin Mu and an explosion happened with the spirit Qi from the whip blasting out.

"HAHA! THAT'S WHAT HE DESERVES!" An elder laughed.

Everyone could see the power of the attack and the explosion that happened after that was enough for even a Dao Shell realm cultivator to be greatly injured.

"Patriarch Ma Jun is indeed the greatest in our sect." The disciples praised.

"No way... how?" But just as they were rejoicing, someone noticed something.

~whoosh~

The winds blew away the smoke and dust, revealing the true situation.

And what they saw left them with wide open mouths. Even Patriarch Ma Yun was stunned.

"How? IMPOSSIBLE!" in front of Ma Yun's eyes stood Lin Mu.

The Shark Punishing Whip was firmly grasped within his hands that shone in a golden light. It was as if a golden deity's statue was floating in the air; untainted by the mortal air.

"That's all you have?" Lin Mu scoffed. "Perhaps I should have let go of my concerns earlier and culled the sects at the very start. Perhaps then the others would not have suffered this much." He added.

"What even—?" Before the patriarch could speak anything through, he felt a great force tugging at the whip.

Lin Mu's hand wrapped around the Shark punishing whip as faint grinding sounds could be heard from the shark teeth rubbing against his skin. The armor of the mortal strengthening scripture was not going to bear this attack, thus Lin Mu had withdrawn it at the very start, letting his own body bear it.

It was a test for himself and he wanted to see how far his body could go alone. In the previous fight against the Dao Treading realm experts of the Gu legion, Lin Mu had basically overwhelmed them before they could attack him.

Not to mention, they were not proper experts who had cultivated normally. They had been boosted to their state and had unstable foundations, not being able to use their strength properly.

The opponent this time was not like that thought. Patriarch Ma Yun was an authentic cultivator who had reached the Dao Treading realm by cultivating steadily stage by stage, realm by realm.

While there was still the Human Controlling Blood curse on him, there was no actual effect or corruption of his cultivation base. Thus, the power he exerted was true and pure.

And it was this very power Lin Mu wanted to feel.

The Patriarch pulled back the Shark Punishing Whip but found it impossible to do so. It was as if there was a mountain attached to the whip and he could not pull it back.

~HUU~

He took a deep breath and amplified his strength with his spirit Qi before pulling hard.

~CLANG~

This time, he managed to do better and actually made Lin Mu move a few meters.

"Flashy tricks! You won't survive long!" The patriarch said as he used a skill.

~SPLASH~ SPLASH~ SPLASH~

Three pillars of water rose up from the sea before swiveling in the air and turning into a bull shark that attacked Lin Mu.

Lin Mu's eyes glanced at the attack coming from the corner of his eye and lifted his left hand. His right hand was still wrapped around the whip and prevented it from moving.

"Boulder Collapsing fist: First Form- Impact!" Lin Mu punched out with his left hand as vital essence surged within his hand.

~WOOOO~

The Bull Shark let out a cry as it fiercely bit Lin Mu. And just as it did, the inside of its mouth was hit with Lin Mu's fist.

~KABOOM~

The impact of the punch traveled through the Bull Shark's body, compressing the water within it and directly exploding it into a burst of water.

"Impossible!" the people watching were stunned.

They knew what the Bull Shark made from water was. It was one of their sect's top Qi skills!

And yet it was destroyed by a single punch.

The patriarch gritted his teeth, seeing that his attack was destroyed, and readied another one. He understood that the opponent this time was not simple. Even though the spirit Qi fluctuations coming from Lin Mu were merely at the Dao Shell realm, his power was almost equal to his own.

The patriarch used the skill again, this time creating three such water Bull Sharks.

"This will waste too much time... best end it quick." Lin Mu stated.

Since he knew where he stood against the others in a direct conflict, he didn't need to hold back anymore.

Chapter 1060 Overwhelming Metal Spirit Qi

The patriarch of the West Ocean Sect had been feeling strange since the moment the chaos had started. As soon as he found out that the formation arrays had stopped working, he had assumed the worst.

But the worst in his mind was that his lord Gu Yao had come and did what he had told him before. As his lord, he didn't need his permission and could enter the mines whenever he wanted.

That was also why he had not acted personally and gone to the mine, merely sending others to check up on it. Though that was still doubtful for him, since his lord would at least notify him, even if it was at the very last second.

He knew what was happening outside the sect and that his master had mounted an offense against the Noon Grass sect openly this time. He had been informed of it and had been told to prepare for a retaliation from the other sects as well.

There was no saying if the top three sects might act at this point, as they all knew openly going against the Noon Grass sect and restricting the Long cloud alliance directly by unknown experts will definitely bring attention to their heads.

But when the explosions happened and the vault was attacked, he was sure that this was not his lord. This was some other intruder and perhaps from the Long cloud alliance too.

And seeing Lin Mu, he was sure that it was the latter. After all, there was no way someone would attack their sect like this.

"Time to end this..." Lin Mu muttered and flicked his hand.

~CLANG~

The Shark Punishing whip snapped back and was sent flying to the side. Ma Yun immediately swung the whip again, but it hit nothing but air. The three Bull Sharks also ended up hitting nothing and seemed to be searching for their target.

"Huh? Where did he go?" Lin Mu was no longer there.

"Patriarch! Behind you!" the elders shouted.

They tried to help him too, but were a bit too slow to reach him.

"Slow." A voice was heard behind the patriarch.

"Wha—" the patriarch barely turned around and saw the figure of Lin Mu standing behind him when a golden fist came towards him.

~CRACK~

He was hit in the chest and felt his bones crack. The golden fist was like a heavy flail hitting him at full swing.

"Argh!" The patriarch cried in pain as he was sent flying.

"PATRIARCH!" The elders shouted and rushed towards him.

~shua~

But before they could do much, Lin Mu disappeared again and appeared behind the patriarch.

"How is he doing that?!" The elders were confused.

Lin Mu's golden fist slammed into the back of the patriarch, breaking more bones and making the man spit out blood.

~COUGH~

The patriarch was sent flying once more.

"GET TO THE PATRIARCH!"

"ACTIVATE THE OCEAN END SLAUGHTER FORMATION ARRAY!"

The elders quickly got into action. Knowing that the man in front of them was not simple, seeing as how he could move fast and catch their patriarch off guard.

~shua~

Lin Mu appeared at the location where the patriarch was flying towards and kicked out, making the patriarch bend like a cooked prawn.

~BOOM~

~KACHA~

More bones broke in the patriarch's body as his spirit Qi turned chaotic.

'Why can't I react? What is this man?' Ma Yun was lost.

He was doing his best to react and mobilized his spirit Qi to defend, but Lin Mu was giving him no chance. Before his spirit Qi could even finish one circuit to execute a Qi skill, it was broken apart by his attack.

Even his attacks were strange. At first there was no outer effect to it, as if it were a pure physical attack. Even then, the power of the attack was no less than that of a powerful Qi skill.

If it was just that and the patriarch was injured, he would be able to handle it. He was faster all a Dao Treading realm expert and could use his spirit Qi faster than most could think.

But then after the punch made contact with his body, sharp spirit Qi would suddenly appear out of nowhere, assaulting his meridians, breaking apart the spirit Qi he had mobilized.

The sharp spirit Qi was like hundreds of blades, slashing apart his own spirit Qi.

'How can the spirit Qi enter my body, though? It is impossible to break my defenses like that. I didn't even sense them being broken.' Ma Yun thought.

And while he was thinking this, another kick hit him from the back, this time shattering his leg and making it bend at an unnatural angle.

"GAH!"

Unfortunately for Ma Yun, he didn't know that this was something Lin Mu had learned very recently.

'Never though metal spirit Qi would work like this for me...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu had spent some time learning about the properties of the metal spirit Qi and knew that it could be used in many ways. The most common method being, amplifying the sharpness and power of spirit weapons.

But there were other ways to use it as well. For Lin Mu, who had a body which was basically covered with gold, using metal spirit Qi was as easy as breathing. Thus, taking his entire body as a weapon, Lin Mu amplified it and this gave rise to a new effect.

His spirit Qi could breakthrough the defenses of a cultivator and attack them internally. This was why it was so hard for the patriarch to resist. But Lin Mu also knew that if he slacked even a bit, the man would be able to recover quickly.

The only reason why Ma Yun was helpless right now was because this was his first time seeing something like this. Lin Mu wasn't so stupid as to think that a long lived expert like him would not be able to find a solution before that.

'Need to end it before that.' Lin Mu decided as he gathered more power.