

## Walker 111

### Chapter 111 - Professions Of A Cultivator

The captain's reaction was the last straw that broke the camel's back, as after hearing his words Li Peng was utterly shocked. No longer could he keep his composure as sweat started forming on his back and forehead.

"This... This, what kind of poison is this?" Li Peng questioned.

Seeing that the opportunity had appeared, Hei Wan decide to strike the iron while it was hot.

"My best guess is that it's a poison called the memory confounding powder. It has a delayed effect and all that are affected by it enter a daze and lose their memory of around an hour." Hei Wan answered.

The shocked expression was still there on Li Peng's face as he comprehended Hei Wan's words.

"Such a poison exists? And it can even affect cultivators. Truly fearsome!" Li Peng uttered.

"You need to leave now. We won't be affected by the poison as our faces are covered, but you will be affected as well soon." Hei Wan spoke.

"What should I do then? Even if I leave now won't I forget the events of the past one hour." Li Peng spoke.

"I need you to write a document and stamp it with your personal seal. Once you lose your memories, we will be able to prove that what we were saying was true." Hei Wan ordered.

Li Peng realized the importance of her words and immediately nodded.

"Yes, I'll do as you command, madam." Li Peng replied.

He then picked up a piece of parchment and swiftly wrote a letter of trust and then stamped it with his personal seal. Once the letter was done, he handed it to Hei Wan, who took it and stored it in her sleeve.

"Now we should be fine. I'll talk to Lin Mu, so you don't need to worry." Hei Wan spoke.

A sigh of relief escaped Li Peng's lips as he heard Hei Wan's words.

"We're lucky that madam Hei Wan is here. If you were not here, we would have been doomed." Li Peng spoke while walking away from the office along with Hei Wan.

"It's not entirely your fault Li Peng, it's the Town Head, and the Guard captains fault. They have been taking things too lightly these days. They did not even inform the officials in the Wu Lim city. I only got to know of this because of a few merchants." Hei Wan replied.

Now knowing that the plan was nearly complete, Hei Wan just waited for Li Peng to fall into a daze as well. Everything after that would be smooth sailing.

A few minutes later, Li Peng stumbled and fell down on a chair. Hei Wan called out to him a couple of times and confirmed that he was indeed under the effects of the memory confounding powder.

"Should we proceed now, leader?" Hei Bao asked.

"Yes, call Lin Mu. We are done here, I'll handle the rest myself." Hei Wan answered.

Hei Bao nodded and then went to fetch Lin Mu, who was now waiting in a different room. Lu Xiao was placed in this room as well, along with a few guards and physicians. The physicians were done checking Lu Xiao, while the guards were just keeping an eye.

Hei Bao entered the room and looked at Lin Mu. The guards spotted him and saluted him with cupped hands. He nodded to them and went towards Lin Mu.

"Let's go." Hei Bao spoke.

Lin Mu nodded and started following him. A minute later they met up with Hei Wan.

"Seems like the plan was successful." Lin Mu spoke with a little smile.

"Indeed, most of it is complete. Now all that's left is for me to continue the investigation." Hei Wan replied.

Lin Mu thought for a moment before deciding to ask her what had been in his mind for a while now.

"What is your identity that you were able to command the guards and even Li Peng?" Lin Mu question.

"That-" Hei Bao was about to speak when Hei Wan interrupted.

"It's fine. We can tell him." Hei Wan spoke to Hei Bao.

She then turned to look at Lin Mu and spoke.

"The identity I'm assuming right now is actually my real identity. I am a high official from Wu Lim City and work under the mayor." Hei Wan answered.

A slight trace of shock appeared on Lin Mu's face, but he managed to suppress it.

"I see. No wonder Li Peng seemed so easily convinced. He had already met you before." Lin Mu spoke.

"Yes, I've met him twice before. He was appointed to his current position as a supervisor by the mayor himself because of a few merits that he obtained." Hei Wan explained.

Lin Mu had not expected for Hei Wan to be a real official. He had originally thought that it was just a facade, and she had just set up a disguise that went deep. But the reality seemed to be rather different.

"How do we proceed now from here?" Lin Mu questioned.

"We now have direct access to the investigation, so we will take care of it. You can go and keep a watch with the mercenaries if you want to. The curfew should be canceled today now that the town head is dead." Hei Wan replied.

"Wait, how would the curfew be lifted? Won't they be even more alert now?" Lin Mu asked.

"No, all orders issued by an official are canceled upon their death, unless they are issued by a high official." Hei Wan answered.

"Ah, I see. That makes it much more easy for us now. Okay, then I'll head off for now." Lin Mu replied and then turned around.

A couple of minutes later Lin Mu left the town center feeling happy. His day had started off on a bad note, and now it was finally on track to something good. After Lin Mu left, Hei Wan and Hei Bao got busy with their work. They had some culprits to catch.

Outside, Lin Mu saw the guards taking care of the mercenaries and pedestrians that had fallen under the effect of the memory confounding powder. Lin Mu did a rough count and estimated that at least a hundred people were affected by the poison.

"This is indeed rather strong and very useful." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

"Indeed, alchemical products such as there are always in demand because of this very reason." Xukong chimed in.

"Hmm, perhaps I should try to acquire more of it, maybe." Lin Mu spoke to himself.

"You could do that, or perhaps even learn it yourself," Xukong suggested.

Lin Mu felt a little surprised by senior Xukong's words.

"You mean, become an alchemist myself?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yes, if you have the talent that is. We don't know that yet." Xukong replied.

"Talent? Can't I just learn it normally?" Lin Mu asked.

"Of course you can learn it by hard work, but the problem is that if you don't have the necessary talent, it will take you many years to even learn to refine the most basic pills," Xukong explained.

Lin Mu nodded in response and wondered if he had the talent.

"I would need to get the required materials and study materials before that though, won't I?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Not necessarily. If we just want to check for talent, we can do that once you reach the peak stage of the qi refining realm. Once you are at that stage, we will see if you can ignite a qi flame." Xukong answered.

"A qi flame?" Lin Mu further asked.

"It is the most basic requirements needed to refine an alchemical pill. Although external flames can also be used to refine the pills, checking if you can ignite a qi flame is the fastest method to see if you have the talent to become an alchemist. The most important ability that an alchemist need is the control over the flames and heat." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu thought over it and wondered if he would have the talent or not. Xukong was able to guess what was going through Lin Mu's mind, thus he decided to talk again.

"Don't be discouraged if you don't have the talent to become an alchemist. You can still try out the other professions of a cultivator." Xukong spoke.

"What other professions of a cultivator are there, senior?" Lin Mu asked with curiosity in his eyes.

"The other popular professions of a cultivator are Weapons forging, spirit tool refinement, formation creation, and beast taming. There are others as well, but they are not as common." Xukong answered.

"Of these, which is the easiest to learn?" Lin Mu asked.

"There is no single answer to this. Depending on the talent and resources, some professions may be easier for certain cultivators and difficult for others. If you consider having no talent and the bare minimum resources, then I would say formation creation is the easiest to learn." Xukong answered.

After hearing senior Xukong's answerer, ideas were already running in Lin Mu's mind and he was lost in them. Eventually, he reached his house while thinking about them.

## **Chapter 112 - The 'Paths'**

Lin Mu let out a sigh after reaching his house. He had been through a lot of events in the past twenty-four hours and was now feeling mentally exhausted. He used to look forward to a little excitement, but this was way too much for him.

"Let's rest for a bit. I still have three hours till sunset." Lin Mu muttered to himself as he opened the gate of his house.

~Sigh~

He walked into the courtyard and let a tired sigh. He felt as if the exhaustion was rushing to him, now that he had stepped into his house. Lin Mu already had a few tasks charted out for the night, thus he wanted to cultivate and rest for a bit.

Strangely for him, cultivation was pretty relaxing and also helped in restoring his energy. Lin Mu was just about to open the door of his bedroom when he heard a rumble in his belly.

'Oh, I've completely forgotten to eat due to all the stuff that happened. Guess, I'll make something.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu thus went to the kitchen and cooked some spirit beast meat. Fifteen minutes later he was done eating and was now sitting on his bed in a cross-legged position.

"Finally..." Lin Mu muttered.

He then started chanting the severing heart sutra and began his cultivation session. Lin Mu discovered that his speed of cultivation seemed to have increased by a little bit, a few percent perhaps.

Ever since the morning when Hei Wen had that strange incident, Lin Mu felt as if his comprehension of the severing heart sutra had increased by a slight amount.

Lin Mu cultivated for two hours, after which his spirit qi in his dantian was not only completely replenished but had actually increased. He tried measuring his spirit qi wisps and found out that he had a little over nine hundred wisps of spirit qi.

Another thing he discovered was that originally according to senior Xukong's words, his dantian's capacity should have been about a thousand wisps. But now that he had nine hundred wisps of spirit qi

in his dantian, it was nowhere close to being filled. It was perhaps about sixty percent filled. Unable to understand the reason for this he decided to ask Senior Xukong.

"Senior Xukong, my dantian's capacity seems to have increased somehow." Lin Mu spoke.

Xukong was currently busy in his own cultivation as well. He had borne the full brunt of the impact of the Demonic path's aura, thus he had a few minor injuries. He had just finished healing them when he heard Lin Mu speaking.

Xukong awakened from his trance but continued absorbing the extremely pure Spatial energy within the mysterious ring. If Lin Mu were to see him right now, he would see that his size had actually increased by a little bit as well. Before Xukong was about the size of the tip of a pinky finger, but now he was as big as the size of a tip of an index finger.

"Oh, so you've finally noticed," Xukong spoke.

Lin Mu felt a little surprised upon knowing that Xukong had already known about this.

"What do you mean, senior?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Your dantian's capacity has been increasing for a while now. I don't know the exact reason for it but it has been happening for a while now. Last time I checked, the capacity of your dantian was at about 1300 spirit qi wisps." Xukong answered.

"1300 spirit qi wisps? But senior it seems to be even higher now. My dantian is only sixty percent filled." Lin Mu replied.

"Oh? Only sixty percent? It seems like your dantian's capacity has increased to about 1500 spirit qi wisps now. This is a good thing so you shouldn't worry." Xukong spoke.

"But won't it take me longer to reach the late stage of the qi refining realm this way senior?" Lin Mu asked with concern.

"It will indeed take you longer, but think of it in this way. You will have higher spirit qi reserves than other cultivators and would be able to last a long time in a battle. And of course, when you reach the next stage eventually, you will be even stronger." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu realized the benefits of this and nodded in response.

"I see, senior." Lin Mu responded.

Lin Mu estimated that he should still have about thirty minutes left till he would have to leave for the mercenary camp to help Hong Luo, thus he decided to ask Senior Xukong about a few more matters that had been bugging him for a while now.

"Senior what exactly happened to me in the town head's office? You told me you would explain it later on." Lin Mu questioned.

"Ah, yes. You awakened a new sutra from the Nine divine sutras right?" Xukong responded.

"Yes Senior, The Burning Heart Sutra." Lin Mu spoke.

"When you were obtaining the Burning Heart Sutra, I witnessed the changes that happened within the mysterious ring," Xukong replied.

Xukong then went on to explain all the events that he had seen in the mysterious ring.

He hid certain parts such as the face changing Heart Demon and the True Grand formation array as he knew that Lin Mu was not ready for them. The True Grand formation array was simply beyond his capacity to understand, while the Heart Demon was a sensitive topic that was very likely to disturb and hurt him mentally.

Lin Mu patiently listened to senior Xukong's explanation. Five minutes later the explanation was done and Lin Mu was feeling a little strange that so much had happened, unknown to him. Though the main part of his interest was the thing that senior Xukong spoke about, 'The Demonic Path'.

"What is this Demonic Path, senior? Or rather what are these 'Paths' that you've spoken about before." Lin Mu questioned.

"A path can be simplified as the amalgamation of an entire type of cultivation. It includes the heavenly laws that dictate the mortals as well as the immortals. As for the Demonic Path, it can be said to be a combination of everything that a Demon would learn and experience during his cultivation." Xukong answered.

He then saw the confused expression on Lin Mu's face and understood that he would need to explain this more deeply and perhaps with more examples.

Xukong thus started his explanation.

The three sutras that Lin Mu had obtained from the Nine Divine Heart sutras were all a representation of different 'Paths'.

The Calming Heart sutra was the representation of the Buddhist path and combined its characteristics of peace, tranquility, mercy, and enlightenment.

The Severing Heart Sutra was the representation of the Sword path and combined its characteristics of fierceness, unyielding demeanor, staunchness, righteousness, unwavering will, and supremacy.

The Burning Heart Sutra was the representation of the Demonic path and combined its characteristic of violence, rage, strength, uninhibited will, and freedom.

Xukong had first attributed the raw strength that Lin Mu had demonstrated while killing the town head to be Demonic Might. Demonic Might was an innate ability of the Demon race and increased the strength of the user while reducing their inhibitions and dulling their senses.

But when Lin Mu demonstrated the skillful use of the Blink skill as well as his spirit sense, Xukong abandoned that thought. Only when he learned that Lin Mu had obtained the Burning heart sutra did he understand that this was something that was not Demonic Might yet belong to the Demonic path.

Lin Mu stayed silent after hearing senior Xukong's explanation and pondered on it for a few minutes.

"What are Demons?" Lin Mu questioned after pondering on Senior Xukong's words.

Lin Mu knew what the word 'Demon' meant, he had even listened to the stories that were told by the elders when he was a little child. They were described to be evil and merciless creatures that would kill people heartlessly and eat them. In short, they were used to scaring children into behaving.

"Demon is a general term for the creatures that belong to the Demon race. There are many different kinds of demons or you could say species of demons in the Demonic race. They are actually a common race in the myriad of worlds just like humans." Xukong answered.

"Wait, so demons are real? But aren't they supposed to be evil and dangerous?" Lin Mu asked with confusion.

"Yes, they do exist. Demons are just like any other intelligent race in this universe. The only difference is that they have a different culture and characteristics. While they are predisposed to violence and anger, they aren't inherently evil.

They do looker widely different from humans though, having features such as scales, horns, wings, tails and such." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu suddenly remembered the vast red expanse that he was in before. The bloody lands that spanned across immeasurable distances and the red sky that made one dread their existence. He remembered the various beings that he had seen there. The very same beings that had taught him the Burning Heart sutra.

While remembering this, Lin Mu unknowingly entered a daze. The beings started chanting the Burning Heart sutra in his memories and he too started chanting it along with them.

The Mysterious ring on Lin Mu's hand started humming again and the ethereal altar within it became active again. The Aura of the Demonic path reappeared in the ring and also started emanating from Lin Mu's body.

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Far across the Northern Forest, beyond the frozen mountains, there existed a shrine.

This shrine was hidden between a ring of mountains and seemed to be desolate. A bell hung at the top of the shine that looked to be made of bronze yet was very rusted. One could tell that the bell had existed for yore and had weathered the tribulations of time.

Suddenly the bell that hung at the top of this shrine started ringing. The sound of the bell echoed across the mountains and spread far and wide.

Deep beneath the surface of the shrine, an ancient presence awakened.

~Sigh~

"Soon..."

**Chapter 113 - Approval**

Xukong had instantly felt the aura of the Demonic path and had rushed to the Ethereal altar to check. Though different from before, the aura of the Demonic path wouldn't even let him get close enough, not to say about checking the altar.

"What is happening this time?" Xukong muttered.

Xukong even tried talking to Lin Mu but received no response. Not having any other option left, he tried looking into his mind. He had expected to be blocked by a barrier like last time, but did not. Instead, his spirit sense was actually pulled in without his control.

'This is rather strange.' Xukong thought as he observed his spirit sense probe being pulled in.

Xukong could have resisted easily but did not, and allowed it to be dragged in. He wondered what exactly was happening inside Lin Mu's mind. A few seconds later his spirit sense arrived within Lin Mu's mind and he started observing the changes.

The environment started forming up from the ground up, as the vast expanse of the bloodied lands appeared in front of Xukong's vision. The blank sky then turned blood red as clouds of foul looking qi spread across the horizon.

A lone Lin Mu then appeared in the middle of this expanse, and so did the numerous other figures. The said figures were mere silhouettes and had features such as scales, tails, feathers, and horns. Some were big, and some were small. But their most prominent feature was the aura that was emanated every time they spoke.

The voices of the countless figures were melded together and turned into an amalgamation of Demonic chants. These demonic figures were chanting in an unknown language that Xukong could not understand, yet could still feel the tone.

Lin Mu was there, standing still in the middle of all of the Demonic figures, absentmindedly. The only activity that can be sensed from him was the chants that were coming out of his lips. He seemed to be repeating after the Demonic figures.

With every repetition of the chants, the aura from the Demonic figures would enter Lin Mu's body from his skin. Over time, a thin layer of red membrane had formed on Lin Mu's skin. It was as if his body was adapting to the Demonic aura.

Xukong felt nothing but shock at this scene, as he knew exactly what was happening.

"Will Of the Demonic Path!" Xukong exclaimed.

"How?! Only the scions of the primordials can get its approval." Xukong uttered.

He took a closer look at the Demonic figures and confirmed that they were indeed what he thought they were.

'Even the Sages of Twilight were unsuccessful in gaining its approval, yet Lin Mu can. This is simply astounding.' Xukong marveled.

"If the other wills awaken as well, then the heavens will be thrown into upheaval. I need to keep a close eye on this." Xukong muttered to himself.



A few minutes later the aura of the Demonic Path vanished and the scene within Lin Mu's mind disappeared as well. Xukong retracted his spirit sense and saw that the ethereal altar had calmed down as well.

'Finally, it has ended. Now all that's left is to see what effect it had on Lin Mu.' Xukong concluded.

He didn't have to wait long as Lin Mu awakened from his trance a minute later. He opened his eyes as they flashed for a second. If one could freeze that moment and look into Lin Mu's eyes, they would see an endless sea of Demons marching into oblivion, their aura towering into the sky, infecting the heavens.

~Haaaaa~

Lin Mu let out a breath as he looked around.

"Huh? What happened?" Lin Mu questioned.

Xukong had already decided that he wouldn't tell Lin Mu the truth about what had exactly happened to him. It was too much for him and would only hurt him in the short term, considering his cultivation base. Gaining the approval of one of the 'Wills' wasn't exactly good for a low leveled cultivator such as him. It was better that this was hidden for as long as possible.

Alas, unknown to Lin Mu or Xukong, someone had already become aware of this event.

"You had another bout of enlightenment. A short one, albeit." Xukong answered.

"Ah, is that so senior? But wasn't that too fast, I just received the Burning Heart sutra?" Lin Mu replied.

"Enlightenment and epiphanies are not something that can be asked for or known. They occur according to the fate and the luck of a cultivator. Their workings are mysterious and are masked by the Grand Dao." Xukong spoke in an esoteric tone.

Lin Mu simply stayed silent and pondered over the meaning of senior Xukong's words. Five minutes later he seemed to have understood it enough and was content. Lin Mu tried to see what level of comprehension he had for the Burning Heart sutra, but surprisingly found that it was still at the first stage of external comprehension.

"It doesn't seem like I had much progress in its comprehension though, senior." Lin Mu spoke.

"Of course, you can't expect to progress at the same rate you did for the other two sutras. You need to steadily and stably comprehend it. A great epiphany can only be looked up to, but it's your own effort that will guide you to it." Xukong answered in a sagely tone.

"Yes, senior." Lin Mu responded in a respectful tone.

Lin Mu's eyes wandered over to the windows and he realized that it was already the time for the sunset. The light had become dim and even the faint crescent moon could be seen in the distance, hiding within the Grey clouds.

'I should head out now, I have to help Hong Luo.' Lin Mu remembered.

Lin Mu stood up and stretched his body feeling refreshed and relaxed. His cultivation of session had restored his spirit qi and the short bout of enlightenment had seemingly relaxed his mind. His belly was satiated with spirit beast meat and his mind with determination.

He checked and ensured that he had everything before he left the courtyard. Lin Mu had originally intended to go through the items and documents that he had gathered from the Town Head's office and bedroom, before talking with the Hei Corps. But now that he was already late, he decided that he would have to do it tomorrow.

Lin Mu entered the street and saw the people walking around like normal. They seemed to be a little scared and nervous still, but it was not as bad as he had expected them to be after hearing the news about the demise of the town head and Han Lei.

"Seems like Hei Wan did a good job in managing the aftermath. The curfew is not active and even the people seem to be relatively calm." Lin Mu spoke.

"It does indeed seem like that, but we still don't know what reaction the culprits will be having after knowing about it. You will need to be careful and alert tonight." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu simply nodded in response and made his way towards the Western district where the mercenary camp was located. On the way, he could see people discussing about the events of today and also about the 'culprit'.

"Did you hear about the High official that has come to the town?" A random person spoke to another.

"Yeah, she's apparently going to help solve the problems that have been plaguing the town." The Other person replied.

"I wonder what the culprits were thinking of doing this, are they not afraid of retaliation from the Mayor?"

"I don't think so. If they were afraid they would have not even thought of this, let alone doing it. And now that they've killed the Vice captain and the Town head, this is nothing but a spit in the mayor's face."

"There's no chance that the mayor will let this matter go. His prestige has been challenged."

Lin Mu heard a multitude of people talk with each other during his journey. Nearly everyone was talking about the culprits, Hei Wan, or the mayor.

"Seems like they think Hei Wan was intentionally sent by the Mayor." Lin Mu muttered.

'This should work in our favor, I think. The culprits will now not only have to wonder if they have traitors in their midst but also about the wrath of the city Mayor.' Lin Mu thought as he reached the western district.

As soon as he entered the district, he could see the difference. The number of guards patrolling the area had increased. Even in the residential district, he didn't see so many guards, but he attributed that to it still being early.

'There should be More guards there at night.' Lin Mu guessed.

He soon reached the Mercenary camp and saw that it was brightly lit with torches and lamps. All the mercenaries seemed active and were discussing with each other. Small teams of mercenaries could be seen patrolling at regular intervals along the paths that ran between the tents. Even the number of mercenaries had increased by a lot.

Lin Mu estimated that there should be more than three hundred mercenaries here at this point.

"Did some mercenaries return from the Norther forest?" Lin Mu wondered.

As he thought this, he suddenly saw a group of mercenaries sitting along with Hong Luo in the center of the camp. The mercenaries were well equipped, and Lin Mu could even see that Hong Luo seemed to be rather respectful to them.

There were five mercenaries in that group, four men and a whip wielding woman.

### **Chapter 114 - Eavesdropping**

Lin Mu kept on walking and got closer, yet no one seemed to have paid him any mind. They seemed to be more engrossed in their own conversations. Only when he got close enough to listen to them did he understand why.

"How are we to approach this now?" One of the men asked.

"Hmm, we definitely cannot take the same route we took before. We were too passive, we already know what happened back then." Another man spoke.

"Yes, the mayor has been unresponsive for a long time, but finally he's responding." A short man spoke while nodding.

"Don't forget that the only reason he responded is because the town head and the vice captain died. If this is his reactive level, then heavens know what else he lets go by." A brawny man spoke with a little anger on his face.

"I've always felt that the mayor of the Wu Lim city was strange. The current events have only proved it for me." The whip wielding woman replied.

Hong Luo, who had been silent all this while finally spoke,

"Comrades, I know it has been tough for us, but now that you all are finally here, I believe we can get through this tribulation together."

The serious looking mercenary who was sitting at the head of the group looked up at Hong Luo after he finished speaking.

"You are right up to a certain point, but we still need to look out. If they can take away cultivators without anyone noticing then the culprits are very strong and no doubt are cultivators themselves." The serious looking man spoke.

The people that were in his group all nodded in approval. One could tell from seeing this that this man commanded great respect and prestige in his companions.

"You don't need to worry leader Teng, I sought out help from a cultivator from the town as well." Hong Luo spoke.

The gazes of everyone in the group turned a little sharp after hearing Hong Luo's words as they all turned to look at him. The Leader of the group Teng also did the same and looked at Hong Luo with an inquisitive look.

"And what kind of cultivator is this person that you've asked? Are you sure that person is trustable?" Leader Teng questioned.

Hong Luo gulped after seeing the multiple pairs of eyes on his person and felt a little nervous. It was not just because these people were his colleagues, but rather the difference in their strengths and cultivation bases.

Even though Hong Luo himself was at the peak stage of the Qi refining realm, the cultivation technique that he used was rather inferior and could not compare these people. While there were only two people in this group that could match his cultivation base, the others were nothing to scoff at.

While out of five only two were at the peak stage of the Qi refining realm, the other three were at the late stage of the Qi refining realm. Even if the two experts at the peak stage of the Qi refining realm did not fight with him, the other three were already enough to finish him off.

"You don't need to worry, the person I'm talking about is at the peak stage of the Qi refining realm as well." Hong Luo spoke.

The five people seemed unimpressed by Hong Luo's words and keep on staring at him.

"We already have two people, three including you, at the peak stage of the Qi refining realm here. What use would that new person be? And what kind of reward did you promise him, if it's too much then we will just be making losses." The short mercenary spoke.

"It's not like that, the person that I've sought help from is no common cultivator. While they are a cultivator in the peak stage of the Qi refining realm, they are also only fifteen years old and they also have refined their spirit sense." Hong Luo replied.

The change in the expressions of the mercenaries could be witnessed upon them hearing Hong Luo's words. Some of them had their jaws open in shock while the leader and the whip wielding woman had their eyes wide and their fingers clenched.

"What do you mean?" One of the mercenaries spoke in doubt of Hong Luo's words.

"Yes, are you even sure about what you are saying, right?" Another mercenary added.

"Yes, I'm sure. I witnessed his spirit sense first hand and have met him. As for the rewards, he was rather reserved and humble. He did not demand anything overt and only asked for a few healing and restorative pills in exchange for his help in watching over the camp." Hong Luo Explained.

The five mercenaries went silent for a minute after hearing Hong Luo's explanation.

The Whip wielding woman could not hold back her curiosity any longer and spoke.

"You do know that, if he is as you say he is, then we will have to bear responsibility. A cultivator of that age and talent is not found easily. There no chance that he's not the disciple of a top sect already or is under the tutelage of one of the aristocratic clans."

Hong Luo turned more serious upon hearing her words and thought over it for himself.

"It should be fine, I think. I mean, he approved it himself and I doubt he doesn't have a senior keeping a watch over him, if he's away from the sect. I think that's just an added advantage that we have. If he does end up in trouble because of this, at least we know that the culprit won't be able to get away scot-free because of the Senior that will be keeping the watch." Hong Luo hypothesized.

The leader who was in thought all this time finally roused from it and tuned to Hong Luo.

"Let's hope it is as you think. Otherwise... imagine a cultivator that has the same talent as the crown prince of the Great Zhou empire falling here in this small town." Leader Teng spoke and then interrupted himself in the middle of his own words.

If the five mercenaries were only shocked before then they were utterly terrified now. They had heard of the achievements of the crown prince of the Great Zhou Empire before. The crown prince was recently declared as the youngest person to have reached the Core formation realm at the age of twenty.

Though people knew that this was only applicable in terms of the aristocratic clans and not the top sects themselves. It was a well known yet unproven fact that the top sects had a small army of disciples who were at the same as the crown prince.

It was even said that all the core disciples of the top sects were actually much better than the crown prince and had better talent than him. There were even some hushed rumors that the actual record for the youngest cultivator was not even twenty years of age but rather actually seventeen. Still, it was unknown which cultivator or the disciple of a sect had the honor of bearing the said title.

While this would seem like a small three years of difference to most people, they would not be able to believe the resources and the guidance that's needed to raise a cultivator of that level. Even a mere difference of months would be earth shaking not to say about three entire years.

Lin Mu had long since halted in his steps upon hearing the words of these mercenaries. Their conversation was very informative and interesting to him, thus he chose not to interrupt and just watched from the distance.

Even when the conversation drifted to Lin Mu himself, he stayed silent and kept on listening. He knew that once he came into the picture, the candid talk that was going on right now would easily disappear.

Lin Mu stood there for an entire thirty minutes and within these thirty minutes, he got to hear more news about the world than he had in the past year. Some of the information widened his horizons while the others made him a little nervous and unsure.

After confirming that the majority of the conversation had ended and it was the right time, Lin Mu chose to enter into the fray. His appearance was a little surprising to the mercenaries, especially to the leader and the Whip wielding woman.

Lin Mu could instantly feel the spirit sense probes spreading over him. He quickly reacted with his own and stopped them before they could come near him. This was rather a friendly warning than an actual threat, thus Lin Mu did not go all out.

Yet even then, what Lin Mu did not know was that his little bout of enlightenment that he had gone through recently had changed his demeanor and aura. This reflected in his bearing and even in the temperance of his spirit qi.

When the mercenaries felt Lin Mu's spirit sense interacting with theirs, they felt chills going down their spines as cold sweat appeared on their faces.

Upon seeing that no one was speaking anything, Lin Mu decided to go ahead and introduce himself.

"Hello! I am Lin Mu."

### **Chapter 115 - Helping Hong Luo**

Lin Mu had spoken, yet no one seemed to be replying to him. He stood still in awkward silence for about ten seconds before someone responded. It was Hong Luo who seemed to be feeling strange and nervous too.

"Greetings, brother Lin Mu. You are right on time." Hong Luo greeted.

The other mercenaries except for Leader Teng and the whip wielding woman stood up after seeing Hong Luo initiate the greetings. They could not tell what had happened, but their current situation felt more stressful to them than when they actually fought deadly spirit beasts.

Leader Teng forcefully tried to regain his composure as he stood up and cupped his hands in greeting.

"Greetings brother Lin Mu, my name is Teng Donghai, and this is my team." Leader Teng spoke.

Everyone then started to introduce themselves to Lin Mu. One could tell that they were rather nervous and seemed to be paying extra attention to etiquette.

"Greetings, I am Xiong An." Greeted the Brawny mercenary.

"Greetings, I am Long Da." Greeted the mercenary with an axe on his back.

"I'm Yi Duyi." Said the short mercenary.

"And I am Hao Xiao." Said the whip wielding woman.

Having heard everyone's names, Lin Mu felt a little satisfied. At least for him, the awkward silence was a little painful. Having finished with the greetings, Hong Luo invited Lin Mu to sit along with them. He offered him his chair and asked a mercenary that was passing by to bring him another.

Respectfully taking the offer, Lin Mu sat down and looked at the mercenaries, waiting for them to start. He had been observing their conversation, thus he wanted to know how they will be proceeding. This was a little off course for him, as originally he had expected that he would need to guard the camp by himself and the Hei Corps.

While he would be guarding in person, the members of the Hei corps would be patrolling in silence by hiding in the distance. Lin Mu knew that they had more experience in matters such as these, thus did not worry about them not appearing. He had already been informed beforehand that they will send him a signal when they appear.

Having received his chair, Hong Luo sat down to discuss the plan.

"So brother Lin Mu, we were just about to start with the plan. Luckily for us, Leader Teng and his team returned early from their hunt, so we hopefully won't have to worry as much." Hong Luo spoke.

The other mercenaries simply nodded in agreement, showing that they had already discussed them.

Lin Mu was wondering, though, what did they know about the incident in the town. He wanted to know if they had any opinion on it and if they knew that it involved him. So that later he knew how to make decisions in the future with them. While walking in the town he had heard people talking about all the other related people, but somehow there was no mention of him.

'Did Hei Wan hide my involvement somehow?' Lin Mu wondered.

"Have you all heard about what happened in the town today?" Lin Mu questioned.

Everyone's faces turned a little serious upon hearing Lin Mu's words.

"Yes, we know what happened today. Though it was certainly very unexpected." Hong Luo replied.

"Not just unexpected, it was outright strange I would say." Long Da spoke.

"Indeed, no matter what, we still need to be alert. If they can kill the town head and the vice captain in the broad daylight, then there's no limit to them." Xiong An added.

Lin Mu listened to the words of these mercenaries and confirmed that there seemed to be no information about his involvement or even Xiao Lu's anywhere.

'This should make things a little easier.' Lin Mu thought.

"So what are we going to be doing tonight?" Lin Mu questioned after having confirmed his doubt.

Leader Teng, who had been listening silently until now, spoke.

"We already have the common mercenaries patrolling and have also told them to stay alert. Everyone has been assigned shifts so that the posts are always manned. This already covers most of the area of the camp, so what we're going to do is split the entire camp into seven regions."

"One for each of us." Hao Xiao added.

Lin Mu nodded in understanding. The plan seemed fine and he couldn't tell how else they could improve it more, except for adding more cultivators. But right now, all they had was these many people. Suddenly Lin Mu realized that the two other mercenaries that were with Hong Luo in the morning seem to be nowhere nearby.

"Where are the Ming brothers?" Lin Mu asked, turning to Hong Luo.

"Oh, they're in the town. Earlier, one of the representatives of the new High official came to meet us. They wanted to ask a few questions, thus I talked with them. They also wanted some statements from the other mercenaries, so I sent them along with the Ming brothers." Hong Luo answered.

Lin Mu felt a little strange upon hearing that Hong Luo had sent a pair of mute brothers on a task like this.

"But aren't they mute?" Lin Mu asked with curiosity.

"Yes, they are, of course. They are not there to talk, though. They have gone along as protection for the other mercenaries." Hong Luo replied.

'That does make more sense.' Lin Mu thought.

"Now then let's discuss the positions." Teng Xiaolian spoke.

Everyone nodded and intently started to listen.

They talked for an hour before everything was finished, and everyone separated. Lin Mu was assigned the position that was to the northwestern part of the camp. It was in a relatively safe area and had plenty of mercenaries patrolling.

"Seems like they deliberately assigned you this position," Xukong spoke.

"Yes, senior. Their misunderstanding is quite advantageous for us." Lin Mu replied.

"Indeed. Falsehoods, deceit, illusions and schemes, these are perhaps some of the strongest weapons that can be used to fight an enemy without actually fighting them. You can defeat an enemy even before they know that you are their enemy." Xukong stated with a sagely tone.

Lin Mu carefully listened to senior Xukong's words and comprehended them. He could truly see the benefit in senior's words, thus wanted to completely understand them. Perhaps one day these would become his own weapons.

"Though Senior after hearing the mercenaries' words, it seems like they think of me rather highly. I can't seem to understand their comparison. Is it really that big of a deal becoming a Core Condensation realm cultivator at the age of twenty?" Lin Mu questioned.

"That is a good question. Considering the level of this world, I would say that it is indeed quite impressive reaching the Core condensation realm at the age of twenty. But, if you consider an average across the worlds, it is rather common. In fact, it is not that uncommon for there to be people who reach the Nascent soul stage at that age." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu felt his horizons broaden upon hearing senior Xukong's words.

"When do you think I would reach the core condensation realm, senior?" Lin Mu curiously asked.

"Well, that is up to you. The process itself is rather straightforward, thus all you need to do is cultivate with all your heart. But if I consider your current pace, I would say that you should reach the core condensation realm within two years." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu imagined the day that he would be reaching the realm and wondered what it would feel like.



While Lin Mu was lost in his thoughts, strange sounds seemed to be coming from the side of the Forest. Most of the people were used to them, and even he himself was used to these sounds as they were common.

But the sound that came just now was extremely strange and unnatural. It was as if someone was dragging a blunt rod over a wooden plank. It was gruff and seemed to be faint. Lin Mu instantly became alert and looked around, but saw that none of the mercenaries seemed to be aware of the sound.

"They can't hear it. Your sensitivity to the sounds is higher because of your spirit sense." Xukong spoke.

"I should investigate it, perhaps?" Lin Mu questioned.

"No, wait for a while. It seems to be coming from far away in the forest. It won't be wise to go there right now." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu nodded and then spoke,

"Then I'll wait and see if the sound continues. If it does, I'll inform the others. Or if it comes closer then I'll investigate it myself."

Xukong did not speak anymore, and Lin Mu took this as a sign of understanding.

Lin Mu did not have to wait long either as the sound only got more loud. It seemed to be coming closer and closer. Five minutes later it had reached close enough that even the other mercenaries seemed to be able to hear it.

Seeing that everyone was now alert, Lin Mu decided to act.

"Sound the alarm. We may have a potential problem." Lin Mu spoke to the other mercenaries.

"Yes, sir." The mercenaries replied and ran away swiftly to inform the others.

The mercenaries had already been informed about Lin Mu and were instructed to follow his commands, thus they did not hesitate one moment before acting on it.

"Let's see what this is." Lin Mu muttered as he withdrew the short sword from its sheath.

Lin Mu walked forward and stood near the edge of the forest, with other mercenaries standing at his back, all alert and ready to defend.

The sound kept on coming closer, and now Lin Mu could also hear something else along with it. It was the sounds of someone's footsteps. Soon a faint silhouette could be seen appraising from the trees. It seemed to be humanoid and seemed to be dragging something.

The mercenaries threw some torches near the forest to illuminate it and see what the thing that was approaching was. Even though the rest of the mercenaries couldn't tell what it was, Lin Mu with his better eyesight already knew.

It seemed to be a heavily injured man dragging a large shield on which another person was lying. The man had a broken spear on his back that would tap and drag on the shield as he pulled it. The man seemed to be struggling and stumbling to pull the shield and the man that was laid upon it.

As they got close, Lin Mu could also see the person that was lying on the shield. It was also a man, but he was covered with a cloth. But from the limbs that were exposed from the sides, Lin Mu could tell for sure that it was a man.

When the injured man finally came in the illuminated portion, Lin Mu finally recognized him.

"ZHOU YE!"

### **Chapter 116 - Zhou Ye**

Lin Mu would have never expected that he would be seeing Zhou Ye here. Zhou Ye was none other than the second hunter who had become a cultivator in the Northern Town. He was also the person who had won the annual martial tournament in the Wu Lim city last year.

It was also Zhou Ye, in whose hands Lin Mu had first seen a spirit stone in. Unlike Gan Ma, who was oppressive and disliked, Zhou Ye actually had a decent reputation in the town. While he didn't particularly help people or did anything beneficial for them, he didn't do anything to hurt them either.

Because of his neutral reputation, most people in the town recognized him and did not mind him. He and his small team of hunters were also the more sought after rather than Gan Ma's. Though ever since the plague last year, Zhou Ye's team of hunters had dwindled and now only two people were left. The other members had all succumbed to the plague last year.

Lin Mu had seen Zhou Ye a few times before, and even his father was acquainted with Zhou Ye, having cooperated in some hunts over the years. Though Lin Mu did not expect Zhou Ye to recognize him.

Pushing his train of thoughts to the back of his mind, Lin Mu rushed to the injured man to provide him assistance.

"CALL THE HEALERS!" Lin Mu shouted to the other mercenaries.

A few of the mercenaries immediately turned around to carry out his orders, while the rest rushed along with him. But still, Lin Mu was much faster than them and reached the injured man in a couple of seconds.

Zhou Ye too watched the people approaching him and the voice that had called out his name. His eyes were glazed over and the immense fatigue within them could be felt from the distance. There were multiple injuries on the man's body, with the most prominent one being the Bone that was popping out of his left shoulder.

One could easily tell that his left arm was broken and the humerus bone had popped out sideways from the shoulder. The man also had multiple gashes and wounds all over his body, along with a large claw mark that extended from the man's forehead onto his face, covering the nose, lips, and chin and then extending to the chest and the left arm.

Just from the distance between the five claw marks, one could tell that whatever beast that inflicted it was massive in size and had five claws on one limb, perhaps. Looking at Zhou Ye made one wonder how that man had still survived with all these injuries. Most of the injuries had stopped bleeding, and the blood had dried over, which allowed the observer to know that the wounds were perhaps inflicted a day ago.

Zhou Ye could not see clearly and only had one eye that was still open. The other one was too swollen to see from. Upon seeing that he had reached safety, a slight smile accompanied by pain, dressed his face as his mind relaxed in relief, making him collapse.

But just as he was about to hit the ground, Lin Mu appeared in a flash and held him up. He then gently turned him to the side and laid him down. He did a preliminary check on his body and discovered the multiple grievous wounds.

"Use your spirit sense and observe his internal condition." Xukong reminded Lin Mu.

"Ah yes!" Lin Mu responded and hurriedly extended his spirit sense.

The spirit sense tendril touched Zhou Yew's head and then scanned all over his body. Lin Mu discovered multiple internal injuries. Even though he had no knowledge about organs or injuries on them, he could still tell that they were injured because of the blood that was pooling inside his body. There were also many other bones in his body that were fractured and cracked.

Eight of Zhou Yew's ribs were cracked, with one of them bending inward and was only a few millimeters away from piercing his heart. Lin Mu then used his spirit sense and tried to sense Zhou Ye's meridians, but was unable to sense them. Wanting to gain a clearer view, Lin Mu started chanting the severing heart sutra and then tried to sense them again.

This time Lin Mu's mind was still and free from any distractions. His perception rose as a result and he was soon able to sense the extremely faint pulse of qi that was flowing through Zhou Ye's meridians. Even his meridians were damaged in multiple places, and Lin Mu could tell that the spirit qi was being impeded.

Lin Mu continued tracing the flow of qi and reached Zhou Ye's dantian. His dantian seemed to be completely empty and dry of spirit qi. Faint cracks could even be seen in its surroundings. Though the thing that surprised Lin Mu was the size of his dantian.

Compared to Lin Mu's own dantian, Zhou Ye's was about three times smaller. Because Zhou Ye was so injured and depleted of spirit qi, Lin Mu could not estimate his cultivation base.

"What could his cultivation base be, Senior?" Lin Mu questioned.

"He should have been at the peak stage of the qi refining realm." Xukong estimated.

"What? But the size of his dantian is so small. I thought he would at most be at the late stage of the Qi refining realm." Lin Mu replied.

"The injuries to his meridians and dantian are not because of the beast or whatever that harmed him," Xukong spoke.

"Then how else would he get them then?" Lin Mu impatiently asked.

"He has probably consumed a potential igniting pill. It's a special kind of alchemical pill, that can provide a massive increase in strength and qi. It is supposed to be used in terms of emergencies and life and death situations. Though it has the side effect of reducing if not crippling the cultivation of the said individual." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu felt shocked that such a pill could exist. Now having learned of this, his attention was focused on how to save the man in front of him.

"How do I help him, senior? Do I feed him the healing pills?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Feed him one each of the internal replenishment pill and lesser wound restoration pill. Then use your spirit qi and gently guide it into his meridians. Place your right hand on his abdomen and your hand left on his heart. This will create a small qi circuit that should help replenish his qi and also help in healing his injuries." Xukong explained.

Following Senior Xukong's instructions, Lin Mu first fed Zhou Ye the two pills. The pills melted after entering his mouth and flowed down his throat. Lin Mu then placed his right hand on Zhou Ye's abdomen and his left on his heart.

Then, while using his spirit sense to trace his meridians, Lin Mu started pushing his own spirit qi into Zhou Ye's meridians. At first, it was difficult for him, but soon under the effect of the two healing pills, Zhou Ye's body started responding.

Lin Mu was successful in inserting his spirit qi into Zhou Ye's meridians. Under the instructions of senior Xukong, he then guided the spirit qi in a special circuit.

While Lin Mu was doing this, the other mercenaries that were accompanying him checked up on the other person that was lying on the shield that was being dragged by Zhou Ye. They lifted the cloth that was covering it and then recoiled in shock.

The person under the cloth did not have a head, as it had been decapitated rather gruesomely. One could tell that a very strong blow must have hit the man's jaw as it was separated from there. Five faint claws could even be seen extending from the base of the neck.

One of the mercenaries lifted the man's arm and saw the symbol that was embroidered on the headless man's clothes.

"It's an elite mercenary from the Ashen Cloak mercenary company!" The mercenary shouted.

The other mercenaries came close to take a look and confirmed the mercenary's claim. The symbol, while caked in blood and mud, was still recognizable to them.

By now, the other mercenaries had also reached the site. Hong Luo, Teng Xiaolian, and his team members were nearby as well. They were sprinting with urgency, and tense expressions could be seen on their faces.

A minute later they finally reached the location and saw Lin Mu sitting on the ground, with his hands on Zhou Ye's body. Xiong An and Long Da were about to approach Lin Mu to offer him help when Teng Xiaolian suddenly shouted.

"NO! Don't disturb him."

Xiong An and Long Da froze in their steps as they turned around and looked at their leader with an inquisitive look. Before Teng Xiaolian could speak anything, Hao Xiao suddenly spoke.

"Look, he's using a healing technique." She exclaimed.

Surprise appeared on the faces of the six people as they looked at Lin Mu with an even more intense gaze. And with these very gazes, they saw the injuries on the man healing at a visible rate. The faint trickles of blood that were flowing down from the gashes on Zhou Ye's body stopped bleeding.

The smaller cuts and scratches twitched and slowly started to close up under the effects of the healing pills and Lin Mu's assistance. The swelling that was around Zhou Ye's left eye also started reducing at a visible rate until when it completely disappeared and his eye was visible again.

~Gasp~

"It can't be! A High-grade healing technique!" Hong Luo gasped in shock.

### **Chapter 117 - Healing Zhou Ye**

As soon as Hong Luo spoke, a serious expression appeared on Teng Xiaolian's face. He looked at all the mercenaries who were looking at Lin Mu and furrowed his brows.

"What are you all doing, staring? Get to work! Take away the body to a side and make room. Return to your posts we will handle it here." Teng Xiaolian ordered in a stern voice.

The common mercenaries snapped out of their daze upon hearing the orders and scrambled. Some of them took away the dead body that was on the shield and the others returned to their posts. Due to the alarm, a majority of the mercenaries had gathered here, thus a lot of positions were left unmanned.

This could have become dangerous if some enemy decided to take advantage of their current distraction. Teng Xiaolian ensured that all the mercenaries were far away before separating from the group.

~Haaah~

"This could have become risky. Hopefully, not many mercenaries noticed the process of healing." Teng Xiaolian spoke up after letting out a breath of relief.

The members of his team and Hong Luo turned to him as realization dawned in their eyes.

"Oh, heavens! We were so close to committing a mistake." Long An spoke.

"True. It was good that we were already surrounding Lin Mu and were covering most of the angles. So they should not have seen much." Hao Xiao spoke.

"Still, we will have to talk with the ones who saw it. We cannot let them speak of this. We don't know what kind of background he has, but if he knows a High-grade healing technique, then there is no doubt he's from one of the top sects." Teng Xiaolian explained.

The others understood the seriousness of the situation and nodded in response. They knew that while the common mercenaries won't have any thoughts about Lin Mu, but if they randomly spoke of this and some wrong people found out about it, it would get problematic.

There was no lack of people who wouldn't do everything to get their hands on a High-grade Healing technique. But if they really were blind enough to attack Lin Mu and by any chance he got injured, they wouldn't be able to answer to the seniors of his sect.

Because they themselves were cultivators, they knew how fearsome cultivation sects were, and it was just even more so for the top sects. For the top sects were the very beings that ran this Empire, even though there was an imperial family. Their influence and power were nothing to scoff at. Many had perished in their foolishness of challenging the top sects and many more will.

Teng Xiaolian just didn't want for them to become one of them too. Even if they were not at fault directly, it would do them no harm to just be extra sure.

Lin Mu was completely focused on Zhou Ye, thus did not notice all that had happened around him. He had his eyes closed, thus did not know that there were such great changes in Zhou Ye's body. He was currently observing Zhou Ye's condition through his spirit sense and was channeling his spirit qi into his.

Lin Mu could see that while the meridians and dantian did not completely heal, the impediment to spirit Q's flow was at least reduced. It could flow much faster and efficiently now. This was also one of the reasons behind the quick healing of Zhou Ye.

"That's enough," Xukong spoke up.

"Huh, okay senior." Lin Mu replied as he opened his eyes.

Since he was extremely focused on helping Zhou Ye, he was a little abrupt in waking up. He finally took a look at his work and was shocked.

'What! How did he get healed so fast?' Lin Mu internally exclaimed.

"I didn't expect this either." Xukong spoke with a little disbelief in his voice.

Lin Mu felt a little storage upon hearing Senior Xukong's tone.

"What do you mean, Senior? Was this not supposed to happen?" Lin Mu questioned.

"No, not really. I think I underestimated the effectiveness of the method I showed you. For a world of this level, I should have guessed it." Xukong answered.

"Is the technique you showed me something special?" Lin Mu asked.

"It's a basic healing technique, but I guess for a world like this it should very rare. I doubt many people would know of a technique of the same quality." Xukong replied.

It was at this time that Teng Xiaolian and Hong Luo approached Lin Mu along with the rest. While it seemed as if Lin Mu and Xukong had been talking for a few minutes, in reality barely ten seconds had passed. Their mental communication was much faster than talking normally.

Lin Mu turned around and saw the mercenaries standing behind him.

"That was amazing! Brother Lin Mu." Hong Luo praised.

"Yes, I never would have guessed that I would get to witness a High-grade healing technique today." Yi Duyi who had stayed silent for the most part spoke up.

"Brother Lin Mu's skills are indeed excellent. You were even able to pull someone back from their death like this." Hao Xiao spoke in a flattering tone.

"Ah, thank you." Lin Mu replied a little awkwardly as he was not expecting for them to praise him so much.

He then looked around and noticed the absence of the other mercenaries.

"Where are the rest of the mercenaries?" Lin Mu questioned.

"You don't need to worry about your knowledge of high-grade healing technique leaking, brother Lin Mu. I sent the mercenaries away before they could see too much. I'll also talk to the others and make sure that they keep their lips shut." Teng Xiaolian replied, thinking that Lin Mu was worried about the mercenaries.

Lin Mu did not respond and just stayed silent. But in reality, he was actually talking with senior Xukong.

"It seems like I was right. It is indeed deemed as a high-grade healing technique in this world." Xukong spoke.

"But senior, you said that this is a basic healing technique, then why is it a high-grade healing technique here?" Lin Mu curiously inquired.

"While it is a basic healing technique, its intended use is not for commoners or mortals. Instead, this is a basic healing technique for the physique of immortals." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu was a little dumbstruck on hearing senior Xukong's words. He had not thought that he would be using a technique that was intended for immortals here.

"Also, it seems like these mercenaries are smart and tacitly understood what they should and should not see," Xukong spoke.

"Yes, senior. This should make it easier for us." Lin Mu replied.

Lin Mu suddenly thought of something that made him a little excited.

"Wait, senior if this is so effective in healing, can't I use it on myself?" Lin Mu questioned.

"No, you cannot. The technique can only be used on others. Try thinking a bit more, can you imagine using it." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu listened to Senior Xukong's words and tried imagining. He reached the same conclusion and indeed found that it would not be possible. If he did it, it would be the same as a tap filling its own tank. There would be no difference.

"Then senior, do you have other healing techniques that I can use?" Lin Mu asked with a little hope in his eyes.

"No, the ones that I have, are not suitable for humans," Xukong answered.

'Though there are other techniques I have that can help you in healing, but you are not ready yet.'  
Xukong inwardly said.

Lin Mu nodded slightly and refocused his eyes on the people around him. They were looking at him patiently and were not speaking anything. Seeing that no one was asking him any questions, Lin Mu decided to speak to them.

"What are we going to do now about Zhou Ye?" Lin Mu questioned.

The mercenaries' brows furrowed in confusion upon hearing his words.

"Zhou Ye? You know this person." Hong Luo asked first.

"Yes, he's one of the two hunters in the town, that are also cultivators." Lin Mu answered.

"Hmm, We'll wait for him to wake up and then ask him what happened. From the wounds on his body and the other corpse's I can deduce that it was a spirit beast that attacked them." Teng Xiaolian spoke.

"The other corpse?" Lin Mu asked.

"The other person that Zhou Ye was dragging on the shield was actually a headless corpse. We don't know who that person is exactly, but we do know that they belong to the elite team of the Ashen cloak mercenaries." Hong Luo answered this time.

While Lin Mu was healing Zhou Ye, they had already received a preliminary report from the other mercenaries, thus knew about the corpse.

"That means that the dead mercenary was a cultivator as well, doesn't it. But if that is so, then shouldn't they be in an elite team with other cultivators?" Lin Mu questioned after thinking for a bit.

Teng Xiaolian and Hong Lou's expressions fell upon hearing Lin Mu's question.

"That's the thing we're dreading. The mercenaries in an elite team stay together, rarely do they separate." Hong Luo spoke.

"But if that mercenary was killed, then that means..." Lin Mu trailed off.

"The entire team probably met the same fate." Teng Xiaolian spoke with a grim tone.

### **Chapter 118 - Repulsive Presence**

A mixture of fear and stress could be seen on the faces of everyone that was currently present there. It was not just because of the dead mercenary, but because of the mercenary company that he belonged to. The Ashen Cloak mercenary company was considered to be the strongest mercenary company.

Although it was not the biggest one, it did have the largest amount of cultivators in it than any other mercenary company. Their elite teams were considered to be the best and had the highest success rate than any other mercenary company.

They were also the only mercenary company that actually had the backing of a Nascent soul realm cultivator. No one knew who this backer was, but they knew better than to offend them. Because of this, even the cultivation sects were respectful to them and actually employed them in certain matters.



An elite team of mercenaries usually had around seven people, all of whom were cultivators. Some of them were even led personally by the higher-ups of the mercenary company. These were people who were actually core condensation realm cultivators themselves.

Exactly because of this, everyone was afraid. Teng Xiaolian and his team knew that they perhaps had the same strength as that of this team. But if even this team had died, they could not help but imagine if the same would happen to them.

But even still, they knew that they could not just let this go and would have to investigate it. The mercenaries had their own code of conduct, which they followed. They would help out their comrades if the need so arose and inform their higher-ups.

Their current situation was already stressful, as most of the higher-ups were on missions, while the others would take a long time to respond. Thus all they could rely on right now was themselves.

"We have to investigate this." Hao Xiao was the first one to break the silence.

"Are you sure it would be wise?" Hong Luo spoke.

Teng Xiaolian and the others gritted their teeth in hesitation. They knew that while they were afraid, if they didn't investigate this and went against their code, they would lose all their respect and reputation.

For a mercenary, if there was something that was above money, it was their respect and reputation. For it was this very thing that allowed them to receive jobs. It was also because of this that they were trusted and employed. If they lost it, there would be nothing they could do.

"We will wait till the morning and see if Zhou Ye wakes up. We will have to talk to him and get to know what exactly happened. Unless we do that there is no point in further discussing this." Teng Xiaolian spoke.

After saying this, Teng Xiaolian looked around and made sure that everyone understood his words. Seeing that no one seem to be objecting, he nodded his head.

Lin Mu could see the benefit in waiting till the morning, thus he had nothing to say. And besides this, he had not said that he was going to take part in their investigation. It was fine for him to save Zhou Ye, but he was not going to help them unless he got something in return.

Teng Xiaolian looked at Hong Luo and then at Lin Mu. He let out a breath before speaking.

"Brother Lin Mu, if it comes to it, will you be willing to help us? Fear not, we will ensure that proper remuneration is paid to you."

Hong Luo's eyes lit up a little bit, and he turned to Lin Mu as well.

"Yes, brother Lin Mu, we need your help. We don't have many people and if you help us, I'm sure the Ashen Cloak mercenary company will rightfully compensate you for your effort." Hong Luo spoke.

Lin Mu looked at the two men in silence and did not speak. Instead, he was talking with senior Xukong in his mind.

"What do you think, senior?" Lin Mu asked.

"Hmm, if they are willing to give you resources, you can indeed help them. But you should first get information from Zhou Ye first. He should awaken in the morning. While he won't be fully healed, he shouldn't have any problem talking." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu inwardly nodded before thinking of his response.

"I would be willing to help, but only if it's something within my capabilities. Zhou Ye will wake up in the morning, we will decide after talking with him." Lin Mu replied to the two men.

Neither Teng Xiaolian nor Hong Luo were dissatisfied with his answer and knew that it was acceptable. In fact, Teng Xiaolian preferred that they do this in this way. He had not forgotten about Lin Mu's background, thus if it was indeed something extremely dangerous, he himself would reject Lin Mu's help.

"That is acceptable. Anyway, we don't have to wait long for the morning. The sun should be up in four more hours." Teng Xiaolian replied.

"Hopefully, Zhou Ye would be awake by then." Hong Luo added.

Everyone nodded in tacit understanding and decided to wait. The man in question Zhou Ye had already been taken by a couple of the common mercenaries to a tent so that he could rest and be taken care of.

"Brother Lin Mu, you must have used up quite a lot of your spirit qi. I offer that you rest in a tent, we will handle your post and keep a lookout." Hong Luo suggested.

Lin Mu thought for a second before deciding.

"I will take you up on that." Lin Mu replied while nodding.

Hong Luo gestured to nearby mercenaries that were standing guard and called them.

"Guide brother Lin Mu to a proper tent for resting." He ordered.

"Yes, sir!" The mercenaries replied.

Then, under the guidance of the two mercenaries, Lin Mu reached a tent. The tent was as large as Hong Lou's and he had no problem standing upright. There was a bed kept in the corner and a lamp hung in the center of the tent. The rest of the tent was empty unlike Hong Lou's which was littered with their valuable supplies.

Lin Mu entered the tent and closed its flap, while the two mercenaries who had escorted him stood guard outside its entrance. Lin Mu went ahead and sat down on the bed and let out a sigh.

~sigh~

"I certainly did not expect that this would be happening tonight." Lin Mu muttered.

Lin Mu was in fact not tired at all. He had barely used a hundred wisps of spirit qi, thus was not as exhausted as the others had thought. But since Hong Luo had offered him this, he decided he may as well cultivate.

"The workings of fate are hidden by the heaven's will. Most people would be in the same position."  
Xukong spoke in a mysterious tone.

Lin Mu heard senior Xukong's words but did not respond. He was instead thinking of the injuries on the dead mercenary. While he had not seen it for much longer than a couple of seconds, he could still feel a strange feeling.

"There was something strange with the dead mercenary Senior." Lin Mu spoke.

"Oh? In what way?" Xukong questioned.

"I can't exactly place my finger on it. It's as if it's unnatural or perhaps abnormal, it makes me feel a little repulsed as well." Lin Mu spoke.

"That is indeed strange. You should perhaps take a closer look, maybe I can guess what it is." Xukong suggested.

Lin Mu raised his brows in thought and then nodded.

"Yes, Senior. Let's check it out." Lin Mu replied and then stood up.

He opened the flap of the tent and saw the two mercenaries turning to him.

"Did you need anything, sir?" They respectfully asked.

"Show me the way to the dead Ashen cloak mercenary." Lin Mu replied.

"Yes, sir. Please follow us." They spoke.

Lin Mu nodded and followed them to the tent where the body was placed in. He reached there in two minutes and saw that Teng Xiaolian was already there. He turned around and looked at Lin Mu, who was approaching.

Seeing the look in Teng Xiaolian's face, Lin Mu knew that he was questioning his purpose in coming here.

"I'm here to take a closer look. I wanted to see if I can find a clue or something." Lin Mu spoke before Teng Xiaolian could.

He nodded his head and gestured for Lin Mu to follow him. Teng Xiaolian moved the flap of the tent aside and walked in, with Lin Mu following behind him. A plain wooden table was placed in the tent on which the dead body of the mercenary was placed.

A sheet was covering the body, which was then lifted by Teng Xiaolian. As soon as the sheet was lifted, Lin Mu could finally see the body. The head of the body was decapitated by a strong attack, which left behind deep claw marks in the neck. It was as if the beast pierced the man's and then forcefully pulled up the head, separating it.

There were multiple grievous and gruesome injuries on the body, most of which were dripping with blood, though most of them had already stopped. Still, from the wetness of the blood and the fact, there was no stench, one could tell that the body was not that old.

"He most likely died yesterday and probably took a lot of injuries before he was killed." Teng Xiaolian informed.

Lin Mu went closer and used his spirit sense. As soon as his spirit sense touched the body, he could feel a faint presence hiding within it. A repulsive feeling arose within Lin Mu's heart as he felt it.

"Senior..." Lin Mu spoke in his mind.

"I can feel it too, this is certainly not normal. Try probing deeper." Xukong spoke.

Teng Xiaolian understood what Lin Mu was doing and did not interfere nor disturb him. He just patiently stood at the side.

Lin Mu spread his spirit sense over the entire body and scanned it from the head to the toe. Only when it reached the dead man's abdomen did Lin Mu find something. It was as if there was a barrier placed on it and it was restricting him.

Lin Mu pushed with his spirit sense and could not do it.

"Use the severing heart sutra." Xukong suggested after feeling something.

Lin Mu nodded and started chanting the severing heart sutra in a low voice. While chanting the severing heart sutra he tried to pierce the barrier again. This time he was halted for a moment before, with a pop, the barrier broke.

~Screech~

Then suddenly, an inhuman screech sounded in the tent and spread outside it. Teng Xiaolian had to cover his ears. If one was to look at him right now, one would see that he was covered in sweat.

The screech lasted for five seconds before the repulsive presence started intensifying. In the next moment, a dark black smoky aura that was visible to the eyes started emanating from the corpse. The aura formed an irregular figure in the air that had bone spurs and skulls embedded in its body.

## **Chapter 119 - The Repulsive Being**

Teng Xiaolian had not been expecting to meet Lin Mu so fast just after separating. He had thought that the boy was most likely exhausted after using the High-grade healing technique. Even if the boy was at the Peak stage of the Qi refining realm, Teng Xiaolian knew of the exhaustion brought on by using any High-Grade technique.

Healing techniques were even more intense and their spirit qi conception would depend on the person it was being used on. Seeing Zhou Ye's condition and how fast he was healed, Teng Xiaolian couldn't even imagine it.

That's why, when he saw Lin Mu asking to check the corpse of the Ashen Cloak mercenary he was surprised.

'He's rather dutiful, Hong Luo did good asking him for help. He's helping us with this even when he's tired.' Teng Xiaolian thought.

Teng Xiaolian let Lin Mu enter and then saw him staring at the dead mercenary. He then informed him of the time of death. Lin Mu went close and became silent. Teng Xiaolian easily guessed that Lin Mu was just observing using his spirit sense.

But when he saw a troubled expression appear on Lin Mu's face, he felt nervous. It was then that it happened. Strange and esoteric chants started coming out of Lin Mu's lips. Even though they were faint, due to the tent being enclosed and him being near, Teng Xiaolian was still able to hear them.

It would be fine if he just heard them, but the chants were nothing but fine. Teng Xiaolian had been through many life-threatening situations, he's had deadly beast's glare at him and blades pointed at him by enemies.

But this feeling that he got from these chants was just simply terrifying. It was as if countless blades were pointed at his body and were just about to touch his skin. He felt his life hanging by his thread and thought that he would be dying the instant he tried to do anything.

A couple of seconds later the feeling got less intense and Teng Xiaolian was finally able to breathe. By now, his entire body was covered with cold sweat. He understood that whatever these chants were, they were not targeting him, but rather something else.

'What terrifying killing intent! Even if it's not targeting me, just its mere presence is enough to freeze me.' Teng Xiaolian thought.

The belief that he had in his heart about Lin Mu being the disciple of a top sect was completely cemented now. If it was affirmed when he saw Lin Mu using the High-grade healing technique, now it was unshakable.

In the words of a legendary cultivator, 'He would pity the fool', who would mistake Lin Mu for any common cultivator.

But just as he was about to come out of his thoughts, Teng Xiaolian heard the most inhuman screech he had ever heard. He then saw the dark black smoky aura rising from the corpse and forming an irregular figure that had bone spurs and skulls on its body.

Just looking at the figure made Teng Xiaolian feel repulsed from the very bottom of the heart. Its presence was also something he had never felt before. It was as if a mixture of fear, loathing, and repulsion was formed in his heart.

Another screech resounded, and he then saw Lin Mu extend his hand and catching the figure. But alas, the figure faded away and disappeared into thin air. This entire ordeal was extremely shocking to Teng Xiaolian, and he didn't know what to make of it.

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Lin Mu stood in his place with his hand still extended.

"What was that senior?" Lin Mu questioned in a serious tone.

"I... do not know. That is not something I've ever heard of, or seen before. It also does not seem like a natural being, the repulsive feeling that you were feeling; it was not arising out of disgust. But rather

from the imprint of this world that you have on your soul. It was telling you to get rid of that being, as it does not belong to this world." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu was a little surprised upon hearing that even senior Xukong did not know what kind of being that was. Just as he was about to speak again, he saw something that pulled his attention.

A small black dot had appeared at the place where the figure had disappeared from.

"Senior..." Lin Mu spoke.

"So it is true. That is a being not of this world. That spatial point is just the proof of that, if it were not for your ring, we may have not even been able to know this." Xukong replied.

"How should we proceed now? I doubt that being is weak, considering that it was able to enter this world." Lin Mu asked.

"That is indeed true. We need to take a steady approach here. First, we get more information from Zhou Ye, only after that can we decide." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu nodded and turned to face Teng Xiaolian, who was covered in sweat and looked to be nervous.

"You saw that right?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Y-Yes... Everything. Wh-what was that?" Teng Xiaolian asked while stuttering.

"I do not know either, but we need to be extremely careful. Inform the others, we will discuss this in the morning." Lin Mu replied.

Before Teng Xiaolian could even reply, Lin Mu walked out of the tent and went towards his own. Teng Xiaolian was left standing there dumbly. But he did not mind it, for Teng Xiaolian could not even imagine the being that he had just seen and could judge that this matter had gone beyond anything that they could deal alone.

Lin Mu entered his tent and sat down on the bed. He had decided to cultivate till the morning as even he felt that the upcoming days were going to be tough and distressing. He wanted to be as strong as he could be.

He sat cross-legged and started chanting the severing heart sutra. Hours passed by in the blink of an eye, as Lin Mu was lost in his cultivation. By the time he woke up, it was already morning and the sunlight could be seen peeking through the edges of the tent.

Lin Mu observed his dantian and saw that his spirit qi capacity had actually increased by fifty wisps. His dantian's current storage stood at around nine hundred and fifty wisps of spirit qi.

'Only five hundred and fifty more to reach the next stage.' Lin Mu thought.

It was now that someone called out to him.

"Sir Lin Mu, leader Hong Luo is asking for you. He said that it is time." A mercenary called out.

Lin Mu immediately stood up and walked out of the tent.

"Take me to him." He ordered.

The mercenary nodded and took him to a tent that was located at the very center of the camp. It was close to Hong Luo's tent and looked the same as Lin Mu's.

"They're waiting inside for you, sir." Another mercenary that was guarding the entrance spoke.

Lin Mu lifted the tent flap and walked inside. Hong Luo and Teng Xiaolian with his team were standing there surrounding a bed on which Zhou Ye was lying. Lin Mu approached, and they all turned to look at him.

"Zhou Ye is just about to awaken." Hong Luo spoke upon seeing him.

Tense expressions could be seen on each and everyone's face here. Evidently, they had been informed by Teng Xiaolian of last night's incident and they had also heard the inhuman screech, thus they had no doubts about believing it.

Lin Mu extended his spirit sense and scanned Zhou Ye's body. Most of the major injuries had been healed, but the hidden sequelae would take a long time to heal. Zhou Ye seemed to be twitching and moving in his sleep. His body was covered in bandages and medicines had been applied to his body by the healers.

"Use the technique I taught you once again, he should wake right up," Xukong suggested.

Lin Mu nodded and stood beside Zhou Ye. The others made way for him tacitly and stood to the side. They then saw Lin Mu placing his hands on Zhou Ye's abdomen and heart. The next second, Zhou Ye opened his eyes and gasped.

"Wh-Where am I?" Zhou Ye questioned.

"You're at the mercenary camp of Northern Town, Zhou Ye. We found you injured last night when you walked here from the forest." Hong Luo answered.

Zhou Ye had a flash of realization as his memories soon came rushing back to him.

~Aaaah~

He winced in pain as he held his head. The others let him be and waited for him to regain his mind. Ten minutes passed by and finally, Zhou Ye was starting to stabilize. He let out a breath of fatigue as he removed his hands from his head and laid back on the bed in a more relaxed manner.

"Are you fine, now?" Hong Luo asked gently.

"Y-Yes..." Zhou Ye replied.

"What happened to you, can you tell us?" Lin Mu questioned.

"I-It's a long story..." Zhou Ye spoke.

### **Chapter 120 - Zhou Ye's Story- Part I**

Zhou Ye took a deep breath before thinking for a bit. A few minutes later he started speaking.

"It started when my group of five went to hunt in the forest a month ago. We had heard that someone had found snow veiled hares and some high tier beasts in the forest nearby. We didn't want to really

hunt spirit beasts at that time, so these beasts were a good opportunity to get some money before the winter got really intense.

We were returning during the evening after a successful hunt, and suddenly one of my companions collapsed. We went to check and discovered that he had stopped breathing. We were very surprised and became alert, but it was useless as we had already lost when we went to check up on our companion.

Him collapsing was a distraction and at that moment some black-robed people ambushed us. I was able to escape into the depths of the forest, but my companions were not so fortunate. I tried to return to the town a few times, but the black-robed men were able to find me every time.

At first, I thought they were just warriors that were at the high tier of the Body tempering realm, but then I realized how wrong I was. They actually had cultivators in their midst.

I couldn't understand why they were even attacking us. Originally I had thought of them as bandits, but there was no chance a bandit in this region could be a cultivator. Any cultivator could easily get employed and won't have to resort to banditry, at least here.

Then I realized that the problem seemed to be a lot more deeper than I thought. The black-robed men blocked me at every point and didn't let me escape. Eventually, I was captured and was knocked unconscious.

They took me to a hidden cave, and I didn't know its location as I was unconscious when I was taken there. I was shackled and chained in a prison there. But when I opened my eyes for the first time there, I discovered that I was not alone.

There were many more people imprisoned there along with me. I even found some of my companions there. They were heavily injured and were chained the same as me. But the most shocking thing for me was that there were actually mercenaries there as well."

*~Gasp~*

A collective gasp was heard in the tent as everyone except Lin Mu, and Teng Xiaolian was shocked. Teng Xiaolian had already seen last night's incident so was expecting there to be something strange and Lin Mu had already known of this. Though the information about there being a hidden prison in a cave was very interesting to him.

'Seems like I'll need to speak to the Hei Corps soon.' Lin Mu thought.

Zhou Ye had taken a little break and was drinking water to moisten his parched throat. Evidently, him speaking this much was already taking its toll on him.

"Are you fine? Do you want to rest more?" Hao Xiao asked gently.

Zhou Ye shook his head in denial.

"No, I'm fine. I... I want to finish this first." Zhou Ye replied.

"So, what happened next?" Hong Luo asked.

Zhou Ye took another deep breath before continuing.



"I stayed there for over two weeks and observed all that happened there. It was surprisingly calm, except for the mercenaries' attempts to escape. The black-robed men actually did not torture us or hurt us, unless it was necessary. They even provided us with proper food and water. Going so far as to actually treat any injury that bled.

While I was there I also saw that they took away a few people every day and brought more in. Nearly all of them were mercenaries and were all cultivators. There were some body tempering realm mercenaries too, but they were far and few in between.

Eventually, I and a few other prisoners got talking and planned out some things. We tried to look for avenues of escape and concluded that the best opportunity would be when they actually released us from the prison to take us to wherever they did.

One of the people that I met then was Dongfeng Zhao. He was a mercenary from the Ashen cloak mercenary company and was the leader of one of their elite teams. He told me that he and his team were ambushed as well when they were hunting for spirit beasts in the northern forest.

Dongfeng Zhao then told me that nearly all of the mercenaries that were there were elite mercenaries and had been commissioned to hunt the spirit beasts by the mayor of the Wu Lim City. They had actually felt suspicious at the start when their communication with the other teams was slowed down, but when they were attacked and brought there, they finally understood.

Someone was taking this opportunity to target all the mercenary companies. Dongfeng Zhao guessed that it was probably someone wanting to eliminate competition and reduce the influence of other companies. But after a few days, he rescinded his words and realized that this was more than that.

The strengths of the black-robed men were way more than necessary. More than ninety percent of their people were cultivators and there was plenty of peak stage Qi refining realm cultivators as well. There was no chance that an entourage so strong would even need to compete with the mercenary companies when they can just set up their own faction with that strength."

"Was someone taking revenge then? Or perhaps sabotaging?" Hong Luo questioned.

"It does seem like that, it could be either of those or even both. In the end, the person that's suffering is the mercenaries and the mayor of the Wu Lim city." Long Da spoke.

"Considering the strength of the black-robed men, I would say that it's actually someone targeting the mayor of the Wu Lim city. Only he would be worthy of a large-scale scheme such as this.

They're abducting the mercenaries and making the mayor have a loss. Since even if mercenaries die, the mayor still has to pay for their services, and beyond that, whatever need he had for the large amount of beasts won't be satisfied." Teng Xiaolian analyzed.

Everyone went silent and pondered on this after hearing Teng Xiaolian's words. Even Lin Mu felt that they seemed to be viable and reasonable.

'If there is indeed someone targeting the mayor, doing this would indeed harm his work, finances, and even reputation.' Lin Mu thought.

"It could be like that, but something still irks me, but I can't place it where." Yi Duyi spoke.

Others nodded in response, as they felt strange too.

Zhou Ye had taken this time to rest for a little bit and was ready to speak once again.

"Eventually the day came when we were to be transported someplace else. That was about three days ago. We were blindfolded and taken out of the cave. Unlike me, who was blindfolded and couldn't see, Dongfeng Zhao could still observe his surroundings because of his spirit sense.

He told me that they were actually taking us through a different route in the cave and not the one they had come from. In a surprise to us, it actually took them over two hours to get out of the cave. Because of the large number of twists and turns we took, none of us could tell in what direction we were going, neither where we had come from.

When we finally got out of the cave, a dense canopy of trees greeted us. Due to the type of trees they were, I was able to guess that we were now in the northwestern part of the forest. Though I still did not know how far deep we were in there.

While being transported, we halted to take a break. It was then that Dongfeng Zhao took the opportunity to check everything out. He confirmed that it was ten of those black-robed men transporting us, while there were only four of us prisoners. It was me, Dongfeng Zhao, and two of his teammates.

We were keeping an eye out for an opportunity to escape when it happened..." Zhou Ye said and trailed off.

Seeing the abrupt pause that Zhou Ye had taken, Lin Mu furrowed his brows but didn't disturb him and let him think it out. A few minutes later he started speaking again.

"We... we heard a loud roar. It was simply terrifying and was accompanied by a strong wave of spirit qi. We instantly understood that it was a spirit beast... a strong one. But only when we saw it did we understand how wrong we were.

It was no common spirit beast that had discovered us but rather a Core condensation realm spirit beast."

"WHAT!" They exclaimed in unison.

"Yes, a core condensation realm spirit beast. It was a five meters tall bear. It had irregular black and brown fur and had bone spurs coming out of its skin. Its claws were ten inches long and looked like knives more than claws. Its eyes were red, as if filled with pure anger.

Its mere presence was enough to freeze us in our tracks, and when it came close, it just went from bad to worse. Before the black-robed men could even do anything, the bear had split three of their men in halves with one swipe of its claws.

Only after witnessing this did they start to retaliate, but alas it was too late. The bear was out of their league. It massacred all of them with ease, leaving no chance for survival. The Black-robed men saw that they were losing, thus resorted to using us as Shields.

Dongfeng Zhao took this opportunity and picked up a sword that had fallen to the ground nearby and freed him in a surprise to the black-robed men. Eventually, we all got free, but the black-robed men managed to kill two of Dongfeng Zhao's teammates in retaliation.

Enraged he wanted to kill them but knew that he could not. In this time period, the two black-robed men that were fighting off the bear were killed and it was now coming towards me. I was unable to dodge and was just about to be killed.

But then Dongfeng Zhao pushed me aside and took the attack. The bear's claws pierced his neck and the bear then pulled them out, decapitating him in the process."