

Read Walker Of The Worlds

Chapter 12 - Returning To The Shack

Lin Mu could smell the tantalizing aromas arising from the various food stalls. The owners of the stalls roared out their prices, with many people standing around and sitting at the benches set up near the stalls; eating their food. There were various dishes being sold by the stands. There were buckwheat noodles, skewered barbecued meat, fried chicken drumsticks, big buns filled with meat, soups and vegetable filling, stir-fried rice, braised meat soup, and many more.

There were also some teahouses along the street where people could be seen relaxing and enjoying some tea with some light snacks. Lin Mu decided to buy some buns, as they would be cheap and very filling. He had to save some money to buy rice as well as some spices so that he would not have to eat the sour apples every day. He did not even have any salt with him to season anything he caught to eat, thus he especially wanted to buy a set of spices.

Lin Mu walked up to a stall that was selling buns and spent 3 coppers coins to buy two meat-filled buns for his meal. He sat down on a bench nearby to eat the buns and take in the sights of the people in the town. He had been missing the town after three days, even though his days had been relatively exciting due to all the events that had happened ever since acquiring the mysterious rusty ring.

After finishing the buns, he wanted to find out when the merchants would be coming to the town next week so that he could sell the fragrant wood box.

'I should head to a teahouse to find out when the merchants would be coming next week.'

Most people liked to go to teahouses to drink some tea and gossip with the other patrons. It would be the best place to find out information, as most people would answer questions rather easily and without any suspicion. If one was lucky one could even hear about events happening in the city, gossip about what schemes the officials were planning or which merchant was getting punished for cheating people. Such things people talked about to satisfy their need for entertainment and drama.

Lin Mu walked into a relatively popular teahouse and looked around for an empty chair to sit. The place was packed with people. Looking around for a moment, he found a table that had one empty chair left. He spent two copper coins to order a cup of tea for him from the waiter. There were three people already sitting on the table talking with each other.

The people that were sitting on the table gave him a momentary glance before going back to talking amongst themselves. The waiter soon brought with him a tray on which

there were four cups and a pot of tea. He placed a cup in front of each person and then poured them some tea before walking away to serve other patrons of the teahouse.

The tea in the cup was steaming and gave off a faint fragrance that gave one a sense of calm. Lin Mu picked up the cup and blew at it before taking a sip of the light green liquid. Most of the patrons were talking with each other, while some sat in silence, some talking out loud and their voices could be heard on the other side of the teahouse; yet no one minded it.

The people sitting on the table with Lin Mu were talking in a normal voice, and he was listening to all that they were saying. Most of it was just about how their days were going, how was their work or family; most topics being pretty mundane until he heard something that made his ears perk up.

"Did you know that the city mayor was in an outrage yesterday?"

"What? Why, what happened?"

"Apparently the mayor lost something important and in a fit of rage broke and destroyed a lot of things in his mansion. All the servants and the officials in the mansion could hear it, and it was not until the mayor's wife went in to calm him down that he stopped."

The third person who was sitting on the table opposite to Lin Mu then asked in a doubtful voice,

"And how do you know this?"

"My wife's brother works as a servant in the mayor's mansion so I can vouch that it's true."

The man still had a doubtful look but allowed him to continue.

"The lord must have lost something precious for him to break into a fit of rage, as he is a rather composed man."

"Did he just lose it somewhere or was it stolen? I think it was stolen, as if it was lost inside the mansion it would have been found."

The three men conversed without giving a mind to how the surrounding tables were now also paying attention to them, as the information they revealed was a rather juicy piece of news. Not much gossip came out of the mayor's mansion, and now that some had come, everyone wanted to hear it. Even Lin Mu was listening attentively, without missing a word.

"Is that why there are city guards in the town, because he got something stolen and ordered them to find it?"

"That could be it, but they won't reveal the information so easily."

One of the person's sitting on a table next to Lin Mu's spoke up,

"Apparently the mayor also sent out a group of officials, along with a detachment of guards to the south yesterday evening."

"Yesterday evening? That should be just after he had the outrage, could those two be related?"

The conversation continued about the topic until it eventually changed to something else. Lin Mu had finished his cup of tea when he finally decided to do what he came here for. He turned to the people sitting on the table and asked,

"Does anyone know when the merchants will come next week?"

The men paused for a moment to turn their attention towards Lin Mu and then answered,

"They should be coming early this week, as the mayor has been buying a lot of rare materials lately, and will also sell the first shipment of the spirit apples."

"I think they should be here in five days at least, if not earlier."

Hearing the answer he wanted, Lin Mu was pleased and thanked the men for the information and stood up to go buy the supplies he wanted. He walked out onto the street and went towards a shop that sold grains. He spent 10 copper coins to buy a kilogram of rice before going to a shop that sold spices. He bought a set of spices that included black pepper, cinnamon, cumin, cloves, allspice, nutmeg and salt. That was all he could buy for 10 copper coins, as he wanted to save the remaining 5 copper coins to buy a gourd to store water.

He didn't want to keep on making trips to the stream from the hunting shack again and again just to get some water. He easily found a shop that sold sundries and bought a gourd from there. It was a little later than 2 pm now, and he wanted to go back to the hunting shack before sundown so that he could check up on the traps he had set. At least he now had some rice to eat for dinner, and if he could find some bird nests in the forest, he'll be able to eat some eggs with it.

He slung the sack containing the rice on his back for now, as he did not want to put it in the ring here and risk others seeing it. He walked out of the town gate towards the outskirts. He passed by the spirit apple orchards where the peasants were still working as hard as ever. The line of carriages that was standing along with the mercenaries was no longer there, already having crossed the town and headed towards Wu Lim city.

Lin Mu kept his head down when he was passing by the orchards, as he did not want the peasants to notice him. Thankfully, no one noticed him and he was able to cross the orchards and onto the path leading to the forest.

He had been walking for about half an hour when he felt the mysterious ring on his right-hand buzz. This time he knew what was going to happen, thus he was prepared and no longer surprised. He braced himself, but was not pulled anywhere this time. He looked around and saw no people except for him nearby.

He then looked at the ring on his finger when a familiar feeling went through his body and he saw a rift open up in front of him. He did not feel a pull that was as strong as before on his hand. Still curious to know what he will find this time, he extended his hand inside the spatial rift. The spatial rift was as dark as ever and his hand felt like it had entered still water.

He felt around but found nothing. Moving his hand around every corner of the spatial rift, he then found something hard and rough near the lower right corner of the rift. He touched it and tried to get a guess of its size but could not move his hand much, as it was already at the very edge of the rift. He willed for it to be stored into the ring and then pulled back his hand out of the spatial rift.

The spatial rift closed as soon as he pulled his hand out. Lin Mu wanted to see what he had found this time, but waited till he reached the hunting shack - as he did not want the chance of a passing traveler to discover him. He reached the hunting shack in another half hour. Thinking about withdrawing the object he found in the spatial rift, it appeared in his hand.

This time, though, the object was much bigger than he had imagined, and as soon as he felt the weight of the object in his hand it fell down with a loud thud; nearly crushing his toes. He looked at it and found it to be a large rock, nearly half as big as him. He was lucky that his legs were not close to the place where the rock fell. Just an inch more and his toes would definitely be crushed.

He looked at the large rock and found it to be nothing unusual. He touched it and examined all its sides, but found it to be just a common rock one could find anywhere; except for its large size. Still, he kept it back in the ring as he thought that since it came from the rift, it should be something special; just that he could not find what it was for now.