

Walker 121

Chapter 121 - Zhou Ye's Story- Part II

Everyone that was standing there could feel goosebumps on their skin upon hearing the account from Zhou Ye. They had never expected that something so bad could have happened. The entire story was full of ups and downs, which kept them on their toes.

By now, Zhou Ye's face was pale and fear had appeared on it. One could tell that even recalling the event was stressful for him. At this point, he had frozen and could no longer speak. The others noticed his condition and knew that he had been pushed too much, perhaps.

"Should we stop here for now?" Hao Xiao whispered to Teng Xiaolian.

Teng Xiaolian furrowed his brows in response and looked at Zhou Ye.

"We need to get this done with, there's too much that's hanging by a thin thread. If we don't get the information now, we may be too late." Teng Xiaolian spoke.

Hong Luo too clenched his fist and looked between the terrified man and Teng Xiaolian.

"But Leader Teng, maybe we..." Hong Luo was just about to speak when he was suddenly interrupted.

Everyone's expression turned to that of a surprise from the tense one. They were suddenly feeling a wave of calmness spreading throughout their body. They then also heard the faint sounds that were coming from next to them.

Everyone turned their gazes to the source of it and saw Lin Mu standing there with his eyes closed. He had an extremely tranquil expression on his face, which invoked a feeling of calmness in whoever that saw it. His lips were gently moving and faint chants were coming out of his mouth.

Teng Xiaolian's expression was then pulled towards Zhou Ye. The man who had been scared frozen from his thoughts had suddenly changed. The fear from his face had faded away and what replaced it was peace. His arms and shoulders which had been tensed because of being clenched had relaxed.

Even his eyes which had gone dull due to the terror had regained their vigor. The breathing which was irregular and labored had harmonized and moved in a steady rhythm.

Indeed, what Lin Mu was doing was nothing but chanting the calming heart sutra. He had long since reached the second stage of external comprehension, thus knew that he could use it on other people now. The current situation seemed the best for it to be used, and it also helped Zhou Ye heal on a mental level.

In fact, when Lin Mu scanned Zhou Ye with his spirit sense, he discovered that his spirit qi flow had also improved. Evidently, the trauma from the incident had been hurting him on a mental level and had affected his cultivation as well.

A minute later Lin Mu stopped chanting the calming heart sutra and opened his eyes. He could then see the gazes of everyone on his face. But these gazes were not of shock or surprise, but rather of profound and deep respect.

Lin Mu didn't know, but today he had buried a seed of respect and slight worship within these mercenaries.

Xukong had been seeing this entire event closely and had not stopped Lin Mu from using the calming heart sutra. He let him follow his own choice, and apparently, this had been the right judgment. For when he saw the emotions hidden within the eyes of these mercenaries, he knew that Lin Mu had perhaps embarked on a new journey.

'The Will of the Buddhist Path, its traces can already be seen. Is he going to gain its recognition as well?' Xukong thought.

'Even if he gains its recognition, at least it won't be as problematic as the Will of the Demonic path. There should still be some monks that have the recognition of the will of the Buddhist path. If it really comes to it, Lin Mu can take refuge with them.' Xukong pondered.

Lin Mu did not mind the gazes but instead tenured to look at Zhou Ye.

"Are you feeling better?" Lin Mu questioned with a calm tone.

Zhou Ye who was now feeling refreshed and relived gently nodded his head.

"Yes, thank you for... whatever that you did." Zhou Ye replied.

"Now then, will you tell us the rest?" Lin Mu spoke.

Zhou Ye nodded again and cleared his throat before speaking.

"After Dongfeng Zhao was decapitated, I was terrified and tried my best to move to the side. I was lucky that the black-robed men were closer to it than me now and were targeted first instead. The bear attacked them and effortlessly killed them as well.

Finally, it was now my turn. There was no chance that I could escape, anyway. The beast was stronger, as well as faster than me. It was just about to end me with its claws when it happened.

The bear suddenly froze and then roared. It scratched at its own body as if it was hurting it. Another roar, but this time one that was full of pain came out of its mouth as it cleaved out its own flesh. Chunks of flesh and black blood splattered as the beast mutilated itself.

But instead of getting weaker, the beast instead seemed to be getting stronger. Black smoke came out of its body and replaced its flesh that it had ripped out. Once the flesh was restored, bone spurs sprouted out of it and added to its gruesomeness.

Fortunately, after this happened the beast seemed to be in a disoriented state of mind as it kept on struggling with itself and walked away. It even collided with the trees in its way and broke them down. Large trees that were thick enough for four grown men to hug were broken down like twigs by it.

The sheer strength of the beast was astounding and was nothing like I had ever seen. After that, it took me a few minutes before I was able to gather my wits. After ensuring that I was safe for then, I grabbed Dongfeng Zhao's body and put it on a shield I picked up.

I didn't want to leave the body of my benefactor who had saved me, to rot and be eaten by beasts, thus I carried it with me. I also scrounged some supplies from the black-robed men as I knew that I would not be able to survive there without them.

I was lucky enough to find some alchemical pills and food, which helped me through. I started my journey back and encountered more beasts on my way. It was fine when they were just common beasts or even high tier beasts, but when I encountered spirit beasts, I couldn't help but escape.

I avoided fighting them as much as I could, but still got injured. At the very end, when I couldn't do anything, I used the alchemical pill I had left as a last resort. I knew it was a potential igniting pill, but I still used it anyway, as I would not have had much of a chance at survival.

After I took the pill, my memories became blurry. I don't remember what I did or how I eventually got here. But I know that all I had in my mind was to survive and reach the town. Eventually I did reach, and then the last thing I remember happened.

I heard someone call my name."

Zhou Ye looked at the people for a moment and smiled before closing his eyes. In the next second, he swooned and fell back on the bed.

Hong Luo and Lin Mu rushed to check up on him and felt relieved after finding that he had just fallen asleep.

"He's just tired. He pushed himself to speak that's why he fell unconscious." Hong Luo spoke.

"We just have to let him rest now. He has done us a great favor by informing us." Teng Xiaolian spoke.

The other mercenaries nodded in response as they understood how difficult it must have been to survive the ordeal he had been through.

"What do we do now, leader Teng? We definitely need to inform the higher-ups at the base, but we don't know if they'll be here in time." Long Da questioned with concern.

Teng Xiaolian furrowed his brows and thought for a moment before speaking.

"Send a messenger to the base and also one to the council. Tell them that the elite teams have been eliminated and to send help. Meanwhile, we need to talk with the mayor."

"Yes, Leader." Long Da replied before leaving the tent in a hurry.

Lin Mu was also thinking of what they were supposed to do now. When Zhou Ye had deceived the black smoke coming out of the Bear's body and healing its wounds, senior Xukong had spoken to him.

"It is some kind of parasite that has infected the beast. Its most likely trying to take over its body and is thus making it harm itself. And it's no common spirit parasite either, from what we've seen I can say for sure that it's an invader." Xukong spoke.

"An invader?"

Chapter 122 - Invader

Hearing a new term had once again sparked Lin Mu's curiosity as he wondered what it meant. Lin Mu waited patiently for senior Xukong to explain it to him.

"In a simplified manner, an invader is basically a being that enters a world that it's not allowed to. It does so to gain control of that world or to obtain its resources.

You see, most worlds have an innate barrier present in them. They are created and operated by that world's will." Xukong spoke.

"World's will? Senior, you mean each world is alive?" Lin Mu questioned while tilting his head.

"Not exactly. While it may or may not have had life on its surface, every world can have a certain level of sentience. Not all worlds have it, though. Some worlds are simply too young to have developed it, while others lose it due to dying or being destroyed."

"Every world slowly gains its consciousness and also starts to generate spirit qi. You could even say that spirit qi is formed when a world gains sentience or a world becomes sentient when spirit qi comes into existence. It can be either of those reasons." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu felt intrigued upon hearing this new information. It had actually solved an important question that he had, but had never asked. The question was about the existence of spirit qi and how it came into being. Xukong's words had answered a part of that question.

While Lin Mu now knew that spirit qi was created by a world, he didn't know how other energies or types of qi came into being. For example, he didn't know how spatial qi came into being or how it was created.

While he wanted to ask further about this, he knew that now was not the time for it as there were other things at hand.

"So about this 'Invader' if it's restricted by the barrier, how does it still enter the world?" Lin Mu questioned.

"An invader can use various methods to enter a world. The most common method is to find a flaw in the world's barrier and enter through there. Another is to find a gate from which it can enter, this can be in the form of a teleportation formation or a spatial portal.

From the way that the black smoke disappeared, I can tell that it came through the second manner. The creature, whatever it may be, is a powerful being and knows how to manipulate space. The Invader here is actually not its real body but perhaps an avatar." Xukong answered.

Senior Xukong's mention of the avatar instantly reminded Lin Mu of his real body and how he had created a smaller avatar to accompany Lin Mu.

"Wait senior, does this mean that you are an invader too?" Lin Mu questioned with his brows raised.

"In a broader sense, you can say that, but in my case, I would be a traveler instead.

You see, the difference between an invader and a traveler is the permission of the world. Once a world reaches a high enough level and is well developed, its residents can leave it and travel to other worlds. Similarly, other beings can also travel to that world." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu, while having understood the meaning of the words, still felt confused.

"How is it decided when a world is developed or not?" Lin Mu questioned again.

"It depends on multiple factors. A world may simply become a higher world by gaining a massive amount of spirit qi, or its residents can become high leveled cultivators. A world can be said to have developed when its residents can freely leave it without danger and also return back." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu felt like he understood it a bit better, but had more questions appearing in his mind.

"What realm does a cultivator need to reach in order to increase the level of a world senior? Like, do they need to become an Immortal Ascension Realm cultivator?" Lin Mu questioned again.

"While an Immortal Ascension Realm cultivator can leave a world, it won't immediately elevate a world's status. Just a single cultivator won't be enough to increase its level. Instead, an entire group of cultivators over many generations need to reach that stage in order to elevate. And more than just that, there needs to be a countless amount of lower realm cultivators as well.

Eventually, there would come a time when the world would become a higher leveled world. A world can only be expected to increase in its level, but can never be made to." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu felt enlightened after hearing senior Xukong's words and could feel the knots of doubt in his mind unraveling. The only thing that was left now was how they would proceed after this.

"What should we do now senior?" Lin Mu asked, feeling a little lost.

"Hmm, being a resident of this world, you do have an innate obligation to destroy or repel the invader. You must have felt it when you saw it; that's the world's will commanding you. But still, the final decision is up to you. While the world's will expect this of all its residents, it won't force them as it won't be possible for everyone to do that." Xukong answered.

"But if you do choose to do so, your effort won't go in vain," Xukong added after taking a pause.

"What...? Does this mean that I would gain some reward?" Lin Mu asked.

"Indeed, what you will gain is the recognition of the world itself. It will silently help you in things you wouldn't even know you needed help in. It can even improve your luck and allow you to gain untold fortunes." Xukong replied.

'Heavens know that you need it. With the path you are walking on, you need all the help you can get and I don't think mine would be enough.' Xukong spoke inwardly.

Lin Mu thought over senior Xukong's words but did not reply to him right away. His attention was instead pulled back to the people standing around him. While it seemed like Lin Mu had been talking with senior Xukong for a long time, in reality only a couple of minutes had passed by.

With each progressing day, the speed of the mental communication between Xukong and Lin Mu had been increasing. While it was indeed completely Dependent on Xukong's ability, Lin Mu had also helped increase the speed as he was getting more attuned with it and was also progressing in his cultivation.

To others, it only seemed like Lin Mu was lost in thought and was thus busy. After they saw that Lin Mu had snapped out of it and was looking at them again, they became more alert.

"What do you suggest, brother Lin Mu? What do we do now?" Hong Luo respectfully asked.

Lin Mu turned his sight to him and spoke.

"Leader Teng's words are right, you should send the emergency messages. In addition, I can perhaps help you contact the mayor." Lin Mu replied.

"And how would you do that?" Teng Xiaolian questioned.

"I'm acquainted with the new high official that is administering the town, Hei Wan. I'll inform her, and perhaps we can arrange a meeting." Lin Mu answered.

If it was before, Lin Mu would have avoided talking about anything about the members of the Hei corps. But now that Hei Wan was out in the open and even had a clean identity, there was no problem in him taking advantage of that fact.

A slightly surprised expression appeared on everyone's face after hearing that Lin Mu was acquainted with Hei Wan.

"Indeed, nothing can compare to brother Lin Mu's influence." Xiong An spoke in a flattering manner.

Lin Mu paid no heed to his words and continued.

"I'll warn you though, do not attempt to investigate this alone. I'm afraid that we're dealing with something that's beyond us." Lin Mu spoke in a serious tone.

Lin Mu had decidedly chosen not to tell the mercenaries about the 'Invader'. It was not that he didn't think that they wouldn't believe him, but rather that it may become problematic if it spreads. He wanted to talk with the Hei corps first, as he believed that they may have a better control over the situation.

"I'll leave now and tell you later when we will have a meeting." Lin Mu spoke.

"That's fine with me." Teng Xiaolian replied.

The others also nodded in acceptance and acknowledged his words.

Lin Mu left the tent and turned towards the direction of the town. His walk soon turned into a sprint and he rushed towards the town center. With his speed, it didn't take him long to reach the town center as he was there in five minutes.

Although what felt strange to him was instead that the number of people walking around was decreased. He had expected that people would be staring at him as he ran, but surprisingly there were barely any people outside. Even the number of guards seemed to have fallen.

Only when he stood in front of the town center did he realize why.

Chapter 123 - Reinforcements?

Currently, in front of the town center, an entire crowd of people was standing. Along the sides of the crowd, squads of guards were standing fully decked in their gear looking ready for anything.

The crowd was standing in silence which was surprising to him as this hardly happened when such a large group of people gathered together. The people in the crowd seemed to be focused on the town center and seemed to be waiting for something.

A few more people slowly added to the crowd as they reached there from the various parts of the town. Feeling confused at this development, Lin Mu spread his spirit sense around and started scanning the crowd.

In a small surprise to him, he found the mute Ming brothers standing at the front of the crowd along with a few of the mercenaries they had taken with them. Not understanding what was happening he decided to go and talk with them.

Lin Mu waded through the crowd and reached the front of it, right where the mercenaries were standing. The people grunted and chided in displeasure at being moved around but didn't do anything. Lin Mu didn't pay them any mind either.

The Ming Brothers noticed him and felt a little surprised themselves. They poked a mercenary that was standing along with them to talk with Lin Mu. This mercenary evidently knew who Lin Mu was as he cupped his hands in greeting.

"Greetings Sir Lin Mu." The mercenary greeted Lin Mu.

The other mercenaries too did the same thing upon seeing their companion do so. This turned into a wave of greetings that spread among the ten or so mercenaries that were present there.

There was no chance that the people standing in the crowd wouldn't notice this, especially when they were standing in silence all this while. The people also heard the sounds of greetings and wondered if it was someone important that had appeared.

Knowing that this could turn problematic Lin Mu immediately gestured to the Ming brothers to silence the others. They having understood the implications of this, acted on it, and silenced the mercenaries.

Lin Mu then came forward and stood in front of them.

"What is happening here?" Lin Mu questioned.

"The High official is going to announce their decision to the crowd." Said the mercenary who had been instructed by the Ming brothers.

"And what is this decision?" Lin Mu questioned, guessing about the possibilities.

The mercenary looked around and made sure that no one else was listening before speaking in a low voice.

"After meeting with us and also hearing the complaints of the commoners, the High officials have decided that they are going to launch a hunt for the beasts that have been attacking the people and also for the black-robed culprits.

Alarm bells rang in Lin Mu's mind as he realized the implications of this. It would have been fine if this was done when he had not known about the 'Invader' but now it was a much more dangerous situation.

If the commoners were to find out about this incomplete information they may become too agitated and start looking for the culprits themselves perhaps. While this may actually end up suppressing the activities of the culprits, it could also just trigger them to do something that could be direr.

Lin Mu now knew that he would have to stop Hei Wan and inform her of the reality of the situation. Knowing that he perhaps didn't have much time he turned to the mercenaries.

"Where are the high officials? Are they still in the town center or are they somewhere else?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yes, they should be in the town center. Their carriage is still standing to the side, so this is most likely." The mercenary answered.

Lin Mu rushed towards the entrance of the town center and was about to be stopped by the guards that were standing there. Not wanting to waste any time explaining to them, Lin Mu started chanting the severing heart sutra and targeted the two guards.

The effect of the chant was rather instantaneous as the eyes of the guards became dull and they entered a daze. With this done, Lin Mu easily entered the town center and looked around for Hei Wan.

He kept his spirit sense spread around so that he could find them as soon as they entered his range. Not sensing them on this floor, Lin Mu proceeded to the next. He already had an idea that she would most likely be in the office of the Town Head but didn't want to make a mistake based on this assumption.

Lin Mu's decision turned out to be for the better as he actually found Hei Bao right there on the second floor. The man also noticed him due to the spirit sense probe and looked at him. Seeing the tense expression on Lin Mu's face Hei Bao instantly understood that a new development must have happened.

Guessing his thoughts, Hei Bao spoke.

"Leader is upstairs, let's go."

Lin Mu nodded and followed him upstairs. Now that he was with Hei Bao no one dared to stop him and he easily reached the top floor. Lin Mu saw Hei Wan exit the office and it looked like she was just about to go towards the balcony from where the announcements were made.

"Hei Wan wait!" Lin Mu shouted.

Hei Wan immediately turned to the source of the sound and saw Lin Mu coming towards her along with Hei Bao. She stopped in her tracks and waited for the two people to reach her.

"What happened?" Hei Wan questioned.

Hei Bao too focused on Lin Mu as he too wanted to know.

"We found Zhou Ye last night at the mercenary camp." Lin Mu spoke.

A tense expression also appeared on the faces of the two people as they recognized the name.

"Let's talk in the office." Hei Wan suggested.

The trio walked into the office and then started talking. Lin Mu narrated the events of last night to Hei Wan and Hei Bao. He told them about the injured Zhou Ye and headless Ashen Cloak mercenary.

He told them about the 'repulsive being' that had risen from the corpse of the dead mercenary and how he knew what it was. Lin Mu then told them about the events of this morning and the story told by Zhou Ye.

After Lin Mu had finished talking, the two of them stood in silence for a bit before speaking.

"This 'Thing' that you saw, do you know what it is?" Hei Wan questioned first.

"Yes... It is an Invader." Lin Mu answered in a grim tone.

The eyes of Hei Wan and Hei Bao went wide as they heard the word. It seemed as if they already knew what it meant or what it entailed.

"So, it is an Invader..." Hei Bao repeated in ponder.

"You know what they are?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yes, we do. This... is not the first time we've heard it either." Hei Wan answered.

"What? Where have you heard it before?" Lin Mu asked.

Hei Wan let out a sigh and thought for a moment before speaking.

"Not many people are aware of the existence of the invaders. Perhaps at this moment, only the higher-ups of cultivation sects and some aristocrats know of their existence. Even we only know of this because our lord had once spoken to us about this." Hei Wan replied.

"But if you know about the invaders then..." Lin Mu spoke and was interrupted.

"Yes, we know what they do. This is not the first time they have appeared." Hei Bao spoke.

"Not the first time? They've appeared before?" Lin Mu questioned again.

"Indeed, while we don't know the exact details of it we do know that they once appeared a long time ago. And also that when they appeared they brought with them immense destruction." Hei Wan answered.

Lin Mu stayed silent after hearing her answer and pondered over it for a minute.

"Then I reckon you know what you should tell the people and what not?" Lin Mu asked.

Hei Wan nodded her head and spoke.

"Now I do. Thank you for rushing here and informing me, or this could have become a big disaster. I'll keep the details to a minimum and change the search for the beasts to only a vigil. We will still search for the culprits though.

I've already asked for more reinforcements and they should be coming soon. So it will be fine if the culprits get agitated as well, we want them to do exactly that and reveal themselves." Hei Wan explained.

"But are you sure that the reinforcements will be enough to handle them?" Lin Mu asked doubtfully.

Lin Mu didn't think there would be much difference if more of the Hei Corps came. If anything it could actually end up causing a disadvantage to themselves.

"Yes, I'm sure of it. After all, this time there is a core condensation realm expert among the reinforcements." Hei Wan replied with a little smile that was hidden by the veil.

Chapter 124 - Announcement

Lin Mu would have never expected that there was going to be a core condensation realm expert in the reinforcements. If this was true, then it was perhaps going to be much better than he thought. It would help safeguard from anything too drastic and hopefully would be enough to stop the culprits.

"I see, that's a relief. It will definitely be better." Lin Mu spoke.

Then Lin Mu wondered if there was one core condensation realm expert in the reinforcements, then was it possible to get more of them. He also wondered how many core condensation realm experts there were in the Hei corps.

"Do you have more core condensation realm experts? We would most likely need them later if we are to deal with the 'Invader'." Lin Mu questioned.

"I think so too. You don't have to worry, more of them will be called in when it's the right time. In all, we have three core condensation realm experts." Hei Wan answered, feeling a little proud.

Having more than one core condensation realm expert was often a thing of pride for most clans and organizations. Even the rich clans in the Wu Lim city didn't have any core condensation realm experts in them. Perhaps only the mayor was the one who was a core condensation realm expert and also had some subordinates that were core condensation realm experts as well.

As for the Nascent Soul realm experts, they were considered very rare. Barely any clans in the Shuang Qian kingdom had those in their families, except for perhaps the royal family. Any nascent soul realm expert was qualified enough to start a cultivation sect of his own, thus this showed the level of prestige they commanded.

Feeling a little better after hearing Hei Wan's words, Lin Mu nodded.

"Now then, it's time for me to address the commoners." Hei Wan replied.

Lin Mu nodded and let her continue on her way. He and Hei Bao followed behind Hei Wan and accompanied her to the balcony. Upon reaching there, Lin Mu stayed behind and let Hei Bao stand with Hei Wan. It would not be good of him to stand with them and would only bring him unnecessary attention.

"Don't be too expectant of the core condensation realm experts, Lin Mu." Xukong suddenly spoke.

"I shouldn't be?" Lin Mu asked, feeling a little confused.

"No, you should not. Any invader that can successfully enter a world is a strong being. They would have to be at the Nascent soul realm at the very least if not higher in order to even sense the spatial fluctuations. So you can imagine their strength.

Even if they are restricted by the world's will, they are still not to be taken lightly. There're more chances than not that the core condensation realm experts wouldn't even stand a few seconds against it.

In this case though, it's just an avatar. So it could be possible if you take the right precautions. Still, you need to be extremely prepared for anything that would come your way." Xukong explained.

A serious expression appeared on Lin Mu's face as he comprehended Senior Xukong's words.

"Yes Senior, you are right. We definitely cannot take this lightly. I'll take your advice to my heart and prepare for the worst." Lin Mu spoke in a determined voice.

Xukong inwardly nodded upon seeing this and let out a sigh.

'While he is rather obedient, he still needs to learn a lot. I only hope that I'll have enough time to teach him.' Xukong inwardly spoke with a helpless tone.

Right now, Hei Wan had just opened the doors of the balcony and had walked out. Hei Bao was standing next to her and was keeping a sharp look out on the people. Lin Mu understood the reason for this and knew that being vigilant was for the best.

'We can't ease up right now. Better to be as alert as possible.' Lin Mu thought.

In accordance with his thoughts, Lin Mu extended his spirit sense and kept a vigilant gaze. Hei Wan had now finally started to speak, and everyone's gazes were on her at this moment.

"Residents of Northern town. I have heard your complaints and plights. I know what has happened and now I am going to resolve it. You have suffered for far too long and it was our dishonor that it was not taken seriously."

Hei Wan took a deep breath and looked at the expectant faces of the commoners, feeling a little empathic, remembering her own memories from the past.

"I have decided that we are going to hunt down the culprits that are responsible for the recent incidents. As for the beast that has been wreaking havoc, we are going to hunt it too and are forming an elite team of experts for it."

By now, faint expressions of happiness had appeared on the faces of the commoners.

Lin Mu was listening to her words and felt that they were good and should be enough to assuage the people's fears. Even the mercenaries who had been wronged and falsely accused should be favorable to this.

But just as Lin Mu was thinking of this, he suddenly detected something in the range of his spirit sense. It was traveling fast and was only five meters away from Hei Wan and Hei Bao. Alarm bells rang in his mind as he acted on instinct.

Lin Mu Blinked to the two people and withdrew the large tower shield from the ring. He immediately put it in front of them and held on. Two clanging sounds were heard as something collided with the shield. Lin Mu now knew that those two objects were actually crossbow bolts, whose tips were glistening with a black liquid.

"ASSASSINS!" Lin Mu warned.

Hei Bao and Hei Wan immediately entered a battle-ready stance as they too focused on their spirit sense. While this was happening Hei Bao was a little shocked, as he was not able to sense the bolts even when they had entered his range. They were simply too fast for that. Yet, Lin Mu had fortunately and blocked them.

Lin Mu was still holding out the tower shield in front of him. He kept on holding it with his right hand and withdrew the mask which Hei Shi had given him before. He wore it quickly, to ensure that he won't be exposed.

He knew that the culprits were close, and he wanted to make sure that they were kept unaware.

It was now that Hei Wan spoke up.

"THERE! On the roofs, there are two of them."

Chapter 125 - Assassins

Lin Mu and Hei Bao heard her words clearly, and their eyes went towards the direction of her finger. They spotted the two assassins and locked on to them.

The two assassins had evidently realized that they had failed in their attempt to kill Hei Wan and Hei Bao, thus they had turned around to escape.

"GUARDS PROTECT THE COMMONERS! MERCENARIES LOOK OUT FOR YOUR COMPANIONS!" Hei Wan shouted.

The guards that were standing in two files at the sides of the crowd immediately became already and acted on the orders that were issued. They surrounded the crowd and made sure that they were covered from all sides.

The crowd was panicking, but was still responsive enough to listen to the words of Hei Wan and the guards. The mercenaries on the other hand were used to danger, thus they did not panic, but instead withdrew their respective weapons and got ready to fight.

"We have been waiting for this moment, brothers! Time to show those culprits what it means to challenge us." A mercenary from the group shouted.

"YEAHHH!!" The mercenaries shouted in unison, having no fear on their faces.

The culprits were on the other side of the square on top of the buildings. They were already a good distance away, thus it would be a little difficult for Lin Mu and Hei Bao to catch up with them. Still, they weren't going to let them go.

"I'll take the one on the right, you go after the left." Lin Mu spoke.

Hei Bao nodded in response and jumped down onto the lower roof from the balcony, just as he had done yesterday. Lin Mu too did the same and went after the assassins.

Lin Mu strengthened his legs with spirit qi and increased his speed. He leaped down from the roof and started running through the streets in the direction of the culprits. He ran for a bit and once he was sure that he was away from the eyes of people; he blinked to the top of the roof of a building.

Once he was up there, he could see the culprit in the distance clearly. The culprit was still pretty far from him and he had to catch up with him. Lin Mu observed that while the culprit was far, he wasn't as fast as him.

Lin Mu was steadily catching up to him. The culprit was running on the ground and thus had not spotted Lin Mu yet, who was high up on the roofs. Lin Mu would leap from roof to roof and when some of them were too far apart, he would just use blink to teleport to the other side with ease.

Lin Mu's regular use of 'Blink' had made it easy for him to maneuver through the buildings. In a minute, Lin Mu had caught up with the culprit and was on the right of him, up on the roof of a house. By now they had crossed up the central area and had entered the residential area.

Because the houses were relatively smaller in size than the buildings in the central area, the culprit finally saw Lin Mu. If the culprit's face was not covered with a cloth, one would have been able to see an absolutely stunned expression on his face.

Lin Mu took this moment where the culprit was stunned and blinked right behind him. The culprit just became even more shocked when the person in front of him had disappeared in the blink of an eye into thin air.

Lin Mu appeared behind the culprit and punched the man on his head. While the punch was not strengthened with spirit qi, Lin Mu's tenth stage body tempering realm strength was already enough to knock him out instantly.

The culprit fell on the ground and scattered the dust on it.

~Haah~

Lin Mu let out a breath after ensuring that the man was incapacitated, but still alive. Honestly, he was a little unsure of his strength and had held back. He was a little worried that if he used too much strength, he may just end up killing the man instead of knocking him out.

Lin Mu then realized that he actually didn't have a rope to tie the man with.

"Ugh, I need to remember to buy more things now." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He then took out some clothes and wrapped them around the man's hands and legs to tie him up. Now that he was done with this, another question came to his mind. It was about transporting the culprit. He

could just wait there for the guards to come, but he was worried that the culprit's companions may find him, or perhaps the culprit would free himself.

Not having any other idea, Lin Mu just decided to put the man in his ring temporarily. Though he knew that he couldn't keep him in there for long or the man would suffocate.

"Try to store some air in your ring. I'll restrict it in a place so that the man can breathe in it." Xukong chimed in Lin Mu's mind.

Lin Mu's eyes lit up, and he replied.

"Yes, senior."

Lin Mu had actually tried storing air in his ring before, but the problem that occurred was that the air would just diffuse in the environment inside the ring. Even senior Xukong had been unable to grasp the size of the space inside the ring, thus one could only imagine the sheer massiveness of it.

No matter how much air Lin Mu tried storing in the ring, it would just end up spreading and would become useless. His previous experiment of storing beasts had already made him understand the consequences. But now that senior Xukong was helping him personally, it shouldn't be much of a problem for him.

Lin Mu willed it, and the air in his surroundings started to enter his ring. He could actually see the dust in the surroundings, moving towards him. A minute later he reckoned that he should have stored a sufficient amount of air in the ring, though he still couldn't estimate the exact quantity of it.

"Don't worry, this should be enough air for him to breathe for an hour at least," Xukong spoke.

"If you say so, Senior." Lin Mu respectfully replied.

He then stored the unconscious culprit in the ring and started running towards the direction of the second culprit. Lin Mu of course wouldn't leave Hei Bao alone to deal with the culprit. He actually didn't even know if Hei Bao had caught up with the culprit or not.

Chapter 126 - Suicidal Culprit

Lin Mu climbed up on the roofs again as he knew that it would be nearly impossible to spot Hei Bao and the culprit on the ground. He used blink to quickly reach the top and started running towards the location that he was expecting them to be.

Lin Mu leaped from roof to roof and soon reached the area that he was expecting Hei Bao to be in. Though when he looked around, he couldn't spot him anywhere. He wondered if he had gone further or were they at the back instead.

Lin Mu knew that he was faster than the Hei Bao and the culprit, thus the chance of them being ahead was much less. He turned to the back and ran towards there. A couple of minutes later, he saw the two men on the ground fighting and knew that his guess was right.

"Let's get this done with." Lin Mu muttered.

He then jumped down from the roof and approached the fighting duo. Hei Bao and the culprit easily spotted him. No change of expression could be seen on the face of Hei Bao, but Lin Mu could tell that the culprit was getting tense now.

Lin Mu had already sensed the cultivation of the culprit and knew that he was at the mid stage of the qi refining realm, the same as the one he had captured before. While Hei Bao was at the peak stage of the qi refining realm, he wasn't using all his strength as he wanted to catch the culprit and not kill him.

Lin Mu was just about to act when the culprit did something he had not expected. The culprit withdrew a black pill from his sleeve and moved his face cover aside.

"NOO!!" Hei Bao shouted.

He lunged forward to restrain the culprit, but before he could do so, the culprit had already popped the pill in his mouth and swallowed it. Lin Mu too rushed forward and stood next to the culprit. He wanted to save him but was too late as the black pill's effect started and the culprit started convulsing.

"It's no use. You can't save him now." Xukong spoke.

Lin Mu simply nodded and kept on staring at the culprit who was now lying still on the ground, no longer convulsing.

"We were too late. I should have just taken the risk and restricted him from the very start." Hei Bao spoke in regret.

He then turned to look at Lin Mu and looked around.

"I take it you lost your culprit?" Hei Bao asked.

"No." Lin Mu replied while shaking his head.

He then withdrew the unconscious man from his ring and laid him down.

"What!? You put him in a spatial treasure! Is he even alive?" Hei Bao exclaimed.

It was common knowledge that living creatures usually cannot be kept in spatial treasures unless they are specially made for storing them. If one was to store a person or a beast in spatial treasure, they would just die of suffocation, if not from other reasons such as being splinched due to insufficient space or dismembered due to unstable space.

"Don't worry, he wasn't there for more than a minute. I was close by." Lin Mu replied, not wanting to reveal much.

Hei Bao nodded in response and then checked up on the culprit.

He frisked the culprit's body and removed a few things from there. Lin Mu had not known that the culprits would commit suicide before, or he would have done the same thing. He had already knocked the culprit unconscious and had restrained him thus was not as worried.

Hei Bao retrieved a pill and a small crossbow from the sleeve of the culprit, along with a small vial of black liquid and a quiver of bolts from the culprit's waist. He also took away the dagger that was hidden in the culprits' clothes.

The crossbow that Hei Bao had removed from the culprit, seemed to be intricately crafted and looked complex. While its size was small enough to hide within the wide sleeves of the culprit, its range and power were still sufficient to kill someone.

The crossbow was made mostly from some kind of metal and was slightly shiny as if it was polished to perfection.

"What kind of crossbow is this?" Lin Mu questioned.

Hei Bao furrowed his brows while staring at the crossbow in his hand.

"This is a special crossbow made for assassinations. There aren't many people that can make this and it is rather expensive to make as well. I think I know where these crossbows may have come from." Hei Bao answered.

"Oh? Where are they from?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Wen Dao armaments, in Xiangwei city. They are specialists in hidden weapons such as these. Their workshop isn't as big as the other major ones, but because of their unique weapons they are rather rich and powerful." Hei Bao answered.

"So this means that if we inquire there, we may be able to get the identity of the culprits?" Lin Mu asked.

"Not exactly. They won't reveal the names of their customers that easily, they are rather strict about keeping the privacy of their patrons. It will be difficult in finding out clues from them. We will need to figure out something else." Hei Bao replied.

~Sigh~

"Alright. Let's return back for now." Lin Mu spoke.

"Yes, let's go." Hei Bao responded.

He then picked up the unconscious culprit from the ground and slung it on his back, while Lin Mu stored the other culprit, which was dead now in his ring. They began their journey back and reached the town center after five minutes.

The crowd had dispersed by now, evidently having been moved to safety by the guards. There was still a squad of town's guards protecting the square though. The mercenaries were also standing there, looking a little frustrated and lost.

Lin Mu had heard their shouts of vigor before, thus could guess that they had perhaps been unsuccessful in their endeavor. He could also see the Ming brothers standing beside Hei Wan along with a couple of more people.

One of these people was the driver of Hei Wan's carriage and the other two were men who had large straw hats on their heads which hid their face. Hei Wan was vigilantly observing the area along with the other cultivators, looking ready for anything.

They soon spotted Hei Bao and Lin Mu, who were approaching from the far. After they reached Hei Wan's position, Hei Bao put down the unconscious culprit that he was carrying on his back.

"We were able to capture this one, the other is dead." Hei Bao informed.

Chapter 127 - Identity Of The Culprits?

The people present there currently furrowed their brows upon hearing Hei Bao's words.

"We'll make do with him. Have you seen his face yet?" Hei Wan spoke.

"No, not yet. If they are death warriors as well, they probably have poison hidden in their face covers. I just didn't want to take the risk there." Hei Bao replied.

"That was wise. We can check it once we go inside." Hei Wan spoke while nodding her head.

She turned around and walked in through the entrance of the town center. The others followed behind, and Lin Mu did the same. Hei Wan went to a different room this time instead of the office. They went to a room that was on the second floor.

The room was mostly empty, except for a table and a few chairs. The walls were made of stone and had no windows. The eight people walked in through the singular entrance and closed the door upon entering.

"Place him on the chair and lock him with the chains." Hei Wan ordered.

There were some chains and shackles that were kept on the table. It seemed like to Lin Mu that Hei Wan had already expected this and had prepared this beforehand. The driver of the carriage and Hei Bao went ahead and restrained the culprit with the chains and shackles.

After this was done, Hei Bao carefully removed the face cover of the culprit, revealing the poison sacs that were hidden within. If someone else had carelessly removed the face cover, they would have just exposed themselves to the poison and would probably die.

Hei Bao put the cloth that had the poison sacs attached to in a separate corner of the room, away from others. He then removed the final layer of the cover from the face of the culprit, revealing his face.

Though in the end, the revelation turned out to be disappointing as none of the people could recognize the man that was the culprit.

"Anyone know who this is?" Hei Wan asked and looked around.

Everyone shook their heads, denying that they did not know. Lin Mu tried to remember if he had ever seen this person before, but could not. Hei Bao walked towards Lin Mu and gestured for him to follow him. While walking, he whispered to him.

"We need to see the other corpse too."

"Ah yes. I'll take it out." Lin Mu replied after reaching out of the room.

Lin Mu took out the corpse and carried it with Hei Bao to the room. The Ming Brothers looked at the corpse with interest and confusion. Lin Mu could guess what they were thinking. They placed the corpse on the ground, and Hei Bao did the same process again.

He removed the cloth with the poison sacs and revealed the face of the culprit. This time Lin Mu recognized the face as his brows furrowed.

"I know this person." Lin Mu stated.

Everyone turned to look at Lin Mu upon hearing his words.

"Who is it?" Hei Wan questioned.

"I don't know his name, but I know that he's one of the guards that had disappeared after the beast attack." Lin Mu answered.

The dead culprit was none other than one of the guards he had seen at the entrance of the town the night he had killed the black-robed men.

Hei Wan turned to the two men that were wearing the large straw hats that covered their faces.

"Investigate their identities and find some guards that may know more about this dead 'guard'." Hei Wan ordered.

The two men nodded and immediately left the room to carry out their orders. Finally, Hei Wan turned to look at the Ming brothers.

"You two know that it's best if this information is kept confidential for now, right?" Hei Wan spoke in a cold tone.

The Ming brothers immediately felt cold sweat appear on their backs upon seeing the cold stare of Hei Wan. While they couldn't actually see her face because of the veil, they could still feel the hidden pressure and intent.

They hurriedly nodded to show their acknowledgment.

"Good, then. Call in your leader, I'll discuss this with him." Hei Wan spoke.

A relieved expression appeared on the faces of the two mute brothers, as they felt better that their leader was now going to be here instead. They nodded and cupped their hands in respect before leaving as well.

Once they were gone from the room and the door was closed, Hei Wan let out a sigh.

~Sigh~

"Now we can speak freely." Hei Bao spoke.

"Yes. What else did you two find out then?" Hei Wan questioned.

Hei Bao then showed her the two crossbows in response, along with the other items he had retrieved from the two culprits. While Hei Wan did not seem to be bothered by most of the items, she still furrowed her brows upon seeing the crossbows.

~Sigh~

"Wen Dao armaments. It would have been so much easier if it was someone else. Why did it have to be them?" Hei Wan spoke with a helpless tone.

"Will your lord be able to do something, maybe?" Lin Mu asked.

Hei Wan shook her head upon hearing Lin Mu's question.

"No, unfortunately not. While Wen Dao armaments are rather secretive about their customers' identities, it would have not been much of a problem getting it from them. But the problem now is that they've gained the backing of cultivation sect recently." Hei Wan explained.

Hei Bao tilted his head in confusion after hearing this as well.

"This is news to me. When did this happen? They must have done something to gain the cultivation sect's favor." Hei Bao questioned.

"I found out about it recently as well, it only happened about a week ago. Apparently, some disciples from some cultivation sects took fancy to their workshop and decided to take them under their wing." Hei Wan answered.

"Just disciples? What kind of a sect are they from that they can just take an influential and powerful workshop like Wen Dao armament under their wing?" Hei Bao asked with shock on his face.

"We don't know. But looking at the cultivation base of the disciples, I fear that they may be from one of the top sects, perhaps. The disciples all had a cultivation base at the core condensation realm." Hei Wan answered.

"WHAT!?"

Chapter 128 - Requesting For Weapons

Neither Hei Bao nor anyone else had expected these words to come out of Hei Wan's mouth. Core Condensation realm experts were already a rarity in this region. Even in Wen Dao armaments, there was only one Core condensation realm expert.

This Revelation was too much for them and they could only imagine the kind of sect the said disciples must have come from. Even in the top sects, most disciples were at the qi refining realm. Only the inner sect disciples were at the core condensation realm, along with a few core disciples.

"This means that... they are at the very least inner sect disciples." Hei Bao stated.

Hei Wan shook her head helplessly in acknowledgment.

"That is true, and seeing their numbers, I doubt they can be from anywhere except a top sect." Hei Wan spoke.

Hei Bao then realized that they still didn't know how many disciples were there. He turned his eyes to Hei Bao in a questioning manner.

"There were eleven disciples at the core condensation realm and fifteen at the peak stage of the qi refining realm." Hei Wan answered upon seeing the gaze of Hei Bao.

At this point, even Lin Mu was left speechless and could not know what to make of this. It seemed to him that another one of their avenues had been blocked by misfortune. It was now that he heard the voice of senior Xukong again.

"It doesn't matter to us as much for now. You need to focus on the Invader instead, that is what's going to be more problematic in the long run." Xukong advised.

"Yes senior, you're right." Lin Mu replied while gently nodding his head to himself.

He then looked at the faces of the people in the room and thought about what they should be doing next.

~Ahem~

Lin Mu coughed and pulled their attention towards himself.

"Now then, we still need to focus on the current situation." Lin Mu reminded.

Hei Bao and Hei Wan let out a breath and nodded their head in acceptance.

"You're right. We shouldn't be distracted by needless things for now." Hei Wan spoke.

"So, when are the reinforcements coming?" Lin Mu questioned Hei Wan.

"The majority of them should be here within a week, but the core condensation realm expert will take around ten days to reach." Hei Wan answered.

Lin Mu tilted his head in confusion upon hearing her words.

"Why is it taking him so long?" Lin Mu questioned.

"You see, the Core condensation expert was very far from us. We only sent the message to him four days ago. While he should have received the message by now, it will still take him a long time to reach here." Hei Wan answered.

"What was his location before this?" Hei Bao asked, feeling strange.

"The Black Dawn kingdom." Hei Wan answered.

"Hmm, that makes sense. Crossing the borders and the counties would take that much time." Hei Bao replied.

Lin Mu was not expecting that the core condensation realm expert would be coming from so far. He had heard of Black Dawn Kingdom before and knew that it was the neighboring kingdom of Shuang Qian Kingdom. It was located to the west of it and was nearly the same size as that of the Shuang Qian kingdom.

Lin Mu didn't know much about the Black Dawn kingdom, except that it was a rather barren kingdom and didn't have much farmland. The only common thing between the Shuang Qian Kingdom and the

Black Dawn kingdom was that the Northern Forest existed in both Kingdoms. It was the largest forest in the Northern Lands and spanned across the three frontier kingdoms.

Lin Mu had only heard of some tidbits from the traveling merchants that had once come to the northern town and had been to the Black Dawn kingdom before. He had heard from them that it took over two months to reach the Black Dawn kingdom from the Northern Town if they traveled by a carriage.

'If that expert is able to reach here in ten days, then it's still rather quick.' Lin Mu reckoned.

"Well then, what should I do in that period?" Lin Mu asked.

Hei Wan turned to Lin Mu and thought for a bit before speaking.

"We'll be discussing this matter with the mercenaries first, we can do that as soon as they reach here. As for the rest and considering the matter of the 'Invader' I think we can only proceed after all the reinforcements are here." Hei Wan answered.

Lin Mu nodded after hearing her answer and thought it was reasonable. He didn't want them to rush in headfirst and make a mistake which they cannot afford.

"You can do whatever you want in the meantime. We will contact you when we need your help. We are also going to assign people to help the mercenaries keep a watch on their camp, so you don't need to be bothered with it. As for the culprits, we will be interrogating this person and investigate further." Hei Wan explained.

'That should give me enough time to cultivate till I reach the late stage of the qi refining realm, hopefully.' Lin Mu thought.

Seeing Lin Mu lost in thought, an idea appeared in Hei Wan's mind.

"Do you perhaps need something from us? You've helped us plenty until now, so we should compensate you." Hei Wan spoke.

Lin Mu raised his brows upon hearing her words. He then thought over the things that he had been desiring: Weapons.

He had tried buying them from the shops in the town but was unable to get them here. He had been told that he would need to get them from the Wu Lim City as they were rather unorthodox and were not popular enough in this area.

"I do want something." Lin Mu spoke.

"Oh? What do you want?" Hei Wan asked.

"I want weapons." Lin Mu replied.

"Well, that can be easily arranged. Just tell me what kind of weapons you want and we'll get them for you." Hei Wan spoke in an assuring tone.

Lin Mu didn't reply to her straightaway, but instead withdrew a roll of paper from his ring. This roll of paper had the list of the weapons that he needed for training with the 'Thousand Armament Blade

Scripture'. He had long since made this list, as he had not been able to find them in any of the shops here.

Lin Mu passed the roll of paper to Hei Wan, who promptly took it.

Upon seeing the roll of paper, Hei Wan thought that perhaps Lin Mu wanted some specific type of weapon and that its design was written on the paper. But when she unrolled it and read it, she was stunned.

It wasn't the design for a weapon on the roll of paper, but rather an entire list of weapons. She roughly glanced over at them and realized that there were more than three hundred weapons on there. Some of them were common weapons, while the others were unorthodox and rare.

She couldn't imagine why Lin Mu would need these weapons. While the common and uncommon weapons were fine with her, but some of the weapons that were mentioned on the list were simply unheard of to her. She had never seen names such as these.

Hei Bao approached Hei Wan and curiously peeked on the roll of paper that was in her hands.

"This... this is enough to equip a small army!" Hei Bao exclaimed.

Hei Bao was rather shocked by this and didn't know how Lin Mu would even use them.

'He couldn't possibly carry them all, could he? Even if he stored them in his high-grade spatial treasure, will he even have enough space for them?' Hei Bao thought.

Hei Wan removed her eyes from the roll of paper in her hands and looked up at Lin Mu again.

"Are you sure that you want these?" Hei Wan questioned.

"Yes, I'm sure. I want all of those weapons." Lin Mu replied.

Lin Mu was actually not expecting to get all of the weapons. He knew that getting all of them would be an expensive affair, thus he would be happy with even a quarter of the weapons.

"Fine, then. I'll have them imported from the Wu Lim city. Though I don't know how much time it would take as some of them would probably have to be custom made." Hei Bao replied.

'Wait, she's actually getting me all of them? That's makes it easy then.' Lin Mu inwardly spoke, feeling surprised.

He suppressed his surprise and made sure that it was not displayed on his face before speaking again.

"That's fine, I will wait for them. Thank you for the offer though." Lin Mu spoke in a grateful tone.

Hei Wan simply nodded and gestured to one of the men with the straw hats. She handed the list to him and told him to get it ready. The man accepted and left the room to carry out his given task.

"I'll retreat for now then. I'll be at my house, so you know where to find me." Lin Mu stated before leaving the room as well.

Chapter 129 - Giving The Seized Items To Hei Wan

But just as Lin Mu had stepped out of the room, the voice of senior Xukong was heard in his head.

"Didn't you want to give them the things you have taken from the mayor's office?" Xukong questioned.

Lin Mu suddenly realized that he had forgotten about this in the situation and knew that he should do this before going. He thus turned around in that second, and the people inside the room witnessed this. Hei Bao had a confused expression as he saw him suddenly return.

"Did you need anything else?" Hei Wan questioned.

"Ah, yes. I forgot to give some things to you people." Lin Mu answered.

Hei Wan tilted her head in a questioning manner, as she then saw Lin Mu withdrew multiple items from his spatial treasure and placed them on the ground and the table.

There were scrolls, registers, ledgers, documents, and some random items in it. Though a shocked expression appeared on her face when she saw the golden shining bars in Lin Mu's hand.

But that wasn't the end of it as Lin Mu kept on withdrawing one golden bar after the other until finally, a small pile of around forty gold bars was formed on the table.

~Gasp~

"This... this..." Hei Bao stuttered upon seeing the pile of gold on the table.

"Where did you get this? Wait, is this all from the town head's office?" Hei Wan questioned upon identifying some of the missing things from the office.

Lin Mu nodded in response as he spoke.

"Yes, I got all of these from the town head's office. I thought they would have clues, and it didn't seem right to trust anyone else at that time, so I just kept them with me."

Hei Wan nodded as she understood his reasoning. Until now, they were not completely sure about the identities of the culprits, thus knew that it would be best to remain cautious.

"That's fine, you did well." Hei Wan replied as she kept on looking at the items.

Lin Mu then extended his hand toward the gold and picked up one of the bars. He pointed at the engraving on it and showed it to Hei Wan.

"Do you know what this is?" Lin Mu questioned, feeling a bit uneasy.

Hei Wan looked at it and instantly recognized the markings on the gold bars.

"Yes, I know. These are the gold bars which are issued by the kingdom to various towns and cities for their financial needs." Hei Wan answered.

The moment Lin Mu heard her answer, the suspicions within his mind were confirmed as he gritted his teeth and clenched his other hand. Faint traces of anger appeared in his eyes as his aura changed slightly.

Both Hei Wan and Hei Bao noticed this change and knew that something had gone wrong. Hei Wan particularly felt the faint killing intent she had felt from Lin Mu before, emanating again.

"Wha-what's wrong?" Hei Wan asked with concern.

Lin Mu took a deep breath and silently chanted the calming heart sutra to suppress the rage that was rising from within him. He knew that this was not the right time, and he needed to be clear headed at this time.

A few seconds later the calming heart sutra showed its effects and Lin Mu returned to his normal self. He took a deep breath and looked at Hei Wan.

"This gold is for the use of the town, right? So that the people can take benefit from it when they have problems. But the town head never did that here. The people have always suffered in the winters." Lin Mu answered in one breath.

Hei Wan understood his words and knew what he was meaning.

"I can swear on my lord, I'll get to the end of this and ensure that justice is done." Hei Wan replied in an assuring tone.

Lin Mu simply nodded and just left the room. He thought that he shouldn't spend any more time here as it would just keep on bothering him. He could also see that Hei Wan was speaking from her heart and decided to trust her to deal with it.

Lin Mu didn't know what he would do if the matter was left up to him. He feared that he may end up doing something that he would perhaps come to regret later. Thus he decided that it would be better for him to just focus on his cultivation.

After Lin Mu was gone from the room, Hei Bao's brows furrowed with confusion. He turned to Hei Wan and looked at her. At this point, there was no one else except for the two of them left in the room.

"He is not fine, is he?" Hei Bao asked.

Hei Wan shook her head before speaking.

"No... but he will be, I know it. Whatever he's dealing with right now, he needs to get through it himself. From the short time we have been acquainted, I've understood one thing, and that is that he is a self-reliant person. He would function better if he deals with it himself." Hei Wan explained.

"If you say so. I just hope that he recovers quickly and doesn't enter a dark place. I... fear him." Hei Bao spoke with apprehension.

Hei Wan's eyes went wide as she focused on Hei Bao.

"You felt it too?!" Hei Wan questioned.

"Do you mean the change in his aura?" Hei Bao counter questioned.

"Yes. I thought it was just me, but now it seems like his aura has indeed changed. Before only I could feel it because it was faint, but now that you can too. That just means that his killing intent is growing stronger." Hei Wan answered.

"He wasn't like this when we first met him, though. He only changed after he met the town head and killed him." Hei Bao spoke.

"Hmm, that is true. That just means that I need to investigate this matter even more closely. After all, I've given him my word." Hei Wan replied.

Hei Bao then went silent for a bit and rubbed his chin, before speaking again.

"Are you sure the lord will be fine with such a large expense? Just the sheer quantity of weapons in that list is troubling, not to mention that some of them will have to be custom made." Hei Bao questioned with a concerned tone.

~Sigh~

Hei Wan let out a sigh and rubbed her forehead in fatigue.

"The lord's letter arrived this morning. It was in response to the first report that I gave him about Lin Mu. He's ordered that everything is to be done to keep him on our side and to ensure that no enmity occurs. The expense on the weapons is nothing compared to what he's willing to spend." Hei Wan answered.

"But don't you find that it's strange he's asking for so many weapons? It's enough to equip a small army. What would he even do with so many of them?" Hei Bao asked, unable to suppress the doubts within his heart.

"Whatever it may be, it's not our concern now. The Lord has given us our orders and they are to befriend Lin Mu and make him our ally. We will just do our best to satisfy the request." Hei Wan replied in a stern tone.

Hei Bao noticed her strict tone and understood that he was now starting to perhaps bother her a lot more than he should. He thus decided to change the topic.

"About our reinforcements, where are they coming from? And about the core condensation realm expert, is the lord really willing to use them?" Hei Bao asked.

~Sigh~

Hei Wan let out another sigh as she just decided to answer his queries. While she wanted nothing more than to just return to her work, she understood that Hei Bao had the right to ask her these questions, and it would be better if he was clear about their situation.

"The reinforcements are coming from our inactive members. They are all those who had been disguising themselves as commoners and a few other people from the corps. As for the core condensation realm expert, we were lucky that he was able to complete his mission early." Hei Wan took a brief pause and then continued.

"We were originally unsure about the background of Lin Mu and had suspicions that he belonged to a sect. We also didn't know about the personality of Lin Mu, thus the Lord had chosen that person to come. He is the most experienced in interacting and dealing with disciples of cultivations sects, thus he was the best choice.◆◆◆ Hei Wan explained.

"Let's just hope everything goes well." Hei Bao spoke as he turned towards the unconscious culprit.

A grim expression appeared on his face as he walked towards the culprit that was chained to the chair and spoke, "In the meantime... we can have some fun."

He then firmly held the unconscious culprits' fingers and in a snap, bent them.

"AAAAGHHH!!!!"

The pain-filled shouts of the culprits thus echoed in the room, as he had a rude awakening.

Chapter 130 - The Eleventh Stage Of The Body Tempering Realm

Lin Mu had left the town center and was now walking towards his house. He took in the sights and the sounds from the surroundings. Most of the streets had become rather empty except for the guards that would patrol at every few intervals.

Lin Mu knew that this was due to the assassination. Hei Wan had already ordered the guards to take the people to safety, so they were most likely in their homes now. He knew that now that the matter had been resolved on a certain level, the people will most likely get the notice by evening.

Lin Mu looked up at the sky and saw the sun, which was just about to reach the top of his head. He estimated that it should be eleven am right now and knew that he had plenty of daylight left. The days had finally started to get short, and the clouds were starting to get dense.

There were three more months to the end of the winter, and in another month the sun would be completely hidden till the start of spring. That would be the time when the cold would be the harshest and the snow the deepest.

Lin Mu could still remember the last year's blizzards clearly. The snow was knee deep and people could not open their doors as the snow was piled up against their doors. Lin Mu knew that some people would start to run low on supplies and would have to ration them.

He hoped that this time since Hei Wan was here and the town head was dead, the things would be different.

"And if they are not, I will make them..." Lin Mu muttered to himself as another fluctuation in his aura appeared.

Lin Mu kept on walking and eventually reached the residential district. He could now see some people here discussing with each other. He could hear them gossip about the incident from before and the announcement. Lin Mu understood that they seemed to be slightly more satisfied this time.

'At least the people have hope this time.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Soon Lin Mu reached his house and saw someone standing in front of it. He looked at the man's attire and understood that it was a guard. But the suspicious thing was that he hadn't seen the guard before, and he seemed to be someone new.

Lin Mu extended his spirit sense and was surprised to find out that the guard was actually a cultivator. He instantly became alert and ideas started to run in his mind.

'Is he one of the culprits? Are they disguising as guards now?' Lin Mu wondered as he withdrew his sword and continued forwards silently.

The guard was facing the other way thus he had not seen Lin Mu yet, and he had not even sensed it when Lin Mu's spirit sense had probed him.

'Hmm, it seems like he hasn't experience spirit sense before. He's also at the early stage of the qi refining realm, this will be easy. Seems like we will have another culprit to interrogate.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu looked around one more time and confirmed that no one was watching him. Once he was sure of that, he used blink and appeared right behind the guard. He then put up his short sword against the man's neck.

"Don't even try to move. One move and I'll slice your neck. Now tell me who are you?" Lin Mu spoke in a threatening manner.

The guard who had been carefree this entire time felt as if he was doused with cold water. He had not expected for someone to suddenly seize him. But then the next instant he recognized the voice and his eyes went wide.

"Wait! Sir Lin Mu! It's me, Hei Ping!" The guard hurriedly spoke.

Lin Mu tilted his head upon hearing the guard and then suddenly recognized the voice. Though he still didn't move as he was still feeling suspicious. The guard saw this and knew that Lin Mu was still wary of him.

"Sir Lin Mu, I was assigned by leader Hei Wan to guard and serve you. If you needed anything, I was asked to be there for you. I was assigned the position of a guard so that it would be easier for us." The guard explained.

Only after hearing the man's explanation did Lin Mu withdrew the sword from the man's neck. Lin Mu then remembered the man named Hei Ping's voice. He had seen him before, but because the man was wearing the mask, he could not recognize him. Hei Ping was one of the other members of the Hei Corps that had recently returned to the safe house.

"Hmm, should have informed me before." Lin Mu spoke.

Hei Ping took a deep breath and touched his neck, ensuring that it was safe.

"That's what I was here for sir, to inform you." Hei Ping spoke in a helpless tone.

"Okay then. So where are you going to stay?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Since I've been assigned the duty of a guard, I'll be here most of the time. There are more of my companions who will be patrolling the street and neighborhood too. But if you need anything, just call for me. I will also be informing you of any report that comes from the leader." Hei Ping explained.

"I understand, for now I'm going to be resting inside." Lin Mu replied and then unlocked the gate of the courtyard.

He then walked inside and entered the backyard. He came to stand in front of the graves that were situated there. He kneeled down and closed his eyes.

"Father, Mother, please bless me with strength. I know the journey in front of me is long and is going to be difficult, but know this that I will prevail." Lin Mu muttered with determination.

Lin Mu then stayed there in the same position for a couple of hours before he stood up and returned to the inside of the house. Unknown to Lin Mu, his aura that had become slightly unstable since the morning had finally become calm after visiting the graves of his parents.

Lin Mu could feel his stomach rumble and then realized that he had not eaten anything for a while.

"Hmm, I'll eat some food before cultivating." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He thus took out the spirit beast meat from his spatial ring and started to cook it in the kitchen. Twenty minutes later the roast meat was ready and Lin Mu started devouring it. With his current appetite, it didn't take long for Lin Mu to completely finish it.

Lin Mu then returned to his bedroom and sat down on his bed cross-legged to cultivate. But just five minutes later, a surprised expression appeared on his face as he was awakened from his session. A wave of energy emanated from his body for a brief moment, and it almost seemed like one could see his bones shining through his flesh.

"I broke through..." Lin Mu muttered.

Indeed, Lin Mu had just broken through to the eleventh stage of the body tempering realm and had entered the peak tier of body tempering stage experts. His vital energy was flowing into his bones and was even touching his bone marrow.

A refreshing feeling washed over his mind as he felt his entire body relax. It was as if his body's cells were exhilarating in joy and had become extremely active. In fact, a minute later, faint wisps of steam could be seen emanating from his body.

"Wha-What!?" Lin Mu spoke with surprise.

"FOCUS! Feel the vital energy within you and guide it on its path. Let it flow to your bones and wash your marrows." Xukong guided in a stern tone.

Lin Mu did not speak and just followed the instructions. He continued chanting the calming heart sutra and focused on the flow of the vital energy. He could sense the vital energy that was filling his skin, muscles, and blood.

This vital energy had been at an extremely saturated stage and was close to breaking out at any moment. Lin Mu's current situation just turned out to be the most suitable, thus it broke through. The vital energy from these three layers started to seep into his bones.

Even though the energy was flowing into his bones, Lin Mu couldn't actually feel any decrease in the energy from those three layers. It was as if the energy was instantly replaced the moment it flowed away.

This cycle of replenishment and consumption continued for an hour until finally, Lin Mu felt as if his bones were saturated as well. He had just reached the peak of the eleventh stage of the body tempering realm in one attempt.

~Huuu~

Lin Mu let out a breath and expelled a wisp of gray gas from his mouth. This gray gas traveled forward and touched the wooden wall of the room. But when it touched it, the wall suddenly started corroding.