

Walker 191

Chapter 191 - Calming Duan Ke

Looking at Lin Mu act like that made Duan Ke only feel more uncomfortable. Especially when his lips gently opened, and he lightly came forwards, a myriad of thoughts popped into her mind. Thoughts which she had never thought of before.

Feeling scared at these thoughts, she closed her eyes in acceptance. But just as she was awaiting the thing that she had imagined, it never happened. Instead, a wave of calmness washed over her body and relived her worries.

Duan Ke could hear some esoteric chants in her ears and could tell that they were coming from the front. She did not understand what the chants meant, but they were helping her. It was as if the chants were lifting a hidden weight that was placed upon her heart.

Duan Ke couldn't tell how much time had passed as when she opened her eyes after the chants had stopped. She no longer felt the terror she had felt before, and a feeling of serenity and peace had replaced it. She had not felt like this in a long time and was cherishing every moment of it.

'What is this?... Did he do it? But how?' Wondered Duan Ke, as she basked in the peaceful feeling.

Her eyes lifted from the ground and looked back at the person standing in front of him. For the first time ever, she was taking such a close look at him. Lin Mu had changed from what she used to remember he looked like.

Duan Ke couldn't almost believe her eyes as she saw the changes in him. Lin Mu's height had increased by a little bit and his hair had grown as well. His physique had also changed slightly, but it wasn't as apparent. Strangely enough, she felt as if his shoulders had become broad like a shield.

She felt as if they would be good for protecting her for some reason. As she thought of this, her face was tinged with a slight shade of pink.

'What am I thinking? Ah! Why do I feel like this?' Duan Ke questioned herself.

Forcibly suppressing her thoughts, she focused her attention again. This time on more important things, such as why Lin Mu was here and how he was able to enter this place.

Lin Mu saw the strange look on her face that lasted for a couple of minutes before he actually stopped chanting the calming heart sutra. He was feeling a little guilty at Duan Ke's condition thus thought of this solution.

He reckoned that it should help her to a certain extent, but had never expected for there to be a reaction such as this. For some reason, her face had turned a shade of pink and he didn't know what to think of.

'Perhaps, it's just the effect of the calming heart sutra reliving her fear... Yes, that's probably it.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

He then saw Duan Ke open her eyes and struggling with something before finally speaking.

"How did you enter here?" Duan Ke questioned.

Lin Mu was at a loss of what to answer. He couldn't just tell her that he appeared here because of sheer curiosity, could he? It was now that the voice of Senior Xukong rang in his mind.

"Actually, that's what you should do. Did you forget they already suspect your capabilities? Take advantage of this the same as you did with the Hei corps." Xukong suggested.

Lin Mu thought over it for a moment before deciding that it should be fine. Many people already believed that he had a strong background adding a couple more people didn't really matter at this point. Besides, even if he told them the truth, he didn't think they would believe it.

~Huu~

Taking a deep breath, Lin Mu finally opened his mouth.

"I sensed a formation outside and wanted to know what it was doing here in the middle of the town. And ever since your shop disappeared, I was wondering where you guys were. It eventually led me to this, and I ended up finding an opening in the formation." Lin Mu answered rather truthfully.

Duan Ke heard Lin Mu's words but could not bring her to believe in them. They were seemed far too good to be true. She knew the complexity of the formation that was placed on this courtyard and knew the difficulty one would have in finding a flaw in it.

One could not just 'find an opening' as what Lin Mu had just said.

'There is definitely something more that he's hiding.' Duan Ke thought to herself.

But just as she did so, Duan Ke remembered the incident from the past again and that combined with the peerless sword intent she had felt before, an idea formed in her mind. She could imagine Lin Mu standing there and a mysterious figure behind him, guiding him.

'Yes, that's it! He definitely has a hidden expert behind him. The only question is which one... is it the expert who had the peerless sword intent, perhaps?' Duan Ke thought to himself.

A multitude of thoughts and ideas passed through her mind, but in the end, she realized that it would be best to leave it to her grandfather for now. Jing Wei was much more experienced than her and would be able to understand the situation much better than her.

With this temporary solution in her mind, she just decided to take Lin Mu to meet her grandfather.

"Let's go, we'll meet my grandfather and there you can tell him the rest." Duan Ke spoke in a cold tone.

Lin Mu finally heard the familiar cold tone and felt a bit better. He was used to Duan Ke acting like that and was feeling uncomfortable with her previous behavior. Calmly nodding to show his acknowledgment, he spoke.

"Alright, show me the way." Lin Mu replied.

Duan Ke turned around immediately and the spirit sword that was floating above her floated down and came to hover in front of her. She lightly held the sword and it disappeared. Looking at this, Lin Mu immediately felt the spatial fluctuations.

Chapter 192 - The Spirit Qi In The Courtyard

'So she does have a spatial storage treasure as well.' Lin Mu thought to himself as he continued walking behind Duan Ke.

Along the way, Lin Mu kept on smelling the sweet fragrance of the flowers. It was the first thing that he had felt upon opening the portal to this courtyard and was still smelling it. The fragrance was calming and helped him feel a bit relaxed.

Lin Mu could only imagine how stressed Duan Ke must have been, considering she had access to a relaxing place such as this. Not only this, but Lin Mu could even feel the faint spirit qi in the air. While it was still faint, he could sense it very well.

It was different from the other places. The concentration of the spirit qi was higher than the real world, and it was easy for him to sense it as well. Even without using his spirit sense or the severing heart sutra, Lin Mu could sense it.

In fact, he felt as if he could even absorb the spirit qi straight from the air. Feeling curious, he tried that very thing.

~Whirl~

The sound of wind blowing was heard, and Duan Ke abruptly halted. She knew that wind never blew in the courtyard unless the formation array artificially did that. But looking at the status of the formation array, no such thing had been triggered, which made her think of only one thing.

She immediately turned around and saw the wind swirling around Lin Mu. She could clearly sense the wisps of spirit qi in the wind as they were absorbed by Lin Mu. This was already surprising to her, but with the ease that Lin Mu was absorbing the spirit qi only made her more shocked.

Duan Ke knew this courtyard inside out and knew of every formation array that was placed on it. There were in fact around a hundred formation arrays placed in this courtyard, which were in turn composed of many more individual formations.

One of those formation arrays was a Qi gathering formation array which absorbed the qi from the atmosphere and ground of the real world and channeled it to this courtyard. There was another special function that was added to it with the virtue of another formation array.

This formation array was a kind of identification array and helped verify the identity of persons. The way it did it was with the qi signature of a person. A qi signature was basically the unique traces that appeared in every person's qi due to the cultivation technique that they practiced.

A cultivation technique not only gave a person's spirit qi a unique signature, but the person themselves would add small traces of their individuality to their spirit qi. While this was of little use most of the time, in situations such as these it was very important.

When a qi gathering formation array was layered with an identification array, they combined to give a completely new effect. The effect was such that the qi that was gathered by the qi gathering array could only be utilized by the persons whose identity was registered in the identification array.

If their identity was not registered, they would not be able to absorb the qi no matter what they did. But clearly, in front of Duan Ke a big exception was present. Somehow Lin Mu was absorbing the spirit qi in the air and that too without much effort.

With the casual way he was walking, Duan Ke could tell that it was very easy for him. Even she herself could not do anything such as this and would have to sit down to properly cultivate. But then more questions popped up in her mind.

What kind of effect would it have on the formation array if the spirit qi was forcefully absorbed even if the person was not registered in the formation? A lot of negative ideas popped up in Duan Ke's mind and her face fell.

Not wanting to take any chance, she hurriedly spoke up.

"Stop! Don't absorb the spirit qi." Duan Ke ordered.

Lin Mu was astonished and snapped out of his own thoughts. He was engrossed in the feeling of spirit qi and had not noticed when Duan Ke turned around. Since this was the first time he had absorbed spirit qi with such an ease he wanted to revel in the moment.

In fact, in the few tens of seconds that Lin Mu had spent absorbing spirit qi, he had already gained over a hundred wisps of spirit qi. The only time he had even gained spirit qi this fast was back when he absorbed the spirit qi from the spirit stones when he was helping Hei Yingjie.

"Huh? Is there a problem?" Lin Mu questioned feeling confused.

"Yes, there is a problem. You can't just absorb the spirit qi here without our permission." Duan Ke answered, feeling slightly angered.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I should have consulted you before." Lin Mu apologized immediately.

~Humph~

Duan Ke harrumphed before speaking, "Don't do it again," and then turned around to continue walking.

Lin Mu rubbed the back of his head in helplessness and followed behind her. Along the way, he got a closer look at the flowers that were planted in the gardens. He could now tell that the fragrance was actually coming from these flowers and he could even sense something else.

Lin Mu extended his spirit sense and observed the flowers with them. But when he did, he was surprised to find them filled with dense spirit qi.

"These are... spirit flowers?" Lin Mu muttered to himself.

"Yes, they are indeed spirit flowers and looking at their numbers it's an entire garden of them," Xukong spoke in agreement.

Lin Mu was amazed at them, as this was the first time he had seen them. The only other thing that he had seen that was rich in spirit qi like this was the purple grape sized fruit he had eaten in the past. Still, the density of spirit qi in that fruit was unknown to him as he did not have spirit sense back then. He could only estimate that it was perhaps on the same level.

Eventually, both of them reached the entrance of the large mansion where an old man was standing.

Chapter 193 - Jing Wei's Confusion

Jing Wei was busy in cultivation the entire time and when he woke up, he saw that his granddaughter was not there in hall. He checked the library where she usually spent her free time and did not find her there either, which was rather unexpected to him.

Ever since the incidents, including the one with Lin Mu, Duan Ke had been obsessed with finding the clues to the identity of the hidden expert. Jing Wei himself had been doing the same, but even his memory was betraying him. He could not recall if he had ever known of something like that before.

He had scanned the old records of his clan yet even after two entire months he had barely been able to search in thirty percent of them. And this was when he had the help of his granddaughter as well. Still, after knowing that Duan Ke was not in the library, he checked the other parts of the mansions.

It didn't take Jing Wei much effort, as he just did a simple sweep of the entire mansion with his spirit sense. For a cultivator of his cultivation base, their spirit sense was massive. Even though his cultivation base was sealed by himself, and his full potential of spirit sense restricted, it was nothing for Jing Wei to do such a task.

Jing Wei did not even wade through the rooms individually but rather directly pierced through them with his spirit sense, the wall acting less than air. After learning that she wasn't in the mansion, he didn't worry as there wasn't anything that could harm them here.

This courtyard was one of the heirloom treasures that had been refined by each head of the clan. It had hundreds of formation arrays inscribed into it, with many of them being defensive ones. Jing Wei was confident that even with his sealed cultivation base, he would be able to hold off Dao treading realm experts as long as he was in the courtyard.

The entirety of the courtyard was actually a special spirit tool that was bordering on the level of an immortal tool. It was one of the few spirit tools in existence that were able to manipulate space and create a spatial dimension such as this.

While it could not compare in size with the inheritance grounds of the top sects which were similarly based in different spatial dimensions, there was one thing that put this courtyard above them all. While the top sects' inheritance grounds were big, they were immobile.

They could never be moved from the location they had been created at and would forever stay there. The only time they could be moved would be when it was the time for the destruction of that spatial dimension. Jing Wei's clan had some information about the peculiarities of space and had learned from it that every space would one day collapse as it reaches its end.

The biggest advantage of this courtyard was that it could be moved around. The courtyard was in a bubble like space from where a connection could be formed to the real world. The secret to it was kept by Jing Wei and no one else knew about it, not even Duan Ke.

Because of this very reason, he never doubted the safety of his granddaughter as long as she was in this courtyard. It wasn't like she had left the courtyard either, as he would have been alerted if the restrictions of the courtyard were lifted.

Without his permission, no one could enter or leave the courtyard. Thus the shock that Jing Wei felt after discovering that there was a third person in the courtyard was terrifying, to say the least. Jing Wei knew even better than Duan Ke and knew the level of danger they may be facing right now.

In the thousands of years, he had lived, he had learned and seen many things that others could only come to imagine. He knew the cultivators that would be able to do such a thing would be immensely strong. So strong that perhaps even with his cultivation unsealed and the courtyard in his control it would not be possible for him to resist.

Such a person was none other than an Immortal Ascension realm cultivator. It was someone he definitely did not want to meet. He had the chance to experience their might before, and it was terrifying to say the least. He doubted he would be able to fight against one.

But when he saw that Duan Ke and the other person were calmly walking without any sign of agitation, he was dumbstruck. Even more so when he recognized the person who was with his Granddaughter.

"What?! How?!" That was all Jing Wei could say before he rushed out of the Mansion and appeared at the entrance.

There he finally confirmed with his own two eyes that it was Lin Mu who had appeared in the courtyard. Seeing that nothing bad was happening, Jing Wei waited patiently till they reached him. He did not show a change of expression on his face, even though internally he was nervous.

Lin Mu looked up at the old man, who looked the same as he was the last time he had seen him. Except this time he was wearing much better quality clothes and looked to be a proper cultivator. Back when he had seen Jing Wei at the shop, he had been dressed in a robe that while it was clean still looked old.

The one thing Lin Mu noticed seemed different was that Jing Wei was no longer wearing the black beaded bracelet in his left hand. He then remembered that Jing Wei had forcefully pulled on it and broken it apart. Only after doing that had he been able to return to normal after being affected by senior Xukong's ward.

Looking at Jing Wei's face, Lin Mu could tell nothing and could only feel calmness on it. He was unaware that Jing Wei was perhaps much more nervous than back when he fought in the war a thousand years ago.

Lin Mu walked forward and came to stand beside Duan Ke. He lifted his hands and cupped them in greetings.

"Hello, Owner Jing Wei." Lin Mu greeted respectfully.

Chapter 194 - Peculiarity Of The Courtyard

Jing Wei did not know how to respond at that moment and was at a loss. But to his fortune, Duan Ke was the next person to speak, and he did not have to respond first.

"Grandfather, he was able to somehow find an opening in the formation array and entered the courtyard." Duan Ke informed.

Many thoughts appeared in Jing Wei's mind upon hearing that and he began thinking of all possibilities. His train of thought went in the same direction as Duan Ke and arrived at the same conclusion as well.

'Seems like the 'being' supporting him helped him.' Jing Wei thought.

~Huu~

Jing Wei took a deep breath before speaking.

"And why did you come here? I reckon you understood that we were intentionally not allowing anyone here?" Jing Wei questioned.

Although Jing Wei felt a little scared at asking him like this but he surmised that since the expert behind Lin Mu hadn't attacked them till now, it should be safe for now. In the past two months, he had also come to an understanding.

Jing Wei understood that what the 'being' behind Lin Mu had done at that time was a mere warning. A show of power, to say the least. It was not even a threat. But considering the 'beings' standing, Jing Wei reckoned that it was to be expected.

Powerful cultivators had eccentric personalities and habits. He himself could attest to it. He had lived for over two thousand years now and knew that he had picked up some strange habits himself. He just attributed it to a natural thing that happened to most cultivators once they lived long enough.

Jing Wei had seen others that were on a similar level as him and had witnessed the same kind of eccentricities. He could only imagine a being that was who knows how many times more powerful and long-lived than them would act like.

Still, since Lin Mu was already here, there wasn't much that he could do.

'I may as well clarify all things.' Jing Wei thought to himself.

While Jing Wei was thinking all this, only a couple of seconds had gone by. Lin Mu thought during that time and then decided to speak. He gave him the same explanation that he had given Duan Ke, except this time he added a few more details.

With senior Xukong's suggestion, Lin Mu told them how he had discovered the formation with his spirit sense and had traced the entirety of it. He then told them that by doing that he found a way to make an opening and appeared here in the courtyard.

Jing Wei and Duan Ke couldn't help but think, 'The proverb stands true, a monster can only be created by a monster.'

They reckoned that with a powerful backing such as his, Lin Mu must have had a lot of time and guidance to be able to do such a thing.

Jing Wei and Duan Ke finally realized another thing, 'Wait, he said spirit sense?'

Both of them exchanged a look and knew exactly what the other was thinking. Duan Ke tried to sense Lin Mu's cultivation and realized that while she could feel the faint waves of spirit qi from him showing that he was a cultivator, she could no longer sense any vital energy in his body.

'What the... How is this possible? Did his body tempering realm cultivation regress? No, his physical condition is too good for that to be true. What could it be?' Duan Ke wondered.

Jing Wei too was having similar thoughts. He had a brief thought about probing Lin Mu with his spirit sense to get a better idea, but then quickly remembered his previous misfortune. No longer daring to even think of that, he decided to get more information.

"We'll talk more inside, that would be more appropriate." Jing Wei suggested.

"That's fine with me," Lin Mu replied while nodding his head.

Soon Jing Wei and Duan Ke brought Lin Mu to a hall. Along the way, Lin Mu got to see all the luxuries that were in the mansion and was amazed by them. The paintings, calligraphy scrolls, and statues all emanated spirit qi.

Even the wood from which the walls and floor were made from emanated faint spirit qi, making him wonder what they were made from. Lin Mu could not even begin to imagine what all these materials were and how much they must have cost.

He had never seen such luxury before, and the only thing that he had to compare it with was the town head's office. But that and this were completely different. If that was an opulent luxury, this seemed to be more sober.

Everything was tasteful and nothing seemed out of place or too much.

'All of this stuff... I can't even imagine...' Lin Mu internally felt overwhelmed.

"Such is the world of cultivators, Lin Mu. From this, I can tell that these two have a powerful background in this world. I can actually identify some of the rare materials here. While they are common in the higher worlds, for a low level world such as this, they are perhaps the epitome of luxury." Xukong spoke in Lin Mu's mind.

"Not just this, but have you sensed anything peculiar here?" Xukong asked.

Lin Mu tried to think over it, but could not understand what Senior Xukong was asking. He curiously extended his spirit sense and scanned over the place. It was then that he got a familiar feeling from multiple places in the mansion and not just that, he tried to extend his spirit sense out from the windows and sensed it out in the middle of the air as well.

"There are formation nodes everywhere!" Lin Mu internally exclaimed.

"That's good, you realized that at least. Now, what more can you tell me when you feel this place?" Xukong further asked.

Lin Mu tried hard but could not feel anything more. He probed all the items and even the walls, but all he could sense except for the formations was spirit qi. It was then that he realized it, and his eyes went wide.

"This place... the qi here is uniform, too uniform." Lin Mu answered.

Chapter 195 - Pseudo Immortal Tool

Lin Mu sensed the spirit qi and found it to be quite stable. In fact, it was moving in a strangely harmonic way. It would flow from different channels and then return to the beginning. Lin Mu had seen something like this before, and it was in something that he owned.

It was his short sword, which was a spirit weapon. This surprised Lin Mu as he had never expected this.

"Senior... this entire place..." Lin Mu muttered.

"Yes, this is not just a minor plane but rather an entire spirit tool. That too a spirit tool that is bordering on the level of an immortal tool and is at a grade called as pseudo immortal tool." Xukong revealed.

This was the first time Lin Mu had seen something that was this powerful. The closest item he had to this was his own spirit sword, but the difference was great between those two. Lin Mu had heard about pseudo immortal tools from senior Xukong before and knew that they were one peak grade spirit tools that were half a step in turning into an immortal tool.

Though Lin Mu still did not know what was it that they lacked in order to become an immortal tool, and this was what made him curious.

"Senior, what is it that makes a spirit tool pseudo immortal and what is thee that will turn it into an immortal tool?" Lin Mu questioned.

"In order for a spirit tool to evolve into an immortal tool, what it needs is... sentience," Xukong answered.

"Sentience? But isn't a spirit tool or spirit weapon already sentient? Like that time when my short sword responded to me and formed the link." Lin Mu asked, feeling slightly confused.

"No, while your sword did react to you, that was but a basic instinct. The sentience I'm talking about is different. At that level, the spirit tool will become conscious of itself and will be able to think for itself." Xukong explained.

After hearing Xukong's words, Lin Mu was amazed and wondered if he would ever get to see something like that. His mind then went back to the place they were in, as they had reached a hall while he was thinking about the courtyard.

Jing Wei reached in front of two large doors that were about five meters tall along with Duan Ke and Lin Mu. The doors automatically opened as he approached them, allowing the three of them to walk in without any hindrance. Lin Mu was fascinated by it and continued following them silently.

After entering the hall, he could see the decorations in it. They were the same as the rest of the mansion except for the large throne like chair that was placed at the head of the hall. The chair was as if made from marble and had delicate carvings on it.

At the front of the throne like chair, there was a large table that was empty. On the sides of the table, one could see four more chairs. These chairs were smaller than the throne like chair and were at a lower level than it.

The hall was almost fifty meters long, Lin Mu guessed. But now that he had taken a look at it, he for some reason thought that it looked incomplete. It was as if there was something missing in it, but he couldn't place his finger on it.

"This is a royal hall. Looking at its design and the large throne like chair, I would say this is where the head of organizations would have a meeting." Xukong informed Lin Mu after sensing his thoughts.

Lin Mu had never seen anything like this, not to mention that there was not a single house as big as this anywhere in his knowledge. Even back when he went to the Wu Lim city, the biggest building there was ten times as small as this.

Lin Mu could only guess that perhaps the royal palace would compare to this, but even then there was a doubt in his heart that it would still not compare. He looked around in the hall and then realized what was missing from it.

He had also heard senior Xukong's words and knew that it was used for meetings and looking at the lack of chairs, it was evident that it was no longer used for that specific purpose. Lin Mu then realized... there seemed to be only two people in the entire mansion that was as big as this.

'So that is why it feels strange. There are simply no people to fill it.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

And as he thought this, the three of them reached the large table. Jing Wei went to sit at the large throne like chair while Duan Ke went to sit on another smaller chair near it. Lin Mu understood what they were going to do and selected a chair to sit opposite to them.

~Sigh~

Jing Wei sat down comfortably and let out a sigh that was reminiscent of fatigue. He then looked up at Lin Mu and thought for a moment before speaking.

"Now you can tell us why you are here... properly." Jing Wei spoke.

Lin Mu looked over at Duan Ke and saw that she was looking at him with a curious look as well.

"As I said, I was just looking passing by and notice a few strange things. I observed them with my spirit sense and found them to be formation nodes. I was confused at first, but then realized that it must be you people. At first, I was just curious and wanted to explore more on the formation, but I just ended up finding a way to open it up." Lin Mu spoke frankly.

Upon hearing his answer, the corner of Duan Ke's lip could be seen twitching.

'What finding a way to open it up, it's clear that someone helped him.' Duan Ke inwardly cursed.

Jing Wei listened to his words but did not speak straightaway. Instead, his attention was actually pulled towards what Lin Mu had said.

'He used his spirit sense to observe the formation arrays of the courtyard? What level is his spirit sense that he can even attempt that? Even Duan Ke shouldn't be able to do it.' Jing Wei thought to himself with astonishment.

Chapter 196 - Myriad Armament Canopy Abode

Jing Wei thought it over and decided that it would be better if he didn't ask further as if it really was someone else that helped him, then perhaps they preferred to stay in the dark and did not want to be revealed. He had also come to the same conclusion as Duan Ke as he could not believe that it would be possible for someone that was in the Qi refining realm.

Even someone that was at the nascent soul stage and was a formation master would take a long time to analyze a single formation, not to mention an entire array. It was even more difficult in the case of the courtyard as there was not one, but rather hundreds of formation arrays layered together.

Lin Mu was simply looking at Jing Wei as he stayed silent. Seeing that he was not speaking anything, Lin Mu was now feeling awkward. Wanting to break the awkward silence, he decided to ask something.

"This is a nice courtyard and the mansion is even better. I would have never guessed that something like this would ever be in a small town such as the Northern town. A pseudo immortal tool is indeed amazing." Lin Mu spoke.

Jing Wei and Duan Ke's eyes went wide as they heard Lin Mu guess the truth about the courtyard.

"What?! How do you know about this?" Duan Ke questioned with shock.

"I just sensed its uniform spirit qi and considering the hundreds of formations arrays on it, I guessed that it must be a pseudo immortal tool. Not to mention that it is also able to manipulate space." Lin Mu truthfully answered.

Lin Mu would not have said something like this usually, but he had been suggested this by Senior Xukong. He said to him that this will show his capabilities to the duo of granddaughter and grandfather. Besides, they had always helped him until now and hadn't actually harmed him, thus he thought that it would be good to develop a relationship with them.

Even Xukong was in approval of this, as he too was at a loss about this world. While he had endless knowledge about many worlds, it was still impossible for him to know about everything. This world also had too many mysteries which made him confused, and he reckoned that it would be better to ask someone that would be more knowledgeable.

The first candidates in his mind were actually the Hei corps, but he later rejected seeing their dedication to their 'Lord'. For an unknown person like that, he did not want to leave it up to luck, thus decided that Jing Wei would be a better choice.

One, they had already had a few interactions before granted that the last one may have been a bad one, but it was nothing that they could not fix. The second that they had been surprisingly accommodation of Lin Mu for some reason.

The third reason was that Xukong was confident that after the little scare he gave them back then, they would never think of doing anything even close to threatening Lin Mu. Xukong was also suspicious of Jing Wei's cultivation base and could estimate that he was at the Dao shell realm at the very least.

A cultivator that was at a stage as high as that in a low leaved world should be knowledgeable about many things that common cultivators didn't know.

~Sigh~

Jing Wei let out another sigh as he heard Lin Mu reveal the truth about the courtyard.

"So you know about pseudo immortal tools as well, that is impressive." Jing Wei praised in a helpless tone.

Lin Mu was still looking at him with the same casual look as before and did not react to his words.

"Um, does this place have a name? I mean it should right, it is after all a pseudo immortal tool." Lin Mu asked.

"It does indeed. It is called as the Myriad Armament Canopy Abode." Jing Wei answered.

Hearing the name Lin Mu felt a little impressed. He thought that the name did suit a pseudo immortal tool. He wanted to ask what it could actually do but decided against that, as it would not be good to ask that straightaway.

"Was that all? Is that why you came here?" Duan Ke asked, feeling a little underwhelmed.

She had been having so many thoughts about how things could go bad and she was nervous about them. But now that she saw Lin Mu sitting here calmly and interacting with them, she didn't know what to do. She couldn't believe that he had no hidden intentions.

"Ah! I actually do." Lin Mu replied.

'See, I knew it.' Duan Ke thought to herself.

"I wanted to ask you if you have a spear that is a spirit weapon." Lin Mu asked.

"Huh?" Duan Ke responded, feeling a little dumbfounded.

"Hahaha." Jing Wei let out a laugh.

Lin Mu heard it and was a little surprised at his laughter and wondered what it was about.

"So you broke in through the defenses of a pseudo immortal tool to ask us for something like this? If those old elders of the sects were ever to listen to this, they would spit blood. Good... good... very good..." Jing Wei spoke in a jovial tone.

Even Duan Ke was astonished at her grandfather's reaction and wondered if he was fine.

"So you say you want a new spirit weapon, eh? Why do you want it, is the spirit sword I gave you not up to your expectations?" Jing Wei asked.

"Ah, about that, I almost forgot. Thank you for giving me such a precious thing for cheap. I don't know why you did, but thank you. And yes, the short sword is great, it has been very useful to me." Lin Mu replied in a grateful tone.

Jing Wei placed his hand on his chin and stroked his unruly beard as if he was thinking.

"Hmm, alright! If you want a new spirit weapon, I'll give you one. But first, you have to pass my test, I won't give you one easily." Jing Wei spoke in a teasing tone.

Chapter 197 - Jing Wei Asks For A Test

Lin Mu looked at Jing Wei with the same resolve he had and did not feel strange about this. He had already experienced the way that Jing Wei tested him before and was confident that he would easily pass it, but had never expected that he would be suggesting something else.

"But the test will be you fighting, my granddaughter Duan Ke." Jing Wei declared.

Lin Mu felt surprised at this and didn't know what to think of this. He had a little idea that this could be a choice but had little expectations about it. In fact, even Senior Xukong had not expected this and had told him that he would be testing him the same way he had done before that.

"Hmm, what is he thinking? I thought he wanted to hide their identities and capabilities. Seems like it doesn't matter to him anymore." Xukong spoke in Lin Mu's mind.

Not only were Lin Mu and Xukong surprised by this, but Duan Ke herself was too. She had not expected for her grandfather to suggest this. In her mind, her grandfather had always been calculative and careful and never the one to take the risks.

But what he had just suggested had overturned that idea that she had in her mind. Though she could understand his perspective on this. They had already known that Lin Mu had a certain kind of protection on him, and the previous method was likely to be useless.

Thus Jing Wei decided to use this method. It was a rather straightforward method and would ensure that they actually got the proper results. This way they would not be the only losing party, and Lin Mu would have to reveal his fighting strength as well.

'Let's see how good is the kid that a being such as that will take him under his wing.' Jing Wei thought to himself.

"Alright, I accept. But how do we go about this?" Lin Mu finally replied.

"It will be straightforward. I know you are not in the core condensation realm and thus will be mismatched against Duan Ke. Hence, all you need to do is last for five minutes against her and I will declare you a winner." Jing Wei explained.

Lin Mu could not find any doubts about it and neither did Duan Ke have any apprehensions with it. In fact, she had not fought properly in a while and was now looking forward to it.

'I wonder if he will be able to make me use my full strength.' Duan Ke thought to herself.

At first, she thought she would be overestimating Lin Mu, but then remembered what kind of person she was against. But still, to get a more accurate idea and ensure that it was fair, she decided to ask Lin Mu about it.

"What is your cultivation base, though? I don't want to be unfair." Duan Ke spoke up.

Lin Mu felt a little good in his heart that Duan Ke actually thought of this and did not start rightaway. Though he would have not minded it either way. He had lasted against a wave of spirit beasts and a core condensation beast for about an hour.

Lin Mu thought that it would be easy for him to last mere five minutes against Duan Ke.

"Don't be overconfident! Remember this is not a beast you're fighting and neither is she a half-baked cultivators like the ones you've been fighting. She has a proper foundation and would be a tough match. If you don't focus, you will no doubt lose." Xukong chided immediately as soon as he sensed Lin Mu's thoughts.

Lin Mu was a little taken aback by Senior Xukong's harsh tone, but then realized the meaning behind it.

"I'm sorry, senior. I will keep your advice in my mind." Lin Mu apologized.

"That's good. Now focus on your opponent, I won't help you this time. I want to see how you fare against a well trained cultivator as well." Xukong declared.

Lin Mu's eyes brightened with determination and he wanted to make Senior Xukong proud. He had taken it upon his heart to defeat Duan Ke now and would try to defeat her at any price that he could. In fact, Lin Mu was wondering if he should use his skills that were bestowed by the ring.

"No, you shall not use them. This will be a fight of pure prowess, I can guess what that man Jing Wei is thinking. He wants to assess your skill level and wants to see if you're worthy of a spirit weapon, perhaps." Xukong spoke.

Lin Mu heard his words and was surprised by some parts.

"Senior, you mean..." Lin Mu muttered.

"Yes, he may be thinking of giving you a spear at the same level as your short sword." Xukong interrupted.

Lin Mu had never expected that this would be the case. He would be happy with a normal low grade spirit spear for now and did not mind if he would be getting one. But now that he had the hope that he would be getting one on the same level as his spirit sword, he was motivated even more.

Lin Mu had learned from Senior Xukong about the grades of spirit weapons and knew how much of a difference they can make in the long run. Although Lin Mu could not use the full potential of his short sword right now with his current cultivation level, he knew that it will be much more useful later on.

Senior Xukong Had told him that according to his estimation, Low grade spirit weapons should be the most common in this world and should be the basic level weapon that a cultivator used. The mid grade spirit weapon was something that rich core condensation and nascent soul cultivators would use.

While High grade weapons would be used by cultivators that were either rich nascent soul cultivators or Dao shell realm cultivators. As for the peak grade weapons, it was likely that only Dao treading realm cultivators had access to them.

Chapter 198 - The Test Begins

The hierarchy was the same for Spirit tool as well and would be the same for a lot of other things such as pills and formations. Of course, there were exceptions to it, but those were only up to a certain extent. One of them was the four vessels restoration pill that Lin Mu had.

It was a mid grade healing alchemical pill that was effective on everyone from mere mortals to core condensation realm cultivators. That was also the reason why it was so expensive and rare as it would take a mid grade spirit alchemist to manufacture those.

Even for a low grade alchemist, the basic requirement was that they needed to be able to ignite their qi flame. Doing so was a difficult task that would require huge stores of spirit qi and would only be possible for Peak qi refining realm cultivators at the very least.

And that was not all, as becoming an alchemist also involved a ton of learning. One had to learn a mountain of texts to gain an understanding about herbs and pills. Their knowledge revolved around the efficacy of the herbs, their medicinal properties, their dosages and their refinement process.

A similar picture came into the view when one consider the other professions of the cultivators such as the formation masters, weapon forgers, and spirit tool refiners. The difficulty only increased as one became more involved.

"Though don't get your hopes all the way up. There is still a chance that he may not give you a weapon of that grade. We do not know Jing Wei's true identity, but I can guess that he is either a weapon forger or a spirit tool refiner. There is no other way he would be so knowledgeable about weapons otherwise. And his control on a pseudo immortal tool like the Myriad Armament Canopy Abode only affirms my belief." Xukong Advised Lin Mu.

Lin Mu silently nodded and showed that he fully understood Xukong's words. While this entire conversation had happened between Lin Mu and Senior Xukong mere five seconds had actually passed in real time.

When Duan Ke saw Lin Mu nod his head, she thought that he was responding to her about her previous inquiry. Lin Mu knew that he should not stall anymore and replied quick.

"I am currently in the late stage of the qi refining realm." Lin Mu answered truthfully.

Duan Ke was inwardly expecting something like this and was thus not shocked. Lin Mu's previous revelations had already tested her wits and she had simply increased her expectations by a few levels. But these very few levels in the eyes of common cultivators would be a mountain to compare to.

Jing Wei meanwhile had not changed his expression and was looking as if he had already expected this outcome. He knew for sure that Lin Mu was not in the core condensation realm, which left him with two viable options, the late stage of qi refining realm or the peak stage.

Knowing that Lin Mu could use the spirit sense beforehand helped him in devising this conclusion. Even Jing Wei himself in his thousands of years of life had not seen a single cultivator that could refine their spirit sense before the late stage of the qi refining realm.

According to their belief, having dense and saturate spirit qi was one of the basic requirements of refining spirit qi. It was a pity that they did not know Lin Mu was not doing it in the conventional way. He did not even have a true cultivation technique, to be honest!

If Jing Wei was to know this fact, he would rather doubt his ancestors that believe this!

"Follow me, this place is not suitable for a spar." Jing Wei said and gestured for Lin Mu to follow him.

Duan Ke and Lin Mu followed behind him as he took them to a different hall that was much wider than the previous one. While the previous one was longer than this, it did not have the same area as this.

Lin Mu looked around and could see the solid stone floor underneath him. This was completely different than the rest of the mansion, which only had wooden floors. Even the walls of this room seemed to be reinforced with metal in places.

Lin Mu's curiosity was ignited and he extended his spirit sense to observe the hall. His findings were amazing to him. The hall was covered in tens of formations, the design of which Lin Mu found to be different.

"This is a reinforcement formation whose function is to contain all the forces that are inflicted on it. The walls are specifically made as well. Do you see those metal parts on the walls?" Xukong spoke up.

"Yes Senior, I do." Lin Mu replied hurriedly.

"Guess what metal they are made of, you have already seen it before," Xukong questioned in a mentoring tone.

Lin Mu thought for a bit before he linked the defensive features of the hall with what Senior Xukong had just said.

"It is the Heavy Depths Iron ore!" Lin Mu answered.

"Correct, the Heavy Depths Iron ore has been refined and combined with the wooden wall to contain spirit qi attacks. This means that while you can't use the skill bestowed upon you by the ring, you can use the skills that you learned yourself, including the basic strength amplification by your spirit sword." Xukong spoke in a suggestive tone.

Lin Mu immediately grasped what he meant, and ideas started forming in his mind. Lin Mu had not used the full potential of his spirit swords as it was too strong and he would simply split apart all enemies that he had encountered until now.

He had even tested the short sword on the Heavy Depths Iron ore chunk that he himself had and had cut it apart. But according to Senior Xukong, he did not have to worry about it right now as it should be properly refined.

Lin Mu and Duan Ke stood on the opposite sides of the hall and entered an offensive stance before Jing Wei spoke.

"Start!"

Chapter 199 - The Spar

Lin Mu unsheathed the short sword that was hanging from his waist and entered an attacking stance. Duan Ke similarly extended her hand and her spirit sword appeared in her hand. She let go of the sword and it kept floating in the air.

Duan Ke then extended her index finger and middle finger together as if it were a sword and pointed forward. Her spirit sword that was floating in front of her changed direction and the point of the sword was now pointing towards Lin Mu.

The spirit sword Duan Ke was using was longer than Lin Mu's and was a normal sized sword. It was about sixty centimeters long and was decorated with a tassel at its handle. Its hilt was made in the shape of two leaves curling around the base of the blade while there was the pattern of a lily on its handle.

Compared to Duan Ke's sword, Lin Mu's was shorter and its design was also rather mundane. If not for the visible good craftsmanship that could be felt from the aura that the blade exuded, one would think that it was any common short sword that could be found at a blacksmith.

Lin Mu looked at Duan Ke and saw that she was using her spirit sense to control the spirit sword instead of using it to fight directly. Lin Mu had also learned how to do it by now but barely had any opportunities to do so. In most of the fights, he had been in, he had finished it rather quickly using his skills in tandem with his sword.

Senior Xukong had taught him that the best way to fight was to end it as quickly as possible. No matter who the opponent was, it was better to use your full potential. Even a lion used all his strength to hunt a rabbit.

Lin Mu had taken this to heart and thus had finished all fights quickly and efficiently. The only fight that had lasted long was when he was battling the pack of the steel back wolves. But even then, that was only due to there being too many opponents. Otherwise, Lin Mu was still killing the individual steel back wolves at a quick pace.

Duan Ke stared at Lin Mu and their eyes met. She decided to make the first move and gestured in a slashing manner, putting her fingers to her chest and then slashing outward. Her spirit sword followed the same gesture and went flying forward.

Lin Mu kept his eyes trained on the sword's path and skillfully dodged it while moving forward. Duan Ke gestured again and the sword turned back, going towards Lin Mu's back now. Lin Mu himself was running towards Duan Ke and knew that if he defeated her first, the fight would end.

Still, he was able to sense that the sword was coming towards his back with his spirit sense and used his short sword to block it.

~Clang~

Metal clashed against metal as a sharp sound spread in the hall. Lin Mu felt the impact of the swords and was pushed back.

"That was strong... its better if I just dodge her strikes, otherwise the impact will knock me off the path." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Maneuvering under the spirit sword that was still trying to pierce him, Lin Mu deflected it to the opposite direction. Duan Ke gestured upwards, and the sword turned to face Lin Mu again, but he was ready this time. Channeling spirit qi into the short sword he slashed at the very moment that it was about to clash with him.

~Deng~

~Swish~

A different sound was heard this time as the force contained within Lin Mu's short sword was greater. Duan Ke's spirit sword was knocked back and got slammed into the back of the wall.

Duan Ke's eyes went wide as she saw this.

'What! How much spirit qi did he amplify the short sword with? Nearly half of the spirit qi I stored in my spirit sword is already depleted from this. Ugh, seems like I'll need to take this more seriously.' Duan Ke thought to herself with shock.

Jing Wei was looking at this and nodded his head.

'Seems like my old sword has accepted him and is now attenuated with him.' Jing Wei thought.

After knocking the sword away Lin Mu kept on running towards Duan Ke. Before he was halted midway and even had to take a few steps back, but now he was gaining on her again. This time though, Duan Ke moved herself. She started moving towards Lin Mu and gestured in a calling manner.

Her spirit sword that had fallen on to the ground shot back and returned to her hand at a blinding speed. The speed was even fast for Lin Mu to see clearly and he only observed it due to his spirit sense.

Although Lin Mu's spirit sense was about eighty meters long now, it still couldn't cover the entirety of the hall that was about a hundred meters in length and breadth. Still with his spirit sense, a majority of the area of the hall was covered and he was able to observe most things within it.

Lin Mu's eyes went back to Duan Ke, and he found that she was at a mere hand's distance from him and was about to slash at him.

"What the!" Lin Mu uttered as he quickly brought his short sword forward to block the blow.

~Clang~

The force this time was even more great as Lin Mu nearly lost hold of his short sword.

"You need to do better than that, I won't hold back anymore." Duan Ke declared with a sharp gaze.

~Huu~

Lin Mu took a deep breath as he tightened the grip on his short sword. A smile appeared on his face as his eyes light up with fervor.

"Alright, this will be my first time fighting like this as well. I never get the opportunity before..." Lin Mu spoke in a calm tone before quickly taking a back step while strengthening his legs with spirit qi and vital energy.

This amplified the force generated by his leg muscles and he shot backward five meters away.

Duan Ke withdrew her stance and was now pointing the spirit sword diagonally towards the ground.

Lin Mu closed his eyes for a brief moment before opening them. His lips started to move and strange chants started to come out of his mouth.

Chapter 200 - The End Of The Test

Duan Ke looked on at Lin Mu with slight apprehension in her eyes. For a moment there she had thought that it was her grandfather standing in front of her and not Lin Mu. The aura that had appeared on Lin Mu was now completely different from before.

It was as if she was seeing her grandfather back in his peak, ready to fight against a thousand enemies.

"What is he doing?..." Duan Ke whispered to herself.

Lin Mu looked at Duan Ke with a sharp gaze and it felt as if hundred of blades were dancing at this moment within it. Duan Ke finally felt the effect, her gaze went dull. The severing heart sutra was working.

'Now!' Lin Mu shouted in his heart as he threw his short sword forward.

Jing Wei too was astounded by this change and wondered what had just happened to Lin Mu.

"This change in demeanor... Is he starting to develop sword intent?" Jing Wei muttered to himself as he kept on looking, not wanting to miss a single moment.

Lin Mu's short sword kept flying toward Duan Ke and was now very close. Duan Ke felt as if she was in a daze and could not respond for a moment. She could see the short sword flying towards her but could not respond.

'That's it, just a little more...' Lin Mu thought.

Just when the short sword was about to pierce Duan Ke's shoulder,

~Clang~

Sparks flew as her spirit sword came forward to block it.

Duan Ke returned to her normal self at that moment and looked at the short sword in front of her with fear in her eyes.

"How did he... or what did he do?" She muttered to herself.

But this only lasted an instant as she quickly regained her poise. Anger appeared on her face as flames danced within her eyes.

Duan Ke was finally angry, angry that she was close to being defeated by someone that was an entire cultivation realm below her.

'Dammit!' She cursed internally while gritting her teeth.

A wave of air spread out from her as spirit qi in the hall swirled around her.

Duan Ke took hold of her spirit sword that was still blocking Lin Mu's short sword and forcefully hurled it away. She moved at a lightning speed, and her legs could only be seen as a blur. She appeared next to Lin Mu in the next second and slashed at him.

Lin Mu was currently unarmed and did not have his short sword as it had been hurled to the other side of the hall.

He was surpassed at Duan Ke's speed but did not lose his composure. Just as her spirit sword was about to cut him, he withdrew the large tower shield he had in his ring. Lin Mu had not used it for a while, and the last time was back when he defended Hei Wan and Hei Bao against the assassin's bolts.

~Dang~

An even louder sound was heard as Sparks flew.

~Crack~Crack~Crack~

The large tower shield that Lin Mu had just used to defend against Duan Ke's sword cracked. While the cut itself was blocked by the shield, the force of it still traveled through his arm and he felt pain in it.

"Oh, heaven's she is angry." Lin Mu internally spoke.

Duan Ke was unfazed at the appearance of the tower shield and swung her sword again, but this time the shield could not bear it.

~Crumble~

The tower shield broke into multiple pieces as they were spread all around the ground. This time though Lin Mu had not borne the brunt of the impact as at the very last moment he had let go of the shield and moved to the side.

The pieces of the tower shield were now scattered all around the hall, and Lin Mu was unarmed again. Duan Ke gripped her sword harder and lunged forward to strike, but suddenly her spirit sense discovered the short sword that was flying towards her from her blind spot.

Lin Mu had been controlling the Short sword this entire time and was only wanting to get close enough so that his spirit sense could connect with it.

Duan Ke twirled and dodged the incoming blade and refocused her attention on Lin Mu.

They trained their eyes on each other as Lin Mu's short sword came to float above him. Duan Ke thought that he was going to attack straightway but was a little surprised as a spear appeared in his hands. It was the very spear that he had bought from her along with the tower shield back then.

"What is he doing..." Duan Ke thought and was then interrupted by the flying short sword.

By now Lin Mu's spirit qi had been depleted by more than half, and he did not want to take any more chances.

"Let's get this over with..." Lin Mu muttered and lunged forward with the spear in his hand.

Duan Ke deflected the short sword and blocked the spear tip. But just as she blocked it the spear disappeared, making her lose her balance due to the change in momentum. Replacing the spear now was an axe. Lin Mu spun around as the Axe came creasing towards Duan Ke's waist.

She blocked the Axe forcefully making its blade break and the handle snap. She then raised her spirit sword upwards blocking the short sword that slashed from another direction.

Lin Mu threw the remnant of the Axe away and pulled out a long sword instead, using that to fight Duan Ke.

Their Battle continued in this manner as countless hits were exchanged. Lin Mu would keep on switching the weapons, while the short sword would continue to attack Duan Ke. His motive was to distract her with his normal weapons while getting an opening with the short sword.

Jing Wei was looking at the entire exchange with amusement in his eyes. By now he had realized what Lin Mu was doing and that he was using the thousand armament blade scripture.

"He has indeed grown a lot during these few months. Even the thousand armament blade Scripture that a lot of the geniuses of my clan could not learn after years is being used by him efficiently. Although there are still many flaws in his technique, there is no doubt that he is a hidden talent." Jing Wei spoke to himself in a content tone.

"STOP!" Jing Wei shouted, "the time is up, Lin Mu is the winner." He declared.