

## Walker 271

### Chapter 271 - Little Shrubby's Improvement

Lin Mu extended his spirit sense and observed the Spirit qi wisps in the air being absorbed into Little Shrubby's body. The process didn't last that long and concluded after two minutes.

*~Meow~*

A growl escaped little Shrubby's mouth as it felt the effects of the Duan Circle Ascension fruit. It was at that moment that Lin Mu could sense the connection between himself and Little Shrubby strengthening.

"Is this the effect of its intelligence increasing?" Lin Mu wondered.

"Not exactly. His intelligence would not increase this fast, it will be an eventual increase. What you're seeing is simply the connection strengthening due to little Shrubby's potential for intelligence increase. Once it reaches its potential, it will increase even more." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu nodded in response and thought over it. Although he did not know what the effects will be like later on, he at least knew that there were some effects.

"Here you go," Lin Mu said as he offered the rest of the Duan Circle Ascension fruits to Little Shrubby.

The beast ate them one by one, and soon the effects intensified. Lin Mu could sense the spirit qi in the air stirring again as it moved towards Little Shrubby. This time the process lasted much longer, for about ten minutes.

Little Shrubby was a bit overwhelmed and laid down on the ground with his eyes closed. It absorbed the spirit qi that was swirling around it, and its cultivation started to rapidly increase. Lin Mu estimated that the increase was much more than his own.

It took Lin Mu about six fruits to obtain an increase of about five percent, while Little Shrubby was able to obtain an increase of about fifteen percent with just four fruits. Not only that, but the connection between Lin Mu and Little Shrubby was also strengthening visibly.

"This is rather big, the benefits that it obtained are much more than me..." Lin Mu muttered.

"It was bound to happen. You are not only at a higher cultivation base, but you also have been practicing the nameless technique of the lost immortal. In addition to that, I believe the mysterious ring also had a hand in improving your aptitude perhaps, that's why the increase was lesser. You are already at a higher level." Xukong explained.

"I understand, Senior." Lin Mu replied before returning to his cultivation.

Time passed by and night arrived. Lin Mu slept and appeared in the Sleepscape. There he plucked the five spirit apples that were hanging on the tree before starting his daily practice. After a sufficient time, he paused and used the nameless technique of the lost immortal to infuse half of the drops of liquid spirit qi that he had obtained today.

*~Huu~*

Lin Mu let out a breath as he opened his eyes. He still could not feel much of a difference and was now wondering if he could find anything in the Memoirs of the lost immortal that could perhaps give him a clue about the technique.

The thing that he had discovered about the wooden slip was that he could not actually browse through it as he did with the communication jade slip, that had the records that Jing Wei gave him. If Lin Mu wanted to see the latter contents, he had no choice but to read through it one by one.

The next part of the memoir would only appear if he completed the previous one and but he could still go back and check the previous one.

In the past few weeks, Lin Mu had lightly glanced through the Memoirs, but did not really focus on it much as he had been busy cultivating for most of the time. Right now, since he felt like he nearing a dead end, he thought of reading it once again.

Lin Mu took out the wooden slip and opened it, making the text appear on it.

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A year had passed by since the Lost immortal had become the old man's disciple. During this time they were still living in the mines and were working as a slave. They had not escaped yet due to a few changes that had occurred after the mine collapse.

The kingdom had a conflict in the royal family, which lead to one of the princes being assigned to take over the working of the mines. While they did not know the specifics behind it, the rumors that went around in the guards was that the prince in question had offended some influential cultivator that was invited by the king as a guest.

The king, intending to punish the prince assigned him to take care of the mines which was something that most royals and nobles did not want to do. Not only did it take up too much time, but they would have to stay away from the luxuries they were so used to.

It wasn't like it brought much profit anyway, which led to everyone avoiding it like the plague. Still, upon being assigned to the mines the prince actually improved the functioning. He applied certain policies which were better for the slaves and also increased the productivity.

The first of the policies was to make a roster of each and every slave that worked in the mine. He wanted to know how many workers were currently there after the mine collapse. They had still not done a proper head count as it was common for some slaves to simply die in the mines and disappear.

The guards were less than pleased, to say the least after being told about this. Still under the pressure of authority, they carried out their duty and finished the roster after a month.

This became the main reason why it became difficult for the lost immortal and the old man to escape. Before, they were relatively unknown and if they went missing, people would have just assumed that they had died in the mines. But now that the roster was made, and it was confirmed that they were alive, it would be much harder.

**Chapter 272 - The Memoirs Of The Lost Immortal- II**

Although it was easy for the guard to miss the count before, it was still impossible for the slaves to escape because there was only one entrance and exit of the mine which was heavily guarded. If they were assumed missing, they would have been able to escape with the help of their cultivation base. But now, there would be an investigation that would be launched.

The king was keeping a close tab on the prince and was looking out for each mistake that he made, thus the prince was rather paranoid and did everything to prevent that. This led to him keeping a close eye on the workings of the mine.

Just like this another year passed by and it had been two years total since the Lost immortal had become a cultivator. Because of the terrible conditions and lack of resources, the lost immortal was barely able to reach the early stage of the qi refining realm.

The old man had also discovered that the cultivation technique he practiced was rather unsuitable for the physique of the lost immortal. This left him with no choice but to give him another cultivation technique that was inferior to his own.

Still, the lost immortal did not mind this and cultivated wholeheartedly. He never let go of any free time that he got and used every second to the fullest. At first, it was quite difficult for him to balance cultivating and mining as he had to fulfill a certain quota. If that quota was not fulfilled, he would not get food and thus would not be able to gain vital energy.

Vital energy was essential in the Body tempering realm and without it, he would never be able to progress, thus at the start, he focused on fulfilling his quota as much as he could with the old man chipping in.

In terms of the old man, his cultivation was also quite slow and he had barely reached the mid stage of the qi refining realm.

A year after becoming the old man's disciple, the lost immortal finally reached the eighth stage of the body tempering realm and decided to enter the qi refining realm and become a cultivator officially. Still, this was no easy task, and it took him nearly three months before he was able to sense the spirit qi and another three months before he was able to absorb it.

The old man did not say this to him at that time as he did not want to demotivate him, but the lost immortal perhaps had the lowest talent he had ever seen. The old man knew that without proper resources and a suitable cultivation technique, it would be quite hard for him to progress.

Six months passed by like this, and the resolve of the Lost immortal was only getting stronger. Eventually, a day arrived when another collapse happened. This time too a lot of slaves died, but the lost immortal and the old man were able to escape it successfully.

This led to another head count to be initiated. The lost immortal and the old man knew that this was the right opportunity to escape, thus they started to plan. Going out of the entrance was rather impossible, as there were some cultivators that were guarding it.

These cultivators were none other than the prince's own personal guards who had taken up the job. The Old man was not confident that he or the lost immortal would be able to fight against them, when they were still so weak, thus they tried to find an alternate route.

The head count would take a month to complete during which they could delay their turn rather easily by hiding inside the tunnels. The problem with food was solved as they were able to steal the leftover stock of food during the collapse.

The aim of the lost immortal and the old man was to find a secondary tunnel that led up to the surface. Even if they did not lead all the way to the surface, as long as they came close the old man was confident that they would be able to dig their way up.

Both the old man and the lost immortal were now strong enough that digging through some rocks was easy for them. It took them three months, before they were able to find a suitable tunnel. It took them a lot of trial and error, along with hiding from the search parties that were sent down.

In the final week, they started their digging and their journey began. During this, they experienced a setback due to another collapse that happened. This led to the floor below them, collapsing into a cave.

This cave was closed off before and was undiscovered thus they had not expected to have a fortunate encounter there.

Within the cave, there was a pool of water that was about two meters wide in radius and a meter deep. This pool of water glowed with a faint light, which attracted the attention of the old man. Upon taking it he was excited as he knew that they had found a treasure.

The pool of water was actually a primitive spirit spring. A spirit spring can be considered as the embryonic form of spirit stone mines. The water that was present in the pool contained dissolved spirit qi that would eventually condense to form the core of a spirit stone mine.

This core was also the point from where the Spirit Stone mine would start to grow and accumulate more spirit qi. But looking at the size and condition of the spirit spring, the old man knew that it would take hundreds of years before this spirit spring would be able to turn into a spirit stone mine.

The old man instructed the lost immortal to absorb the spirit qi in the pool, due to which his cultivation started increasing at a rapid pace. Still, due to the low talent of the lost immortal, his benefits were not as great as they would have been for a normal cultivator.

The lost immortal was able to reach the mid stage of the qi refining realm and was even able to break through to the late stage of the qi refining realm barely. In the process, the spirit spring was completely depleted and with it, the possible fortune of the kingdom was also lost.

If this spirit spring would have become a spirit stone mine, the kingdom would have definitely sensed it and would have become incredibly rich and powerful with its support. They would have been able to create entire generations of cultivators with it, and their status would have skyrocketed.

But alas, fate was not in their favor and instead befitted the lost immortal. This was his second big fortune after having multitudes of misfortunes.

Now with his new found strength, the old man and the lost immortal began their journey back to the surface. They broke through rock after rock, shattered one boulder after the other, and eventually reached a new tunnel.

But it was here that the fortune of the lost immortal came to an end, as they were discovered by a search party.

### **Chapter 273 - Learning From His Resolve**

Lin Mu closed the wooden slip after he realized that he had been reading it for a long time and it was already the time for him to leave the Sleepscape. But it seemed like his quest for information about the nameless technique of the lost immortal was unsuccessful.

Although it was not completely fruitless, rather he had still learned a few new things. The biggest of which was none other than the poor talent of the Lost immortal and his perseverance. Lin Mu could not imagine how a man who had lived through such despair and misfortune could have a firm resolve like that.

*~Sigh~*

"And here I am getting impatient about not progressing fast enough..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Lin Mu wanted to read further and was curious about what happened next but the time restraints were telling him otherwise. He had established a routine that he was flowing with discipline and he did not want to break it. Ever since he got into the routine, his cultivation was progressing steadily.

Lin Mu then thought back the mines that the Lost immortal was trapped in and finally came to the topic of the spirit spring. He wondered if there were any of those in this region. He had already seen caves and knew that there were plenty of them in the northern lands.

Lin Mu wondered what kind of benefits he would obtain if he obtained a spirit spring like that.

"Senior, the memoir mentioned that the lost immortal talent was low and thus his progress was slow. But if it were someone else that came upon the spirit spring and used it, how much would they gain?" Lin Mu questioned.

Xukong who had been accompanying Lin Mu had also been reading the memoirs along with him, or rather had been reading it from Lin Mu's mind. He too was getting interested in the Lost immortal story and could sense a strange desire for which he could not find a reason.

"Hmm, considering the size of the spirit spring that was described in the Memoir, if a cultivator with an average talent were to absorb it, they would directly be able to reach the core condensation realm from the very bottom.

As long as they were at the eighth stage of the body tempering realm, they would be able to absorb the spirit qi in the water even without needing to sense it. Once they started it, they would be able to absorb the entirety of the spirit qi within three days and breakthrough to the early stage of the core condensation realm.

The main obstacle that usually restricts cultivators, which is the refinement of liquid spirit qi, is easily solved with the help of the spirit spring as it already has dissolved spirit qi in the water." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu was astounded by Senior Xukong's words and wondered if he would have the luck of finding a spirit spring like that, or perhaps even a spirit stone mine.

"The spirit spring should be present in this region, actually," Xukong said.

"Oh? Really Senior?" Lin Mu asked with excitement.

"Yes, the northern forest has all the conditions that satisfy the creation of a spirit spring. Though the main problem that stands is, the spirit spring is found either in caves or deep underground. Even if we know with a hundred percent guarantee that there is a spirit spring in the region, you would still not be able to find it.

Not to mention, a spirit spring is easily hidden because of rocks and other things, unlike a spirit stone mine which would attract everyone's attention. The qi signature of a spirit spring is also very faint, and finding one would be no less of a grueling task than finding a needle in a haystack." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu was a bit disappointed after hearing his words, but realized that he was obsessing over something that did not even exist right now.

*~Huu~*

Lin Mu took a deep breath and reorganized his thoughts, which were gating a bit haywire.

'I should just focus on my aim. If the lost immortal can do it in the worst of conditions, then I can definitely do it in conditions that are a hundred times as better than his.' Lin Mu thought with determination.

He stored the wooden slip away and disappeared from the Sleepscape, appearing in the real world. There he found Little shrubby sleeping beside him, snuggled into him. Lin Mu gently stroked its head as he heard the gentle purrs.

It was strange, the purrs seemed to be calming his heart and when he sensed the connection Lin Mu discovered that it had become twice as strong as before.

"This is good. The Dual Circle Ascension fruits seemed to be still having their effects on Little shrubby." Lin Mu muttered.

He sensed the cultivation base of Little Shrubby and found out that it was already a quarter of the way through the mid stage of the qi refining realm, just like that.

Seeing that the beast did not seem to awaken still, Lin Mu decided to begin his own routine.

"Back to it then..." Lin Mu said as he took out the meat before eating it and then assimilating the vital energy.

He then withdrew the box that contained the Basic Qi pills and popped one in his mouth.

Chants started coming out of Lin Mu's mouth, and he was thus lost in his cultivation.

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While Lin Mu was engrossed in cultivation, the mayor of the Wu Lim city, Wu Xun was pacing in his office.

Looking at his face, one could tell that he was troubled about something and could not calm down. He stayed like this for nearly an hour, after which he suddenly stopped. He withdrew a communication jade slip from his belt and held it in his hand for a few seconds.

"Ahahahahaha!" A peal of laughter came out of his lips as his mood instantly lifted.

"Zhou Di, your end is coming closer and closer. Soon your entire domain shall pay for what your clan did!"

### **Chapter 274 - Three Months Later**

Time passed by and unknowingly Lin Mu turned sixteen.

He had not paid attention to his birthday and did not bother celebrating it after his parents died, thus did not really remember it well. Still, it was not all for vain as Lin Mu was at a big turning point in his cultivation.

If one were to look inside his dantian, they would see that there was a shimmering lake within it. Faint wisps of spirit qi floated above it as the shimmering lake water, which was none other than liquid spirit qi rippled.

Another drop of liquid spirit qi had just been added to it.

Lin Mu opened his eyes as he reached this juncture. He knew he needed to take a pause as the next step was crucial and he did not want to make a mistake.

*~Huu~*

Lin Mu let out a breath as he stretched his body. He had been cultivating for the past three days straight, thus needed to relax for a bit.

It had been three months since he had eaten the Dual Circle Ascension fruits and his progress had been rater good. With his strengthened resolve, Lin Mu was able to greatly increase his pace of refining spirit qi and was at the very cusp of reaching the next stage.

He looked at the empty boxes of basic qi pills that were lying to the side and sighed. He had depleted all of them about two weeks ago, which was earlier than he had expected. Still, this meant that his own speed of cultivation had greatly increased.

When he finished the last basic qi pill, he had used the third and final toxin cleansing pill to clear all the pill toxins that he had accumulated. The day after he did that, his speed had increased again.

His progress with the nameless technique of the lost immortal also seemed to had progressed by a minute amount, as he could sense the hunger that he used to have decreased. Although his overall appetite was still massive.

Even if the hunger was no longer as painful as before, Lin Mu still ate a massive amount of beast meat. And along with him, Little Shrubby progressed as well. The beast had already reached the end of the mid stage of the qi refining realm and would break through to the late stage as soon as it was able to refine its first drop of liquid spirit qi.

Lin Mu had asked Senior Xukong if he could help Little Shrubby with it, but was advised to let the beast progress on its own. Every beast comprehended its own method of progression, thus it was better to let it figure out how to do it on its own.

Little Shrubby also did not mind it, and all Lin Mu could feel from its thoughts was happiness. This not only helped his mood, but actually allowed him to better focus on his own cultivation.

Another thing Lin Mu had greatly progressed in was his body tempering realm cultivation. It was also at the very edge of breaking through, and Lin Mu knew that he would be breaking through to the next stage at any moment. All he needed was a little push.

The vital energy was already saturated within his bones and was now starting to penetrate into his marrows. Once it fully penetrated through, he would enter the thirteenth and final stage of the body tempering realm.

Lin Mu silently meditate for a while before taking out a large amount of beast meat that he had prepared beforehand. Today he was determined to reach the thirteenth stage of the body tempering realm and was thus going to eat till he was at his wit's end.

His appetite had already reached a point where even if he didn't feel hungry anymore, he could still keep on eating.

"Now's the time." Lin Mu state before starting to stuff his belly with the meat.

He kept on eating and did not mind the mess that happened as it soon disappeared on its own. About two months back he had received the cleaning formation from Jing Wei, which he had placed in the house. Because of that, his routine had become even more efficient and he did not have to spend time cleaning his room.

Lin Mu had also inquired about the damaged spatial storage ring from Jing Wei and wondered how far he was in fixing it. He had received the answer that while Jing Wei had been able to decipher a lot of techniques and skills that were used to refine the spirit tool, it would still take him a while to fix it.

A big obstacle that was hampering this was actually the lack of a special material. This material was none other than a source of spatial attribute qi. Any material that contained spatial attribute qi was used to make a spatial storage tool.

Lin Mu had asked Senior Xukong if it would be possible to use some of the spatial energy from the ring, but was told that it wasn't exactly the thing that Jing Wei was seeking. The spatial energy within the ring and the spatial attribute qi while similar were different.

The explanation that Lin Mu got from Senior Xukong was that the spatial energy within the ring was a much higher quality form of qi. He told him that an energy like this was currently beyond the scope of his control, thus Lin Mu could not use it. At least not for the time being.

Thus having no option left, Lin Mu could only let it go and let Jing Wei find the materials on his own. Apparently, Jingming Shang was going to deliver the materials as soon as he could, thus Jing Wei told him not to worry. In fact, Jing Wei seemed to be even more anxious than Lin Mu and wanted to fix the ring more than anyone.



Thirty minutes passed like this, and Lin Mu had finally finished all the meat that he had prepared. Within these thirty minutes, he had eaten an entirety of five mid stage qi refining beasts. The wisps of vital energy within his stomach were seething, as if unable to endure.

Lin Mu sat down cross-legged and started chanting the calming heart sutra, assimilating all the vital energy wisps.

### **Chapter 275 - Close To Death**

A serene silence was spread around in the room, but slowly a faint sound was appearing. This sound was none other than that of heart beats and was increasing bit by bit every minute.

Lin Mu was silently assimilating the vital energy from the meat that he had eaten and was assaulting the next stage of the body tempering realm. He was slowly eroding the barrier which prevented him from entering the next stage with each wisp of vital energy that he assimilated.

The vital energy would be absorbed into his body from the stomach and then assimilated into the tissues. As Lin Mu's skin and muscles were already saturated, the only place left was his bones and marrows. His bones were also on the verge of being completely saturated and the vital energy was slowly penetrating into the marrows.

Lin Mu's heart beats kept on getting louder and louder until eventually, they resounded in the room.

*~Pop~*

Then, an almost audible pop was heard and a massive wave of vital energy was released from his body. Lin Mu started trembling as the barrier which was acting like a dam was broken through and the vital energy rushed in like an unyielding river.

But the moment the vital energy entered Lin Mu's marrows, a sharp pain assaulted his senses. He felt as if boiling water was being poured into his bones and scalding them. Lin Mu gritted his teeth and held on.

He had already learned that the thirteenth stage of the body tempering realm was different than the previous stages, and the process would be much more harsh. The vital energy kept on pouring and seemed as if it was coming out of nothing. It seemed as if something strange was happening, as Lin Mu should have broken through at this point.

"The vital energy... it is much more than I expected. Is this the effect of the nameless technique of the lost immortal?" Xukong muttered in surprise.

Xukong kept on observing, and by now thirty minutes had passed since Lin Mu started the process. Xukong was now getting anxious, as he could not think of a reason behind this.

'If this was any other cultivator they would have broken through the moment the barrier was broken, but why is it not stopping? The vital energy should stabilize, if this keeps on going on he will kill himself.' Xukong thought to himself.

Another thirty minutes passed and by this point Xukong wanted to interfere. He tried to communicate with Lin Mu, asking him to stop, but his words fell on deaf ears. Lin Mu had subconsciously entered a state of trance to stop the pain from affecting him. But inadvertently this also meant that he had sealed his other sense too.

No matter how much Xukong tried to communicate with Lin Mu, there was no response.

'Do I really need to take that step?' Xukong thought with apprehension.

*~Groan~*

A pain filled grunt escaped Lin Mu's mouth as he started bleeding from his seven apertures. His eyelids trembled as streaks of blood escaped from its corners. His ears too had trickles of blood which then dripped down onto the bed, staining the sheets red.

The bleeding from his nose and mouth was the most intense, though. The blood flowed down and dyed his pristine white robes a deep shade of red.

Observing the scene in front of Xukong was barely able to hold on. He flew over to the lateral altar that was in the center of the mysterious ring and stopped at the barrier at its edge.

"Will you not interfere this time?" Xukong spoke.

"I know you can hear me!"

Xukong did not know what he was doing. He didn't know for sure whether his words were true or not, but he still wanted to give it a try. He had his guesses after seeing all the techniques and skills that Lin Mu received. All of them seemed to complement Lin Mu somehow and were filling in for the flaws that were presented.

"You've been modifying his physique and then you also gave him skills which would help him get attuned to manipulating space even with his low talent. An artifact of your level is definitely sentient. Answer me!" This time Xukong shouted.

But even then there was no response. The altar that was dimly glowing stayed the same.

In the real world, Lin Mu's heart beats that were once strong and loud were getting fainter and fainter. His skin was also getting paler by the minute as more blood was shed.

"Are you really going to let him die!?" Xukong said with anger.

Xukong gritted his teeth as he still received no answer. He took one last look at Lin Mu before making up his mind.

"FINE! I'll do it myself!" Xukong declared.

And with these words, the spatial energy within the ring started seething. The silvery grey steaks that flickered in the sky started revolving around Xukong's small palm sized body. His ten golden yellow eyes glowed with power as a massive surge of qi escaped the ring.

But just as Xukong was about to take the next step, he froze.

The obscure pattern that was created because of the wooden slip appeared on Lin Mu's abdomen. A net composed of obscure characters formed around Lin Mu's stomach. With each passing second, the net was increasing in density and more and more threads were being added to it.

Each thread was formed by linking multiple characters and they interwove. Suddenly the net started shrinking and covered the entirety of Lin Mu's stomach. Soon the net merged in its entirety with the stomach changing its color to a graying blue, making it seem unnatural.

But this did not stop here, and soon more characters appeared and started linking up, forming new threads. These threads interwove again and formed another layer of net above the stomach. But unlike the previous one, this one was not as dense and the holes in it were rather large.

A blue glow appeared from Lin Mu's stomach as an extremely intense wave of energy spread.

### **Chapter 276 - Xiantian Physique**

The energy that was currently emanating could not be identified and was different from spirit qi and vital energy. Its source seemed to be the numerous characters that made up the net that was covering the stomach. With each passing second, the energy seemed to be increasing and with it, the net was slowly fading away.

As the energy spread around in Lin Mu's body, it healed every injury that was within it. The injuries that were caused by the raging vital energy were repaired and the hidden sequelae were also being healed. The bleeding apertures of Lin Mu stopped, and the blood that was staining his face also seemingly dried up.

The blood dried and flaked away before turning to a fine powder in the air. Lin Mu's expression eased up, and the pain dispersed.

Inside his bones, the vital energy that was pouring in like a raging river smoothed up and the barrier had completely disappeared. Now it was as if the bones and marrows were linked through the reservoir of vital energy.

All the layers of Lin Mu's body that contained the vital energy were merging. The vital energy within his skin, muscles, blood, bones and finally the marrows joined and became a single complete entity. Also due to the massive amount of vital energy that had appeared, Lin Mu had directly shot to the peak of the thirteenth stage of the body tempering realm.

Normally the vital energy should have only been enough to break the barrier to the thirteenth stage and would have started tempering his marrows. But now the vital energy had completely soaked his marrows in it and was fully saturated. Lin Mu had gained an entire stage's worth of vital energy in one go.

"This... energy... what is it?" Xukong questioned, feeling confused.

He looked back at the ethereal altar, having calmed down with no qi fluctuations around him.

"Did you already know this was going to happen? Or perhaps... you planned this from the very start?" Xukong questioned the nearly nonexistent altar.

But as expected, he received no response and sighed with helplessness.

'At least he's gotten through this ordeal, I just hope there are no more surprises.' Xukong thought, feeling a bit relieved.

Back in the real world, Lin Mu's heartbeats had returned to normal and his breathing was rhythmic as well. He slowly opened his eyes as they faintly glimmered. The graying blue net that was composed of the obscure characters had completely faded away by now and Lin Mu's stomach had returned to its normal look.

*~Cough~*

*~Cough~*

*~Cough~*

*~Cough~*

Lin Mu's face turned a bit red as he started coughing. At first, the coughs were low, but they soon increased in loudness and became like the hacking coughs that a chronic smoker would have.

*~Splat~*

Then at the end with a loud cough, Lin Mu spat out a large glob of thick liquid that looked like black tar. It fell to the ground, but upon touching the ground it did not spread around but rather clumped together like a blob of mercury would look like.

Lin Mu controlled his breaths and looked at the black tar-like blob with apprehension. Unlike the previous times where he had expelled impurities, this time they did not seem corrosive. Although they definitely did look quite bad.

*~Phew~*

Lin Mu let out a breath of relief as he checked his body. The vital energy within his body had reached an equilibrium and was circulating within itself. It would move from the uppermost layer that was the skin to the bottom most layer that was the marrows and then go back up.

This cycle continued endlessly, and no loss of vital energy could be perceived. His vital energy had become even more hidden than before and from the outside, it looked like he was a common teenage boy that had no body tempering realm cultivation.

*~Sigh~*

Lin Mu took a look at his soiled clothes and sheets before letting out a sigh.

"Seems like I escaped by the very edge of my life." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

"That's very accurate," Xukong suddenly spoke.

"Huh, ah yes... this break though was rather dangerous. Seems like I was still a bit unprepared." Lin Mu agreed.

"No, it is not that," Xukong said as he briefly thought and then continued, "rather no amount of preparation would have helped you with what you just went through. This was no common breakthrough, I have no doubt the nameless technique of the lost immortal was the cause behind it."

Lin Mu was a bit surprised and did not say anything. Instead, he used his spirit sense and closely observed his body. His dantian was the same as before and there was no change, but the other parts of his body that had undergone tempering had become strengthened.

He observed his marrows and could feel a strange activity within them. He could feel as if something was growing in them. Lin Mu continued observing the activity and after a little while felt the growing matter move into his blood.

Then in the blood, the matter started circulating. It moved to all parts of his body and changed to resemble that part of his body. Lin Mu finally identified this matter as some kind of cells. These cells that changed to become part of his different organs and tissues were much more active than his preexisting cells.

With the growth of these cells, Lin Mu could feel his strength increasing bit by bit in tiny fractions. Unlike the previous stages of the body tempering realm, where Lin Mu had directly gained a large increase in his strength, this time the growth seemed to be slow and eventual.

"What is happening Senior?" Lin Mu question knowing that Xukong had most likely seen his memories.

"Your body is replacing its cells. Usually, this should have happened much later, but since you have directly reached the peak of the thirteenth stage of the body tempering realm, your marrows are making new cells that are improving the rest of your tissues and organs. Eventually, they will replace all the cells of your body and you would have practically obtained a new physique, The Xiantian Physique." Xukong answered.

### **Chapter 277 - The Different Physiques**

Lin Mu was a bit confused about this Xiantian physique that Senior Xukong was talking about. While he knew about physiques and had learned about them from Senior Xukong, he still did not know how he would be getting it.

He thought that physiques were something that people were born with and were not something that could be gained. Besides, the only other physiques he knew of right now were the 'Broken Fate Physique' that belonged to the lost immortal and the 'Garden Of Karma' which could be considered as a physique as well.

"Senior, but didn't you tell me that physiques are something that a person is born with?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Indeed, that's true. But, that's just one of the categories of the physiques. In total, there are three categories: Innate physiques, that a person is born with, acquired physiques that a cultivator can gain after fulfilling certain conditions, and then finally the unique physiques, which contain the ones which cannot be put into the other two categories.

The 'Broken Fate Physique' that belonged to the lost immortal is a type of an innate physique. The 'Xiantian physique' is a type of an acquired physique that can be gained by a cultivator once they reach the peak of the body tempering realm and cross all thirteen stages of it.

The final type, which is the unique physique is harder to define. But the best example of it is none other than the 'Garden Of Karma'. We do not exactly know if it is even a physique or something else, thus it is placed into the Unique physique category.

Of course, these categories are not fully fixed and certain exceptions can arise. For example, certain acquired physiques can also be naturally present in a person upon their birth, thus becoming an innate physique. But on the other hand, none of the innate physiques can be acquired." Xukong explained.

After listening to Senior Xukong's explanation, Lin Mu felt enlightened and his doubts cleared up. But soon he wondered about the characteristics of this 'Xiantian Physique'.

"Senior, what is the benefit of the Xiantian Physique?" Lin Mu further questioned.

"Xiantian physique is also known as the Congenital physique. It returns your body to the original state that it was born in. You see, after a human is born, they start accumulating impurities within their bodies. These impurities would have no impact on common humans, and they would be able to live out the rest of their lives with relative ease.

But for cultivators, this is entirely different. These very impurities become a hidden obstacle in the progress of their cultivation. While these impurities may seem similar to the ones you acquire from the pills or even food, they are vastly different.

Because these impurities are accumulated over a long time, they change the very structures of the cells of a cultivator, making them weaker. Most cultivators do not have the Xiantian physique and thus compensate for these hurdles by simply increasing the resources that they use and also the effort. Even the requirement to enter the qi refining realm that is the eighth stage of the body tempering realm is because of this reason.

The eighth stage of the body tempering realm is 'just enough' so that a person can handle spirit qi in their bodies. But the higher they go in their body tempering realm cultivation, the better their cultivation becomes. This is another reason why better cultivation techniques have a higher requirement for cultivators to practice them.

Still, the Xiantian physique is not something that just anyone that reaches the thirteenth stage of the body tempering realm can acquire. There is also a certain aspect of luck involved in this. There are chances that a cultivator, even after putting great effort and reaching the peak of the body tempering realm, may not begin their transition to acquiring a Xiantian physique and may simply be stuck with their normal body." Xukong explained in depth.

Lin Mu paid full attention to Senior Xukong's explanation and ensured that he comprehended it properly.

"I understand now, Senior. Then this means that my aptitude had increased once more and my pace of cultivation should increase as well." Lin Mu said, feeling motivated.

"Yes, you are correct," Xukong affirmed.

Lin Mu stood up, wanting to test out his newly increased cultivation. But upon standing up, his attention went to the glob of black tar that was now lying in the corner of the wall. In all this time, it had somehow rolled off to the side.

"Senior... what exactly is this? I mean, I can tell that they are the impurities expelled by my body but they seemed different, they are... not corrosive?" Lin Mu asked with furrowed brows.

"To be honest, I can't exactly tell what it is either, except for that it is the impurities. It is not the normal impurities as they would have been rather liquid and would not have stayed in a globule like that. And it does not seem to be the usual impurities from your body either, as those were corrosive." Xukong replied.

"I see..." Lin Mu said, before bending down to get closer to the glob of black tar.

He then removed a small vial from his ring and pushed the globule into that vial. He then closed the vial and stored it back into the ring. The vial that he had used was none other than the vial that was used to store the toxin cleansing pills.

Lin Mu didn't know why he was doing this, but he just felt like this was better than simply throwing the glob away. Xukong meanwhile watched Lin Mu do this, but did not question his reason behind it. He had already seen Lin Mu do far more weird and some outright stupid things before, thus this was nothing out of the ordinary for him.

At this point, he just attributed everything strange Lin Mu did to his unnatural curiosity about things. Xukong didn't know whether this was a curse or a boon; but at least until now, everything had been fine.

### **Chapter 278 - Assessing His Situation**

Lin Mu was now at a point where he had to review his position according to the goals that he had set up. He had satisfied the first minimum condition that was required for him to assimilate the Bloodline of the Great slumber bear.

Since he was at the thirteenth stage of the body tempering realm, that too at the very peak, Lin Mu should relatively not have many problems in assimilating it. But there were still two requirements that were needed for him to survive the process.

He still needed to make sure that the Nameless technique of the lost immortal was working and that he had understood its effects. His current close call with death had only made him more worried as the nameless technique seemed to have a hand in that.

But it was also that very technique that had allowed him to directly reach the peak of the body tempering realm in one go. Then came another requirement that could change depending on the condition of the great slumber beast.

If the great slumber beast was sufficiently weakened, Lin Mu would be able to kill it even with his current strength. But if it was not so then, he would have to reach the peak stage of the qi refining realm to be on the safe side.

'Hmm, I'm already close to the breakthrough. Just a few more drops and I'll directly breakthrough. My foundation is already stable and senior Xukong had already said the transition between late stage and peak stage of the qi refining realm is relatively milder, similar to the early and mid stages.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Xukong could already guess what was going through Lin Mu's mind and was a bit happy that he was able to handle himself after nearly escaping death. But he was still doubtful about the ring. He didn't know if it was deliberate on its part or perhaps it would have really let Lin Mu die.

Whatever it was, Xukong knew that Lin Mu needed to get stronger quickly. The duty that comes with being the world's ordained is not easy, and it needs to be fulfilled satisfactorily.

"Are you going to attempt to breakthrough right now?" Xukong questioned.

"No, at least not now. I want to check up on a few things first. Seeing that I had that close call, I want to review my situation for a bit." Lin Mu answered after thinking for a bit.

Xukong hummed in agreement as he could see the wisdom in Lin Mu's decision. It was better to be cautious than to jump in face first into a situation.

Lin Mu meanwhile looked around for Little shrubby as he could not see him in the bedroom. He sensed his connection with Little Shrubby and found himself to be in the kitchen. Upon walking into the kitchen, Lin Mu spotted the small beast attempting to cook... again.

Little Shrubby had apparently not given up on cooking, even after getting cooked food to eat. Especially after its intelligence started increasing, it had become even more determined to cook. Lin Mu found it strange, but just attributed it to the beast's uniqueness.

Lin Mu saw it turning the skewer of meat around on the stove, although the meat was badly charred. In order to make it easier for the beast to cook, Lin Mu had made a few modifications. He had lowered the stove and made it broader so that Little shrubby could stand at the side and control the food.

While for fire, Lin Mu had simply set up a long burning lamp which was always lit and he would simply add oil to it whenever it started to go out. The lamp had enough fuel that it could burn for about two days straight, and since the oil used was none other than the melted fat from beast meat; it was even easier for Lin Mu to do it.

Little Shrubby merely needed to take a stick and light it using the lamp before putting it into the base of the stove to ignite it. As for the wood for the stove, there were plenty of wood logs that were placed in the storage. Little shrubby had no problem lifting them as his strength was quite enough, being at the mid stage of the qi refining realm.

Lin Mu had set this up about a month ago and Little Shrubby would attempt to cook there every day with only failures to present. All of the meat that it cooked was charred and burned. But thankfully the beast did not mind this and ate the meat that he burned.

Little Shrubby saw Lin Mu and stopped what it was doing before jumping down from the platform and nuzzling against Lin Mu's legs.

~Nyaa~

Little Shrubby purred in pleasure as he rubbed his face again and again upon Lin Mu. He had not been able to interact with Lin Mu that much these few weeks because of him being engrossed in cultivation fully. He could also sense the increase in his master's strength from the connection that they had.



Little Shrubby was perhaps the only one that would be able to tell the true cultivation level of Lin Mu because of their connection. All others would simply think of Lin Mu as having no body tempering realm cultivation, while his qi refining realm cultivation would also be a bit of a mystery because of his ability to use the Spirit sense.

Though this was soon about to change as Lin Mu would be entering the peak stage of the qi refining realm soon, and thus this advantage would disappear. But the others would still not expect for Lin Mu's spirit sense range to be as long as eighty meters, as most peak stage qi refining realm cultivators only had a max range of ten meters.

Lin Mu now took out the jade slip that was given to him by Jing Wei and contacted him. He held it in his hand for about a minute before opening his eyes.

"Perfect!"

### **Chapter 279 - Crazy Jing Wei**

"Oh? Good news, I presume?" Xukong asked curiously.

Lin Mu nodded in response before speaking.

"Indeed, Senior. Jingming Shang delivered the material required to repair the ring about two weeks ago, and he has just been finishing up. Old man Jing Wei told me that he was just about to contact me when I did it first instead." Lin Mu replied.

"That's good, another thing off your mind," Xukong said.

Lin Mu hummed in agreement before leaving the room and heading out to the streets. He had already gotten used to leaving Little Shrubby at home and did not worry much. No matter where he was in the Town, Lin Mu could sense him through his connection, especially after it has strengthened even more.

And it was not like Little Shrubby would get into trouble either. There were not really many people that were as strong as it was, and the ones that were actually stronger than him would not be able to catch him anyway. Even now Lin Mu was unable to match the speed of the small beast.

Lin Mu made his way to the desolate alley where the Jing Wei's emporium was located in and triggered the formation to make it reveal itself. He then walked into the shop only to find it empty.

"Hmm, looks like Duan Ke is in the courtyard." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He took a look around and found everything to be the same except for a few things that had been added. These things were sacks and large packages that were yet to be opened. The packages were wrapped in canvas, and the contents of it could not be perceived from outside.

Lin Mu curiously scanned it with his spirit sense and got the shock of his life. There were about three large packages kept in the room, and all of them looked common. But its contents were anything but simple.

"Gold... So much gold..." Lin Mu uttered with shock.

All of the packages were filled with solid bars of gold which had no stamp or engravings on them. Usually, the gold issued by the kingdom or any other organization had some markings on it which proved its authenticity. But there did not seem to be anything on these gold bars, and they actually seemed to be a bit crudely made as they had dents and unequal edges.

"Why is this gold lying here?" Lin Mu wondered.

He knew that there was no chance of the gold ever getting stolen, but it still seemed unusual for it to be kept here.

Just as he was thinking about that, the door behind the shop opened, and out walked Duan Ke.

"Oh, you're here just in time. Grandfather is nearly done, and now we have the final ingredient as well." Duan Ke said.

"Let's get to him then," Lin Mu said in an impatient tone.

"Wait, we have to get the final material," Duan Ke said before walking to the three large packages.

Lin Mu was a bit surprised at first before understanding what she meant.

"That gold is the final material?!" Lin Mu asked, feeling a bit overwhelmed.

"You'll see. Grandfather can explain it better, he's the expert here. I didn't inherit grandfather's skill, I specialize in investigational skills." Duan Ke replied in a nonchalant tone.

Lin Mu nodded before following behind Duan Ke into the back room where she blew out the lamp making the scenery shift. They were now standing in the courtyard, but its look had drastically changed.

"Wh-what? What happened here? Why is there smoke everywhere? And is that a tear in the barrier?!" Lin Mu shot a string of questions.

In front of Lin Mu, the courtyard had changed by a lot. The grass in the ground had become brown and wilted, there was smoke everywhere and a strange smell of charcoal and metal was spread in the air. There was even a small tear present in the barrier that protected the Myriad Armament Canopy abode.

*~Sigh~*

Duan Ke let out a sigh as she rubbed her head in frustration and fatigue.

"This is what happens when grandfather gets too obsessed with his work. He hasn't had a challenge like this in years, thus he is giving it his all." Duan Ke explained.

"Hahaha!" Xukong laughed in Lin Mu's mind. "As I expected, that man is a league above others."

"Huh?" Lin Mu felt confused after hearing senior Xukong's sudden laughter.

"Don't mind me. You'll see it yourself." Xukong said, mysteriously.

Lin Mu could only hold his curiosity in for the time being and followed behind Duan Ke to the mansion. Unlike the outside though, the mansion was the same as before and impeccably clean. Lin Mu and Duan Ke went downstairs into the workshop he had visited before.

The door of the workshop was already open when they got there and thus Lin Mu could get a direct sight of what was happening inside.

The entire room was covered in a black layer, which seemed like soot. There were formations glowing everywhere, and Lin Mu could even see a stream of sparks flowing in the air. Then at the end of the room was the forge he had seen before.

The last time Lin Mu had seen it, the forge looked abandoned and cold. But right now it was glowing with heat and an entire formation array was circling around it. The stream of sparks would enter into its top end from time to time, and the fire would rage at the bottom part.

There were scraps of metal fallen all around the room, and when Lin Mu got closer, he could see that all of them were emitting faint waves of spirit qi. Looking at the shapes of the scraps, Lin Mu could tell that they had been forcefully damaged, and they looked quite similar to the fragments of his weapons from back when he sparred with Duan Ke.

Then at the side of the forge was none other than Old man Jing Wei himself. His clothes burned in places with his hair and beard all messy, covered in the same soot as the rest of the room.

But the thing that garnered the attention most was his face. Jing Wei had a crazed expression on his face that looked no less than insane.

"AHAHHAHHA!"

### **Chapter 280 - Refining The Gold**

Lin Mu almost recoiled in shock after seeing the current look of Jing Wei. He had doubts whether he was really seeing this or if he was hallucinating.

Jing Wei finally noticed the two of them enter the workshop and turned to look at them.

"Excellent time! I finally got the right methodology, this is going so well!" Jing Wei uttered with joy.

Lin Mu felt creeped out by his current behaviors and felt like he needed to stay a meter away from the old man.

Duan Ke was unfazed by this though and walked forward with ease. She came to stand at a short distance from the forge and then placed the three packages there. She had stored them into her spatial treasure and was now simply depositing them here.

Lin Mu felt a bit strange as to why she had stepped away from the forge instead of directly giving it to Jing Wei. But then he soon witnessed the reason. After placing the packages down, Duan Ke went four meters back and came to stand beside Lin Mu.

Then a barrier appeared just ahead of the packages and expanded to engulf them.

"Ignite!" Jing Wei shouted.

~Crackle~

~Whoosh~

A stream of fire came out from the furnace, looking like a flowing river. The fire was extremely hot and Lin Mu could feel its heat from his position. The temperature of the workshop had just increased by at least ten degrees.

If it were any other commoner here, they would have already gotten burns on their skin and they would have fainted due to the heat. When Lin Mu originally entered the workshop, it was already hot being at around fifty degrees, but now it had reached sixty degrees where a normal human would not survive for long.

Although Lin Mu felt the heat, it was not painful for him and it seemed the same as normal for him. He did not feel as if his body was under any kind of distress. The vital energy circulating within him was protecting him and isolated him from the heat in a unique manner.

Lin Mu observed the stream of fire touch the packages, instantly burning away the canvas coverings and revealing the gold hidden beneath. The crudely manufactured gold glugged under the orange flames and looked dazzling to the eyes. Its deformed look did not hamper its appeal, but rather highlighted its beauty.

"Engulf!" Jing Wei shouted next as he gestured with his hands.

His left hand was gesturing towards the gold and the stream of fire, while his right hand was towards the forge.

The stream of fire surrounded the bars of gold, which had now melted slightly to become one large block of gold instead. The fire lifted the gold block and pulled them towards each other. The three blocks of gold collided with each other and became softer and softer.

"Merge!" Commanded Jing Wei.

The block of gold melted together and formed a sphere of liquid gold, which glowed with a golden shine.

Lin Mu was watching the entire process with rapt attention and did not miss even one second of it. He even slowed the blinking of his eyes so that there were lesser chances of missing something that was quick.

"Refine!" Jing Wei shouted with fervor.

And along with his shout, his hands started to move in different styles. They formed multiple gestures, the meaning of which Lin Mu could not perceive.

The golden ball of molten gold was quite large and had the diameter of almost a meter. If such a large amount of gold was ever revealed outside, there would definitely be a myriad of greedy eyes gazing at it, if not outright fighting for it.

The gold ball started turning and spun around. The spinning got faster and faster until a change occurred. The gold ball started reducing in size and the heat emanating from the fire increased.

"More! More! More!" Jing Wei kept on urging.

About five minutes passed at the end of which the gold ball was spinning at a blinding speed and a sharp whirring sound could be heard. The gold ball had now reduced to the size of a football and was still floating in the air while being surrounded by flames.

"Not enough! I need more!" Jing Wei declared before gesturing with both his hands.

"DUAN KE! Restrict the Forge!" He ordered.

A serious expression appeared on Duan Ke's face as she flourished her hands and took control over the forge. The formations that were previously glowing around Jing Wei were now surrounding her. But unlike Jing Wei, she seemed to be greatly troubled by this.

Beads of sweat rolled down her forehead and her breathing became heavier.

"Do you need help?" Lin Mu asked with concern.

"NO! You just keep on looking and don't disturb us!" Duan Ke spoke in a curt tone which immediately made Lin Mu shut up.

Duan Ke then gritted her teeth and focused on the task at her hands. It was evident that controlling the forge was much harder for her than it was for Jing Wei, who seemed to have been doing it effortlessly.

Lin Mu tensed back to look at Jing Wei and saw the football sized mass of gold float to in front of Jing Wei. The old man then extended his rough and calloused hands before placing them around the gold ball. They were not touching the ball and were simply hovering around it.

"Condense for me!" Jing Wei ordered in an authoritative tone and making the gold ball spin even faster.

Jing Wei started moving his hands closer, which now made the gold ball shrink even further, until it reached the size of a cantaloupe.

**~HAAAA!~**

The old man yelled with vigor as he forced his hands together, this time touching the gold ball.

*~Sizzle~*

A sizzling sound was heard as Jing Wei's hands made contact with the fierily hot gold ball. But strangely enough, no burning smell appeared from it as one would expect.

*~Shing~*

Suddenly a green glow burst from the gold ball.