

Walker 301

Chapter 301 - Jing Wei's News

Lin Mu had certainly not expected something like this. Not only was he representing the lord in the competition but he would also be attending the wedding now. He had never been to a wedding of anyone that had a high status like the son of the Mayor, Wu Teng.

All the weddings Lin Mu had been to were of the commoners and were usually a rather simple affair with little costs. They were also quick and would be complete within a day, unlike the more richer people whose wedding proceedings could last for about a week.

Lin Mu hearing that the entire thing was going to last for ten days made him feel both excited and a little sad at the same time. Excited because he would be getting to see the city and also experience the high class event. Sad because he would not be able to focus fully on cultivating during those days, most likely.

'Hmm, Hei Wen said that all expenses would be borne by the mayor and the lord... then does this mean I can eat as much as I like?' Lin Mu wondered.

Lin Mu had heard stories of how precious ingredients were used in the banquets of the rich and this was no ordinary rich person, but rather the city mayor Wu Xun's own banquet. Not to mention hearing that his son Wu Teng will be marrying the daughter of an elder of a cultivation sect.

There was bound to be even better stuff in the entire event, if not the same.

"You said that all expenses are borne by the mayor and the lord, right?" Lin Mu questioned.

As soon as Lin Mu asked this questioned Hei Wen didn't know why but she got a bad feeling at the bottom of her stomach. It was as if her guts were telling her that misfortune was bound to strike soon or something.

"Well yes, but it depends on the kind of expense too. As long as it's not something unreasonable like a person destroying property or hurting people, it will be fine. Again there can be exceptions, so just use your judgment and don't do anything untoward." Hei Wen warned.

"How about eating food?" Lin Mu further asked, not minding her masked chiding.

"Food? Of course, food is included in that. Any invited guest can eat and drink as much as they want. It would be a dishonor to the mayor if he could not do even this much." Hei Wen answered.

A smile bloomed on Lin Mu's face while the feeling in Hei Wen's guts worsened.

"Alright then, it should be no problem, I'll be ready. Just call me when you are about to head there." Lin Mu replied before walking out of the town center.

Hei Wen rubbed her forehead as a headache sprouted out of nowhere.

'Did I... perhaps taunt the god of misfortune or something? Why do I feel bad?' Hei Wen thought to herself.

Meanwhile, Lin Mu was on his way to the entrance of the town now. He wanted to hunt more beasts and try to find a beast that had awakened its bloodline. He now knew how much time he had before he could head there.

"Hmm, so once I'm back from that wedding, I'll head to the northern forest to get the Great slumber Bear's bloodline and then prepare for assimilation. Though I'll also have to do something with little shrubby, as I can't leave it on its own the entire time.

The house too... I can't leave it just like that for a year. People are bound to come to check if it is not opened for a year. What should I do for that?" Lin Mu muttered to himself while trying to plan for the future.

"For the House, you can try placing an illusory formation on it. I'm sure you can try asking Jing Wei for it." Xukong suggested.

"Oh yeah, I can try that. Perhaps he'll even have a beast core with an awakened bloodline. If he does, then I won't have to hunt specifically for one." Lin Mu replied.

He then took out the communication jade from the ring and contacted Jing Wei with it. For a minute there was no response, but then he could sense Jing Wei respond. He seemed to be in a hurry and asked Lin Mu what did he contact him for.

Lin Mu quickly told him what he needed and got both a positive and negative answer. In the case of the illusory formation, there wasn't much of a problem, and Jing Wei could give him the things needed for setting it up. As for the beast core with an awakened bloodline, Jing Wei said that they did not have them.

They had sold off most of the raw beast materials that they had gathered to Jingming Shang for the resources that were needed to fix the spatial ring that Lin Mu had giving to Jing Wei and thus could not do much about it. Lin Mu understood this and said that he'll be fine with just the illusory formation.

Jing Wei told him to come to the shop right away and also said that he had a little more news about them.

'Hmm what could the news be?' Lin Mu wondered as he changed his direction to go towards Jing Wei's emporium.

He opened the door of the shop with a loud creak and walked to the back room. There was no one in the shop, and it seemed like the dust had started to settle again. Lin Mu blew out the lamp in the back room and appeared in the courtyard before heading to the mansion at the other head.

While walking there, he looked up at the sky and found it to be the same as before. The environment of the courtyard was also restored to its normal one, and the damage caused by the repair of the spatial ring was also gone.

Lin Mu then saw Duan Ke standing there at the doorway, seemingly waiting for him. Upon getting close, Lin Mu could see that her expression seemed to be a bit troubled.

Chapter 302 - A Patriarch And A Princess

Lin Mu was about to ask Duan Ke what was wrong when she suddenly spoke.

"Let's go grandfather is waiting for you." She said before walking in.

Lin Mu didn't even have a chance to respond to her and simply decided to follow her for the time being. Though he was also having a strange feeling in his guts now.

They reached the hall and Lin Mu saw Jing Wei sitting there with his eyes closed. He seemed to be deep in thought and from his expressions it looked as if he had detached himself from this world and the only things that existed for him now were the things in his mind.

Jing Wei opened his eyes when Lin Mu came to a stop in front of him.

"Grandfather, I've got the illusory formation components ready as you asked." Duan Ke said.

"That's good. Now give them to him and tell him how to use them after that." Jing Wei said in a calm tone.

Duan Ke withdrew a box from her Spatial treasure and handed it to Lin Mu. She also took out a small jade slip and held it to her forehead for a minute before giving it to him as well.

"The box has the components you will need to set the formation while the jade slip has detailed instructions on how to construct it. It shouldn't be hard as the components are already refined." Duan Ke said.

Lin Mu kept the box of components in his ring and looked through the contents of the small jade slip. The information appeared in his mind and he found it to be relatively simple.

"I can guide you with the formation so these instructions don't really matter," Xukong said in Lin Mu's mind.

"Hmm" Lin Mu hummed in response to both Duan Ke and Xukong.

He then looked at Jing Wei, who was still sitting on the throne like chair.

"So what news did you have for me?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Well, first of all I would like to thank you and your master again for giving us the knowledge. We will eternally be grateful for that." Jing Wei said and then stood up.

Duan Ke also seemed to have tensed up and was now standing in a rather different posture.

Jing Wei then brought his hands in front and upped them in a salute, and Duan Ke did the same.

"What..." Lin Mu was about to talk when he was interrupted.

"I Jing Wei, the sixth patriarch of the Jing Clan hereby declare that me and my clan, as long as they exist shall be in your debt and if you so desire will be available to help for five generations of your offsprings." Jing Wei declared in a powerful tone before bowing.

Lin Mu kept on listening with shock face couldn't say anything either.

"I Duan Ke, the sole princess of the former Duan kingdom hereby declare that me and my family, as long as they exist shall be in your debt and if you so desire will be available for help for five generations of your offsprings." Duan Ke declared in a staunch voice before bowing as well.

Lin Mu was overwhelmed by their words and felt as if his mind was going blank.

"That was certainly unexpected," Xukong commented.

While Lin Mu could still understand Jing Wei's words, he was confused about Duan Ke's.

'Princess? The Duan Kingdom?' Lin Mu questioned in his mind.

He tried to recall if he had read anything about the Duan Kingdom and remembered that there indeed was one a long time ago. The Duan Kingdom was one of the kingdoms of the former Central Continent and was also a great power once upon a time.

Eventually, it was taken over by the Zhou kingdom like the rest and became a vassal. The Royal clan of the Duan Kingdom still existed back then, but something happened about fifty years ago when a civil war broke out. There was some kind of conflict in the royal family and all of its members were either wiped out or disappeared.

After that, the kingdom was split up by the neighboring kingdoms and disappeared forever into the annals of time. Lin Mu had not expected that Duan Ke was a princess of that kingdom at all.

Jing Wei and Duan Ke stood back up from their bow and looked at the perplexed Lin Mu.

"I know it's a lot to process but don't take it to your heart. We... we are no longer the same as before. I am the Patriarch of a clan that has no members, and Duan Ke is the princess of a kingdom that has no subjects. Our titles are mere scars of the past and hold no meaning." Jing Wei said in a calm tone.

Lin Mu didn't know what to say and simply nodded his head. He knew that the words they had said were heavy and were their way to express their gratitude. He could not disrespect them by denying them this thing.

"Grandfather, you still need to tell him that..." Duan Ke prompted.

"Tell me what?" Lin Mu asked.

"The knowledge that we obtained has greatly helped us, and in a long time, I finally feel like I have hope. Hope to take revenge for my clan." Jing Wei replied with flames in his eyes.

~Sigh~

Jing Wei let out a breath and calmed himself down before continuing.

"And for this very reason, we need to prepare. We have been waiting for the right opportunity and now it has come. We... we will be gone for a while." He said.

"Gone? Where are you going and for how long?" Lin Mu questioned, feeling apprehensive.

"We will be heading to our ancestral lands, there we will have the right things to prepare. I also want to tell you this, when we come back, the empire will not be the same. It is likely that the news of our return will start a new conflict, so you need to be prepared for that.

As for the time... it can be a few months or it can be more than a year." Jing Wei answered.

Chapter 303 - The Fall Of Jing Clan-I

Lin Mu didn't know what to think. While he was surprised by their identities more specifically Duan Ke's he still had some questions.

"Go ahead, you can ask us what you want. You deserve that." Jing Wei said reading the expression on Lin Mu's face.

Lin Mu took a few seconds before he got all his thoughts in order.

"Who are the people you want to take revenge on and why exactly?" Lin Mu questioned.

~Sigh~

"There are far too many people that betrayed us. Some did it intentionally, while some were simply bystanders who decided to not interfere when they could. Though the ones that are the most guilty are none other than the cultivation sects.

In the past, my clan was very influential and we were the sole suppliers of peak grade spirit weapons and tools along with some pseudo immortal tools. We had contributed to defending against the invaders and the northern tribes for countless years.

Over time, numerous powers rose and fell, but we remained the same and even got more powerful. The cultivation sects were threatened by our influence and our skills in the refinement of spirit tools. The presence of our spirit weapons and tools could easily decide the winner of a war. The one who had our weapons had the highest chance to win.

But our clan had rules. While we would contribute fully in fighting against the invaders and the northern tribes, we would never provide the kingdoms or the sects with weapons that could decide the fate of a battle. If they wanted them, they had no choice but to pay a great price.

Things were fine when I became the sixth patriarch of my clan about fifteen hundred years ago. The kingdoms and the Sects respected our rules. But then came the time of peace. The northern tribes became silent and there were no more attacks. It was also during this time that the Great Zhou Empire had been fully stabilized.

The then Emperor had been able to cull all dissent and gained power over all the kingdoms making them his vassals. Still, the emperor had a few thorns left in his path. These were none other than the Eastern Ming Dynasty, The Duan Kingdom and my Jing clan.

The Eastern Ming dynasty of course had already suffered a lot and eventually submitted to the emperor under the prolonged oppression. This left the Duan Kingdom and my Jing clan, who were existing peacefully. While the Duan Kingdom also quite strong, they had long since submitted to the emperor. The actual reason behind the emperors thinking of them as a thorn was his paranoia.

The Royal family of the Duan Kingdom was blessed in the investigational and appraisal arts. Back during the times of the great war, they had been able to win battle by simply having excellent intel, which was obtained due to their executional investigational skills.

Still, because the Duan Kingdom had not directly opposed nor had any conflict with the emperor, he could not do much, and thus he had to bear with it. But my Jing clan was still something he was afraid

of. We had enough power that we could potentially overthrow his rule if we allied with the other former powers and the sects.

The emperor kept on searching for avenues to harm us but failed at most attempts. eventually, a new emperor replaced him but he had the same paranoia as his father. It was not until about a hundred years ago that it happened. My daughter... my sweet precious Miao'er fell in love with the prince of the Duan kingdom.

I knew how the emperor could react to it, and thus I tried to stop it, but she ran away and eloped with the prince. Knowing that I could not do much, other than to suppress this news, I contacted a few of my friends. With their help, I was able to fabricate a story that my daughter died while cultivating due to heavenly tribulation.

The royal family of the Duan Kingdom tacitly approved of this, and Miao'er lived there with the prince by changing her identity. Eventually, time came and the prince ascended the throne, becoming the king Duan Chen. It was then that a clan rose in the Northern lands.

This clan was called the Gu clan and was a small clan. They were able to grow big in the span of a few years due to them finding the inheritance of a fallen expert. With the help of that, their people grew in strength.

But they were greedy and wanted more power. They were willing to do anything to achieve that and made a shady organization that did all the black deeds that the other organizations and sects needed to be done. They also sold information and intel, becoming the largest information broker on the continent.

It was this Gu clan that sparked the fall of my clan. They somehow discovered the fact that Miao'er was still alive and was actually the queen of the Duan Kingdom. The Emperor could not bear the news and entered a furious state.

He incited the sects and the powers that were under his control. While he was not able to convince them all to attack us, he was still able to make them take no action. The cultivation sects too wanted our secrets and the refinement skills that we had hidden away.

Then one day it happened, the emperor's men and cultivators swept the lands of my clan and killed every member. The same massacre happened in the Duan Kingdom, except there only the royal family was wiped out. In a single night, nearly the entirety of my Jing clan and the Royal family of the Duan Kingdom was wiped out.

This all happened over fifty years ago. The Emperor wiped out all the traces of massacre and made it look as if the Jing clan never existed. The commoners were never involved in the matters of the cultivators anyway, thus they had no problem with it, while the cultivators themselves were involved in the slaughter so there was no question there either." Jing Wei paused and let out another sigh while rubbing his brows.

Chapter 304 - The Fall Of Jing Clan-II

Jing Wei took the teacup that had been lying on the table in front of him all this while and poured some plain water into it before taking a sip and moistening his parched throat. He then took a deep breath and continued his story, while Lin Mu silently listened on.

Lin Mu had not expected to hear something like this today. This was the dark history of the empire that had been hidden from the eyes of the masses for decades. He could also see the hypocrisy of the so-called 'Righteous sects' and how they became bystanders while still secretly killing the Jing Clan's members.

"After the slaughter, only a few people were able to survive. I sustained injuries and escaped, but not before a tracking formation was placed on my body. Wherever I went I could be found and no matter what I did, I could not suppress the tracking formation.

The intricacy of the formation was beyond anything I had ever seen and I could not find its origin. But I knew that it was none other than the emperor who had commanded for it to be done. The other people who were able to survive were my eldest grandson Jing Luo, my daughter Miao'er and a few servants from the Duan Kingdoms royal family.

The servants were the ones that were able to save Miao'er and were able to smuggle her out. But our problems had not ended there, we were all separated and away from each other. I was in my clan's territory, Miao'er was in the Duan Kingdom's lands while Jing Luo was somewhere in the Eastern Ming Dynasty cultivating in seclusion.

I was able to contact them and we were able to decide upon a safe place which was none other than this very courtyard. The myriad armament canopy abode was the biggest achievement of my clan and was also the greatest secret. Its full potential was never tested, and even now I do not know of it.

The myriad armament canopy abode was meant to be a safe retreat for the clan in case of a calamity, and that was exactly what we were having back then. But I could not reveal the myriad armament canopy abode to the world until I found a way to suppress the tracking formation.

Eventually, I discovered a way that required a great sacrifice. I sealed my cultivation and suppressed my lifeblood, as that was the only way which could forcefully suppress it. My daughter Miao'er was able to find her way to me eventually and the only person left was my eldest grandson Jing Luo.

He was too far away, and it was difficult for him to come to us because of the danger that now presented in between, the cultivation sects. There were thousands of search parties looking for us and were spread in each and every kingdom.

It was during this time that I found out Miao'er was with child. Because of this, I had no choice but to take shelter in a small village and wait for my grandchild to be born. Jing Luo hid during this time, yet still ended up in conflicts with some cultivators.

He was on the precipice of the nascent soul realm back then and was looking for an opportunity to breakthrough. That was the reason why he was so far away from us and was in the Eastern Ming dynasty. He did breakthrough, but it came at a bad time.

The heavenly tribulation that he had been trying to suppress from appearing all this time came and interrupted his battle. He successfully broke through but ended up sustaining injuries due to the heavenly tribulation.

This also revealed his location to all the Sects, as Heavenly tribulation was not something that could be hidden easily from the sense of the elders of the sects. Having no choice, I unsealed my cultivation base and went to save him.

While I was able to save him, Miao'er suffered from an attack in my absence. Her servants sacrificed their lives so that she could escape, but she was too waked by the pregnancy. I sealed my cultivation base and reached her location with Jing Luo, only to find out she was on her death bed.

My new granddaughter Ke'er was in her hands while she bled out. She held on till she could hand Ke'er to us before passing on to the afterlife. It was that day that we swore upon the heavens that even if millenniums passed, we would have our revenge.

Now finally together, I activated the myriad armament canopy abode and hid away to bide my time.

The Emperor had still not given up on us though and kept on looking. A decade passed like this and they were still unable to find us. The Emperor grew impatient and turned his attention on a new target, which was none other than the Gu clan, which was the perpetrator behind everything.

Even if the emperor was paranoid, he was not stupid. He knew what the Gu clan had done and what they were capable of. If they could bring forth the downfall of a strong clan like the Jing clan they couldn't they do the same with the empire given enough time?

Thus the Emperor had the Gu clan wiped off from the face of the empire as well. That was a great day for us, as well as it meant that one of our greatest foes had been eliminated. But this also meant that our other foe the Emperor had only gotten stronger.

Thirty years ago we got an opportunity to take revenge and embarked on the mission to kill the emperor. That was the time when the First Prince of the empire, the emperor's son, was going to be appointed as the crown prince.

But our mission failed as the sects were able to interrupt us and I ended up separating from Jing Luo. He sacrificed himself so that I could escape. Ke'er was still young and needed for someone to raise her, thus I went into hiding again.

We roamed across the Empire, finding opportunities and allies until we eventually settled here." Jing Wei concluded with reddened eyes.

Chapter 305 - Pity And Disgust

Please read the author note at the end.

A myriad of emotions were currently flowing through Lin Mu. Sorrow, Rage, Pity, Discomfort, and Disgust all combined to form a strange mix that Lin Mu could not explain.

He felt sorrow for all the bad that had happened to Jing Wei and Duan Ke's families and clans. He felt rage against the people who had put them in this position and had caused the downfall of their clan and kingdom. He felt pity for Duan Ke as she never got to see her mother and Jing Wei because he lost his grandson as well.

He felt discomfort at the idea that even if one has everything in the world, it can all be taken away in the blink of an eye. Lin Mu himself had gone through this before when his property was taken from him and he was thrown out of the town, but in the case of Jing Wei, it was different. He and his clan were so powerful, yet against the machinations of many, it could not stand.

Then finally he felt disgusted because of the actions of the cultivation sects. Their so-called Righteousness was only a facade that they would drop at a moment's notice if they were benefiting from it. Jing Wei and his clan had stood with them and helped them resist the invaders and the northern tribes. Without them, perhaps countless more lives would have been lost and they would not have even won wars.

Lin Mu felt as if the beasts were better than these cultivators, at least they stayed true to their nature and acted according to it.

Xukong was able to see each and every thought that Lin Mu had. He didn't even have to deliberately listen to them, rather they were so powerful and loud that he could hear them through their link even if he didn't want to.

But Xukong didn't mind it, rather he was happy. He had long since wanted Lin Mu to experience the true realities of this universe, the bitter absolutes that ruled and reached over both the mortals and the immortals.

While Lin Mu had already experienced some, they were simply not enough. The world of cultivation was harsh... much harsher than that of the commoners. The commoners could easily live out their lifespans being ignorant and they would not suffer much, at least usually.

But the cultivators... they pursued immortality... they pursued eternal existence. For them, what happened to the mortals was but a mere fraction of their lives.

They could potentially live countless times more than them. The ones that could not go above the sufferings of the mortals were forever bound to remain mortals.

They had to embrace the truth... or break it!

Going beyond it, beyond the shackles of mortality, is how an immortal is born. Not only does this require the 'Qi' but it also requires the 'Dao'.

The Qi can be obtained even by an inanimate object, but the 'Dao' needs a soul... it needs a mind... it needs a will.

A weak will won't let the mind grow, a weak mind will cripple a soul, and a soul like that will never be able to comprehend the 'Dao' without which one would never touch the precipice of immortality.

Cultivators take countless years to learn this and stumble through a sea of mistakes before they discover this truth. But Xukong, he didn't want Lin Mu to do that. No... he had much bigger plans. He had seen his

capabilities, his... talent. He knew there was much more to it than he could even see now, and for this very reason he wanted him to grow faster, better and stronger.

Lin Mu learning about the past of Jing Wei and Duan Ke was showing him a small aspect of this 'Truth' and that was enough for him... at least for now.

Suddenly, Xukong could feel it. There was a change in the ring. Xukong now knew a little bit about how the ring was working and how it would give Lin Mu the skills and abilities it was giving. He now knew that they both had the same thing on their minds. Both Xukong and the mysterious ring wanted Lin Mu to grow.

"So you will let him see it all... let him experience it and only then will you reward him. Good... very good... I like it." Xukong said while looking towards the ethereal altar which had started glowing in dark purple light.

"What is it that you want to give to him? Are you still assessing it or have you already made a decision?" Xukong asked the alter without expecting an answer.

Xukong stared at the glowing altar with a strange glint in his eyes. While he could see the glowing altar, there was no specific aura that could be felt from it. Xukong had experienced the Buddhist path's aura, the sword path's aura, and even the demonic path's aura. But right now there was nothing that was similar to them.

'What is this?' He wondered but was soon forced to focus on the situation outside.

Lin Mu looked at Jing Wei and Duan Ke with a calm expression. He felt like if he expressed sympathy with them, that would simply insult them. With all that they had gone through, this would be degrading to them. They were much more stronger than this and deserved a better response.

Jing Wei and Duan Ke saw Lin Mu giving them a respectful and calm gaze. This made them take a breath of relief as they did not want to be pitied. They were going to take their revenge, and that was absolute. If it were anyone that was to be pitied, then it was their enemies, for their fates had just be flipped.

Lin Mu inwardly felt a need to help them, but it was not just because they had helped him, but rather because he did not want the people who pretended to be righteous but acted differently, to exist in this world.

Today an intense dislike had been born in Lin Mu's heart for the cultivation sects.

Chapter 306 - Farewell And Parting Gifts

Lin Mu looked on at the two and thought of what to say until he eventually decided on something.

"Looks like both of us will be going away soon, ha ha!" Lin Mu said.

Jing Wei raised his brows but understood that this was a good way to change the good situation and thus decided to go with it.

"Oh, really? Where are you going?" Jing Wei asked.

"I'll be going into seclusion for about a year soon... well after a wedding." Lin Mu replied.

"A wedding, whose wedding?" Duan Ke questioned, feeling curious.

"The son of the mayor, Lieutenant Wu Teng is getting married to the daughter of one of the elders of the Tri cauldron peony sect." Lin Mu answered.

"What? When did that happen?" Jing Wei asked, feeling confused now.

The two of them had been inside the courtyard for a while now and did not have much contact with the outside world for the past two weeks. The only contact they had was with the servants of Jingming Shang, who had sent them the materials that they needed.

But after that, they did not hear any news from the town and were thus in the blind about everything. Understanding this, Lin Mu began to tell them of all that had happened these past few days and how he was now going to represent the Lord of the Hei corps in a competition of some kind.

"Be careful Lin Mu, those people will try to use you," Jing Wei said in a concerned tone. "I've seen these contests and while they are common and are a means to demonstrate your strength, you will also draw plenty of eyes to yourself."

Lin Mu listened to his words and found them to be fair. He was inexperienced in these matters, and there was no one better than Jing Wei to give him advice in this aspect.

"I won't tell you what to do, but you can decide yourself if it is worth or not." Jing Wei added.

"Thank you for your advice, old man Jing. I'll think over it," Lin Mu said in a respectful tone.

Then suddenly a question came to Lin Mu's mind.

"You said you were going to leave, right? Then what's going to happen to the shop and the courtyard?" Lin Mu questioned.

"The shop itself will be here, as it had always been a part of the twin. But the Myriad armament canopy abode, it can go wherever we want it to as it. I can anchor it to any place and will be able to enter into it. That is the reason why this was the backup plan of my clan." Jing Wei said.

"Oh, I see." Lin Mu nodded in understanding.

He then realized that he should probably hurry and get back to his tasks. The first thing he needed to do was to place the illusory formation array in his house to protect it while he was gone.

"Goodbye, then. I hope we meet again soon and you accomplish what you are setting out to do." Lin Mu said.

"You too, take care. You have a great duty on your head and you need to fulfill it. Be careful and don't let the schemes of others harm you. I hope that by the time we meet again, the situation will be one of peace and not conflict." Jing Wei replied.

Duan Ke meanwhile looked at Lin Mu with a complex expression and felt a bit confused about what to say.

~Sigh~

"Goodbye then," Duan Ke simply said with a small smile on her lips.

Seeing this, a big smile bloomed on Lin Mu's face as this was the first time he was seeing Duan Ke like this. He didn't mind that her farewell was rather short, but was happy with it.

Lin Mu was about to turn around when Jing Wei stopped him.

"Oh, I almost forgot!" Jing Wei said before waving his hand.

~clink~

~Shing~

~clink~

~Shing~

~clink~

~Shing~

Ten large bags appeared on the ground in front of him and made clinking sounds. As soon as Lin Mu heard it, he knew what was inside the bags. He didn't even look at them before he spoke.

"Why?" He asked.

"Where we are going, it won't be that useful. Besides, even if you have a strong master, having more money doesn't hurt. This should last you for a good while... I hope." Jing Wei said.

Lin Mu did a quick sweep with his spirit sense and was able to estimate an approximate number of coins in those bags. His mind was shocked by the sheer amount, but he was able to control it rather well this time.

"But if you had so much gold, why did you have to get more to repair the ring?" Lin Mu questioned, feeling strange.

"Oh, that was a different kind of gold that I used. The gold used to make these coins is the normal gold, but the one that I used to refine green gold and fix the ring was a different variant called as Crude gold. It is considered to be of a lower quality than the one that is used to make these coins. But it has some special properties that this kind of gold does not have and it can be refined further to make green gold." Jing Wei answered.

Lin Mu nodded his head and felt good at having another one of his curiosities satisfied. He then touched all of the coin bags and stored them in his ring, becoming a million gold coins richer in an instant. Lin Mu did not even know how he was going to spend it and felt like it would take him a few years to finish them all.

Just the current amount he had was barely starting to reduce. But of course, he didn't mind it and went along with it. He bid farewell to one last time to Jing Wei and Duan Ke before leaving the courtyard and heading to his house.

~Sigh~

"Will we ever see him again, grandfather?" Duan Ke questioned after Lin Mu had left.

"Oh, I believe it will be more than that. He has been ordained by the world's will, no person who has ever been given that duty has stayed hidden. I believe his name will echo across the entire continent soon." Jing Wei said.

"Even if we don't want to, we will see him. I just hope that we are on the same side in the end..." Jing Wei added with a melancholic look which was resonated by Duan Ke as well.

Meanwhile, Xukong was looking at the ethereal altar in the ring again. It had suddenly calmed down without doing anything, which was not something that he had expected.

"Why did you settle down?" Xukong questioned it, receiving no answer.

He thought to himself and went over Lin Mu's conversation with Jing Wei and Duan Ke, finding the answer on his own.

~Sigh~

'So that's why... only when he is in the need will you give it to him.' Xukong thought to himself.

"No matter, we will think of it when the time arrives," Xukong said to himself. "For now, we should just focus on the present..."

Chapter 307 - Setting Up His First Ever Formation Array

Lin Mu was currently being instructed on setting up a formation array and was about halfway done. Xukong had taken a look at the components that Jing Wei had given Lin Mu and also the instructions that were given to him. As he had expected, their method of setting up the formation was quite inefficient.

Xukong could think of ten different methods by which he could set up a better illusory formation array with the same components. And that was exactly what he was doing right now. In fact, Xukong even found a way to add a few more features to the formation array that would increase its effectiveness.

The formation array was set up using a lot of components which included formation flags, talismans, formation plates, and formation stones. All of these were made of special materials and were inscribed with smaller individual formations on them.

When all of these were used in a certain pattern along with the right methodology, they would give rise to a formation array.

Lin Mu had just finished planting formation flags in each of the corners of his house and stuck talismans onto the four sides of the courtyard. Then finally he buried a formation stone at the very center of the courtyard. The stone would act as the main node of the illusory formation, the flags would act as the border posts and finally, the talismans would reinforce the borders of the entire array.

Then at the end, Lin Mu was left with the formation plate.

"What do I do with this Senior?" Lin Mu asked.

"That formation plate is the key to the entire illusory formation array. That is what you will be using to control the entire thing." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu nodded in understanding before looking at the formation plate and pouring his spirit qi into it. It took him about ten minutes before the plate was fully filled and ready to activate. It even took up a rather large amount of his liquid spirit qi, requiring around a hundred drops.

"This is a much larger amount that was mentioned by Duan Ke Senior, why is it so?" Lin Mu asked again.

While he was not bothered by the depletion of his liquid spirit qi as he could not gain it back within a day, he still felt a bit shocked as the difference between the amount that Duan Ke had said was barely ten drops of liquid spirit qi but this took about hundred which was ten times more.

"I've changed the setup of the formation a bit. While this has increased its initial consumption, it will also strengthen the entire formation array and make it more potent. Besides, the formation itself should sustain on its own for a few years after you inject it with the amount you have.

If we had an additional powering formation, then you would not have even needed to do this step and the formation array could have stayed activated forever as long as no one attacked it or something happened to the powering formation." Xukong spoke.

Just as Xukong finished explaining, runes started appearing in the air, denoting that the formation was now ready.

"Do it!" Xukong ordered.

Lin Mu's spirit sense connected with the formation plate and the entirety of the courtyard was now covered in formation runes. First, they were clashing with each other and seemed to be incompatible, but then with Senior Xukong pointing out the mistakes, Lin Mu corrected them.

Usually, this would have been quite difficult for Lin Mu to do, as he practically had no formal training with the creation of the formations. But with the pre-made components and Xukong's instructions, it was a piece of cake for him.

Lin Mu was able to rectify the mistakes with the help of the formation plate, as it did whatever he commanded it to with his spirit sense. About thirty minutes later, the entire formation array stabilized and the runes faded away.

But Lin Mu could still feel the connection with the entire formation array and knew that if he wanted he could activate, deactivate and even destroy the entire thing at will. It would not even need a snap of his fingers, and the entire thing would detonate.

But of course, that was not something Lin Mu wanted. These were just the features that were available to him. Along with the illusory feature, Xukong was also able to modify a couple of components in it, to add a mild bewildering formation to it as well.

Now with the combination of them all, if anyone were to look at the location the courtyard was located it, they would only see the other adjoining houses. It was as if the courtyard did not exist. And if someone accidentally touched the wall of the courtyard, for example, they would not think there is a courtyard there at all.

Their perception would be distorted by the formation array. But of course, there were limitations to the formation array, it was not all-powerful. The formation array could sustain itself for a few years or even up to a few tens of years as long if everything went well.

But if some damage was inflicted on itself, the spirit qi storage of the formation array would deplete, which would then reduce the time for which it could stay active. Another thing was the while this formation array could affect the commoners it was not the same for the cultivators.

In the case of cultivators, at most those below the Dao shell realm would be fooled by it. The perception of the Dao shell realm was in a completely different league because of which most common formations would not work on them.

There were also a few exceptions, such as if there was a formation expert who was passing by. If the formation expert had a high enough attainment, he or she would instantly be able to detect the illusory formation. Thought whether they would be able to resolve it was dependant on their strength.

Having completed this entire task, Lin Mu took a breath of relief and returned to his room to replenish the spirit qi he had spent.

Chapter 308 - Politics

~Shing~

~Slick~

~Thud~

A large beast's head rolled on the ground as blood splattered to the sides. Lin Mu gestured with his fingers, and his short sword returned to his scabbard.

~Sigh~

A sigh escaped Lin Mu's lips as he witnessed another failure. About four days had passed since Lin Mu set the formation array and bade farewell to Jing Wei and Duan Ke. The two of them had left the town the very night when Lin Mu had met them.

He had not seen them leave but could sense it due to the communication jade that he had. Jing Wei had told Lin Mu had as long as they were within the distance of about a thousand kilometers the communication jade would work. But last night it had finally stopped working and the connection it had was broken.

It was evident from this that they had long left the town or even the kingdom itself, depending on the direction they went.

The day of the competition was getting closer and Lin Mu was still not able to complete one of his smaller goals, which was to practice refining a bloodline to prepare it for assimilation. He had hunted nearly about seventy beasts and was still unable to find a beast with an awakened bloodline.

Still, he was not totally disappointed as another one of his smaller goals had been fulfilled yesterday as well. Yesterday was the day when the large shipment containing the beast meat had arrived for Lin Mu. Hei Wen had sent him a message and had asked him to meet somewhere outside the town.

This was done as the shipment was rather large and they did not want people to know and talk about it, especially with the current political climate. When Lin Mu met yesterday with Hei Wen, he also got to know of some new undercurrents that had arisen in the current situation.

The mercenary union had officially blamed the mayor of the Wu Lim city, Wu Xun for mishandling the incidents that occurred and also for falsely accusing the mercenaries that 'HE' himself had recruited. The mayor had of course tried to flip the directive onto the mercenary union, but the head of the mercenary union did something which was completely unexpected.

He used the royal decree which was issued to them for the services they had rendered to the kingdom. Because of that decree, they now had the support of the king of the Shuang Qian kingdom, and even the Tri cauldron peony sect could not do anything without disturbing the delicate political ecosystem even more.

Of course, this also meant that the wedding had to be forcefully delayed as the mayor was now called in for questioning at the Royal court of the Shuang Qian kingdom. Investigators were also sent to the Wu Lim city and they would be making their rounds around the four towns as well, getting the people's perspective.

Another ironic thing that happened was that the battalion that lieutenant Wu Teng had brought with him had now been ordered by the king to assist in the very investigation. Wu Teng being the son of the Mayor was not allowed to participate under any circumstances and another officer would be sent to take authority over the entire battalion for the time being.

Of course, lieutenant Wu Teng was not punished he was merely asked to restrain himself till the investigation would be completed.

The people had even expected that lieutenant Wu Teng would be infuriated and would not comply easily seeing that his marriage was being delayed. But it was not so, instead he very jovially accepted it and just took it as a vacation.

The last report Hei Wen heard about him, spoke of him enjoying his time at one of the pleasure pavilions of Wu Lim city, much to the displeasure of his fiancée and the tri cauldron peony sect. The other powers were able to guess certain aspects from this and realized that the relationship between the mayor and the Tri cauldron peony sects wasn't as good as he was showing it to be.

Frankly, Lin Mu was a bit overwhelmed by hearing the entire thing and did not know why Hei Wen was even telling him this. But then Senior Xukong explained an obvious fact to him.

He said,

"The background that they think you have, certifies you to receive all this information and they think they have the responsibility to tell you this. This is something you will experience more in the future; when one has power, people flock to him and would do him favor just to get a little bit of his approval."

This was another reminder to Lin Mu about how his situation had changed greatly, and he was not the same orphan he was in the past. He was a cultivator now, a cultivator that had been ordained by the world's will.

The subconscious thinking that chained Lin Mu to his previous lowly identity of a peasant was slowly being broken down.

Another thing that Lin Mu had heard was that even if the wedding was delayed for the time being, the other ceremonies associated with it were not fully stopped. The ones such as the competition would still take place, albeit at a slightly later time.

When Lin Mu has asked Hei Wen till when it could be expected, she told him that he should consider ten days as the minimum time period. She told him to be ready, as there were likely to be even more people at the competition due to the investigations that the mayor was undergoing.

This was because the nearby Powers wanted to put the mayor and all the people related to him under a close scrutiny and what better way was there than to examine them during a marital competition where they would be giving the demonstration of their strengths.

The additional people that were now coming were not coming uninvited, but rather they were just changing their previous decision to not attend the wedding. Due to how the politics worked in the aristocratic circle, mayor Wu Xun had to send invitations to each and every power that he knew of, including the ones that he had a bad relationship with.

Even if the powers declined it, that was fine. But if he were to never send an invitation, they would take this as a sign of disrespect and would then try to stir up trouble for him. Such was the world of the aristocrats and nobles which Lin Mu was now starting to clearly dislike.

Hearing Jing Wei's story had made him dislike the hypocrisy of the cultivation sects, and now hearing Hei Wen's report had made him dislike the bureaucracy and facades of the so-called nobles.

~Sigh~

Another sigh escaped Lin Mu's lips as he reminisced over the events of yesterday. He tried to not think over them but for some reason the harder he tried the harder it was to do that.

"Hahaha! Seems like you are in a dilemma, huh." Xukong said with a chuckle.

"I am indeed Senior. What is this strange conflict in my mind, which seems to be even more mysterious than cultivation?" Lin Mu replied.

"That my child is another truth of the universe. Wherever there are sentient beings, their schemes will appear too. Trust me when I say this, no being in the universe whether a mortal or an immortal had escaped this and all they can do is to learn the game and get better at it."

Chapter 309 - Four Hooded Men

Lin Mu let out a sigh filled with fatigue after he finished listening to Senior Xukong's words. He recooked that it would be better to just focus on the task at hand and continue looking for a beast with an awakened bloodline.

"Senior, is there any easier way to find a beast with an awakened bloodline?" Lin Mu questioned curiously.

"There are of course, but I'm afraid none of them are possible for you to use. There are special spirit tools that can do help in searching beasts with an awakened bloodline, but I doubt anyone in this world even knows something like that exists not to mention having one." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu nodded in understanding and continued his hunt. He ended up hunting for about two more hours before deciding to head back for the day.

'At least now that spring is here, the sun doesn't go down as early.' Lin Mu thought to himself while returning.

He followed his routine and cultivated for a few hours before lying down on the bed and appearing in the Sleepscape. Lately, Lin Mu had been reading up on the records that Jing Wei had given him. He realized that there were a lot of things he didn't know, and as these things were native to this world, Senior Xukong could not help him in this aspect either.

He would practice the thousand armament blade scripture and then the nameless technique of the lost immortal before reading the records. He had learned quite a few things that included the history of the continent, the geography, and also the Powers of the continent.

Lin Mu also found out that there were around twenty five kingdoms in the great Zhou empire and that the number of sects was even more than this. The exact number of cultivation sects was difficult to say, as new ones would appear and disappear every few years.

But the one thing that remained constant was the top ten sects. Their numbers had stayed the same for the past thousand years, and they had always been ruling over the cultivators in a way. Lin Mu suddenly felt lightheaded and realized that he should probably sleep now.

Thus another day began, and Lin Mu went to hunt. This time he changed the location and went towards the North eastern part of the forest, seeing that he was having no luck in the middle or the North western part. Lin Mu wondered if he'll just end up practicing for the first time with the Great slumber bear itself if he was not able to find any beast with an awakened bloodline.

Two hours passerby by in the blink of an eye during which he was able to Hunt three spirit beasts but sadly none of them had an awakened bloodline.

While walking, Lin Mu suddenly realized that he had reached the area that was rather close to the place where he found the Dual circle Ascension fruits. He decided to check up on it and wondered if the bewildering formation was still there or not.

Five minutes later Lin Mu reached the location and discovered there to be people there.

"Huh, what?" Lin Mu muttered before quickly hiding.

Lin Mu knew that the mercenaries had already stopped their mission and were no longer hunting any more beasts in the forest and the hunters would not dare come in this far deep into the forest either. This left only one option.

'Cultivators? But from where?' Lin Mu thought as he peeked from the side of a tree.

There were about four people in the area and all of them were standing near the tree around which the dual circle Ascension vine grew. All of them were wearing hooded brown cloaks which covered their clothes and faces.

'Seems like the bewildering formation finally dissipated or they would not have been able to enter this place, not to mention how I'm able to directly look to the center of the area.' Lin Mu further thought as he tried to listen to the four people.

Lin Mu was standing about forty meters away from the four but could still hear their faint conversation.

"Senior brother, did you really sense something good here?" Spoke one of the people. The voice seemed to belong to a young man.

"I did Junior brother, look," the man called as Senior brother said before showing him the bangle on his wrist.

Lin Mu could see that one of the gems on the bangle was glowing with light.

'Is that a spirit tool?' Lin Wu wondered.

The young man looked at the bangle and saw that it was indeed glowing.

"Senior brother, this is merely a spirit qi sensing bangle that too of a low grade, isn't it possible that it's just sensing a spirit qi fluctuation in the area? The accuracy of this spirit tool is quite low." The young man replied.

"Of course I know that, but do you really want to miss out on the off chance that there is something precious here?" The Senior brother spoke.

"Enough! We've wasted plenty of time here. Let's get back to the mission that we were assigned to." Spoke another man in a gruff voice.

The two bickering pair of Senior and junior brother immediately tensed up and zipped up their lips.

"We need to find a suitable gift to give to sister Yi Ze Jin, before the next week or our image in the eyes of elder Yi Deng will fall." Spoke the last remaining person.

While speaking, that person and slightly turned around because of which Lin Mu was able to get a look at his face and even the clothes that he had below the cloak.

The person looked to be in his early thirties and had a clean shaved face. His hair could not be seen because of the hood, but Lin Mu still spotted something on his clothes that made him identify who they were. There was a pattern of three cauldrons with a peony flower above them embroidered on the clothes of the man.

"The Tri cauldron peony sect? What are their disciples doing here?"

Chapter 310 - An Awakened Beast

After hearing the next sentence of the disciples though, he realized what they were here for.

'Are they here for the marriage of lieutenant Wu Teng? Then that means... this Yi Ze Jin they talked about that's the fiancée of the mayor's son.' Lin Mu thought.

Lin Mu would have used his spirit sense to take a closer look at the four disciples but knew that since they were from a cultivation sect, there was no way they would not detect his spirit sense. Thus for the time being Lin Mu just decided to watch using his spirit sense.

As Lin Mu could not use his spirit sense, it also meant that he would not be able to tell the cultivation bases of the four disciples, not to mention that he was too far to be able to detect the passive fluctuations of their spirit qi.

"Eldest brother, I still do not understand why we have to find a gift here in the forest? I mean, can't we just get something from the sect by exchanging some resources. I reckon there would be better items in the sect than this place." Spoke the Junior brother.

"You idiot, do you really think sister Yi Ze Jin even needs our gifts? With Elder Yi Deng being her father, there isn't anything she's lacking. We are here to find something unique for her as a marriage gift. Even if it's not that precious, it will be fine, it's the effort that we went through that she values." The disciple called as the eldest brother explained.

"Oh! I see now." The junior brother replied.

Suddenly the Senior brother yelled for the three of them.

"Look, someone dug out something from here! The bangle is pointing towards this place too." Spoke the Senior brother.

The three of them then gathered around the hole that had been dug from where Lin Mu had excavated the skeleton of that deceased nascent soul realm cultivator.

The four of them had not seen it as it was behind the tree, not to mention that the grass had grown over the hole as well, hiding it nearly completely.

"Hmm, there was definitely something buried here. There are fluctuations of spirit qi here, but what?" Spoke the eldest brother.

"Junior elder Fa Shiu, you are the strongest here please can you tell me what was here?" Spoke Senior brother.

"An elder? That to here... Hmm, this doesn't seem good to me." Lin Mu muttered himself.

The man who was called Junior elder removed his hood and closed his eyes. Lin Mu was finally able to see that the man had dark brown hair that was tied up in a bun, as a lot of cultivators did. He saw him close his eyes for about thirty seconds before opening them.

"Looks like we missed out on something good here. There were definitely some spirit stones buried here and from the faint traces of spirit qi that have been left behind it seems like they were mid grade spirit stones at the very least." Junior Elder Fa Shiu spoke.

~Sigh~

A sigh escaped the lips of Senior brother, but he didn't mind it as much.

"Junior elder, do you know how long ago this was taken away? Perhaps it was dug out by a beast and taken to its nest." Spoke Senior brother.

"From the faint traces, I can estimate that they were taken at the very least a month ago though I can't tell if it was a human or a beast.." Junior elder Fa Shiu answered.

"Let's just continue our search then, hopefully we find something good soon." The Eldest brother spoke before starting to walk in the direction that was opposite to that of Lin Mu's

After the four men were gone, Lin Mu did a quick sweep of the area, ensuring that there was no one close by. He then walked up to the hole and looked at it.

"I didn't expect that they would be able to sense the faint traces of the spirit stones that were once buried here. Though their estimate on their grade was rather wrong." Lin Mu spoke.

"It should be obvious, I doubt there are many cultivators who have even seen a peak grade spirit stone before," Xukong added.

Lin Mu nodded in understanding and looked around the area again. He still wanted to continue his hunt and knew that it would be better if he took a different direction from the four disciples. He thus went a bit right to the place that the four disciples had gone and continued his journey.

Lin Mu had his spirit sense already extended as he wanted to be ready for any danger. Another hour passed by and Lin Mu was wondering if he should give up for today, but then he suddenly heard a faint groan coming from the depths of the forest.

The groan was rather unique and seemed as if something was cackling. Lin Mu immediately became alert and extended his spirit sense in the direction that the groan had come from.

Lin Mu tried to remember if he could recognize the sound from any of his records, but was unable to do so. He thus decided to continue onward and soon reached the location that the cackling groan had come from.

"What kind of beast is that?" Lin Mu wondered.

The beast in front of Lin Mu seemed to have the body of a cow but the head of a tapir. It had brown blue fur and seemed to be making those cackling sounds while it ate a dead beast from the ground. Lin Mu could not recognize the dead beast as it was pretty much minced up.

Lin Mu used his spirit sense and probed the cow like beast with the tapir's head. The beast seemed to have sensed him as it immediately turned towards Lin Mu's direction and sniffed the air.

Upon observing the beast with his spirit sense, Lin Mu became both nervous and excited. Nervous because the beast in front of him was an early stage core condensation beast, his second one. Excited because the beast seemed to have an unusual spirit core.

"Seems like you're in luck. That is definitely a beast with an awakened bloodline. It's a trunk-faced cow that naturally awakens their bloodlines when they reach the core condensation realm." Xukong informed.

