

Walker 461

Chapter 461 - Jumpscare?

Wu Hei was shocked upon hearing the voice suddenly calling out to him. He was a hundred percent sure that there was no one near him just a second ago, but the voice was right behind him.

He tried to identify the voice, but couldn't do so. It was no one from his group of acquaintances, which meant that it was either a random stranger or more likely an enemy. Wu Hei quickly summoned his spirit sword and turned around for a battle.

His spirit sword shot towards the source of the voice and collided with it.

~DENG~

~clink~clink~clink~

But then his spirit sword was swatted away like a child's toy. His eyes went wide and he looked at the faintly glowing arm of the man in front of him. Now... he recognized him.

"You! From that restaurant..." Wu Hei muttered.

He didn't know what to be shocked about more. The fact that the man had been able to approach him without him knowing and escaping his spirit sense. Or the fact that he was able to swat a full power attack of his like it was nothing.

If it was any other core condensation realm cultivator, they would have had their arm severed or worse, their head decapitated.

"So you really were paying attention to me back at the restaurant." Lin Mu said.

"Who are you?" Wu Hei asked as he recalled his spirit sword to his side.

"I thought you would have recognized me by now. After all, you saw me eat at the restaurant," Lin Mu chuckled.

Wu Hei's eyes narrowed and he became apprehensive.

"I know you are not under the control of Gu Yao, so you don't need to act in front of me. It is I, Lin Mu." He revealed.

Wu Hei's eyes went wide and he couldn't help but take another look at Lin Mu. His appearance was much different than the teen he had seen two years ago. This man was much taller and well built than him, plus his voice was also quite different.

But now that he looked closely, he couldn't help but match some of the facial features of Lin Mu to this man. The one thing that was telling him that this was likely to be was his appetite, that he had demonstrated in the restaurant. Still, he couldn't confirm just from this as there were many more people that could do the same and he could just be someone pretending to be Lin Mu.

~Sigh~

"Seems like you still doubt me. I think this should help..." Lin M said before some faint chants started to come out of his mouth.

A short sword appeared in front of him, that Wu Hei instantly recognized. But what confirmed the fact that this was indeed Lin Mu was what he saw next.

In the very next second, it was as if he had disappeared from the world and appeared in an empty place. There he saw a tall mountain made out of swords appeared and at the very top of it was sitting no one but Lin Mu.

'There is no doubt... this sword intent... it cannot be faked...' Wu Hei confirmed.

A second later, the illusion faded and Wu Hei found himself back in the real world. He felt sweat covering his face and back and was now absolutely sure.

"How did you..." Wu Hei muttered.

"Survive? Escape? Hide?" Lin Mu prompted.

"Yes... all that." Wu Hei replied.

"I can tell you everything... but for now I think it would be better if we find a more private space. Even if this area is rather desolate, I don't think it would be appropriate." Lin Mu said.

Wu Hei nodded as he saw the merit in his words. He had been dealing with Gu Yao and the people he controlled for the past two years, all the while disguising himself. He knew better than to be careless and to err on the side of caution.

"Hmm... follow me from afar, I'll take you to a place. Be careful, there are many eyes in this place that are always watching." Wu Hei spoke.

"I have my ways. Don't worry, no one will see me." Lin Mu said before disappearing into thin air, right in front of Wu Hei's eyes.

Wu Hei did a double take and even scanned with his spirit sense, only to be unsuccessful. Pushing this to the back of his mind for now, he decided to continue on as they had discussed.

Wu Hei weaved through the city, moving from one street to the next. Lin Mu was observing him closely and was actually right below him. When he had disappeared, what he had actually done was to use phase and Blink at the same time.

He saw how Wu Hei avoided certain areas and noted them down to ask about them later. He knew there must be a lot of spies that Gu Yao must have in the area. Lin Mu wanted to investigate on his own as well, and this information would greatly help him.

About an hour later, Wu Hei arrived at the southern part of the city. This street was populated by some shops that sold expensive and luxurious items, as well as some pleasure pavilions. Wu Hei halted at the side of a pleasure pavilion for a bit and scanned the area.

He then sent to the back area of the pleasure pavilion, which was usually used for the servants to enter and opened a hidden door that was disguised as a wall. Lin Mu on the other hand, simply phased through the ground and appeared back on the ground.

"Here I am," Lin Mu announced, shocking Wu Hei again, who was waiting for Lin Mu at the door instead.

~pew~

Wu Hei took a breath of relief and wiped the sweat on his forehead away.

"Now then... can you tell me what exactly happened after you escaped? I was quite restrained and thus could find literally no information about you... which now that I think was good." Wu Hei spoke.

Chapter 462 - Catching Up

Lin Mu sat down on one of the sofas that were placed in the room and began his story.

"After escaping from Gu Yao, I knew that returning was not gonna be an option for a while. At least until I was strong enough to fight him again. I thus went beyond the northern forest, all the way into the northern mountains.

There I cultivated in seclusion until I reached the peak of the core condensation realm. I reached a bottleneck and thus need to wait for the heavenly tribulation before I can continue forward.

I knew that the longer I waited the more dangerous the situation would get and thus finally decided to return. Thankfully, during that time I also experienced a growth spurt and my appearance changed enough that no one recognizes me now." Lin Mu spoke.

Wu Hei felt dumbstruck at his words.

'Reaching the peak stages of the core condensation realm in two years? That too from the peak stages of the Qi refining realm? Is this a joke?!' Wu Hei thought.

But the reality proved him otherwise. Wu Hei could clearly sense the faint spirit Qi fluctuations that were coming from Lin Mu and knew for sure that the man was at the peak of the core condensation realm.

'Wait... how old is this kid? Back then he was barely sixteen and now a little above eighteen?' Wu Hei wondered.

He couldn't help but compare Lin Mu with the other young geniuses of the Great Zhou empire. The crown prince was said to be the youngest person to have reached the core condensation realm at the age of twenty.

Sure, there were geniuses in the top sects that were able to do the same at an even younger age, but there was no one like Lin Mu. Not only had he broken through to the core condensation realm, but had also reached the peak and was now literally only restricted due to the heavenly tribulation.

Wu Hei had no doubt that if the tribulation came right now, Lin Mu would come out on top to become a Nascent Soul realm cultivator. This was a terrifying thought that even he did not dare to think of.

He couldn't help but remember the fact that Lin Mu's master was someone that was beyond the Immortal Ascension realm.

'Xukong... he called him.' Wu Hei remembered.

~Sigh~

"I see... that's rather good. At least you had some gains in these two years..." Wu Hei said with a sigh.

Lin Mu stayed silent for a bit and let Wu Hei calm down a bit as he could sense that the man was a bit agitated. Giving him some time to think would be better, he thought.

"So what happened on your end after I escaped?" Lin Mu questioned.

~Sigh~

"After you escape, I don't know what exactly happened to Gu Yao. He... kind of went insane..." Wu Hei answered.

"Insane? Wasn't he already like that?" Lin Mu asked.

"No, not in that way. Like mentally insane. He kept on repeating about some monster and that it will come for him." Wu Hei replied.

"Monster?..." Lin Mu finally realized. "Master..." he muttered.

"Huh? What?" Wu Hei asked upon hearing Lin Mu mutter.

"I think it was due to my master... he kind of warned Gu Yao that if he went overboard, he would descend to teach him a lesson." Lin Mu revealed.

"Your master... I understand..." Wu Hei said.

'So the monster that Gu Yao has been raving about these past two years is no one but, Lin Mu's master. What kind of a cultivator is he?' Wu Hei wondered.

"When did you wake up? And were you injured?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yeah... getting injured was the least of my worries though. After... whatever your master did to Gu Yao, he was unconscious for five days from what I heard. This would have been a really good opportunity to get rid of him, but he was being guarded by his 'servants'.

I myself woke up after two days and was injured of course, but was able to heal myself using some of the healing pills I had. Gu Yao had controlled everyone in the city by then though, and the red tide had scared the nearby towns as well. They were apparently able to see it from afar as the sky had turned red over the Wu Lim City.

After I woke up though, I found my thoughts in disarray. It was as if there were two people inside me and they were fighting for control." Wu Hei explained.

"How did you break out of Gu Yao's control, if even the supreme elder of the Tri cauldron peony sect and Peak master Yi Deng were controlled?" Lin Mu asked curiously.

~Sigh~

"It was due to the combination of a few reasons. The first being that Gu Yao is my uncle by birth and due to being blood-related the Human controlling blood curse didn't affect me completely. But what made me get fully out of his control was the cultivation technique I practiced." Wu Hei revealed.

"A cultivation technique? How did that help?" Lin Mu wondered.

"I practice a cultivation technique called the Unity Reversal Secrets." Wu Hei answered.

"Oh? The Taiji Celestial's inheritance was spread to this world too?" Xukong suddenly spoke.

"You know about the technique, senior?" Lin Mu asked.

"Yes, I do. I'll tell you more about it later, for now you need to focus on him." Xukong replied.

"But what truly helped me hide that I was free from Gu Yao's control was my assimilated bloodline." Wu Hei added.

"You have an assimilated bloodline?" Lin Mu asked, feeling surprised.

'Did you know this, senior?' Lin Mu asked Xukong.

"No, even I didn't sense it on him. I should have been able to sense a beast's bloodline normally, but it seems like there is more to it than we know." Xukong replied.

"Yes, I do. It is a bloodline that belongs to a beast called Shadow Lurk Beast." Wu Hei answered.

Chapter 463 - Wu Hei's Fortunate Encounter

Upon hearing the name of the beast, Lin Mu tried to remember if he knew any beast like that. But he could not and came to the conclusion that the beast was either so rare that it was never recorded, or it was not from this world.

And from what senior Xukong had said about the cultivation technique, Lin Mu was leaning on the second option.

"How did this bloodline help you hide from Gu Yao then?" Lin Mu asked.

"The bloodline ability of the Shadow Lurk beast is to hide its spirit Qi fluctuation and its aura. I did not expect that it would even work against the human controlling blood curse and thus I was lucky." Wu Hei answered.

"I see... and what did this Shadow lurk beast look like?" Lin Mu questioned.

"I do not know," Wu Hei stated.

"What? But you got the bloodline, right?" Lin Mu asked again.

"I did get the bloodline, but I did not refine the beast myself. In fact, when I got it the bloodline was already refined into the form of a crystal. The bloodline crystal was present along with the cultivation technique Unity Reversal Secrets." Wu Hei replied.

"So... you got some sort of an inheritance?" Lin Mu guessed.

"Yes, it could be called that... a year after I left the city and the tragedy with my servants, I was researching different libraries for the old legends and myths. I knew that with my aptitude, raising my cultivation would take a long time.

And as such, I was looking for things that would help me progress faster. My aim wasn't even an inheritance. What I wanted was simply abandoned areas where sects and powerful cultivators lived.

Even if they were not inheritance grounds, there would often end up some spirit herbs and such growing there, which could have greatly helped me then. I had explored tens of such areas with little luck and only found some mid grade spirit herbs. While it did help my cultivation a bit, it was nothing substantial.

Then one day, I came upon an old letter that was torn and greatly damaged. This letter told about a treasure box which was sent by an old cultivator to his friend. The letter did not mention who it was addressed to due to the damage over the years, but it did say the place it was supposed to be kept at.

Coincidentally, the location mentioned in the letter was just slightly off from the route we were taking back then. I had zero expectations that I would find anything there, but I still did not want to give up on a random miracle.

When we reached the location, we found it to be the fragments of a ruin. There were barely any traces of it left over the ground, and one could not even tell that this once used to be the abode of a cultivator. My team and I spent time excavating the area and eventually found a random box.

Now I didn't know if this was the treasure box that the letter was talking about, as it looked nothing like a treasure box. It was a simple rectangular box that was the size of an incense box. I thought there may be some formations or such on it, but there were none.

It was simply a two-part box that easily opened by lifting the lid. But inside it, I found a small jade slip and a bloodline crystal. Upon seeing the bloodline crystal, I instantly knew I had lucked out. Even if the jade slip didn't have anything much, just the bloodline crystal would have been potentially very valuable if I sold it.

But when I checked the contents of the jade slip, I was shocked even more. The jade slip contained the cultivation technique 'Unity Reversal Secrets' and also explained what the bloodline crystal was.

I kept on reading more and found out that both the cultivation technique and the bloodline crystal were sent by the original owner to this cultivator so that he could analyze it.

I decided to try out the cultivation technique and found it to be much better than the one I used to practice. In less than a year, I had reached the peak of the Qi refining realm. Two years later I broke through the core condensation realm and then decided to assimilate the bloodline crystal.

At that time I was in a rather complex situation and it was better for me to hide my cultivation and as such the bloodline crystal was the obvious choice. It took me a couple of days before I finished assimilating it and gained the ability to hide my spirit Qi fluctuation and aura.

I continued cultivating, and learned that there was much more to this technique than I had originally thought.

And then recently I reached a conclusion that the technique I got was incomplete. A cultivation technique that was able to help me progress so fast... was incomplete.

I tried to look for the complete technique but never found it. I even tried to trace the original sender of the letter as I assumed that he probably had the entire technique and had thus sent a part of it to his friend so that he could analyze it." Wu Hei explained.

Lin Mu heard the entire thing carefully and could come to a few conclusions of his own. Whatever the technique was, it was likely that even its original owner was unaware of it and did not practice it on his own.

But seeing as how powerful and effective the technique was, the original owner must have also been an expert, so as to have been able to obtain the technique and even a bloodline crystal.

He did not know if the bloodline crystal was refined by the original owner or had been found by him, but either of those options would open up a lot of things to consider.

~Sigh~

"It's definitely the inheritance of the Taiji Celestial or rather... a fragment of it." Xukong suddenly spoke.

Chapter 464 - Gu Yao's Influence

Upon hearing the name of the Taiji celestial again, Lin Mu couldn't help but want to know more. But knew that this was not the right time for it.

"I understand how you got through it now. How is your Wu Teng? Since you said those related by blood would be able to resist it." Lin Mu questioned.

"Wu Teng was much more injured by the time I woke up and had been taken away by the disciples of the Tri Cauldron Peony sect to heal. Unlike me, he did not have the Unity Reversal Secrets and thus was unable to break out of the control.

But now that I think of it, that was probably for the best. Because if he really did get free from Gu Yao's control, he would discover the fact that his Human controlling blood curse was less effective on us and restrain us even more.

Since my brother did not have the bloodline of the Shadow Lurk beast either, it would have only been even more difficult for him to hide that he had been freed. Besides, with his personality, I highly doubt that he would have chosen to hide and bide for the time being.

The most likely probability I can think of is that he would have chosen to directly attack Gu Yao and ended up dying to his servants." Wu Hei answered.

~Sigh~

"Yes, I think that was good, too. But where is he now? I heard that only you, your father and mother are currently living in the capital." Lin Mu spoke.

"Yes, it's only us three currently living here. From what I've learned, my elder brother is living at the Tri cauldron peony sect along with his wife and has been given a rather high position.

Since he is the link between the sect and the kingdom, he is favored by the king as well. Ironically, ever since Gu Yao started controlling the sects, the ties between the Shuang Qian kingdom and the sects have actually gotten better.

But this has been but a mere facade to hide the fact that all of the controlled sects are involved in human trafficking." Wu Hei replied.

"How are they gathering people for the sacrifice now?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Now that they have sects on his side, Gu Yao has only gotten more brazen. You must have heard that the mercenaries have left the kingdom, right? Well, that thing is not entirely true. The ones that are still in the kingdom are free and safe, but the ones that decided to leave get captured at the border of the kingdoms.

No one knows about this currently and even the king does not know this." Wu Hei answered.

"Why hasn't he controlled the king then?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Every kingdom that is a vassal of the Great Zhou empire has a life wick candle placed at the grand palace of the empire. These life wick candles are linked to the rulers of each kingdom and whenever something happens to them, the effect is reflected on the life wick candles.

I think Gu Yao has still not been able to overcome this part, and has thus chosen to avoid the king for now. The sects though are a free game and since he directly goes for the higher ups, there is no one left to respond to the changes." Wu Hei explained.

"Damn this Gu Yao... he can't be doing this alone, can he? I mean, I know he now has all these sects backing him, but just that shouldn't be enough. There must be something else." Lin Mu cursed.

"Of course there is. I was doubtful of this as well at the start but then as I spent more time getting involved in his plans I discovered the most obvious culprit; the Northern tribes. We now know for sure that they have their people infiltrated all over the empire and acting according to their agendas." Wu Hei said.

"Hmm... I did actually see a few people coming from the north back when I was in seclusion in the northern mountains. They were wearing beast furs as clothing." Lin Mu said, repeating what Little Shrubby had told him.

"Indeed, those are the members of the northern tribes. They are also supplying Gu Yao and the sects under his control with their expertise in the teleportation formations." Wu Hei confirmed.

"I guessed that as well, when I saw you use that talisman to teleport." Lin Mu said.

"I have to admit, these teleportation formations are much more powerful than the ones that the people in the empire know. Especially the cost of making them. While the top sects also have knowledge about these teleportation formations, they can't just make them how the northern tribes do and use a lot more resources.

It is due to these cheap costs, that Gu Yao has been so fast in taking over all the sects. Currently, he has eight cultivation sects under his control." Wu Hei explained.

"The zither wind alliance... all the sects in that alliance... they're controlled by Gu Yao, right?" Lin Mu asked.

~Sigh~

"Unfortunately, yes... After Gu Yao controlled a bunch of mid level sects, he was able to use their combined power to ask the patriarch of the zither wind sect for a meeting. Then, setting up a trap using all the controlled experts, he managed to take over the Dao Shell realm patriarch of the Zither Wind sect.

This opened up a lot more opportunities for him and he managed to control quite a few of the top sects. Thankfully, the other sects had gotten wind that something was definitely wrong and as such started avoiding any meeting with any person from the Zither Wind sect." Wu Hei replied.

"Then this is much dangerous than we thought... thankfully none of the top three sects have been controlled yet and Gu Yao has also reached his limit it seems. My master communicated with me a while ago and told me that there are only a limited amount of Dao Shell realm cultivators he would be able to control before reaching the Dao Treading Realm himself." Lin Mu spoke.

Chapter 465 - Reassurance

Most of the assumptions that Senior Xukong had made turned out to be true and Lin Mu was thankful it had not gone beyond what they had expected. If it truly did, then they would have been unable to do anything.

Thankfully now that they knew the situation at hand, they would be able to make a plan that was appropriate for it and it would hopefully work.

"Brother Lin Mu, Gu Yao has also reached the Dao Shell realm himself due to the support from all the resources of the cultivation sects and the blood sacrificial. Did you master tell if this will affect his ability to control others with the human controlling blood curse?" Wu Hei questioned.

"Yes. My master already thought of this and told me that even if Gu Yao reaches the Dao Shell realm, he would be limited in his controlling ability. We can roughly consider that he has about ten Dao Shell realm cultivators under his control for now.

And if he wants to control more, he would need a lot of blood essence to use the Human controlling blood curse to control those that are at the Dao Shell realm. But if he wants to do the same with those at the Dao Treading Realm, he would need to be at the Dao Treading realm as well." Lin Mu answered.

~pew~

"That means the top three sects are safe for now. They each have their respective Dao treading realm cultivators who will prevent them from being controlled." Wu Hei took a breath of relief.

"Indeed. But we can't drop our guard here. There is still the wild card which is the Northern Tribes. What more information do you have on them?" Lin Mu asked.

"Honestly, I don't have much. Even Gu Yao himself does not interact with them as much thus we have no idea of what they're planning. The two times that I did see them speak with Gu Yao, they were merely discussing about more resources and nothing more." Wu Hei replied.

"I see... what about the blood sacrifices? I know you have been trying to divert them." Lin Mu said.

Wu Hei seemed a bit surprised upon hearing this but just attribute it to Lin Mu's skill of hiding and disappearing, whatever it was.

"I have been able to free a few of them by changing the location of deliveries. Though not all of them were able to survive it. But those that did are willing to join our cause as they want to take revenge for their companions as well." Wu Hei stated.

"How exactly are you doing it?" Lin Mu asked.

"Well, I simply make it so that the sacrificial cultivators are delivered to a fake location and taken by someone who is disguised as one of Gu Yao's servants. They then pretend to take them. But this does not always work and the ones delivering discover it.

Me and the others have been able to kill those that find out thankfully, to stop this information from getting out. We were able to hide the fact that there are traitors within the ranks, by telling Gu Yao, the cultivators freed themselves somehow and escaped to that location. We pretend that we reached that place to capture them and that is how we justify the change of delivery location.

So far, the success rate is about thirty percent. A lot of cultivators still end up reaching Gu Yao as I am not the only one handling these deliveries. There are other servants of his that do the same for other regions and they still deliver them. Even I can't do it too often as Gu Yao may end up discovering it." Wu Hei explained.

Lin Mu nodded his head and knew this was the best Wu Hei could do for now. Even with his cultivation base that was at the peak stage of the core condensation realm like him, he still wasn't a match for multiple nascent soul realm cultivators that may attack him if he was found out.

"What about the Hei corps?" Lin Mu asked next.

Wu Hei had a tense expression after listening to the question and gritted his teeth. Lin Mu instantly knew something bad had happened.

"When Gu Yao controlled everyone in the city, there were many Hei corps members amongst them as well. With them being in his control, he was able to find the others who were not there and free. He quickly eliminated them and now barely five percent of all my people are left." Wu Hei said in a sorrowful tone.

Lin Mu felt anger rise within his heart as well, since he had some good relations with some of the people in there too.

"Who are the ones that are still left?" Lin Mu questioned.

~Sigh~

"Right now, there is Hei Wan and a few of the weaker members of the Hei corps left. Hei Wan had secret orders from me to escape with some documents if she felt we were a lost cause. She was to deliver them to the sects and the kingdom.

But back then, I did not know that Gu Yao had the ability to control so many people. That plan failed before it had even started. But still, due to that Hei Wan was not in the northern town at that time and was able to escape the massacre." Wu Hei answered.

~pat~pat~

"Don't worry, we will not let their deaths go in vain. I swear upon my honor that I shall take revenge for all that have been affected by Gu Yao and the Northern Tribes!" Lin Mu said while patting Wu Hei's shoulder.

Wu Hei looked up and thought he was hallucinating. For a moment there he had seen an obscure pattern appearing on Lin Mu's forehead. He couldn't read what the pattern said, but could feel the power exuding from it. There was a strange sense of reassurance in Lin Mu's words that he could not explain.

"And when that time arrives, I'll be with you!" Wu Hei replied.

Chapter 466 - A Plan Of Sabotage

"What's the situation here in the capital? And what about your father?" Lin Mu questioned after Wu Hei had calmed down.

"The capital has a lot of spies of Gu Yao. Mostly in the form of disciples of various sects. There are a few that are being controlled by the curse but most of them are here on the orders of their sects.

Overall the situation is in a strange equilibrium but it can be changed at any moment. As for my father Wu Xun, ever since he was promoted to the position of a court minister, his influence has only grown.

He has been using this power to establish various deals that are likely to be helpful to Gu Yao. I haven't been able to gain much on his end due to being greatly restricted. He hasn't been letting anyone other than Gu Yao himself get an idea of what he's doing either.

And now that my mother is under the control of Gu Yao as well, the slight opposition that he had from the old powers that supported my mother have also faded away. Her power as the Zhen clan's final member is useless as well." Wu Hei answered.

"Hmm... looks like we will have to take a different approach. Have you thought of a plan? It doesn't matter if it is not possible now, we may be able to change that in the future." Lin Mu asked.

"There are indeed some plans that I made. I reckoned that since we are unable to directly oppose Gu Yao for now, the most I could do was to delay his rise. I was sabotaging his supply chains and saving the sacrifices, but that hasn't been that effective.

Another thing that I wanted to do was to alert the top sects to his existence. This would have been easy since they already knew the Northern Tribes are acting up, but his hold over the other sects is far too much to do it efficiently. I tried something like that, but it was stopped by his servants before the proof could even reach the top sects." Wu Hei replied.

"Crippling his supply chains may really be the way. I doubt Gu Yao will be able to hide the fact that the various elders of the sects are being controlled for long. Like you said before, the top sects were already suspicious of the many sects that were joining under the Zither wind alliance.

That means they have some idea but don't exactly know what it is. We just need to delay Gu Yao long enough that the top sects figure it out on their own. Or perhaps... Gu Yao may even get desperate and make some big mistake which would reveal him.

Even if he has Dao Shell realm cultivators under him, it will still be difficult for him to go against the Dao treading realm elders of the top sects, not to mention their ancestors who will definitely awaken if things go really bad." Lin Mu analyzed.

Wu Hei thought over it and found it to be quite valid.

"This could work... but we will need a lot of people if we want to do this and doing that... while staying hidden is a herculean task." Wu Hei said.

"What are the particular points for which we will need so many people?" Lin Mu asked curiously.

"Well, since we want to delay him, we will need to hit the root of his power, the sects themselves. Without the resources, he will not be able to do much. But to do this, we will have to get to the sects themselves. Unless we have insiders there, this will be close to impossible." Wu Hei replied.

Lin Mu held his chin and pondered for a few minutes before a few ideas came to him.

"So... as long as someone can get into the sects and get rid of their resources, it will work?" Lin Mu said.

"No, not like that. If we really do get rid of all their resources, we will only be crippling ourselves in the long term. We still have the northern tribes to worry about. If the sects don't have the resource in the time of need, even if we get rid of Gu Yao, we may end up losing the war.

Besides, if only one sect's resources disappear, the others will be alerted and they will amp up their defenses. We would need a coordinated operation that targets all of them at the same time." Wu Hei replied.

Lin Mu once again, thought for a bit before speaking.

"The problem is with the other sects finding and increasing security, right? Then as long as the gap between all the attacks is short enough will this work?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Hmm... it may work. But... it will have to be very fast. Like barely a gap of a day between each attack maybe a bit more if we're lucky." Wu Hei answered.

After hearing these words of Wu Hei a new plan instantly started formulating in Lin Mu's mind. There were a few variables in this, but Lin Mu reckoned that as long as a little bit of luck was on his side, he truly may be able to accomplish this.

A determined expression appeared on Lin Mu's face which made Wu Hei a bit surprised.

"I think I may have a method that can be done to make the plan work... and the best thing is we don't even need more people. At least not for the part of crippling Gu Yao's supply chain." Lin Mu spoke.

"What is it?" Wu Hei asked hurriedly.

"Alright then, listen carefully." Lin Mu said before beginning his explanation.

At first Wu Hei was confused, but the more he listened to it the more shocked he got. The methods that Lin Mu was suggesting were absolutely insane and he would have thought them to be straight up suicide. But Lin Mu's explanation clarified it for him.

"This... AMAZING! If this truly works then we may truly be able to stop Gu Yao!"

Chapter 467 - Completing The Recording

Lin Mu and Wu Hei discussed the plan for about two hours more before they were able to clarify the more fine points of it.

They had separated their duties of the plan and now knew what they needed to do. Wu Hei will be taking care of the background tasks of the plan, gathering information about the resource and shipments while Lin Mu will be the one who was actually going to attack them.

"Where is Hei Wan though?" Lin Mu asked feeling curious.

He had heard from Wu Hei that Hei Wan was safe but he didn't know where she was or what she was doing.

"She is currently working as an attendant in one of the shops of Tri caution peony sect. She can hide there and also gather some information." Wu Hei answered.

"Hmm... that does seem good for the plan." Lin Mu replied.

"Indeed, once we get this started we will need to be quick. We can't let Gu Yao or his allies get a whiff of this." Wu Hei said.

"Of course. Thankfully, with the people you are saving, we will get more people to gather intel. As long as I have the information I'm confident of doing it." Lin Mu stated.

"Good, I'll contact you when I have enough details." Wu Hei replied.

Lin Mu registered Wu Hei's communication jade slip with his and could now contact him at any time without needing to meet him. The two of them split after this and Lin Mu went back to the library at the mercenary union branch.

Lin Mu knew that even if Wu Hei was going to gather the information he still needed to do some parts on his own. Obtaining the information from the library would also be helping him in the long term and as such was quite important.

But while he was going towards the mercenary union's branch, he felt his communication jade slip vibrate. He held it and realized that it was Refiner Ru contacting him.

"All your items are ready, you can come to collect them anytime you want." He said.

Lin Mu changed his direction and decided to directly go to the Gengbai Emporium to get the Harness that he had commissioned to be made.

"Greetings, Senior Wu Lian." The Shopkeeper spoke upon seeing Lin Mu.

"Mm, I'm here for the harness." Lin Mu spoke.

"Of course, we have it ready." The shopkeeper said before going to the other room and returning after a minute.

He had a dark leather harness in his hand and placed it on the counter.

"Please see if it is up to your standards," The shopkeeper said. "If you want changes to be made, we can do them." He added.

Lin Mu saw the harness which had multiple straps that firmly secured against the body of a beast. Its seat was firm yet soft and Lin Mu could tell that it had some excellent craftsmanship. The size was also perfect for Little Shrubby and because the straps were adjustable, even if he grew more the Harness would still fit him.

"Everything seems alright, I'll take it." Lin Mu stated before picking the harness and storing it in his ring.

"Thank you for your patronage." The shopkeeper bade Lin Mu farewell, while hoping that he would return again.

High paying customers were always welcome no matter what kind of a business or shop it was. And any business man would want more of them to come in.

'Hmm... after I finish up with the books in the library, I should go to Little Shrubby and give him these things. Wonder how he'll react...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

He soon reached the mercenary union and entered it without bothering the clerks. They seemed absent currently and Lin Mu did not know where they had gone to. He estimated the time and could tell it was a little past noon.

"Are they having lunch, perhaps?" He wondered.

Pushing this thought to the back of his mind, Lin Mu opened the door of the library. The doors made some noise while being opened as well.

~Rumble~

It was evident that infrequent use had led to it losing its smoothness and now its hinges were getting rusty.

Lin Mu sat back in his previous position and took out more spirit stones to use for the million word transference formation.

~WENG~

The runes appeared in the air and the formation became active again. Books started trembling in their shelves and when Lin Mu finally placed the jade slip in the center, they all flew out of the shelves.

They floated over to the center and words started coming out of them before pouring into the jade slip. The formation was working well and Lin Mu could tell that its speed had even increased by a little bit.

"Your control is getting better," Xukong praised.

"It is all due to your guidance, senior." Lin Mu replied before fully focusing on the task at hand.

He continued using the formation and transferred all the information from the books into the jade slip one by one. It took him twelve hours, but he had finally completed the task and all of the books had been copied into the jade slip.

This gave rise to a thought in Lin Mu's mind.

"Senior, if keeping the information in a jade slip is so convenient why do they not use it more?" Lin Mu questioned.

"They do that, of course. Did you forget that not everyone can afford them though? Only sects and rich organizations can afford to set them up though. Besides... for the amount that you bought that Jade slips, you would probably have been able to buy multiple copies of each book in this library." Xukong answered.

"Ah! I understand... I really did forget that, Hehe..." Lin Mu replied.

He looked out through one of the windows in the library and saw that the moon was already high up in the sky. It was starting to wane, which meant that it was the second half of the fortnight.

Chapter 468 - Gifts For Little Shrubby

Wind whizzed by as Lin Mu flew through the air.

He had finished up recording all the books in the library and was now heading towards Little Shrubby. He had easily left the city by using fade and was now on his short sword.

Lin Mu made sure to take a less traveled path and avoided coming under the view of anyone. Due to it being nighttime, the security was heightened and he could see way more guards patrolling the areas.

The area around the capital city was mostly plains with a few hills and patches of forest spread in between. Little Shrubby was hiding in one of these small patches of forest, and Lin Mu was tracing him through his connection with him.

It took Lin Mu about an hour to reach his position due to how many detours he had to use. It was not like he could use fade either, as sometimes a cultivator would randomly come in his path.

Even with his spirit sense spread, Lin Mu could only travel a short distance of two hundred meters which was simply not enough. If he tribally wanted to, Lin Mu could travel over a kilometer in the short span within which the skill Fade was active.

With no other choice, Lin Mu ended up taking multiple detours and finally reached Little Shrubby. He contacted the beast through his link and waited.

~rustle~

The thick and tall bushes trembled before Little Shrubby appeared from them, his Grey yellow eyes shining under the moonlight.

"Are you done with the work in the city?" Little Shrubby asked.

Lin Mu sniffed and could smell some smoke nearby.

"Were you cooking?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yes, I was about to start but then I heard you." Little Shrubby answered.

"Oh, perfect then. I have something you can use," Lin Mu said before taking out the items he had gotten for little Shrubby.

He placed the prosthetic hand, the harness and the spatial storage belt on the ground.

"What are these?" Little Shrubby questioned, having no idea about them.

Lin Mu then went on to explain the purpose of each item, and the more little Shrubby listened to it the happier he got.

"YAY! Now I can cook even better!" Little Shrubby exclaimed in joy.

But this could only be heard by Lin Mu. For others this was just the growl of a beast coming from a forest.

"Don't make too much noise," Lin Mu warned.

"Okay," Little Shrubby immediately became calm.

"If you want to use the hand, it will take you a bit of practice, but I think you should be able to use the belt rather easily." Lin Mu said.

He then explained how to use them before putting the belt around little Shrubby's neck. Since the belt was a spatial storage tool, it had a size adjustment function.

After Little Shrubby branded it with his spirit sense, the belt automatically shrunk to fit him properly. Now it looked like the belt was custom made for him and even suited him, as the gems embedded in the belt gleamed under the moonlight.

"Let me put on the harness and then you should be able to store it in the belt and put it on your own." Lin Mu said.

Little Shrubby purred in acknowledgment and let Lin Mu put on the harness. There were multiple straps on it and once they were all secured, the harness was proselyte set. Lin Mu climbed onto it and tested it.

"Now try running, we'll see how it works." Lin Mu spoke.

"Okay," Little Shrubby replied before starting to run.

Having learned from the last time, Little Shrubby started slowly and got faster as Lin Mu directed him.

~Zoom~

Soon they were running at the fastest speed that was possible for Little Shrubby, and the wind flowed through their hair.

"Alright, this is enough. We shouldn't go too far, let's return." Lin Mu said.

Little Shrubby did a flip mid-air and change his direction at breakneck speed. This was something he could not have done before when he was carrying Lin Mu, as it would just end up throwing him off his back.

But now with the new harness, it was safe for Lin Mu to sit normally, as the straps would keep him secure. Plus, he was able to grip onto the seat as well.

~Zoom~

With the same speed they had gone, they had returned. Lin Mu felt it to be a rather refreshing experience and thought that this was a rather good investment.

"Now that we are done with the harness and the spatial storage belt, you should try storing it." Lin Mu suggested.

"I'll do it." Little Shrubby replied and willed it.

Then with a slight delay, the harness disappeared from his back.

"Good! Now try putting it back on." Lin Mu spoke.

Little Shrubby sensed the harness in his belt and successfully withdrew it. Since the harness was stored in the position where it was equipped, it appeared back in the same state.

This way it made it convenient for Little Shrubby to put it on and store it whenever needed.

"Now, do the same you did with the spatial storage belt and brand the metallic hand with your spirit sense." Lin Mu directed.

Little Shrubby nodded his head and the spirit sense spread from his body. It touched the prosthetic hand and finally connected to it after a minute.

"I did it!" Little Shrubby said with excitement.

"Try moving it around, you should be able to do that now. Though if you want to control the fingers, it will take you more practice." Lin Mu replied.

~shua~

With a single thought of little Shrubby, the prosthetic hand was sent flying up in the sky.

~rustle~

~thud~

The hand fell back a couple of seconds later on the ground with a thud.

"You're gonna need more practice..." Lin Mu said as he was reminded of his own time, when he had first used his short sword and split the tent apart.

Chapter 469 - The Wait For The Operation

Lin Mu helped Little Shrubby gain better control of the hand for a few hours before he was finally able to use it. Though controlling the fingers was still hard for little shrubby as it had never used them before.

For Lin Mu or anyone that had a human like hand, it would have been easy to control them as they were used to it. But for a beast like little Shrubby, it had never done the same and as such, it was hard for it to learn.

It would be the same for humans if they were given an appendage they were not familiar with. For example, if a tail was given to Lin Mu he would have a hard time learning to use it too.

It took the entire night, before Little Shrubby was able to gain a basic ability to move the fingers. Its grip was either so strong that he snapped the utensils when he tried to hold on to them, or so weak that they simply fell from the hand.

Still, Little Shrubby was not hardhearted and was actually excited. This was like a new toy to him, and he was having a great time playing with it.

"This should be enough for now, the more he uses it the better his understanding will be." Xukong spoke, reminding Lin Mu that it was close to dawn now.

"It does look like it, senior. I guess I should return now." Lin Mu replied.

Lin Mu bade farewell to Little Shrubby and returned to the city. What he did not know was that a few cultivators would get reports of strange noises coming from a patch of the forest and visit it.

But what they would find there is handprint, and palm prints along with trees and rocks that had been destroyed. The matter finally ended with them declaring that it was just some cultivator practicing his techniques and thus causing all the noise.

They also found some camp fires set up that were extinguished along with some bones and scraps of cooked meat, which only assured them further that it was indeed some human cultivator who had taken a break here.

Such a thing was not that uncommon as a few wandering cultivators would pass by and take a halt here. Not everyone would visit the city and some didn't like to socialize with others that much.

Lin Mu had returned to the mercenary union branch and had just decided to stay at the library for the time being. He had told Wu Hei about this and he told him that it was actually a great idea for him to stay there.

Not many people favored the mercenary union now and not even the guards would think to check there. This made it the best place for Lin Mu to stay, as apparently there were a lot of spies in all the inns and hotels of the city.

Even though he looked completely different from before, it was still better if his 'new' identity stayed hidden for as long as possible. This would only be beneficial to their plan and would prolong the time it took for the sects to find out more about him when they started their plan.

Lin Mu was told to wait for a few days before he got the information from Wu Hei and thus had not left the city. While Wu Hei could easily give Lin Mu the location for the sects, it was still better if he gathered all the details for it.

He wanted the operation to be as swift as possible, so there was the least possible chance of an obstacle. This was due to the fact that most sects were quite huge in size. And had protective formations and arrays that were hard to bypass.

Any intruder that was able to enter a sect would only get lost in them, or worse killed. If it was not so, any Tom, Dick or Harry would like to steal from the sects. After all, they were no less than a bank if one considered the sheer amount of fortune that was piled in there, both monetary and in the form of resources.

The clerks of the Mercenary union also did not mind, Lin Mu staying at the library, not to mention that had taken quite a liking to him now. Apparently, after he had left the Big Zhao's Heavenly Delicacies to follow after Wu Hei, the female clerk Tongguo Bing had taken the rest of the credit and bought more dishes for her fellow clerks.

This had made the clerks favor him a lot, and they felt like they were cheating Lin Mu instead. As he had already paid more than was actually worth to stay in the library. They didn't mind it even if he stayed there for a year as there wasn't anyone coming to the Mercenary union anyway.

About a week had passed since the meeting with Wu Hei and Lin Mu talked with him every day through the communication jade slips. The plan was coming together nicely and Wu Hei reckoned that in a month they should have enough to start their very first operation.

Lin Mu wanted it to be quicker, but even Senior Xukong told him to be patient as things like these could be very dangerous. Stealing from sects was considered a great crime, that too at the level which they were going to do. It would not be rare for the elders of the sect to personally hunt him down.

Not to mention since they were all being controlled by Gu Yao, the response would likely be even harsher. Lin Mu was already prepared to fight nascent soul realm cultivators in the future. He only had the experience with Gu Yao and he was probably one of the strongest Nascent Soul realm cultivators and if he took him as a standard, Lin Mu had confidence in holding out against one.

"Now to just bide our time..." Lin Mu muttered to himself as he finished reading another book.

Chapter 470 - Lin Mu's Obstacle In Cultivation

Lin Mu had learned quite a few new things while Wu Hei gathered intel for their mission.

He learned the locations of most of the sects of the Great Zhou continent and except for those that were internationally hidden, he now knew how to get to them. Some part of this he learned from the records that he had taken from the mercenary union and some from Wu Hei.

He was also getting inputs about the current situation of all the top sects and learned that they were officially getting divided into different alliances except for the top three sects.

Soon there will no longer be the top ten sects but the top four and the two great alliances. The fourth sect which was at the bottom of the top ten sects had now become a hot commodity and both, the Zither wind alliance and the Long Cloud alliance were fighting over it.

Lin Mu asked Wu Hei more about this Long Cloud alliance and found that it was being led by the Long Cloud Sect, which was the previous number four sect in the top ten sects. Lin Mu wanted to know if Gu

Yao had any control over this alliance and learned that while he had some spies in them, they were still free.

This relieved Lin Mu a bit as they may be able to reel them in as allies in the latter part of their plan. But both Lin Mu and Wu Hei knew that would be quite difficult as both of them were not qualified to talk to them if one considered their cultivation bases.

At the very least they would have to be at the Nascent Soul realm to be able to accomplish that. Wu Hei had told Lin Mu that while he was at the peak stages of the core condensation realm, he was still far from the Nascent Soul realm.

It would take him a decade if not more to reach that, but if he somehow received the complete version of his cultivation technique, the Unity Reversal Secrets, he would be able to do the same in less than two years.

As for Lin Mu, he was in a dilemma. Neither Xukong nor Lin Mu knew when he would be able to break through to the Nascent Soul realm. Xukong had told Lin Mu that he will sense it when a heavenly tribulation is about to appear for him.

But so far, Lin Mu did not have even a small sign for that. Even his spirit Qi cultivation had reached a peak and he was unable to progress anymore. Not only was his core fully saturated, even his Dantian was now full.

Sleeping and using Well of Slumber also did not work for him as the extras spirit Qi that was generated only dissipated after a while. So instead of focusing on the quantitative aspect, Lin Mu decided to focus on the qualitative ones.

There were a few things that he could do for this. First was the Nameless technique of the Lost immortal which he could continue practicing. Currently, no matter how much spirit Qi he poured into it, it was like a drop in the ocean and no change could be perceived.

Then he had the body cultivation which he could still progress in. He had the mortal strengthening scripture too, which he wanted to practice but was lacking in earth elemental resources. He had already finished all the Earthen Qi pills and could only buy more resources or refine earth attribute spirit Qi of his own.

Since the spirit Qi he was generating was getting wasted anyway, he focused on refining it further into the earth attribute spirit. Since he was already in the second stage, the use for spirit Qi was quite diminished and he would need earth elemental resources to progress further.

But Lin Mu could still use the earth attribute spirit Qi to progress his Five Treasures Realm Cultivation. Since he was using the Earth attribute spirit Qi, the five treasures organ that he could refine was his spleen.

Lin Mu diligently practiced it and continued to refine his spleen with the earth attribute spirit Qi. It was now that he truly learned what the pace of cultivation was like for most people. He was progressing at a snail's pace and even after a week's of practice he had not even seen one-hundredth of a percent's change to his spleen.

"It looks like the Mortal Strengthen Scripture really isn't made particularly for Five Treasures Realm cultivation, the progress is disappointing. Do you have something else, senior?" Lin Mu questioned.

"No I don't, sadly. Either you will have to continue with this, or find a better technique on your own. Even the reason why I knew of this technique was because it was far too widespread in many worlds. And since I didn't really need any cultivation techniques myself, I didn't bother to collect them either." Xukong explained.

"Seems like it is time to go and buy some resources then." Lin Mu replied before leaving the mercenary union.

He was now heading towards one of the shops that sold alchemical pills and resources. This was the same shop that was run by the disciples of the Tri Cauldron peony sect and where Hei Wan was working as an attendant.

It was located quite far from the mercenary union and as such took Lin Mu some time to reach. He would have directly used phase to move underground, but he also liked to listen to the passerby people's conversations.

He had been getting some really interesting information from this and was thus getting habituated with it. This was a sort of an entertainment for Lin Mu and he didn't even know why he was liking it.

But it still helped him relax a bit, which was strange as he didn't even know he was stressed. Just like this while listening to the words of commoners, Lin Mu came to stand in front of the Shop.