

Walker 471

Chapter 471 - At The Pill Shop

The shop was relatively big and had the name board on its entrance. It simply read 'Tri Cauldron Peony Sect Alchemical Supplies'. Every shop that was run by the Tri cauldron peony sect had the same name no matter the city it was located in.

This made it easy for people to recognize it, not to mention the prestige that came with the name. It directly increased their value which in turn brought in more customers. Which Lin Mu could witness easily.

The shop was filled to the brim with customers and clerks were running around at the back, rushing to fulfill the orders. Though there was one person who caught Lin Mu's attention.

It was a woman who was helping the shopkeeper in selling the pills and other resources. This woman was a mature beauty and had a cold face. A lot of customers couldn't help but take a second look at her.

Lin Mu instantly recognized her to be Hei Wan. He walked in and directly went to the main counter. There were multiple spirit sense probes spread around in the shop and the disciples of the Tri cauldron were on guard for any crime that may occur in the shop.

Thus Lin Mu's approach was quickly detected, not to mention the fact that he had not hidden his spirit Qi fluctuation. He was deliberately letting them spread in the area. Lin Mu had long since figured out that just doing this let him establish an authority and saved a lot of time for him.

As long as people saw his cultivation base, they would not dare underestimate him and would respect him. This made things easier for him. Hei Wan too noticed him when he appeared in the shop and almost stumbled.

She had already heard the report that Lin Mu had appeared from Wu Hei and that his appearance had changed. He had described it to her, but she was still shocked upon seeing him.

'This is not a little change, he does not look the same at all!' Hei Wan thought to herself.

It was still unbelievable to her that the boy of two years ago was already at the peak stage of the core condensation. She herself had spent a decade to reach the peak of the Qi refining realm because of which this fact was nothing short of a miracle to her.

If Hei Wan had noticed him, then there was no way the Shopkeeper had not done the same. This man was at the early stage core condensation realm disciple of the sect and could even be considered to be as a junior elder.

The man instantly sprouted a businessman like smile on his face as he cupped his hands in greeting.

"What can I do for you today, senior?" The shopkeeper questioned.

Hei Wan and Lin Mu both looked at each other briefly, but none of them spoke a word to each other.

"I'd like to buy some pills and herbs please." Lin Mu replied in a friendly tone.

"Of course, senior. Our shop has everything that can be supplied by the Tri cauldron peony sect and we give a guarantee for our quality. What would you like in particular? Or if you would like to browse, I can give you our catalog too." The shopkeeper replied swiftly, in a practiced manner.

"Ah, a catalog would be perfect." Lin Mu said.

He did not want to say that he would like anything that was rich in earth attribute spirit Qi or was based on that; as it would probably draw some strange gazes and maybe even suspicion.

Besides, Lin Mu had also learned a few things from the Lost immortal's memoirs about buying things. He had learned that it was best to not let the merchant know of your exact requirements or there was a great chance that he would try to bargain for a higher price.

Getting a catalog would ensure that the merchant had a less chance of finding out, and besides that, the prices on the catalog would also help him verify the actual cost.

"Very well. Here is our catalog of alchemical pills and this one is for spirit herbs." The shopkeeper spoke as he placed them in front of Lin Mu.

Lin Mu started with the pill catalog as he knew they would contain a higher amount of earth attribute spirit Qi due to being concentrated during refinement. Though on the other hand, they would also be a lot more expensive than just the base spirit herbs.

There were about fifty pages in the catalog for the pills, and each page had around five to ten pills on it. Lin Mu used his spirit sense along with his vision and quickly read through the entire catalog in five minutes.

It didn't take him long before he was able to pick out pills that filled his requirements. But he didn't state them to the shopkeeper right away. Instead, he chose to look at the herb catalog too.

The herb catalog was much bigger than the pill catalog, having over a hundred pages in it. Various herbs with their properties, prices and uses were described on each page and Lin Mu took his leisure time reading these.

The Shopkeeper instructed Hei Wan to keep Lin Mu company while he attended to other customers. This was exactly what the two of them wanted, and Hei Wan accepted the task.

"Are you really here to buy pills and herbs?" Hei Wan asked, feeling a bit apprehensive.

"Yes, I do need them. And on the other hand, I also wanted to check up on you. I've heard all that happened in the past and wanted to see how you were doing." Lin Mu replied.

Complex emotions appeared in Hei Wan's eyes, but she quickly suppressed them before letting out a sigh.

~Sigh~

"We should ideally avoid as much contact as we can. Even though the 'controlled' are unaware of him right now, we don't know if they will find out due to some luck." Hei Wan spoke.

Chapter 472 - Hei Wan The Attendant

Lin Mu observed the other people with his spirit sense before speaking.

"I know... and the reason I'm buying the pills and herbs is also due to our mission. I need them to prepare for it beforehand, they will help me increase my abilities." Lin Mu replied.

"I see... well you can just tell me the actual requirements that you have, no need to pretend anymore." Hei Wan said in a knowing manner.

"Well, I guess this will make things easier for me too. What I need are pills and herbs that are either rich in earth attributable spirit Qi or are made from ingredients that contain it." Lin Mu said.

"That's a rather broad categorization... there are a lot of pills and herbs that fit into that." Hei Wan spoke.

"Show them to me," Lin Mu replied.

Hei Wan nodded and pointed out all of them. Lin Mu had already picked out some of the pills and herbs but she showed him the ones that were more cost effective. Lin Mu wouldn't need a healing pill that contained a little bit of earth attribute herbs and cost more.

Rather, a low grade pill that had a lot of earth attribute ingredients with a more economical price was better for him. One by one, the list expanded and soon Lin Mu had his order ready.

But the amount that he was buying irked Hei Wan a bit.

"Are you really going to buy these all? They will be quite expensive you know?" Hei Wan said.

It wasn't that the pills or herbs themselves were that expensive, but just that Lin Mu was getting a rather large quantity of them.

"How much will they cost?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Roughly six thousand low grade spirit stones. Do you really want to spend them?" Hei Wan asked again.

She knew that Lin Mu wanted them for his cultivation but she didn't know if it was a worthwhile exchange. Spirit stones were a lot more versatile and could be used in pinch to restore one's spirit Qi stores.

Lin Mu thought over it and indeed found it a little wrong. He had a rather large capacity of spirit Qi and didn't know if he would be needing to resort to it during an emergency. It was now that an idea occurred to him.

"Wait, they take other resources in exchange too, right?" Lin Mu asked.

"Yes, they do. You can use resources of equivalent value to buy things as well." Hei Wan spoke.

"I have something that I can use then... or rather a lot of them." Lin Mu replied.

"What is it?" Hei Wan asked curiously.

"Spirit apples," Lin Mu revealed.

"Spirit apples?" Hei Wan asked, feeling a bit confused.

While they were indeed quite valuable in terms of Normal currency, if Lin Mu wanted to buy using those he would need a rather massive amount of them.

"Yes, let me show you." Lin Mu spoke and withdrew one of them from his ring.

Hei Wan took the immaculate looking spirit apple that had glossy skin and the perfect shape. But when she touched it, she could instantly feel the spirit of Qi that was contained within it.

"This... how is this possible." Hei Wan said, feeling surprised.

The spirit apple that Hei Wan had in her hand contained as much spirit Qi as a low grade spirit stone. The entire reason why the Northern Town's mayor Wu Xun was so rich was due to them. Spirit apples could be produced in large numbers and each of them cost a single gold coin.

But they were still not comparable to spirit stones and contained much less spirit Qi than them. They were more affordable to the rich and affluent and thus could be eaten regularly as a staple.

"How many do you have?" Hei Wan questioned.

If the spirit apple had the same amount of spirit Qi as a spirit stone, it could be of nearly the same value.

"I have about thirty thousand of them and all of them have the same quality." Lin Mu answered.

"They will perfect then! You can just sell them and get more spirit stones in exchange." Hei Wan replied.

Lin Mu nodded his head and found it to be reasonable. During the time he had spent in the Sleepscape he had accumulated a lot of them and as his cultivation base had also increased the number that grew on the tree every day increased as well.

Currently, the spirit apple tree in the Sleepscape grew thirty spirit apples every day. Lin Mu himself did not have as much use for them as his speed of cultivation was much faster and he wasn't even using the basic Qi pills now due to the Well of Slumber.

Back then the spirit apples were not as potent as they are now. They had increased in quality along with his cultivation base and were now comparable to spirit stones, although their value would still be slightly low.

But that was not of much importance to Lin Mu, as the tree produced thirty of them for literally no cost. His original plan in the past was also to sell these spirit apples for money, but since he had been given a lot of it by Old man Jing, he didn't really need to do that.

They had been accumulating in his ring since then and had reached quite a high number.

"Let me talk to the shopkeeper and try to get a good price for you." Hei Wan said.

"That would be the best. He wouldn't know that we know each other and should agree with it." Lin Mu replied.

Hei Wan nodded and went to talk with the shopkeeper. The man was certainly surprised but the offer and asked to see the spirit apple himself to assess the quality. After confirming the truth, he decided to give his permission.

Both of them approached Lin Mu and asked him to go to a private room with them, to which Lin Mu gladly obliged. He didn't want others in the shop to know about it, anyway.

Chapter 473 - More Spirit Stones

The private room was quite similar to the one from Gengbai Emporium and had some basic things in it like a table, some cushions and a tea set already prepared. Lin Mu did a quick sweep of the room with his spirit sense just to check for assurance and found it to be normal.

This was something senior Xukong had taught him. At first Lin Mu was doubtful for the reason behind it but then he learned them very well from the memoirs of the lost immortal. There were often ways that shops and merchants used to trick customers.

Some of them were the use of befuddling formations that dulled the mind and allowed the merchant to get higher profit. There were also incenses that could do the same, and Lin Mu had already encountered them in the Alluring wisteria pavilion.

Here though, he found everything to be normal and thus he calmed down.

"Please take a seat, senior." The Shopkeeper spoke.

Lin Mu sat down and so did the shopkeeper, but Hei Wan stood at the side.

"So senior, I see you have some spirit apples to sell, could you show them to me so I can appraise them?" The shopkeeper asked.

"Sure, but I think we'll need a bit more space than this." Lin Mu said.

"More space?" The shopkeeper asked with confusion.

While Hei Wan had told the shopkeeper that Lin Mu had a large amount of spirit apples to sell, she hadn't told him the exact number. Doing so would make him determine the price beforehand and would then lessen the profit Lin Mu could make from it.

Still, the shopkeeper obliged and the table was moved to the side, leaving a much larger space there. Lin Mu then simply extended his hand and withdrew ten large barrels that took up nearly the entirety of the room, only leaving enough space for the three people to stand.

The shopkeeper was absolutely astounded and couldn't believe his eyes. He went to one of the barrels and opened its lid revealing the spirit apples that were stored inside. All of them looked the same as the one he had been shown.

Still, he didn't stop here he opened the lids of all the barrels and then used his spirit sense to count them. After ten minutes he was done judging and still had a surprised expression on his face.

"A total of thirty two thousand six hundred and nine spirit apples all of the same quality..." The Shopkeeper muttered.

He roughly calculated the price and how much he could resell them for and came up with the transaction costs.

"Senior this... for 32609 spirit apples I'm willing to offer you 24,268 low grade spirit stones or its equivalent in mid grade spirit stones." The shopkeep spoke.

Lin Mu looked over to Hei Wan, and she slightly nodded her head.

"Alright, I'll take it." Lin Mu replied.

~pew~

The shopkeeper took a breath of relief and felt secretly happy. He would be able to resell these for thirty percent more and his commission from that would be the same as what he would get from the sect in six months.

"How would you like the payment to be senior? Do you want spirit stones, resources, or something else?" The Shopkeeper asked.

"Hmm... deduct the things that I am buying from this and from the renaming amount I want it to be split into two. One part to be converted into low grade spirit stones and the other to mid grade spirit stones.

"That is acceptable. It shall be done as you wish." The shopkeeper spoke and called over a few servants.

Since Lin Mu had asked for quite a lot of things, they would need a little while to gather them and thus he instructed the servants to get what was needed. Hei Wan though was an attendant and thus of a higher rank, because of which she got to stay here.

The shopkeeper couldn't help but think about the man in front of him. This was a great deal but he was curious how Lin Mu had gotten so many spirit apples. The trio cauldron peony sect had a good relationship with the Wu Lim city and its mayor Wu Xun, who was now a minister at the capital.

They were thus aware of the costs of the spirit apples and knew the quality that they could get in the market. But no matter how he looked at these, they seemed to be of a much better quality than what they could get.

'Does he perhaps have a different source? Hmm... but then the climate to grow the spirit apples and the soil would also be needed and that is not available anyplace else than near the northern forest.

The only other way would be to... make a specific orchard that is isolated and enriched for the optimum growth of the spirit apple trees. That is the only way by which the spirit apples can get to such a good quality.

Getting the saplings is not that difficult, but setting up an orchard like that... it is no easy task.' The shopkeeper thought to himself.

Unknown to Lin Mu, he had become a mysterious figure with a good backing in the eyes of the shopkeeper. The man himself was an elder of the Tri cauldron peony sect and thus dealt with things related to alchemical pills and spirit herbs all the time.

He knew very well how they were grown and how to take care of them. Because of this the conclusion he reached was so different than reality. Still, there was no way he could have known the truth either, and even if he did, there was a great chance he would never believe it.

After all, in the entire cosmos, only four people before Lin Mu had ever been the owners of a garden of Karma.

A servant poured them some tea, while they waited for the items to arrive.

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Chapter 474 - Progressing The Mortal Strengthening Scripture

It took the servants about thirty minutes before they were able to gather all that was asked by Lin Mu. Seven servants walked in, each carrying a large box with them. They placed these one by one and the shopkeeper presented them to Lin Mu.

In the first box which had the best quality, the mid grade spirit stones were kept. The box had a preservative formation placed on it as well as a protective formation that prevented the contents from getting damaged when the box was moved.

The second box was similar and had low grade spirit stones kept in it. The third and fourth box had an assortment of pill bottles which were ordered by Lin Mu. The final three boxes all contained various spirit herbs and resources that were either of the earth element or contained earth attribute spirit Qi.

Lin Mu checked them with his spirit sense and found them to be as they were described. Hei Wan also gave her approval secretly and Lin Mu confirmed the transaction before storing all of the boxes in his ring.

"Thank you for your patronage, senior. Please do come again and feel free to contact me if you need any more things." The Shopkeeper said and even registered his communication jade with Lin Mu's.

Lin Mu simply bade him farewell before returning to the library in the mercenary pavilion. Now that he had all the resources, there was nothing stopping him from getting stronger than before.

After Lin Mu was gone though, the shopkeeper's expression turned serious. No longer it was that of a jovial businessman, instead of that a sly cultivator's had appeared.

"Hei Wan, did you get any idea of his background?" The shopkeeper questioned.

"No, elder. He didn't speak anything in excess and only things related to the transaction were discussed between us. I tried to get him to reveal more after I found out how much he was willing to trade, but was unsuccessful." Hei Wan replied with a straight face.

"Hmm... he was definitely experienced, then. Plus the number of things he stored in his spatial storage ring... that was clearly not normal. I reckon it was a high grade spatial storage treasure or there is one way he would have that much space." The shopkeeper spoke.

"Do you need me to ask the disciples to keep an eye on him?" Hei Wan asked, her expression getting slightly dark.

The shopkeeper deliberated over it for a while before shaking his head.

"No... at least not for now. But if he does come again and another transaction like this happens be sure to inform me. Maybe I'll be able to get more information that way." The shopkeeper replied.

"As you wish, elder." Hei Wan said while secretly holding a jade slip in her hand.

Back at the library, Lin Mu had already taken out the boxes that contained all the herbs and other resources. He had asked the clerks not to disturb him for the time being and locked the doors. The clerks agreed with him right away and didn't mind it. It was not like anyone went to the library these days anyway.

"Hmm... what should I start with first, Senior?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Begin with the things that have the least amount of earth attribute spirit Qi and then progress to higher quality items from there. The mortal strengthening scripture develops tolerance to the same amount of resource after a while and thus it's better to do it this way." Xukong advised.

"Alright then," Lin Mu said before opening the first box.

This box contained spirit herbs rich in earth element spirit Qi and were of various types like flowers, grasses, stalks, roots, etc. He picked up what looked like a knotty root and put it in his mouth before chewing it.

"Ugh, this is bitter..." Lin Mu complained before swallowing it.

As soon as he did though, the medicinal properties of the root started spreading from his stomach, and he quickly guided it according to the method of the mortal strengthening scripture.

~shua~

The brown layer appeared on his skin once again and had the stone like patterns on it. The glow of the brown layer flickered as more and more earth elemental spirit Qi was being supplied to it.

Lin Mu was closely observing it and was wondering what the difference was between the earth elemental spirit Qi that he refined himself and the one that was obtained from the herbs. After observing it for a while, he couldn't really find any difference between them.

'Why doesn't the Mortal strengthening scripture progress then?' Lin Mu wondered.

Soon the absorption of the Qi was complete and the glow stopped. Lin Mu picked up another herb before eating it and repeating the process. Little by little the thickness of the brown layer was increasing and after a couple of hours it had reached a thickness of an inch.

The stone like patterns were now more apparent and a heavy feeling could be felt from the layer if one looked at it. By now, Lin Mu had emptied out half of the box of spirit herbs. Eventually, the brown layer started flickering and then a sound was heard.

~Crack~

The surface was covered in cracks, and it was as if the brown layer was now collapsing. Lin Mu did not panic though and let it happen.

~Crumble~

A minute later, the cracks spread even further and the entire layer started crumbling. Once it was gone, an even brighter light was emanated from Lin Mu's body. It made it hard to see him, but soon it started to condense onto his body.

~shua~

The light kept on getting smaller and smaller, until an even coat was formed all over Lin Mu's body. From head to toe, Lin Mu was now glowing in a brown light that seemed to be more clear than before.

Eventually, the light faded away and in its place another brown layer appeared but this one had different patterns than before. Instead of a stone, there were now plate like patterns on it.

Chapter 475 - Third Stage Of The Mortal Strengthening Scripture

Lin Mu took a deep breath as he looked at the new layer of armor that had now formed on his skin. This was the third stage of the mortal strengthening scripture and it had taken half a box of the earth elemental herbs for him to reach it.

The stone like patterns had now disappeared and it was as if Lin Mu was wearing a brown plate armor. Lin Mu couldn't tell how much the difference had increased by but could sense the dense earth attribute spirit Qi that was packed into it.

He tapped on the armor layer and found that his arm easily passed through it and it was as if it didn't exist.

"Only an attack would cause it to harden..." Lin Mu muttered to himself before raising his hand and punching his other hand.

~bam~

The sound of collision could be heard as his arm hit the brown armor layer. It easily defended against it and Lin Mu felt nothing but knew that the power in the attack was enough to break the bones of a Qi refining realm cultivator.

"Well... that didn't take as many resources as I had expected. I still have a lot more left for the next stage." Lin Mu said.

"Don't forget the requirement only increased exponentially after each stage. You may barely be able to reach the fourth stage with all this here." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu nodded his head before meditating for a bit and optimizing his condition. Practicing directly after a breakthrough could make their cultivation base unstable and thus it was better to let it stabilize for a bit.

Lin Mu spent an hour like this before starting his practice again. He started eating the rest of the herbs and continued the process. And just as senior Xukong had said, even after finishing all the boxes of the earth elemental spirit herbs, Lin Mu was unable to have a breakthrough to the next stage.

But while he had not seen any progress in the mortal strengthening scripture, he did get a different surprise. He looked at his spleen and saw that its refinement had actually increased a little bit.

After his spleen was fully refined, he would reach the first stage of the Five treasures realm and just his body alone would have strength equivalent to that of a peak core condensation realm cultivator.

'Perhaps if I'm able to finish the first stage of the Five treasures realm before I reach the Nascent Soul realm, I may even be able to compete against the Nascent Soul realm cultivators.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

During his time in the Sleepscape, he had read about the Body cultivators in the Memoirs of the lost immortal. The lost immortal himself was not one and was a true Qi cultivator, but during his life, he had seen a lot of body cultivators himself.

Their power was not something that normal Qi cultivators could compare to. Just progressing in one stage of the five treasure realms would put them at the same point as that of a peak stage cultivator of that equivalent Qi realm.

Another thing was their terrifying bodies which were durable and had better resistances than normal Qi cultivators. Overall, it seemed like their advantages over the Qi cultivators were many, but in reality, it was balanced.

Body cultivators couldn't use Qi skills and would have to use their bodies to directly fight as common martial artists would do. While they could use the spirit Qi in their bodies and with vital energy, emitting it out of their bodies was often difficult for them.

Another thing was that the effort needed to progress for the body cultivators was immense, such that ten normal Qi cultivators would be able to cultivate at the same time that was required by them. The resources needed also increased by quite a bit.

While body cultivators were rare, what was even rare was someone who cultivated both the body cultivation path and the Qi cultivation path. The people who were successfully able to do both were considered to be rare than a Qilin's horns or a phoenix's feathers.

While some people did practice a little bit of body cultivation along with Qi cultivation, they only did this to increase the strength of their bodies and would not fully focus on this path. Doing so would only cause them to waste their potential.

He spent the rest of the night in eating all the herbs and practicing the mortal strengthening scripture and had to stop as he had run out of the herbs. He looked at the pills and picks out the lowest quality ones first.

They were all sorted according to their quality, just as Lin Mu had asked from the shopkeeper and thus he had an ease of use. He wondered if he should start using them, but was then interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Senior, would you like some breakfast?" A Tongguo Bing asked from outside.

~Rumble~

And just as he heard the word breakfast, his stomach gave him the answer.

"I may as well eat now..." Lin Mu said before opening the door.

"Sorry to disturb you senior, but we got some food and was wondering if you would like some." Tongguo Bing asked.

"Alright," Lin Mu said, and the girl gave him a tray of food that she had already prepared for him.

Lin Mu looked at the quantity and knew that this would barely fill the gaps in his teeth. Still, he accepted the food and finished it rather quickly before thinking of eating more.

"Do you... want more food, senior?" The woman questioned.

"Yes.... How about you go buy me some, I'll give you the money?" Lin Mu replied.

"SURE!" Tongguo Bing replied with a smile.

"Alright, get me as many dishes as you can that have spirit beast meat and spirit herbs in them." Lin Mu spoke before handing her ten gold coins.

She happily skipped away and Lin Mu went back to the library.

"At least I'll save time this way..."

Chapter 476 - Three Earth Elemental Pills

Tongguo Bing soon brought him his food, which she could not carry alone and had to ask her fellow clerks to bring with them. Lin Mu generously allowed them to take some for themselves too.

It wasn't like they could eat as much as him anyway and thus he didn't mind it. He was grateful that he had a place to hide without suspicion. He simply ate his food and returned to practicing the mortal straightening scripture.

He opened the first pill bottle and ate a single pill. The pill melted in his mouth like sugar and he swallowed the medicinal liquid. Unlike the herbs, most of which were bitter, this pill had a slightly sweet taste.

After the pill reached his stomach, he quickly got to assimilating its potency. Guiding it into the circuit for the mortal strengthening scripture, Lin Mu resumed the process. It finally started moving again and he confirmed that it had only stopped due to the tolerance developed to the herbs.

One by one, he kept on eating the pills and three days went by. He would pause in the morning and ask Tongguo Bing to get some food for him and would then return to his practice.

Finally, on the fourth day, he had finished consuming all of the pills he had bought from the shop. He was now stuck at the very cusp of a breakthrough and only needed a little bit more to reach the fourth stage.

~Sigh~

"I need to get more pills.... But these ones won't work anymore..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He was just a small step away from the next step which felt a little frustrating to him, but he knew that he should just take it calmly. He took out the communication jade slip and looked at it for a few seconds before making up his mind.

He sent a message to the Shopkeeper of the Tri cauldron peony sect's shop and asked him if they had any pills of the earth attribute that were not on the catalog.

"Hmm... there are a lot more alchemical pills like that senior, but if you want them, they would have to be ordered first. The alchemist will then refine them for you. Since these pills are more expensive and hard to produce, we don't usually keep them in stock.

If you come by, we can discuss which specific pill you want." The shopkeeper explained.

Lin Mu didn't go there straightaway though. He first consulted Hei Wan and Wu Hei about his situation and asked if such pills could be available in other shops. He got the same answer from both of them that he had already taken all of the common pills of the earth element.

If he needed more of them, he would have to commission an alchemist to refine the pills for him. He also asked them if it was fine if he got them made from the Tri cauldron peony sect's shop. While Hei Wan was a bit apprehensive about this, Wu Hei said that he will suppress any excess information about him getting out from the city; if it so happens.

Right now, Lin Mu was not under any kind of surveillance, so he was fine. Hei Wan had been recording what the shopkeeper had said after Lin Mu had left, thus Wu Hei was aware about this and had acted in the background while keeping an eye on the actions of the Tri cauldron peony sect.

Thankfully, the shopkeeper had not gone overboard and had not sent anyone to spy on Lin Mu. This meant that the man was still fine to speak with and buy from. Thus having reached a decision, Lin Mu went to the shop where Hei Wan was already waiting for him at the door.

"The shopkeeper has asked the alchemist to be ready for your arrival. According to your requirements, he has picked out a few pills which can be refined. You can choose which one fits your fancy." Hei Wan informed.

"Thank you for this," Lin Mu said before walking in with her.

"Greetings, senior Wu Lian!" The Shopkeeper said, "the alchemist is waiting in the private room, please come with me."

This time a bigger room was taken by them and a middle aged man was sitting in the room. Lin Mu sensed his cultivation base and found that he was also at the peak of the core condensation realm. In fact, he seemed to be even slightly higher than that.

"The pseudo Nascent soul realm... he's waiting for his heavenly tribulation too..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Lin Mu was in the same situation as the man, but in his case he had no idea when it would be coming. While the other pseudo nascent soul realm cultivators knew the time would take for the tribulation to arrive. Not to mention their understanding of spirit Qi was also better than other core condensation realm cultivators.

"So this is the person who wants to commission a pill?" The Alchemist asked.

"Yes, this is senior Wu Lian." The shopkeeper introduced.

Lin Mu cupped his hands in a salute before sitting at the table.

"So what kind of a pill do you exactly want. I was told that it needs to be an earth elemental one, but that is a rather vast categorization which includes many pills with healing proprieties, defensive properties, offensive properties and much more." The alchemist asked.

Lin Mu thought over a bit and figured out what he wanted.

"I want an earth elemental pill that is used for cultivation and has the most amount of earth attribute spirit Qi." Lin Mu replied.

"Hmm... a pill for cultivation would be more expensive. The costs to refine it would include buying the herbs and then the refinement itself." The Alchemist spoke.

"I'm fine with that." Lin Mu replied straightaway.

"Okay. Then there are three pills that I can refine of that type. The first is the Dark Soil pill, the second is the five earths pill and the third one is the Earth resurgence pill."

Chapter 477 - Alchemist Bilao

Lin Mu was interested in these pills and tried to see if there was information about them in the records he had collected till now. He quickly found the information about it and knew that these pills were not common at all.

These were actually pills that Nascent Soul realm cultivators would use and refining them was a difficult task too. Not to mention that the ingredients required for them were hard to get as well.

If Lin Mu were to compare any of these three pills with the other pills, then he could say that any one of these pills was more potent than all of the other pills combined.

'But wait if this is a pill used by Nascent Soul realm cultivators, how is he going to refine it?' Lin Mu wondered.

He knew that some alchemists that were more talented could do so, but seeing one in this world was rare. Even Lin Mu had only seen such people in the memoirs of the lost immortal till now.

"You can still try asking, who knows this person may really be talented at it." Xukong spoke.

Lin Mu reckoned that there really wasn't any drawback to this and thus decided to go ahead with it.

"I'm fine with all three pills. If you can refine them all it would be good, but I don't know how long that will take." Lin Mu spoke after thinking for a bit.

Lin Mu had a probable deadline and would have to leave the city when Wu Hei was done gathering information. There were about ten days left but it could be delayed, Lin Mu just hoped that the pills could be refined before that.

"Hmm... I can refine all of them but each pill would take me around fifteen to twenty days of time." The Alchemist spoke.

~Sigh~

"Fifteen to twenty days... that would be a bit too late for me..." Lin Mu replied.

"Well... the reason why it is taking me so long is because these pills are meant of Nascent Soul realm cultivators and I'm still not there. I can still refine them but to make sure I don't fail, I need to take it slow and carefully.

Though there is a way by which I can speed up the process. But this will only work for one of these pills the Dark Soil pill." The alchemist replied.

"Oh? You can do that? How many days it would take you if you use that method?" Lin Mu questioned.

Lin Mu was fine with even just one pill as he reckoned it would be enough to push him into the fourth stage of the mortal strengthening sutra. Senior Xukong had already told him that reaching the fifth stage was incredibly difficult and would take a massive amount of resources to do so.

Lin Mu would be content and his defenses would increase by quite a bit even if he was just in the fourth stage. He had not tested his defensive ability to the full extent when he reached the third stage and knew that it would only be good if it progressed further.

"I can shorten the time required to refine the Dark Soil pill to ten days if I use some catalysts. But this would involve using multiple mid grade spirit stones and would only increase the cost of the pill. For a comparison, you would be able to get two Dark Soil pills for the price of this one." The alchemist replied.

"I see..." Lin Mu responded before thinking over it.

Currently, he didn't really care for the spirit stones as much if he couldn't convert them to his personal strength. While they would be helpful in replenishing his spirit Qi in the time of need, if he didn't bolster his abilities now, it would not make it worth, when he went on the mission if he just ended up getting hurt or worse, dying.

"So do you still want to buy them?" The Alchemist asked again.

"Yes, I'll take them. How much will it cost for the Dark Soil pill?" Lin Mu replied.

"It will cost 250 mid grade spirit stones." The alchemist replied.

This was the first item Lin Mu was spending such a large amount of spirit stones on something, but he knew it was worth it.

'If I think about it, I've spent way more collectivity on other things...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

"Alright, I'll take it." Lin Mu answered.

He then took out a pouch filled with the exact number of spirit stones and handed them to the alchemist, who looked at the pouch apprehensively. He counted the spirit stones and was surprised.

'Did he already prepare before this? Seems like he was pretending to not know the price of the pills huh... a cautious person just like they told me.' The alchemist thought.

"Everything is here, I can start the process as soon as I get back to my abode." The alchemist spoke.

But just as the alchemist was about to stand up, Lin Mu had a thought and he spoke up.

"Ah, I forgot to ask, what is your name?" Lin Mu asked.

"Oh look at me, I forgot my manners at work. You can call me Alchemist Bilao." He answered.

"Alright then, goodbye alchemist Bilao." Lin Mu said farewell to him while thinking, 'where did I see this name before?'

Alchemist Bilao left the shop and went to do his work while the shopkeeper exchanged some more pleasantries with Lin Mu. He couldn't help but feel happy with such a good customer who was high paying. After all, he would be getting a cut from this too, as he was the one who recommended alchemist Bilao.

'Good, that I spent extra effort in getting Alchemist Bilao. Thankfully, he was free from other jobs since he was preparing for his breakthrough. I wonder though... will alchemical Bilao be doing his breakthrough at the sect or someplace else... maybe we'll get to observe and learn from it.' The shopkeeper thought to himself.

Chapter 478 - The Dark Soil Pill Is Ready

Now that he had ordered the pill, Lin Mu just returned back to the library. There wasn't much left for him to do other than to wait. He couldn't progress his cultivation and he couldn't practice the mortal strengthen scripture either.

"Hmm... may as well try to further my five treasures realm cultivation, even if it is slow it'll be fine. A drop will eventually turn into a pond and then into a sea." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Currently, his spleen had reached the fifty percent mark due to the large number of earth elemental herbs and pills he had consumed. This was not the intendant method of cultivation for the five treasures realm, but this was all he had.

Originally the five treasures realm could be cultivated with vital essence but because Lin Mu lacked the specific technique he was using the inefficient method of using spirit Qi to convert into the elemental spirit Qi and then use that to refine the related organ.

This was a long winded and inefficient process, but this was all he could do for now.

'Perhaps I can get some ideas from the lost immortal's memoirs....' Lin Mu thought and started reading them.

Back in the ring, Xukong was observing Lin Mu while thinking about some things.

"He's going to need a proper body cultivation technique soon, if he wants to progress it. But finding it in this world seems close to impossible. ~Sigh~ I should have paid more attention and collected techniques in the past." Xukong muttered to himself.

He then looked back at the altar in the center of the ring and thought a bit more.

'Will you be interfering this time? I wonder... ' Xukong thought.

The ten days passed in the blink of an eye and Lin Mu just continued his routine in that time.

In that time he had been able to find some clues to the five treasures realm from the lost immortal's memoirs but none of them were useful in his situation. Still, he noted them down in his mind thinking that he may have a chance at using them in the future.

Another thing that he discovered in this item was about the alchemist Bilao. He had thought that he had heard or seen his name somewhere before, and it was actually in the records of the mercenary union.

Alchemist Bilao was over two hundred years old currently and thus quite a lot of information about him was available. He was actually a big shot in the Tri cauldron peony sect and had won a few accolades in the alchemist competition that were held by the many sects.

His accomplishments in the field of alchemy were good for his age and cultivation base, not to mention that most of this was self learned. He actually did not have any master and had learned everything on his own.

He joined the Tri cauldron peony sect about a hundred years ago when he was invited by a few elders. They noticed his talent in one of the tournaments and quickly took him in. Even the patriarch of the sect said that his talent was beyond his own and thus he was not worthy of being his master. Although he still gave him some lessons and other elders did the same too.

In fact, if it were not for the fact that Alchemist Bilao wanted to focus on his work and cultivation, he would have long since been given the position of an elder. It was said that even the Rainbow pill sect had eyes on him and was looking to recruit him at one point.

But this didn't happen for some reason and Alchemist Bilao chose to stay back at the Tri Cauldron peony sect.

Since he was at the peak of the core condensation realm, and also had over two hundred years of experience, a lot of the people knew that his breakthrough to the Nascent Soul realm was almost guaranteed.

Lin Mu even wondered why a person like that was called to the shop in the capital city when he should have been focused on preparing for his breakthrough instead.

Finally on the tenth day, as it had been promised, he was contacted by the shopkeeper and asked to collect his commissioned Dark Soil pill.

"Let's get it quickly, Wu Hei should also be done on his end soon." Lin Mu said to himself before leaving the library.

Tongguo Bing noticed Lin Mu leaving the building but did not question him this time. She had learned that he was a rather reserved person except for his monstrous appetite and did not speak much.

Lin Mu directly entered the ground using phase and rushed to the shop. In less than two minutes, he was already at the shop and popped back up in a secluded area.

"Senior Wu Lian! You're here already? That was fast..." The Shopkeeper said upon seeing Lin Mu at the door.

He had just contacted Lin Mu and here was already here, which was rather quick.

"I was just nearby, so it didn't take me long." Lin Mu said, giving an excuse.

"That's good. Well, here is your Dark Soil pill." The shopkeeper said as he placed a box in front of Lin Mu.

The box was small, only the size of a palm, but Lin Mu could see the preservative formation that was carved on it. He opened it and saw the pill lying in a small crystal vial. The pill looked like it was made out of a hollow glass in which small particles of dark black soil were filled in.

Lin Mu slightly shook the vial and did not see the soil like particles move. This was how one was supposed to check the quality of the dark soil pill. If the particles of the soil moved, it meant that the pill was of a low potency and was not fully refined. But if it was packed to the brim, the particles would not move.

"Everything seems alright," Lin Mu said before leaving the shop and hurrying back to the library. This time he just used fade and returned.

Chapter 479 - Fourth Stage Of The Mortal Strengthening Scripture

Appearing in the library again, he shut the doors and got ready. He sat down cross legged and took out the Dark soil pill. Its glassy exterior glittered in the sunlight that was coming from one of the windows.

After looking at it for a moment, Lin Mu put it in his mouth, swallowing it down. Unlike most of the other pills which turned into liquid when put in mouth, this one stayed solid. Even when it was in his stomach it stayed in the solid form.

'Why is it not showing any effect?' Lin Mu wondered.

And just as this question appeared in his mind, it happened.

~boom~

It was as if an explosion had happened in his stomach and the pill started releasing its efficacy. Dense earth elemental spirit Qi was released from it that was rapidly absorbed into Lin Mu's body.

The spirit Qi coursed through his meridians putting pressure on them. This was the first time in a long while, Lin Mu was feeling such kind of a pressure on his meridians. Ever since his meridians had expanded and he had reached the Five treasures realm, he had not had any problem bearing the spirit Qi.

This showed just how much power was contained within that little pill. Lin Mu got over the initial shock after a second and hurriedly practiced the Mortal strengthening scripture. The earth elemental spirit Qi, traversed the meridians and followed the Qi circuit of the mortal strengthening scripture.

Unlike before, the brown armor layer did not appear on his skin right away. It took him fifteen minutes before he had even absorbed the initial wave of the spirit Qi. Lin Mu took a look at the pill in his stomach and saw that it was barely 10% dissolved.

'This is definitely way more powerful than any other pill I've taken...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

~shua~

Finally, he had gone past the limit and the brown armor layer appeared on his skin again. The plate like patterns on it started expanding as the armor started to get thicker. The earth elemental spirit Qi kept on pouring into it and hours passed in the blink of an eye.

About half of the Dark Soil Pill's efficacy had been used up by Lin Mu and he had still not broken through to the next stage. He looked at the armor which was now two inches thick. If one looked at Lin Mu right now, they would think that some barbarian that was wearing a thick armor was sitting there instead.

The armor masked Lin Mu's appearance and he looked like a very bulky man instead. From afar it looked heavy but in reality, it was weightless. More time passed and then the communicator jade slip hummed.

Lin Mu paid no attention to it right now though, and simply continued practicing the mortal strengthening scripture. Finally, the armor could not absorb any more of the earth elemental spirit Qi and reached a peak.

~Crack~

The armor shuddered before cracks started spreading all over it. Bit by bit they covered the entire surface of Lin Mu's body until it finally shattered.

~Tremble~

A wave of aura was released by Lin Mu's body and spread all across the area. All the people who were currently in the Mercenary union and the district that it was located in felt tremors.

"What! Is it an earthquake?" Tongguo Bing who had been doing her work said in shock.

The other clerks rushed out and saw her. They were in the same condition and felt that there was an earthquake too.

Outside the building, the people were all going about their business. But a lot of them suddenly stumbled and fell to the ground.

"What in the name of heavens!" They exclaimed.

~thud~thud~thud~

Some of the stalls and shops that had things hanging on display fell down and the guards became alert.

"Inform the captain, we have an earthquake incoming!" The guards spoke.

But what they didn't know that this entire occurrence was only confined to this area. In fact, when they stepped out of a certain radius they felt calm. There were no tremors here and it was as if everything was normal.

Yet when they turned around and looked back at the road, they could still see the things moving and people trembling. All of them had question marks on their faces and couldn't explain this stager occurrence.

This didn't last for long though and within two minutes everything had calmed down. It was as if nothing had happened, but the marks of those tremors could still be seen everywhere. Some of the buildings and shops had cracks in their walls and a few trees had collapsed.

Even the lamps that hung from the poles along the streets spilled the oil from them. While the ones that were a bit more unstable directly fell to the ground. Thankfully, it was daytime and the lamps were extinguished, or fire would have likely started in the area.

Lin Mu who was the source of this, sat completely unaware and was fully focused on himself.

A new layer had appeared on Lin Mu now. This one did not look like armor and rather like scales. They were brown and were attached to the surface of his skin. Each scale was symmetrical and about two centimeters in diameter.

Now it didn't look like Lin Mu was wearing an armor. Rather it looked like he was wearing tight lizard skin clothes instead. His robes that he was wearing had been shredded in the process of the previous armor expanding and now Lin Mu was left sitting, wearing tattered rags.

He finally opened his eyes, that glowed with a fierce look.

~huu~

"I succeeded..." Lin Mu muttered to himself before taking a look at his body, which had changed once again.

He touched the layer which was rather springy instead of stiff like before. But this was not all, as when he took a look inside his body he received another surprise.

Chapter 480 - Unexpected Progress

Lin Mu saw that while the Dark soil pill was still not fully absorbed, and the mortal strengthening scripture had reached the fourth stage, his spleen had actually gotten more refined as well.

This was unexpected to him as it was not a minor increase either, it was about 75% refined while previously it was at 50%. Just a single pill had helped him increase it greatly which was shocking and it had not stopped increasing either.

Lin Mu estimated that the pill still had about thirty percent of its efficacy left and thus kept on absorbing more and more of it. The effect of it was apparent and the refinement of his spleen sped up.

But while this was happening Lin Mu was wondering how it was happening. This was not possible due to the mortal strengthening scripture as it was not this efficient. And neither did he had a technique for body cultivation.

"How can this be possible Senior?" Lin Mu questioned.

"I... don't know either." Xukong said before turning to look at the altar in the center of the ring.

He thought that it was the altar's doing but it seemed to be calm and no change could be seen in it.

'If not you then what? He's not even using vital essence for refinement.' Xukong wondered.

"Just keep on doing what you're doing. If this is happening then you better take advantage of it. Use up all the earth elemental spirit Qi you have stored if it still continues." Xukong advised.

"Yes senior!" Lin Mu said before cutting off the connection and stilling his mind.

All that existed for him was his body and the spirit Qi in it.

Time passed and it was nighttime now.

~knock~

A knock was heard on the door of the library but no one answered it. Outside the library, a woman who was wearing a veil was standing. Along with her, another younger woman was standing as well.

"Is senior Wu Lian fine?" Tongguo Bing asked with concern.

The entire city had become alert after the news about the earthquake spread. But this became a strange mystery as only one district of the capital was affected, while the rest of the city was safe and calm.

The news reached the king and he sent out his men to personally check what was happening. If it was not an earthquake and was contained to a single district that meant something was wrong there.

He was worried that some kind of an enemy may be attacking them from the ground and this could be the sign of that. If this happened a few years ago, the advisors of the king would have said that he was being paranoid.

But with the advent of the northern tribes and the situation with all the sects, there was no chance that could be taken. Caution was key in these moments and they definitely did not want to make a mistake that would cost them their dynasty.

The king's men who had been sent to the district were still surveying it and were trying to find the source of the tremors.

"He's fine, just deep in cultivation." Hei Wan replied after withdrawing her spirit sense.

"I see." Tongguo Bing said, but unknown to her beads of sweat dripped from Hei Wan's forehead.

Hei Wan looked back at the library's door and let out a breath of relief.

'What kind of a technique is he practicing now, that mountainous aura...?' Hei Wan thought.

She then turned to the clerk and spoke, "it was good that you did not disturb him. He is in a sensitive period and thus it's best we leave him alone."

"Ah, I see. Senior is indeed very talented." Tongguo Bing said, slight awe visible in her eyes.

'Talented is an understatement... even we don't know what he is...?' Hei Wan thought.

"How do you know senior though, Miss Wan?" Tongguo Bing questioned.

"We are acquaintances and have had some dealings before." Hei Wan replied.

"Ah I see." Tongguo Bing nodded her head.

"I'll leave now. Make sure not to disturb him. Also, do you need more payment for him staying here?" Hei Wan asked.

"No!No! Senior already paid enough. Even if he stays here for a year it still won't be enough. It's not like this is a proper hotel or inn anyway." Tongguo Bing replied.

"Alright then. I'll take my leave for now." Hei Wan said before leaving the building.

After she went out though, she took out a communication jade slip and contacted someone.

"How is he? What was the problem?" Wu Hei questioned.

"He's having... another breakthrough..." Hei Wan answered.

"Another breakthrough?! He's at the peak stage of the core condensation realm!" Wu Hei exclaimed.

"No! It does not seem like that. Rather it is some kind of Qi technique's breakthrough; his aura is monstrous right now. I could barely look for a second with my spirit sense before I had to withdraw it." Hei Wan explained.

"Hmm... that's better. If it really was a breakthrough, the heavenly tribulation would have altered every sect and power in the area and there is no doubt that Gu Yao would have detected it too." Wu Hei spoke.

"Indeed. I think the tremors today were related to that too. They may have been caused by him." Hei Wan replied.

"I see. Return to your post for now. It's better you are not seen there, the king's men are surveying the area and would probably come to check up on the mercenary union too." Wu Hei suggested.

"Yes, my lord..." Hei Wan said before leaving the area.

Back at one of the places that were near the grand palace of the Shuang Qian kingdom, two men dressed in luxurious clothes were sitting.

"Did you find out about the tremors?" The older man questioned.

"No father... whatever it was, it is likely to be something new. Or maybe a one time phenomena." Wu Hei answered.

"Hmm... I'll inform elder brother. Just in case." Wu Xun spoke.