

Walker 501

Chapter 501 - Vital Guardian Pill

The introduction of the Vitalizing Red Lingzhi was like the spark that had lit the oil. An explosion happened that rung loud and wide. Had it not been for Lin Mu being in the ground, he would have likely been knocked back.

"Did the refinement fail?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Observe," Xukong replied.

~swish~

The sound of wind could be heard as the smoke was rapidly dissipated. Shaoyan Qianyu was standing there with a protective barrier glowing over her body. The Dark Iron cauldron was also undamaged. It was as if the explosion was all bark and no bite.

~DENG~

A loud sound was heard again, as Shaoyan Qianyu slapped the lid of the cauldron back on it.

~shua~

She made a few hand seals and runes started appearing around the cauldron before illusory chains were formed around it. These chains locked the lid of the cauldron tightly, preventing any fumes from escaping.

~pew~

After the cauldron was successfully sealed, she took a breath of relief and wiped the sweat off from her forehead.

"The Vital Guardian Pill is still difficult for me even after so many years *~Sigh~* thankfully the most risky part is over. Now just to let it congeal for the coming days and hopefully it is ready before Bilao's tribulation." Shaoyan Qianyu muttered to herself.

Lin Mu's ears perked up after hearing her words, and he finally understood why she had made this. But then this presented another question to him.

"Wait, a minute... she's the peak master of the Herb peak, so why did she make a pill for Alchemist Bilao? Shouldn't this be the duty of the pill peak?" Lin Mu wondered.

No matter how much effort he put in thinking about the reason, Lin Mu couldn't find one.

~Sigh~

"Seems like I'll just have to find out about it, eventually. No use wasting more time here." Lin Mu muttered to himself before leaving the residence of the Peak master Shaoyan Qianyu.

This time he used Fade and directly went a long enough distance such that he was directly out of the compound. Once he appeared outside the things became easier for him. Even though Lin Mu had ended up spending quite a lot of time there, he had also learned quite a bit.

Lin Mu pulled out the records he had collected till now and searched for the information about the Vital Guardian Pill that Shaoyan Qianyu had talked about it. A couple of minutes later Lin Mu found out its uses and properties.

The Vital Guardian Pill was a rather unique pill that had both defensive and healing properties. Shaoyan Qianyu's intentions were for Alchemist Bilao to take this pill so that he would have an easier time withstanding the heavenly tribulation.

Everyone knew that the Tribulation lightning was one of the most deadly powers in the world and its strength was fierce. The Vital Guardian Pill would defend against its power and the medicinal effects would heal the injuries that were caused in the process.

It was a high grade pill, which meant that its effectiveness was the same as that of the Four Vessels restoration pill or even greater. If alchemist Bilao were to take it, his chances of surviving the heavenly tribulation would be far better.

"Hmm... seems like the Tri Cauldron peony sect is really enthusiastic about Alchemist Bilao's breakthrough. Though I wonder if this is the attitude of all the people in the sect or just a few of them like this woman.

With this out of the way, Lin Mu put the records away and went down the peak. His next target was the Pill peak, and there were multiple locations he needed to check there as well. Unlike the herb peak, the pill peak had two different vaults there along with two pill repositories.

Lin Mu reached the pill peak's base after half an hour and started moving upwards. Unlike the herb peak, there were no large fields of herbs here. Instead of that, there were multiple residences built along its sides.

These residences had a few things in common, such as a small herb garden in which the disciples planted the herbs that they regularly needed and a pill refinement room. The pill refinement room could be easily noticed due to the long chimneys that were attached to the roofs.

The creation of alchemical pills was no easy process, and even an experienced alchemist would make mistakes often. This would result in explosions which would release some that sometimes had corrosive and toxic properties.

Thus in order to get rid of those, these chimneys were built on the top. But in the case of Peak Master Shaoyan Qianyu's residence, Lin Mu did not see any chimneys like these. What she used was of a much better quality.

Instead of a chimney to expel the smoke and fumes, her residence used specialized formations that not only dispelled the smoke but even detoxified it. This was not something that the sect could build for every disciple, and neither would they be able to afford them.

Lin Mu curiously observed a few disciples that were refining alchemical pills. The difference between them and the peak master Shaoyan Qianyu was like the difference between heaven and earth. Not only was their control of Qi flame worse than Lin Mu who had barely even used it, but their spirit sense control was also mediocre.

Comparing the performance of the peak master and these disciples would probably be an insult to the peak master. Lin Mu didn't spend much time in this, seeing that he would not have any gains and directly went to the first pill repository.

This was actually located quite close to the base of the peak and a couple of long lines of disciples could be seen next to it. There was a mixture of both outer court and inner court disciples in the line.

After listening to their conversation, Lin Mu discovered the reason for the lines. There were two types of lines for each of the outer court disciples and inner court disciples. One type was those disciples who had come to buy alchemical pills, while the second type was of those that came to sell them instead.

Chapter 502 - At The Pill Peak

Here, Lin Mu could see that the lines for those that were desiring to buy the alchemical pills were longer than those of selling.

Lin Mu got closer and saw the entire process of transactions. The disciples would approach the exchange window and talk with the other disciple who was working within. They would state what they wanted to buy or sell and then present their badge to the worker.

The worker disciple would check this badge and would then add or deduct sect credits according to what was bought or sold. This transaction was not done on the whim of the worker disciple but rather a formation array that was in the form of a pedestal.

The worker would enter the value and then place the badge on the pedestal. This would complete the transaction by deducting or adding the sect credits. Overall, the process was simple and the only thing that consumed most of their time was the checking of pills.

Lin Mu wanted to get closer, but was blocked by the barrier surrounding the entire building. He looked around and saw that the only way to enter it was through the designated doors.

"Hmm... let's see..." Lin Mu muttered as he timed his attempt.

He waited for one of the workers to leave the building before he took that chance to pass below the door. He had noticed this flaw in the formation as the formations would open much wider than they should have when the door was opened.

Normally the opening should have been of the same size as that of the door but whoever made the formation did not consider the expansion of the formation during that or was careless enough to let the flaw there.

'Well... it's my gain anyway.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

The building was smaller than the warehouse for herbs, but the security seemed to be higher in the case of actual people. There were shelves upon shelves in the room upon which various containers for the pills.

There were gourds, vials, pill bottles and boxes, all of distinct qualities. Though one thing Lin Mu noticed was that the highest quality pill that could be found here was a mid rank spirit pill.

"So that's the reason for two pill repositories. This one is mostly for lower quality pills and the other one should be for the higher quality ones." Lin Mu guessed.

Lin Mu then spent an hour observing the different formation layers of the pill repository. Because the doors would open and close along with the shelves, the formations were active a lot. This allowed Lin Mu to get a better grasp on its working.

It was similar to how Lin Mu had seen the vault of Herb peak open and was only going to make it easier for him to open them later on. Once he felt like it was enough, Lin Mu moved onto the second pill repository which was some distance from this one.

On the way, he could see that the residences for disciples that were built here were of a much better quality than the earlier ones.

"Hmm... I guess they allot them according to some ranking." Lin Mu guessed.

He briefly looked over one of the residences and saw that they were similar in features to the earlier ones, except for the size and better formations.

After traveling for a while, he finally spotted the next pill repository. The building design was the same as before but it was much smaller in size, being only half of the previous one. Another difference was that there were only inner court disciples waiting here currently.

The lines were also much shorter, allowing the workers to finish up faster. Lin Mu had to wait for about half an hour before the door of the pill repository opened. But then he discovered that the flaw that the previous pill repository had was not present here.

"Looks like the previous one is either damaged or has been built carelessly," Xukong spoke.

"Hmm, seems like it, senior. Guess I'll just observe from the surface. If the formations are similar to the previous one, I shouldn't have much problem later on." Lin Mu replied before getting busy in observing.

From what he observed, Lin Mu could tell that these formations were indeed similar to the previous ones.

"Well, that makes it simpler for me now. Better head to the vault... that one is going to take a long time." Lin Mu muttered to himself before continuing on ahead.

The Vaults were both located at the very top of the peak. But unlike the herb peak, there were two separate compounds here. The first compound was for the core disciples and the elders to live in, while the second one was for the Peak master Yi Deng.

Lin Mu had not seen the man for a long time and was wondering how he was since being controlled. But upon entering the first compound, he saw someone he had not expected.

"Wu Teng..." Lin Mu muttered.

He saw the man training in one of the larger courtyards of the compound.

~thud~thud~thud~

He was training with practice dummies and destroying each of them with a single punch. Lin Mu looked at his appearance and found him to be looking much more serious and gruff than he used to be.

"He's just like Wu Hei described him to be. The human controlling blood curse truly does suppresses their original personality." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

But while Lin Mu was observing Wu Teng, he suddenly felt a flare up of spirit Qi.

"WHO'S THERE!!" Wu Teng suddenly shouted as he turned in Lin Mu's direction.

Lin Mu was a bit dumbfounded, but did not move. He saw as the man approached the location beneath which he was hiding. His spirit sense was just about to touch the ground when Lin Mu blinked away.

'How did he find out?' Lin Mu wondered as he retreated a safe distance away.

Chapter 503 - Wu Teng And Yi Zi Jin At The Peak?

"It is probably his battle instincts. He could tell that someone was observing him." Xukong replied.

"But how is it possible? Even the peak master Shaoyan Qianyu who is at the Nascent Soul realm was unable to discover me." Lin Mu said.

"Some people are just built differently. Their intuition can be much stronger than others even if their cultivation base is not." Xukong explained.

"I see... Wu Teng was a commander who has fought a lot. It is understandable that he still has these instincts." Lin Mu acknowledged.

Wu Teng though was still looking around and was unable to see anyone. It was now that another voice was heard.

"Wu Teng? Who are you speaking to?" A woman's voice asked.

Lin Mu looked towards the direction of the sound and found it to be a bit familiar. The door of the courtyard was open and in it, a woman was standing.

"No one, Zi Jin... I was mistaken it seems." Wu Teng replied.

The woman who had spoken before was none other than Ye Zi Jin, the daughter of peak master Yi Deng and Wu Teng's wife. Back then all the marriage proceedings had halted due to the red tide, but Lin Mu heard from Wu Hei that his father Wu Xun had asked them to proceed with a small ceremony later.

Their goals were already solved because Lin Mu forced Gu Yao to appear and use the Human controlling blood curse. Since everyone, he wanted to be dead was dead and others controlled Wu Xun did not deem it worthy for there to be another marriage ceremony that was elaborate.

Thus a very hush-hush ceremony was done after everything calmed down a bit and Wu Teng was sent to the Tri Cauldron peony sect along with Yi Zi Jin. The peak master was also under Gu Yao's control and thus there wasn't much they needed to do there.

Lin Mu observed as Yi Zi Jin and Wu Teng briefly talked before Yi Zi Jin went on to do something else and Wu Teng returned to his practice.

~Sigh~

"Don't worry, I'll free you two eventually." Lin Mu said silently before heading ahead.

He briefly checked the residence of the elders and saw them busy at work. All of them were actually in a single large hall and were busy with refinement. Two of the elders were using their Qi flames to heat a large pill cauldron, three of them were processing the ingredients, and one elder was adding them to the cauldron.

Overall, they were working in perfect synchronization and Lin Mu could tell that they had great practice in doing this. Coordination like this was not something one could create in just a few days and would likely require a few years at least.

These elders were at the late stage of the core condensation realm at the very least and thus did not pose Lin Mu any danger. He freely checked what alchemical pill they were refining with his spirit sense and learned a few things.

While he did not gain as much as he did from observing peak master Shaoyan Qianyu, it was still plenty for him.

"What pills are they making, though? The amount of ingredients and the size of the cauldron is simply massive." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

The actual variety of ingredients used by them was actually quite less being only five herbs. But the sheer quantity of them was something to see. Lin Mu estimated that they had easily used over a hundred kilograms of herbs till now.

Lin Mu identified the herbs and resized what they were making.

"They're making... Basic Qi pills?" Lin Mu estimated.

"Not just basic Qi pills, they are making high grade versions of them," Xukong replied.

"High grade version? But the recipe I saw needed different ingredients than these to make them." Lin Mu spoke.

"That's true. But that is not the only method to make a high grade basic Qi pill. You see with a lot of alchemical pill recipes that are of the same type but multiple grades, higher grade variants can be made just but further refinement of ingredients that are used for a lower grade variant.

Of course, this is not without its flaws as the success rate would be less than if they would use higher quality ingredients and there also being a higher concentration of pill toxins in the final product.

Still, the advantage that forces a lot of alchemists to use this method is the lack of high quality ingredients. This way they can compensate quality with quantity and then refine it further to make the alchemical pill." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu listened to it with his full attention and nodded his head in understanding. This was something new that he had learned and thus he was quite interested in it. He decided to see the rest of the process, as he deemed it to be worth his time now.

About an hour passed by before the elders finally finished processing all the ingredients and adding them to the cauldron. The intensity of the Qi flames had been quite low till now and it was as if the cauldron was only being warmed.

"Alright, seal it up! We shall finish it in one go!" The elder who had been in charge of adding the ingredients spoke.

The other elders nodded their heads and one of them picked up the heavy lid of the cauldron before placing it on the top.

~DENG~

The sound of metal clanging on metal was heard as the elders locked the lid with the help of metal clamps. These clamps were attached to the cauldron itself and were broad, hooking into the outer lip of the lid.

Once the clamps were secured, five of the elders gathered around the cauldron before raising their hands.

~Shua~

Intense Qi flames came out of their palms and licked the surface of the cauldron. The final elder who was in charge only observed the entire process with his spirit sense, not daring to miss even a small moment.

Chapter 504 - The Elders' Combined Effort

Another hour had passed since the elders had sealed up the cauldron and by now popping sounds could be heard from inside the cauldron.

It was as if one was making popcorn in a pressure cooker as the sounds continued nonstop. Lin Mu could also see that the cauldron was lightly trembling because of the pressure that had built up inside it.

"It... it won't explode, right?" Lin Mu questioned.

"That will depend on their skill. If they miss the correct moment of opening the cauldron, they will mess up. If they open it too early, the pill will not congeal successfully and a part of its efficacy will be lost.

While if they open it too late, the cauldron will not be able to bear the pressure and then explode. Seeing as this cauldron is a mid grade spirit too, it is already a miracle that it has been able to bear it till now." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu could do nothing but nod his head and continue observing. He actually wasn't worried about getting injured as he was inside the ground, but rather about the other people of the compound getting alerted due to the explosion.

If the explosion happened, it was likely that the people will gather to check up on the elders and even the peak master Yi Deng may appear.

And then to check the situation, what will they do?

They'll use their spirit sense, of course, which would still be fine if it was the core disciples, but if it was the peak master Yi Deng there was a chance that Lin Mu would be discovered.

This was all just a paranoid guesswork from Lin Mu, but it was this very caution which had been saving him till now and preventing him from falling into a desperate situation. It was this very caution which allowed him to kill the Great Slumber bear and escape from Gu Yao.

There was no chance that he would ignore this.

"This is enough, time to congeal the pill. Begin the thousand taps stirring technique!" The elder who was in charge orders.

"YES!" All of the elders replied as their palms dimmed. The Qi flames became less intense and actually stopped emitting from their palms. Instead of that, they wrapped around the palms like translucent gloves.

~ding~ding~ding~

One by one, palms starting hitting the surface of the cauldron as the elder moved around the cauldron. These palms strikes were rhythmic and had a particular pattern to them. Still, this scene looked quite comical to Lin Mu.

"What... are they doing?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Hmm... seems like a pill congealing method," Xukong spoke.

Each of the palm strikes was precise and created vibrations in the cauldron. These vibrations collided with the vibrations of other palm strikes and created a unique flow in the herbal liquid inside the cauldron.

Not only this but with the palm strikes, a specific amount of heat was being transmitted, which was neither too high neither too low. Making a comparison, if before the cauldron was being 'stewed' now it was being 'grilled'.

About ten minutes passed, during which these elders kept on slapping the cauldron.

~creek~

Then finally, a creaking sound was heard due to the clamps being forced to open. The pressure inside the cauldron had reached a massive amount, and if it extended beyond this, there was a great chance of explosion.

"NOW!!!" The elder who was in charge yelled, his eyes bloodshot.

~clink~clink~clink~

~whoosh~

The three metal clamps came undone as the lid of the cauldron shot up in the air.

~shua~

The elder who was in charge leaped into the air and caught the lid, preventing it from disturbing the others. Or worse, falling onto the cauldron and spoiling their progress. A cloud of steam hit the faces of the elders, but they did not dare to look away from the cauldron.

The steam was hot and thus burned their beards. Had it not been for them being in the late stage or the peak stage of the Core condensation realm, they would have been badly scalded.

The elders, now with wry and singed beards, looked at the inside of the cauldron. The bottom of the cauldron was still not visible due to the steam that was still coming from it, but the elders waited patiently. They didn't even dare to wave the steam away, afraid of damaging the pill.

The elders didn't have to wait long either, and within thirty seconds the steam cleared away. Wide eyes and toothy smiles appeared on their faces which, combined with their messy burned beards, only made them look even more comical.

"AHAHAHA! IT IS DONE! WE DID IT!" The elders yelled in excitement.

The elder who was in charge carefully leaned inside the cauldron and picked up the glossy white pill that was resting at the bottom.

"Truly marvelous!" the elder spoke as tears threatened to drop from his eyes.

"I finally did it... I finally refined a high grade basic Qi pill. Even if it took the combined effort of all the elders of the pill peak, it is still a new record for the sect!" The elder in charge proclaimed.

"I'm sure the peak master and the sect master will be pleased. We can now refine high grade pills too!" The other elders added.

~huu~

"Indeed. But first! We are to deliver this pill to Alchemist Bilao. We never know when his heavenly tribulation would appear and thus it is best for him to always have it by his side." The elder in charge said.

Lin Mu raised his brows upon listening to this bit of information.

"Even they were making this for Alchemist Bilao?" Lin Mu couldn't help but say.

"It is an admirable effort. The use of a high grade basic Qi pill can help increase the success rate of surviving a heavenly tribulation. When used at the right time, it will provide the cultivator with a burst of spirit Qi that will help them bear through the force of tribulation lightning." Xukong explained.

Chapter 505 - Spirit Qi Gathering Formation

Having heard Senior Xukong's words Lin Mu wondered if the main peak's elders were also doing something like this or not. He looked at the elders who were still celebrating and took the opportunity to leave.

The first vault was located right below the building where the elders were refining the pills. Lin Mu had noticed it before but had not paid attention to it since he was focused on observing the elders refine the pill.

He had to move around a bit before he was able to approach the vault as it had complex formations that prevented him from getting close. Technically, he was standing exactly over the vault when he was observing the elders refine the pill, but because of its restriction, he could not go down.

Lin Mu ended up going around the area and then through the stairs that actually went to the vault's level. After reaching there, Lin Mu could instantly tell this one was going to take much longer than the pill repositories.

He spent an hour observing the formations during which the elders had left the building to meet up with the peak master. But one of the elders had instead gone to deliver the High grade basic Qi pill to Alchemist Bilao.

Lin Mu took full benefit of their absence and learned as much as he could from the vault's formation. He even did some direct tests like touching the vault's formation and managed to gain a better understanding.

If the elders had been here, Lin Mu would not have taken this risk as it could have alerted them. But in their absence, he took full liberty. Once he felt that nothing more could be done here and the elders were about to return, he went up from the vault.

Lin Mu went ahead to the second compound where the Peak master Yi Deng lived. This was where the second vault of the Pill peak was located at. Unlike the first vault, this one was located on the surface but the location was even more secure.

The second vault was located in the cultivation chamber of Peak master Yi Deng. Lin Mu couldn't even get close because the spirit Qi fluctuations of peak master Yi Deng continuously came from the room. Lin Mu was sure he would be found out if he got closer or even used his spirit sense for it.

~Sigh~

"I'll have to come later or try my hand during the heavenly tribulation." Lin Mu muttered to himself before leaving the area.

He directly left the pill peak and went in the direction of the Main peak.

"You should rest and restore your spirit Qi. You have been using your skills for far too long that too continuously." Xukong reminded.

Lin Mu checked his Dantian and saw that the store of spirit Qi in it was at a bare ten percent.

"I should find a place." Lin Mu said, while nodding his head.

"Since you have that identity badge you may as well use one of the empty residences that are for the inner court disciples," Xukong suggested.

"Oh? But won't the sect get suspicious about using them?" Lin Mu asked.

"Actually, it would be more suspicious if you just roam around or cultivate somewhere outside." Xukong replied.

"I understand senior." Lin Mu said before going towards the residences of the inner court disciples.

The method of claiming these residences was rather simple. They were actually not assigned to the disciples unless they were the ones that were of a special type or of a higher quality. Most of these residences were free for an inner court disciple to claim.

All they needed to do was to place their identity badge on the door of an unclaimed residence and open it. This would assign the residence to their badge and they would be free to use it after that. While if they wanted servants they could apply for them at the sect registry or directly ask a few outer court disciples for it.

Usually, the inner court disciples didn't even need to go to the sect registry as there would be plenty of servants or outer court disciples who would be willing to serve them. Lin Mu though wanted nothing to do with them as it would only go against his goal of staying low key.

Lin Mu scanned the area with his spirit sense and easily picked out an empty residence.

"Let's see if this works as intended..." Lin Mu muttered and placed the identity badge into a shallow groove on the door.

~shua~

A few runes appeared on the door before entering the identity badge.

~click~

Then in the next moment, the door automatically opened for Lin Mu. He walked in and saw the grass in the garden which was overgrown. But when he saw the interior of the residence, he was a bit surprised as it was spotlessly clean, nary a speck of dust.

"Is this a cleaning formation?" Lin Mu wondered as he used his spirit sense to check for one.

He opened his eyes and nodded his head, "just as I thought. Though this one is of an inferior quality than the one that old Man Jing Wei gave me."

He entered the bedroom and saw the square mat that was placed in the center of the room.

"This is the focal point of the spirit Qi gathering formation, right?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Correct. Try sitting on it, that should activate the formation." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu did as he was told and sat down cross legged. As soon as he did though concentrated spirit Qi started emanating from the mat and diffused into the air. Lin Mu quickly started absorbing the spirit from Qi as he took deep breaths.

'This spirit Qi is 20% more concentrated than the spirit Qi outside.' Lin Mu estimated.

He felt a bit curious and checked the formation that was being used for it. His spirit sense penetrated the floor of the residence and came across a network of runes that spread far and wide. Lin Mu could tell that they were all individual formations that were linked into a large array.

Chapter 506 - Limiter?

All of these formations were located in the individual residence and then connected to the main spirit Qi gathering array of the sect.

Lin Mu continued observing the network while absorbing spirit Qi and sensed the different concentrations of spirit Qi in different channels.

"Oh? Some of those 'channels' have a higher concentration of spirit Qi while some have a lower concentration." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

"Wait a minute! It's one of these types, huh." Xukong suddenly said upon seeing what Lin Mu had just observed.

"Did you figure out something senior?" Lin Mu questioned.

He knew that if Xukong had reacted like this, there was likely something important or beneficial that he had found.

"Yeah. The formations that they are using for different types of residences, it's actually the same." Xukong spoke.

"What do you mean, senior?" Lin Mu questioned, unable to understand clearly.

"It means that the concentration of spirit Qi is determined by this limiter formation. If you modify it, you will probably be able to obtain the same effects you would see from an elder's residence." Xukong explained.

"Really?" Lin Mu said with his eyes wide.

"Yes. Follow my instructions and it should work." Xukong said, before explaining a few steps to Lin Mu.

Lin Mu carefully listened to all steps and made sure that it was safe before actually proceeding with it. He definitely did not want the sect to get alert about a spy being in their sect.

It was already nighttime and it took Lin Mu two hours before he was able to modify the limiter formation according to Senior Xukong's guidance.

But it was here that he made a mistake.

~WEENG~

"Oh no!" Lin Mu only had a moment to say this before a dense wave of spirit Qi knocked into him.

Lin Mu was barely able to hold his ground or he would have been knocked far back into the wall.

~whoosh~

It was as if a fire hydrant had been broken as the spirit Qi gushed out like a geyser.

"HAAA!" Lin Mu grunted before he was finally able to increase the setting of the limiter formation.

"Quickly absorb the spirit Qi into the ring!" Xukong urged.

Lin Mu realized that the danger was not over and raised his palm into the air, rapidly starting to store the spirit Qi into the mysterious ring. If Lin Mu let it leak into the surrounding, there was no chance that the people would not notice this.

~pew~

The dense spirit Qi that was almost visible to the naked eyes was then successfully stored in the ring.

~huu~

"Managed to do it... somehow..." Lin Mu muttered to himself as he wiped the beads of cold sweat that had appeared on his forehead.

Lin Mu looked into the ring and saw that all the spirit Qi which he had stored into the ring diffused into the surroundings. The spatial energy streaks that flickered in the sky were like hungry sharks as they hurriedly consumed the spirit Qi.

~Sigh~

"Seems like I can't use that spirit Qi, anyway." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

"The spatial energy streaks in the ring are of a far higher quality than normal spirit Qi. There is no way they would allow something of such low quality like this to stay here." Xukong explained.

This was new information to Lin Mu, as he had not expected this kind of property to be a part of spatial energy. The only instance when he had stored foreign spirit Qi in it was when he absorbed the spatial attribute spirit Qi from the spatial fissure that he had fixed in the Myriad Armament Canopy abode.

But even that was only able to stay in the ring due to its properties matching those that of the spatial energy streaks.

Lin Mu didn't relax now though. He spread his spirit sense around to check for any anomalies. He wanted to see if anyone had sensed this or not and luck seemed to be on his side this time.

"Slowly raise the limiter as you increase your absorption speed. That way you will not leak any wisps of spirit Qi outside." Xukong advised.

"I understand, senior..." Lin Mu said before he modified the limiter formation again.

This time he had better control and was able to slowly raise it. He then chanted the severing heart sutra and started absorbing the spirit Qi at a rapid pace. Lin Mu raised the limiter by one percent at regular intervals or whenever he felt that his pace of absorption matched that of the emission of spirit Qi.

It was an hour past midnight and Lin Mu had raised the limiter to 40% of its maximum limit.

For outer court disciples, this limit was set to 5% while for those that were in the inner court this limit was set to 20% instead. In the inner sect, there were a few higher quality residences where this limit was set to 30% instead.

Lin Mu had seen these formations in the residences of the core disciples as well and for them, this limit was set at 40% which was currently what Lin Mu was using.

"I think I can tolerate even more..." Lin Mu muttered to himself before raising the limit once more.

Now the limit was at 50% which was the limit set for elders. This was also the maximum standard limit in any of these formations, as going beyond this level could affect the supply of spirit Qi of other nodes.

Lin Mu did not go beyond this and fully absorbed the spirit Qi that was coming from the mat.

'If I had something like this before, how fast would my pace of cultivation be?' Lin Mu wondered.

He also thought about what would happen if he tried to use this formation in addition to the Well of Slumber Bloodline ability.

"That would probably make this formation unstable and eventually drain the spirit Qi springs below this mountain. We've already seen the capability of the Well of Slumber, that bloodline ability is no joke." Xukong hypothesized.

Chapter 507 - Assessing The Treasure Pavillions

Lin Mu understood that there were more aspects to a formation array such as this and simple exploitation like that would only work up to a certain extent. Even now he was limited unto the 50% of the capacity of the limiter.

He had seen the full force of it which had knocked him away just by the density and amount of spirit Qi. Lin Mu knew for sure he wouldn't even be able to sleep before his body would be sent flying by the formation array.

He thought about this for a while before refocusing on his aim. Lin Mu restored his spirit Qi rapidly as it rose to its maximum capacity. This took him less than three hours when normally it would have taken him over ten hours with the help of basic Qi pills.

One could tell the difference it made by living in the sect and having their resources. This was the part that got Lin Mu interested in the spirit Qi gathering formation array. Neither he nor Xukong knew what was the exact name of spirit Qi gathering formation this was, but Xukong knew it was barely above the lowest grade.

Lin Mu had learned quite a bit about the Qi gathering formations from not only senior Xukong but also the memoirs of the lost immortal. Qi gathering formations were actually an entire subfield in the great field of formation masters.

There were many formation masters who dedicated their lives to making and studying Qi gathering formations. There were simply so many complexities and nuances to a Qi gathering formation that many formation masters that entered it would only be able to learn two or three such formations in their lifetime.

He knew there were five categories of the Qi gathering formation.

They were divided into:

1. Tool powering formation
2. City powering formation

3. Sect powering formation

4. Empire Powering formation

5. World powering formation

The one that the Tri Cauldron peony sect was using was barely on the level of a city powering formation. Even then they needed to combine multiple of those formations to make an entire network of arrays that spanned across the sect.

As for the Tool powering formations, they were the smallest Qi gathering formations that were used for powering spirit tools or even other formations. When Lin Mu had made the illusory formation on his house, Xukong had told him that if he had a Qi gathering formation, he would be able to make the formation work endlessly.

It was on the level of a tool powering formation. As for the higher level formations, Lin Mu had only ever read about the sect powering formations in the memoirs of the lost immortal. An actual one would be able to power a sect even if there were no spirit stone mines or spirit Qi springs in it.

Its efficiency of gathering spirit Qi from the environment would be so high that it would not need any additional sources. Xukong had estimated back then that perhaps only the top sects like the Sky precepts sect would have something along the lines of a sect powering formation.

Time passed, and Lin Mu was now fully refreshed. He opened his eyes and reduced the limiter to the level it was on originally. He definitely did not want any random person from the sect stumbling upon this and then revealing it to the entire sect.

Once this was done, Lin Mu sank down into the ground using phase. He did not want others to know that he had entered and left a courtyard so fast and thus chose this. His next aim was a treasure pavilion that was not that far from his location.

When he actually got there, the treasure pavilion was closed and only some guard disciples could be seen around it. Lin Mu reckoned that it was a good opportunity and got closer. The disciples that were standing around were all at the Qi refining realm and there was no way they would even be able to detect his spirit sense.

Though one big difference that was between these Qi refining realm disciples and other non-sect Qi refining realm cultivators was the ability to use spirit sense. Even peak stage Qi refining realm cultivators that were not part of sects were often unable to use their spirit sense.

While here, most of them were able to do it. It was this very difference that made the greatest difference between the two types of cultivators. With spirit sense, they would be able to use spirit tool, enhance and expand their perception along with many more things.

Spirit sense was like an additional organ to a cultivator, thus having or not having it made substantial difference. The one who had it would be at an advantage over the one that did not.

Still among those that had it, the cultivator who had better spirit sense and cultivation base would come out on top. And in Lin Mu's case, he had both. There wasn't much risk left for him right now, except for the alarm formations that were integrated into the overall formation array of the treasure pavilion.

Lin Mu couldn't enter it, thus only observed it from the outside and checked some of the formations on it, before heading for the next one. There were a total of three that were on the main peak, along with three vaults. He had a lot of work left.

Heading up the peak, Lin Mu reached the second treasure pavilion. This one was of the same design as the previous one, except it had better security. It was evident that there were higher quality treasures kept here.

'Hmm... the formations are pretty much the same as before with the only difference in security.' Lin Mu thought before deciding to head further in.

About ten minutes later, Lin Mu reached the third and final treasure pavilion of the main peak. This was the pavilion that sold cultivation techniques and Qi skill, thus being very valuable to the sect overall.

But then he saw someone he had not expected here.

"Jiao Fang?"

Chapter 508 - Sneaky Jiao Fang

Lin Mu saw that weird disciple who was in tattered clothes when he first met him, near the Treasure Pavilion. He seemed to be a bit tense and was alert. His head would swivel around to take a look every so often and he would ruffle his sleeves.

"What is he doing here?" Lin Mu wondered.

He kept on looking and saw that Jiao Fang was actually heading to the Treasure pavilion too. The man hid behind some trees when he got near the security so that they would not see him.

"Is he even trying? They can very easily find him with spirit sense." Lin Mu said.

But then the opposite of what he thought happened. Lin Mu could tell that the spirit sense of the guards passed over the position of Jiao Fang but didn't stop there.

"Huh? What?" Lin Mu felt strange.

Jiao Fang then took out a small pouch from his sleeves. The pouch was small, about the size of a poplar leaf. He carefully loosened the drawstrings of the pouch and poured out the contents of it into his hand.

There was now a translucent white powder in his hand.

"Wait a second, isn't that... Memory confounding poison?" Lin Mu recognized.

"No... if it was normal memory confounding poison it would not work on these guards who are all at the Qi refining realm. This is a higher grade version of it." Xukong corrected.

Lin Mu silently listened to senior Xukong's words and saw how Jiao Fang blew the powder towards the guards. He seemed to be using some kind of a Qi skill to spread the powder, as it would have affected him too if the natural wind blew it back towards him.

~whoosh~

The wind generated by his Qi skill blew the powder towards the guards, who all breathed it in.

Then about ten seconds later...

~thud~thud~thud~

One by one, all of the guards collapsed onto the ground, unconscious.

Lin Mu's brows narrowed as he realized this weird disciple might not be here for good reasons. An idea appeared in Lin Mu's mind and he got closer to the building. The treasure pavilion was an octagonal building with five floors, with the doors being at one of the sides.

Jiao Fang went to one of the guards and frisked his body, taking out a small piece of a medallion. He then took out another piece of the medallion from his own pocket and matched the two together.

As soon as he did, the formations on the treasure pavilion became active.

"Yes!" Jiao Fang exclaimed under his breath.

Lin Mu didn't miss this opportunity and quickly observed the movements of the formation. Because he had already done this a few times, his experience had gone up and he didn't miss any part of it. He was able to memoirs the finer nodes that were hidden between the different formation layers.

It was these nodes that gave him the most problems as they would only appear when he was finally done unraveling the upper layer of the formation. If that node was not taken care of quickly it would cause another alarm formation to activate which would then lock down the entire treasure pavilion.

It was here that Lin Mu was seeing the superiority of the Dao script over the common tongue and rune script that was used by cultivators. Dao script had countless permutations and combinations, while the common tongue and rune script was more rigid.

The same character in Dao script could mean different things depending on how or where it was used. While for common tongue, it was fixed and flexibility was less. Using Dao script in formations could not only allow one to make more complex formations in less area but also make them harder to break.

Lin Mu had learned a lot of Dao script from senior Xukong back in the Sleepscape during the past two years, and while he would not say he was an expert, he was definitely not a novice. Being used to a higher difficulty made it easier for one when it was lower.

Though Lin Mu did not get to observe it for long as the formations unraveled rather quickly and within thirty seconds the doors of the Treasure pavilion were unlocked. Lin Mu couldn't enter the building with Phase as the defensive barriers were still in place, thus he waited for Jiao Fang to go in before he used Blink to quickly enter through the doors.

After getting in, he hid behind one of the large pillars and observed Jiao Fang with his spirit sense. The man in question was completely unaware that there was now a second person in the building with him.

'Now let's see what he is here for.' Lin Mu thought.

Jiao Fang ran around the entire first floor in a circle, unable to find whatever it was that he wanted. He climbed the stairs and did the same on the second, third and fourth floors.

~Sigh~

"It better be on the fifth floor or I would have risked this all for naught." Jiao Fang muttered to himself, which was heard clearly by Lin Mu.

The man then climbed to the fifth floor and checked each bookshelf carefully until finally stopping at the sixth one. His eyes went wide as his hands trembled lightly. He extended his fingers and pulled out a thick book from the shelf.

Lin Mu raised his brows in interest and read the title that was written on the spine of the book.

'Yulong's Mnemonics'

"Hmm... what is this?" Lin Mu wondered.

He had never heard of this book nor knew about its contents. Jiao Long though, looked really excited about it and flipped through the pages until stopping on a certain page.

~tear~

Then suddenly the man ripped out that page and carefully folded it before hiding it in his sleeve. He put the book back on the shelf before going downstairs and closing the door.

"What was in that page?" Lin Mu wondered as he didn't get enough time to see it.

Chapter 509 - Jiao Fang's Act

Now outside the treasure pavilion.

Lin Mu saw Jiao Long split the two pieces of the medallion apart before putting the piece that belonged to the guard in his clothes. Lin Mu followed behind him but stopped at the edge of the area where the next section of the peak started from.

Lin Mu did not proceed because Jiao Long was going to a place he did not think he should go into.

"The discipline hall? Why would he go there?" Lin Mu muttered.

The discipline hall was the law and order department of the Tri Cauldron peony sect, which dealt with all problems that occurred relating to rules and regulations. Lin Mu could see the disciples were a cut above the rest.

Their gazes were sharp and there was no area that was not being scanned by spirit sense at every moment. Not only that, but they were even scanning the ground, which surprised Lin Mu.

"They are even more alert than the guards that were assigned to the treasure pavilion." Lin Mu muttered.

"ALARM! ALARM!" Suddenly shouts were heard coming from the discipline hall.

"What the hell! That's Jiao Fang's voice." Lin Mu said as he looked at the building.

"HELP! THE GUARDS OF THE THIRD TREASURE PAVILION ARE UNCONSCIOUS!" Jiao Fang shouted.

Lin Mu could not understand why Jiao Fang was revealing what he had just done. Still, it didn't involve Lin Mu, so he could not say much about it except staying hidden and observing.

~thud~thud~thud~

The guards of the discipline hall all rushed to Jiao Fang upon hearing his words and even the elder who was in charge of the hall came out.

"What are you shouting at night!" one of the guards asked.

"Please come see. The guards have all fallen unconscious for some reason. I don't know why." Jiao Fang said, anxiety and fear visible on his face.

"Is this the truth?" The elder asked with a serious expression.

"Yes, elder! I swear upon my life!" Jiao Fang declared.

The elder clenched his fist before looking at the guard beside him. "Take some guards and check the situation. Report back to me right away after that." He ordered.

"Yes, elder!" The guard said before leaving with his companions.

About two minutes later, one of the guards returned with news.

"It is true, elder! All the guards are unconscious and show no sign of waking up. It is likely they have been poisoned!" The guard spoke.

A frown appeared on the elder's face as he held a jade slip. He hesitated and put the jade slip back into his pocket, deciding not to use it now.

"I'll take a look myself. Meanwhile, go ask some elders from the Pill peak to prepare some antidote pills. We don't know what kind of a poison it is. Better to be ready for everything. The third squad will lock down the Main peak for now and no one is allowed to leave without my permission." The elder ordered.

"As you command Elder!" the guards who had been ordered, went to do their duty.

"And you, come with me." The elder said to Jiao Fang.

Jiao Fang simply nodded his head and followed behind the elder. Seeing all this, Lin Mu also decided to follow behind them. He knew that he may have to stop his survey for today due to this, but he didn't lose hope.

"I don't know if this man Jiao Fang is dumb or if he's scheming something. What was on that paper that he would do something like this?" Lin Mu wondered.

The elder along with the others, reached the treasure pavilion where they saw all the guards lying on the ground. The elder knelt beside the guard, who was in charge of the treasure pavilion and checked his pocket.

He then pulled out the piece of medallion before taking a breath of relief.

"It's here at least..." he muttered before checking the body of the disciple for signs of poisoning.

There were no obvious signs of them, which meant that it was some hidden poison that acted quickly, otherwise the guards would have found out and started the alarm. The elder had a tense expression on his face as he found it to be difficult to tell what kind of poison was used.

He was able to confirm that it was not a lethal poison at least, and was probably something that just knocked the guards out.

"How are they, elder?" the guards who had accompanied the elders asked.

"They are fine for now. Their vitals seem normal, and even their spirit Qi seemed to be flowing normally with no blockages." The elder answered.

~phew~

"So that means it is just a tranquilizing poison?" The guard questioned.

"Hopefully yes. But we still need to wait for the elders from the pill peak. My expertise in this is not as good as them and whatever poison the guards are affected with it is definitely not common." The Elder replied.

Lin Mu who had been hearing everything till now, nodded his head in seeing the deduction. He knew what poison was used and also that it was not lethal. But he still didn't know what angle was Jiao Fang playing here.

"He may be trying to throw off suspicion from himself, perhaps. He could be thinking that the guards and the elder won't think he is involved in this then." Xukong suggested.

"But this... isn't this too obvious? A thief crying foul?" Lin Mu asked.

"Could be. All you can do is wait and watch." Xukong said.

Lin Mu nodded his head and kept observing as the elders from the Pill peak finally arrived. They were the same elders who he had seen refine the High grade basic Qi pill. They still had their beards burned and looking disarrayed. But it did not seem like they minded this.

"What happened here?" one of the elders questioned.

"Looks like an attempt to break into the treasure pavilion. Whoever it was, they managed to knockout the guards but did not get into the treasure pavilion." The disciplinary elder answered.

Chapter 510 - The Elder's Assessment And Thief

The Pill peak's elder held his chin for a bit before he checked the body of the unconscious guards. He used his spirit sense and scanned the meridians and even sniffed the body of the man.

"I don't sense anything on him either..." The pill peak elder said.

"You don't? Then how did they fall unconscious?" The disciplinary elder questioned.

"There are two reasons I can think of. First, someone used a unique Qi skill on them which made them unconscious but did not physically harm them or second... someone used a high grade tranquilizing poison on them." The pill peak's elder spoke.

"Our sect does not have a Qi skill like that and I doubt other sects that do have them will dare to enter like this. I doubt that this is the work of a wandering cultivator too as they would have to go through a lot of loops to enter the sect.

Getting past our security and formations is not easy without the right tools. But even then they can't get past the eyes of so many people in the sect.

Which means... it is likely to be the second option. If a poison is really high grade, then the chances of it being undetected are higher. Only those kinds of poisons would be hard for me to detect." The pill peak elder said.

"Hmm, if it really is someone from our sect, then it would make sense. But whoever did this is really stupid. They dare to go against our rules and even have the guts to steal... they shall not go unpunished." The disciplinary elder said.

While the disciplinary elder was speaking, Lin Mu glanced over at the expression of Jiao Fang who was the perpetrator behind this entire incident and saw that he was the least bothered by it. Instead, he had the expression of righteous indignation.

"Don't worry, elder! I have no doubt whoever did this will pay a great price for it! How dare they act against our great sect!" Jiao Fang said with a strong voice.

The elders raised their brows in question but did not speak. For them, this was just another overenthusiastic disciple. There were plenty of them in the sect and there was no lack of those that liked to kiss their ass all the time.

Lin Mu too felt amazed at this act of Jiao Fang.

"This man is really something else. He can act rather easily, huh..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He watched for a few more minutes and saw their discussion. The guards who were unconscious were taken to the infirmary of the sect to be monitored while a barrier was set up around the treasure pavilion. This area would now be monitored more closely.

Not only this but the other treasure pavilions were alerted along with the equivalent buildings such as the herb warehouses and Pill repositories. The news reached the patriarch and he directly gave the orders to directly seal the sect so that no one could enter or leave.

A sect wide hunt was quickly launched as Lin Mu stayed hidden. Now it was even more difficult as the disciples were even scanning the ground just in case someone had buried themselves and hidden there.

While they did not find any disciples or thieves this way, they did end up finding some stashes of things related to 'entertainment' in quite a few places in the sect. The disciplinary elder got angry and immediately ordered such things to be purged so that they may not taint the minds of the hardworking disciples.

As for those that were found to be culprits of hiding such material, they were also punished. Some of them were sent to the disciplinary hall to serve their sentence while some were asked to do hard tasks that many disciples dreaded doing.

The entire night, Lin Mu was on the move as there was little he could do. He even tried to go to one of the vaults of the main peak but was stopped by the spirit sense of elders who were personally guarding these.

Even Lin Mu did not dare to act while they were all here. He did not want to risk the chance of being found out by others as that would end up spoiling the entire plan that had been made. Instead of that, he went to the residence he had claimed in the sect and focused on going over the things about the formations he had learned.

In his mind, Lin Mu was running simulations on how he would unravel the formations of all the storage areas and vaults. Till now the only vaults he had not seen were those of the main peak, due to how hard it was to reach them now.

But it was these very vaults that perhaps had the most expensive items. The three vaults in the main peak were all located near the patriarch's private courtyard and were watched over by him or by a few elders at all times.

No one dared to slack now that an attack like this had happened. An elder with a few disciples even went to the treasure pavilion to see if any important books were stolen or not. Even after scanning the entire pavilion, there were unable to find and substation evidence for the robber.

Jiao Fang himself had been relaxing after he had been rewarded with a badge by the disciplinary elder on behalf of the sect. Jiao Fang was so excited for this that he chose to literally wear the reward on his clothes at all time; as if he was afraid of other not knowing that he was given a reward and praised.

Lin Mu had followed the man for quite a while and Jiao Fang had done nothing suspicious all this time. He never took out that page he had torn out of that book, either. Lin Mu was even wondering if he had done all that for the reward he had been given.

A day passed like this and Lin Mu followed behind Jiao Fang before finally, the man went back to his residence.

"Oh my... did not expect this..."