

Walker 551

Chapter 551 - Ripple Mist Sect

It took Lin Mu a little over four hours to reach the buildings. They looked closer than they appeared, and at a certain point, Lin Mu was even wondering if he was moving forward or not.

He also observed quite a lot of beasts roaming the forests. There were common beasts all the way to the core condensation realm beasts. Lin Mu even saw three Peak stage core condensation realm beasts in the forest.

"This is definitely no common forest..." Lin Mu muttered.

He avoided the beasts and continued his journey to the sect. But once he reached there he quickly hid underground using phase and moved to check the area. Along the way, he had not detected any formation array, which was a bit shocking to him as well.

He was sure that a sect would have a large formation array around it. Especially a sect like this, which was even larger than the Tri Cauldron Peony sect in size. Lin Mu was sure it was a mid grade sect if not higher.

Lin Mu spread his spirit sense around to observe things and saw quite a few people moving around. They were dressed in plain Grey blue robes and were doing menial tasks like cleaning, chopping wood, carrying water, and such.

"Seems like they are servants of the sect." Lin Mu guessed.

He checked their cultivation bases and discovered that nearly everyone was at the eighth stage of the body tempering realm, if not higher.

"Damn, if the servants are at this level then this is no common sect." Lin Mu reckoned.

He spent an hour gathering information and eventually discovered where he was.

"The Ripple mist sect..." Lin Mu muttered.

The sect that was in front of Lin Mu was actually one of the top ten sects of the World, The Ripple Mist sect!

It was ranked seventh in the rankings and came under the alliance of the Zither Wind sect. Which meant that it was likely to be under the influence of Gu Yao as well. And if it was so, then Lin Mu knew he would have to tread carefully.

"Little Shrubby ran over three entire kingdoms in that time..." Lin Mu said, feeling shocked.

The Ripple Mist sect was located south east of the Northern Lands and was over fifteen thousand kilometer from the Shuang Qian Kingdom's border. This showed how far Little Shrubby had come.

"Getting back to the Shuang Qian kingdom will be quite difficult... unless Little Shrubby is able to use the Seven Beasts Burst again. But I doubt we want him to use it again... unless it is absolutely necessary." Lin Mu spoke.

"That's right, I think you'll need to make a different plan from here," Xukong said.

Lin Mu nodded his head and moved to the other mountains that were closer to the main area of the Ripple Mist sect. Along the way, he heard the conversations of the disciples and learned quite a few things.

"So my actions at the Tri Cauldron peony sect have already spread till here, huh..." Lin Mu muttered.

"Well, what you did was truly quite a lot. A robbery of that level will cripple most sects." Xukong said.

"That's fine but why would they give me that name..." Lin Mu said, feeling a bit embarrassed.

"Well, I guess it does suit you a bit. After all, you didn't only steal the sect's resources... you also stole Bilao's Tribulation lightning." Xukong said with a chuckle.

~Sigh~

"I guess the 'Lightning Thief' is not so bad." Lin Mu said.

In the month, Lin Mu had been sleeping, his deeds had already spread across the sects. First was the fact that he had robbed a sect and the second, he had actually stolen a tribulation lightning bolt as well. It was something that was never done before, and now all the sects were wary.

They had beefed up their security and made sure their identity badges were working properly. There were extra checks on who entered and exited the sect while their vaults were on day-long supervision.

~Sigh~

"If it's like this, then the plan Wu Hei made would not work even if I went back." Lin Mu muttered.

"It does seem like that now," Xukong replied, unable to help Lin Mu with much.

Lin Mu put it at the back of his mind for now and investigated a bit more. He also realized why he had not felt any formation array upon getting closer to the sect. It was because the entire mountain he was in before and beyond that came under the sect's territory.

That was the reason why no formation triggered. He was within the limits of the formation from the very start!

Apparently the Ripple Mist sect had expanded their borders after the news about the Tri Cauldron peony sect spread as a precaution and the mountain where Lin Mu was sleeping, was not part of it originally.

Since they expanded it later on, they never detected Lin Mu or little Shrubby who were in there. Then came the detection function of the formation array. Since there were a lot of beasts in the forest around the sect, including the core condensation realm, their movement would probably trigger the formation.

So to prevent false alarms, they made it so that all the beasts that were within the limits of the formation at the time of expansion were considered part of the sect by default.

Hearing this gave an idea to Lin Mu and he decided to do something daring. He deactivated phase and resurfaced. He then stole some disciple's robes and switched into them before trying to pass through one of the automatic checkpoints.

"Just as I thought..." Lin Mu muttered after going through the checkpoint.

There was no reaction at the checkpoint at all. It was as if he was not there, which was strange as when other disciples passed the formation lit up for a bit.

"The formation array... it now considers me as a beast too..."

Chapter 552 - Two Snakes

Lin Mu realized that the expanded formation array branded him as a beast, probably because he did not have the identity badge of a disciple. It basically scanned the entire area when it was being made and marked everything with a cultivation as a beast while excluding the disciples from it.

Now that he thought of it, he wondered why the sect had not thought of this loophole before, or rather why didn't they think that others may take advantage of this and infiltrate the sect.

"No rather, they did this after finding about me, right? So, didn't they think I may have already entered the sect?" Lin Mu wondered.

"Did you forget about the distance? I doubt they even expected Little Shrubby to be so fast that he carried you all the way here. Plus, they didn't think of others trying this as they are probably a top sect and had better security from the start." Xukong suddenly said.

Lin Mu thought over it and realized that senior Xukong was right. He was the only one who had been successful in robbing a sect like that while going past multiple formations. Thus they probably didn't keep up their guard against others.

In a way, it was a combination of ignorance and belief that no one would target them. Still, it turned out to be advantageous to Lin Mu and he now had a safe haven for the time being.

"No wait, even if I'm registered as a beast in the formation array, shouldn't it still prevent beasts from entering the sect?" Lin Mu wondered.

His spirit sense spread around and he quickly found out the reason for it.

"Ah, so they use a different method for this. A beast repelling formation instead of an active block against the beasts." Lin Mu learned.

"This is the more effective method and will also save them quite a bit of resources that letting the formation array actively filter out beasts all the time. Formation arrays as large as these take up a lot of spirit Qi and they probably save at least couple thousand mid grade spirit stones every day from doing this." Xukong explained.

"I see..." Lin Mu muttered, noting this point in his mind.

While he knew he would not be detected by the formation for now, Lin Mu still didn't dare to go deeper into the sect, though. He didn't want to risk someone recognizing him as he was sure they had portraits and sketches of him circulating.

Though he had not seen any of them in this sect for now. Even if he had worn a mask when he was caught, others had seen him before that and the sect would have likely found out about his appearance and would have spread it in the kingdom, or even beyond it.

"Though I wonder if Gu Yao had any reaction to the Tri Cauldron Peony sect getting robbed." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He roamed around the outskirts of the sect for a little while more and gathered a bit more information before deciding to leave. In this time he had learned that the mountain that he was living in was actually the backyard of the sect.

This was a protected area and there were many beasts that lived here. They were all brought in by the sect and were left here to grow. Over the years it had become flourishing and now the disciples could go out to hunt the beasts whenever they wanted.

Lin Mu even learned that there were Nascent Soul realm beasts living in the forest, though he did not know the exact number. For the time being, Lin Mu decided that he would wait till Little Shrubby recovers and in the meantime he will check out the surroundings of the mountain.

He didn't want some random Nascent Soul realm beast stumbling upon the cave when he was out or when he was cultivating. Lin Mu thus flew back to the mountain and scouted its surroundings.

"Hmm... good thing I checked, there is a nest of a Core condensation realm beast nearby." Lin Mu discovered.

The beast in question was a large Fire Fang Snake. It had built a nest in the hollow of a massive tree and had probably been living there for a while. Lin Mu didn't know how the beast didn't come to attack them, even though he was in its territory for all this time.

Though when he went closer to check did he realize why.

"Seems like it is going to lay eggs soon," Xukong spoke upon seeing the balding body of the snake.

"No wonder it didn't leave the nest, it didn't want to get into a fight before that." Lin Mu said in understanding. "Hmm... though it is still a bit strange. Don't Fire Fang snakes live in pairs? If it's going to lay eggs its mate should be with it." Lin Mu recalled from what he had read before.

"That's true... perhaps it went out to hunt? Or maybe it died." Xukong suggested.

Lin Mu wondered if he should kill the beast now, but then realized it wasn't really a threat to him. The beast would not move from the spot till it laid eggs, and even after that it would guard the eggs till they hatched.

~Rumble~

While Lin Mu was thinking about what to do next, he sensed the ground tremble.

"Huh? Something's coming." Lin Mu muttered and distanced himself from that area, just in case.

He moved up from the ground and entered a tree using Phase instead. From there, he observed what was happening. About a minute later, the tremors in the ground only got stronger before the ground burst open.

~Rumble~

Lin Mu saw the beast that had just come out of the ground. It was another snake, but unlike the Fire Fang snake, which had a mix of red and orange scales, this one had black and blue scales.

"A Black Water snake?" Lin Mu recognized. "Is it here to attack the Fire Fang snake?" Lin Mu wondered.

But then he saw something that rather surprised him.

Chapter 553 - A Unique Pairing And An Alternative Method

Lin Mu was sure that the Black water snake was here to attack the Fire Fang Snake, but he instead saw it bringing a corpse of another beast instead. It placed it at the side of the Fire Fang Snake who was resting with its eyes closed.

~Hiss~

The Black Water Snake woke up the Fire Fang Snake because of its movement.

~hiss~

The fire fang snake weakly hissed before looking at the beast's corpse. It then lifted its head from the large tree hollow and revealed the rest of its body. The Fire Fang Snake was actually quite big, but because it was all coiled up, it was hard to see the rest of its body.

The Black Water snake was smaller compared to it. The Fire Fang snake opened its mouth and swallowed the beast's corpse whole.

Upon seeing this, Lin Mu realized that the Black Water Snake was probably the mate of the Fire Fang Snake.

"Strange..." Lin Mu muttered upon seeing this.

He felt a bit confused and took out the Jade slip to go through the beast records he had.

"Hmm... Fire Fang Snakes primarily live in the southern part of the Great Zhou continent near the Scorch Sand Desert." Lin Mu read.

He continued reading more about the Fire Fang Snake and learned a few more things such as the fact that the Fire Fang Snakes make couples when they are young. But seeing as this one was at the peaks stage of the core condensation realm, Lin Mu reckoned it was brought here when it was much weaker.

"Looks like when the Ripple Mist sect brought it here, it must have been a child. They let it off here to grow, and it formed a pair with the Black Water snake when it could not find another Fire Fang Snake." Lin Mu stated.

"This is indeed a rather unique pairing, I must say. Both the beasts are of opposite elements and yet they managed to pair up." Xukong said, finding it interesting as well.

Lin Mu nodded his head and observed the two beasts for a while.

The Black Water Snake was weaker than the Fire Fang Snake and was at the late stage of the Core condensation realm instead. Seeing its submissive attitude with the Fire Fang Snake and its cultivation base, it was evident that the Fire Fang Snake was the one who had probably forced it to pair up with it.

While Lin Mu was watching them, an idea suddenly appeared in his mind.

"Senior, beasts have the same kind of a breakthrough as humans when they reach the Nascent Soul realm, right?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yes, mostly it is the same. Though beasts are likely to have stronger bodies than most other Nascent Soul realm cultivators at the same level as them." Xukong replied.

"Then is their tribulation lightning the same too?" Lin Mu asked.

Hearing this, Xukong got an inkling of what Lin Mu probably wanted to do.

"Yes, it's the same. No matter where you go Tribulation lightning will be same, the only difference will be in its quality and strength." Xukong replied.

"Then, if the Fire Fang Snake has a heavenly tribulation, I should be able to steal it as well." Lin Mu said with a smile.

"YES!" Xukong exclaimed. "The Nurturing Heart Sutra! If you use it on the Fire Fang Snake, it should improve its talent which would probably cause it to start its breakthrough and trigger the Heavenly Tribulation."

"Exactly senior. This way I won't have to piss off any other cultivators and would still be able to break through to the Nascent Soul realm. Even if this Fire Fang Snake is not able to trigger a heavenly tribulation, I'm sure there should be more beasts that are in the same stage as it is." Lin Mu said.

"Indeed, that could work." Xukong agreed.

Having made a decision, Lin Mu decided to act on it. He first left the tree and found a better place so that he could chant the nurturing heart sutra and create the Beast Qi. Lin Mu was not as proficient with the Nurturing Heart Sutra as he was with the other three ones and thus needed to be undisturbed.

The first three sutras he now had for over two years, while the Nurturing Heart sutra in his possession for barely a day now. Lin Mu thus found a rather isolated tree and sat at its crown. It was a large tree, quite like the one the Fire Fang Snake was nesting in. Expect this one was still alive.

Lin Mu closed his eyes and chanted the Nurturing heart sutra, making the spirit Qi within his Dantian boil. It then started to reduce at a rapid pace until half of it was gone in less than five minutes.

All of this spirit Qi was converted into a thin string of energy that floated above the spirit Qi sea of Lin Mu. This was none other than the Beast Qi!

Lin Mu opened his eyes as he realized he didn't have much time before the Beast Qi would become unstable and leave his body forcefully. Either that would happen or it would just dissipate, since Lin Mu was not a beast.

At least this time, there was no reaction from the beasts of the forest when he chanted the Nurturing heart sutra. Though the sutra was also in the first level of external comprehension while the other three sutras were at the second level of the external comprehension.

Lin Mu didn't know how long it would take for it to reach the same level and what changes would happen when it really did.

~huu~

Lin Mu let out a breath as he observed the string of beast Qi in his Dantian.

"Well then. No use waiting, let's get to it," Lin Mu said before jumping down from the tree and approaching the location of the Fire Fang Snake.

~hiss~

The moment he got within two hundred meters of the beast, he heard a loud hiss.

Chapter 554 - Injecting The Beast Qi

Lin Mu's neck turned as he looked at the source of the sound.

~Hiss~

A black-blue snake looked at Lin Mu with a fierce gaze, as if warning that he should not approach the Fire Fang Snake.

"Hang on there, little guy. I got something for you two." Lin Mu said, unsure whether the beasts will even understand him or not.

Little Shrubby could, because he had eaten the Dual Circle Ascension fruits, stayed with him a lot, and had the link with him. But these two beasts were at the core condensation realm like little Shrubby, so their overall intelligence should be still better than average Qi refining realm beasts.

"They may not understand your words but they should understand the tone of your voice and your intentions. Beasts have sharp instincts, as long as you don't show any maleficence, they should still be fine.

Especially since the Fire fang Snake is about to lay eggs, they will try to avoid conflict." Xukong said.

"I understand senior." Lin Mu said and thought of something.

He had one of the best things with him, if he wanted to show that he meant no harm. Lin Mu gave a little smile before chanting the calming heart sutra. His body's aura immediately toned down, and the Black Water Snake observed him carefully.

While it had not dropped his guard, the snake was at least a little less tense.

"Look what I have for you two." Lin Mu said before withdrawing the string of Beast Qi that was within in Dantian.

As soon as the String of Beast Qi appeared in the world, the forest went silent. It was as if all the beasts were trying to pinpoint its position and none dared to make a sound. The Black Water snake too

watched the string of Beast Qi with entranced eyes and even the Fire Fang Snake which had been resting opened her eyes.

The Fire Fang Snake lifted her head and gazed at Lin Mu cautiously.

"I guess you two like it. So... I'll give it to you both." Lin Mu said before splitting the String of Beast Qi in half.

He held each half of the string in his hand and sent them flying towards each of the snakes. The two snakes reacted like lightning and leaped at the strings of beast Qi, devouring them instantly.

A pleased expression could be seen on the face of the Fire Fang Snake, but the Black Water snake was not looking exactly good. It lowered its head and rolled on the ground, hissing. From his reaction it looked like he had eaten something bad and now was having a stomachache.

Lin Mu had of course, expected something like this, but the reaction of the Fire Fang Snake was weird to him. Lin Mu had seen how Little Shrubby had to struggle with the beast Qi, even though it had a stronger bloodline than the Fire Fang Snake.

"How is she completely fine?" Lin Mu wondered, having no answer.

Thinking that it may be better to just leave them alone and observe for now, Lin Mu retreated back to the tree where he was before. He climbed to the top of the tree and bend some branches to make himself a comfortable seat.

The Fire Fang Snake coiled back into her nest and seemed to have calmed down. Though when Lin Mu observed the area using his spirit sense, he could tell that she was cultivating. Spirit Qi could be felt moving around her body before being breathed in by her.

The same was happening with the Black Water Snake, and he was cultivating too, except not in the same calm manner as the Fire Fang Snake. It was still rolling around on the ground, while knocking down some of the plants nearby and uprooting shrubs.

Having observed them for one hour, Lin Mu didn't find anything different.

"Hmm... just this much beast Qi is not enough for any big change. Seems like I'll need to try more." Lin Mu muttered before deciding to return to the cave.

In the cave, Lin Mu chanted the Nurturing Heart sutra once again and created another string of Beast Qi. This time it was for Little Shrubby, as he had already assimilated the previous one that Lin Mu had given.

Lin Mu knew that while Beast Qi was quite valuable, if one wanted to evolve the bloodline of a beast, a large quantity was still needed.

"Let's see what happens now..." Lin Mu said as he placed his hands on Little Shrubby's body and injected the string of Beast Qi.

~Tremble~

Little Shrubby's body trembled a little bit on the ground but there were no abrupt and violent convulsive reactions like before. It seemed like his body had adapted to the Beast Qi and the bloodline had taken a step forward in progress.

Even the color of his fur had become more vibrant, and his aura had stabilized as well. Lin Mu could tell that if before Little Shrubby was asleep due to overtaxing his bloodline, now it was asleep because his bloodline was progressing.

Lin Mu could feel the strong yet hidden heartbeats of Little Shrubby, along with the heat that emanated from him. His claws would occasionally extend and retract while glowing.

"Oh, gonna have to stay away from there, or he'll burn my robes when I'm cultivating..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

The heat of Little Shrubby's claws was strong enough that it needed no contact to burn stuff. Anything that was within one meter would be ignited just by being in their presence. And this was only when they were glowing and not fully ignited.

~huu~

Lin Mu took a deep breath and sat down to replenish his spirit Qi. He had used the Nurturing heart sutra twice and had used up most of his spirit Qi in his Dantian's spirit Qi sea. He barely had ten percent left now.

"It will take a little trial and error... but we will get there..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Chapter 555 - Qualitative Change

The next day Lin Mu opened his eyes and saw a change in Little Shrubby.

"Did his fur fall off?" Lin Mu spoke.

He stood up and observed the fur that was fallen on the ground everywhere. Lin Mu checked little Shrubby and saw new fur growing on his body. It was very small and would take a while before it would be replenished.

Lin Mu didn't know if this was a good change or not, but then remembered even he had lost all his hair when he had obtained the Xiantian Physique. He reckoned that this must be something similar, if not different.

Little Shrubby's aura had also gotten a bit more stronger than before, and it had yet to fully absorb all the Beast Qi that Lin Mu had injected into him yesterday.

"Hmm... I'll give him more when he is done with this part." Lin Mu spoke before leaving the cave.

He wanted to see what the condition of the two snakes was now that a day had passed. Lin Mu flew there and saw the two snakes still lying there. The Fire Fang snake was in the same position as before and was resting while the Black Water snake had calmed down, too.

It no longer looked like it was in discomfort, though it was still sprawled on the ground like he was dead. Lin Mu checked both of them with his spirit sense and found that there was a slight change in their cultivation base.

It had increased by a little bit, but it was most obvious in the Black Water snake.

"Hmm... a few more strings of the Beast Qi should be enough to show an effect, I think. Since Little Shrubby shed his fur after two full strings, it should be roughly the same for them too... hopefully." Lin Mu estimated.

Lin Mu chanted the Nurturing heart sutra and refined another string of Beast Qi before taking it out of his Dantian. The Fire Fang Snake woke up immediately upon sensing the Beast Qi and raised its head. The black water snake though, was still asleep and it seemed like it could not take any more for now.

"Seems like it's just you this time..." Lin Mu muttered.

The Fire Fang Snake looked at Lin Mu with eyes filled with interest, and actually took the initiative to approach him. Lin Mu couldn't help but raise his brows at this action and saw the snake stopping a couple of meters away from him.

It looked intently at the String of Beast Qi but did not rush in for some reason.

'It's willing to wait?' Lin Mu thought.

He moved the beast Qi around and saw the snake following it. He moved it to the top, to the left and to the right. The Fire Fang Snake Continued staring at it, not even blinking for the fear of missing it.

Lin Mu then flicked his finger, sending the beast Qi flying towards the Fire Fang Snake, who quickly consumed it.

~hiss~

The Fire Fang Snake let out a contented hiss as it coiled back up in her nest. Lin Mu could sense its heartbeats getting stronger.

"Time to wait and watch..." Lin Mu said before taking his seat on top of a tree nearby.

This time the Snakes were much more tolerant of him and thus did not mind him being nearby. Lin Mu also took this opportunity to cultivate so that his spirit Qi would be replenished. He was there for about two hours before he felt a bit hungry and went to hunt.

He had not had proper food for more than a month now and felt like he needed to cook and eat something. Even though he had some pre-cooked food in his ring, he wanted to eat something fresh.

Lin Mu flew over the forest and daily caught a bunch of Rabbit beasts that were all at the Qi refining realm.

"Ahh... this reminds me of the time in the Northern forest." Lin Mu said as he reminisced about the past.

Just like today, the rabbits were being roasted over the fire while he gently applied the spices to them.

'All things come back in a circle... times repeat and so do memories... three years passed in the blink of an eye and I changed too...'

The food was soon cooked while Lin Mu was engrossed in his memories and he woke up from the rumble of his belly. Lin Mu quickly finished the meat before chanting the nurturing heart sutra and refining the Beast Qi string.

"He seems a bit better than yesterday." Lin Mu said, upon checking Little Shrubby's condition.

He then placed his hands on Little Shrubby's back and injected the string of beast Qi.

~shua~

This time the reaction was much stronger than before. A spirit Qi vortex seemed to have formed around Little Shrubby, and it started to pour into his body at a great speed.

"What's this?..." Lin Mu said, feeling surprised.

"Looks like you triggered a breakthrough for him. This is the infusion of spirit Qi which happens when a cultivator or a beast is undergoing a qualitative change." Xukong said.

"Spirit Qi infusion? How is this different from a normal breakthrough or cultivating normally?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Think of it like this... the body of Little Shrubby is a vacuum and the Spirit Qi is the air that is rushing to fill that vacuum. While when you cultivate you are trying to stuff that very air into a filled container." Xukong answered.

"Ah, now I understand." Lin Mu nodded his head.

He watched the spirit Qi vortex for about fifteen minutes, after which it finally faded away.

~Huala~

Spirit Qi fluctuations that were much stronger than before came from Little Shrubby's body as it fully broke through into the Peak stage of the core condensation realm. Its fur which was short, started to grow at a rapid pace and soon covered its entire body.

Now it was actually longer than it used to be. Another thing that was different was that more patterns had appeared on Little Shrubby's fur than there were before.

Chapter 556 - Practice And Adapting

"He should wake up soon now, right?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Hmm... seems like it. Though with the changes that happen we can't be fully sure." Xukong replied.

~Sigh~

"I guess we just wait and watch." Lin Mu said before cultivating.

He had to replenish the spirit Qi he used up and also sleep for a bit as he needed to practice in the Sleepscape as well. After a few hours, he had fully replenished his spirit Qi and Lin Mu appeared in the Sleepscape.

There he saw the spirit apple tree, which was covered with twenty spirit apples.

"Huh, the number of them growing at once increased again..." Lin Mu said upon seeing the tree.

He thus went to the tree and plucked the spirit apples before storing them in the ring. Lin Mu himself had little use for the spirit apples, as his recovery was much faster than eating one of them.

Even now he did not understand why there was this tree growing in the Sleepscape. Still, he didn't mind it as he could sell its fruits for money when he needed it and it gave a pleasant look to the otherwise plain Sleepscape as well.

Lin Mu then took out the new spirit weapons he had gotten from the Tri Cauldron Peony sect and started to practice the Thousand Armament Blade Scripture with them. Over time, Lin Mu had already completed the routines of each weapon that was described in the scripture.

The next step for him was to now assimilate them into his swordsmanship. The use of the Thousand Armament blade scripture was that so the person learning it would know multiple weapons described in it, and would be able to apply their essence into the swordplay.

It was a complex technique that even Xukong was a bit impressed by. Lin Mu had been practicing this manual ever since he got it and still was at its second step.

~shua~

~zing~

~Huala~

Swords, spears, axes, halberds, sabers flew as Lin Mu practiced the manual. He could now sense the places where he was lacking in and understood where he needed to improve. Rapidly switching between the weapons, Lin Mu let his body flow like water.

He no longer thought and only let his body do the work. The moves were ingrained into his muscles and needed little to be executed. He was deep in focus and had let go of everything else in his mind.

Lin Mu spent the rest of the night in this and only stopped when he felt like it was morning.

~Humm~

The spirit weapons hummed as Lin Mu slashed out one last time, this time creating a faint outline in the air that traveled for a meter before disappearing. The most surprising thing was the fact that no spirit of Qi had been used in this.

Yet if someone were to come in front of that outline, they would undoubtedly be chopped into two.

~huu~

Lin Mu let out a breath as sheathed the weapons before storing them all in the ring.

'The weapons from the Tri Cauldron peony sect, while a bit inferior to the sword and spear I use, are still better than the old weapons I used.' Lin Mu thought.

Having thought of this, Lin Mu willed it and returned his consciousness to his body. He opened his eyes and saw Little Shrubby gently sleeping in front of him. His aura had become stronger again and his heartbeat was stronger as well.

"He should wake up today I think." Lin Mu estimated.

He then left the cave and went to the location of the two snakes. Upon reaching there Lin Mu saw that only the Fire Fang Snake was currently present there, while the Black water snake was nowhere to be seen.

'Did it go out to hunt?' Lin Mu wondered.

~hiss~

The Fire Fang Snake sensed Lin Mu's presence and woke up. Confirming that it really was him, she let out a content hiss while looking at him intently.

"Where's your mate?" Lin Mu questioned.

But the Fire Fang Snake gave no response, just staring at him intently without blinking.

~Sigh~

"Seems like talking with them is still no use..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He checked the condition of the Fire Fang Snake with his spirit sense and saw that its cultivation base had improved times again. In fact, he reckoned it should reach the Pseudo Nascent Soul realm soon.

"Let's see the effect this time..." Lin Mu said before chanting the nurturing heart sutra and refining the string of Beast Qi.

In this attempt, it took Lin Mu less time to refine the Beast Qi than before. It was evident that he was getting proficient in the use of the Nurturing Heart Sutra.

~shua~

The String of Beast Qi came floating out of Lin Mu's body as he flicked it towards the Fire Fang Snake, who quickly consumed it with pleasure. It almost looked like she had a smile on her face while she absorbed the Beast Qi.

Lin Mu also noticed that the spirit Qi fluctuations that occurred after consuming the Beast Qi reduced for her.

'Seems like her body has gotten used to the Beast Qi as well and the bloodline is adapting to it.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

He observed the snake for a bit while also replenishing the spirit Qi.

"I should take a look at the sect. Need to have information about the recent events, just in case. Besides me using the Beast Qi caused the beasts to create an uproar, there are bound to be people from the sect who must have noticed it." Lin Mu said.

"Yeah, you should do that. Better to be safe than sorry." Xukong agreed.

Lin Mu nodded his head and flew toward the sect after changing into the robes of a Ripple Mist Sect disciple. He had changed back into his normal robes when he came back from the sect last time, as he didn't want to damage them while he was in the forest.

Chapter 557 - Sacred Trials And Little Shrubby Awakens

Silently sneaking into the Ripple Mist Sect, Lin Mu began eavesdropping on the different conversations that were going on between the people.

"Did you hear? Senior sister Bi is going to participate in the sacred trials this time."

"Of course I did! It's the talk of the sect, even the servants know about it."

"Do you think she will be able to gain fortune from the secret trials?"

"If she can't then who else can? She's the only peak core condensation realm cultivator joining the trial this time and is the strongest of all candidates."

"That's true. Even Core Disciple Tian Jun was at the early stage of the Core commendation realm when he joins date Sacred trials thirty years ago. If he can gain one of the supreme inheritances of our sect, then Senior sister Bi should definitely be successful."

Lin Mu heard the same topic nearly everywhere in the sect. Apparently, the Ripple mist sect had a 'Sacred Ground' that only opened every ten years. This sacred ground contained the supreme inheritances of the Ripple mist sect and was said to have been set up by their ancestors.

The ripple mist sect had a history of thousands of years and thus they had a lot of time to nurture this sacred ground. It could be said that this was the foundation upon which they erected their sect.

Their best cultivation techniques could be found hidden within the trial ground, along with many other precious herbs that grew within. Any person that got them would be incredibly lucky and would rise up through the ranks if they obtained it.

Still, Lin Mu didn't mind it much, as it didn't have anything with him. It was not like he would be able to enter there, anyway. Or rather... he would not want to enter there, as it would mean risking his identity being revealed.

Since the Ripple Mist sect was part of the Zither Wind alliance, there was bound to be someone here that was spying for Gu Yao. Plus, there was a great chance that if he revealed his face, he would be discovered.

So far, Lin Mu had not seen any portraits of him in the sect so he was unsure whether anyone knew what he looked like.

Lin Mu had wandered in the sect for about two hours now and had learned quite a few things, though they were mostly related to the Sacred trials. He also learned that the sect had actually become aware of the uproar caused by the beasts in the forest.

They had even sent out some disciples to check the forest, but they had not gone too deep into the region where Lin Mu was living. There were stronger beasts around the mountain that Lin Mu lived in and they were too much for most disciples to handle.

Even core condensation realm beasts could prove too much to them and if they made a mistake, they would have to pay with their lives. Not to mention that there were about four Nascent soul realm beasts that lived in the forest as well.

If by some misfortune the disciples encountered them, they may be saved by the formations but will probably suffer some severe injuries. Usually, this should have been handled by the sect's elders who were also at the Nascent soul realm, but they were all busy with the preparation of the sacred trials.

They were one of the most important events that ever happened in the sect and thus they needed to be well prepared, there was no scope for a mistake. Each disciple that entered the sacred trials would have the potential to become one of the powerhouses of the sect in the future.

Thus they all knew to do their best and not to slack off on it.

'At least this works in my favor. When the Heavenly Tribulation happens, hopefully they won't come to check. If everything goes smoothly, I might be able to take advantage of it properly.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

He returned to the mountain and decided to wait out till Little Shrubby woke up. The hours passed like flowing water and it was soon evening.

~purr~

Lin Mu opened his eyes and saw some movement in front of him. Little Shrubby, who had been asleep the entire time, finally started moving. Low purrs came out of his mouth as his eyelids trembled. Finally, a minute later, the beast opened his eyes.

"Master..." Little Shrubby spoke.

"You're finally awake. You've been asleep for a while now." Lin Mu said with a smile.

"Are you okay, master?" Little Shrubby questioned.

"I'm fine. I... also need to thank you for saving me at the Tri Cauldron peony sect." Lin Mu spoke.

"Of course! I won't let anyone harm master!" Little Shrubby said with determination.

~pat~pat~

Lin Mu pat the head of little Shrubby, which was a lot softer due to the new and long fur that had grown there.

"How do you feel now? Are there any problems in your body?" Lin Mu questioned.

Little Shrubby closed his eyes for a bit before opening, slight confusion present in them.

"I broke through? And I feel different." Little Shrubby spoke.

"Yes, you broke through. You've been absorbing the Beast Qi that I've been injecting into you." Lin Mu replied.

"Beast Qi?" Little Shrubby questioned.

"Ah, yes you haven't seen it yet." Lin Mu said. "Let me show you and you can tell me what you feel about it." He added.

While Lin Mu knew about Beast Qi and had seen its effects on Little Shrubby, he would still know better if Little Shrubby himself told him how it felt.

Lin Mu chanted the Nurturing heart sutra, which made Little Shrubby's ears perk up.

"What is that, master? It's so... good?" Little Shrubby said, finding the chants pleasant.

Lin Mu lightly nodded his head before completing the chant and refining the Beast Qi string in his Dantian.

"It is one of my abilities that allows me to make Beast Qi." Lin Mu said before drawing out the string of beast Qi from his Dantian.

As soon as little Shrubby saw it, his pupils went wide, fully covering his eyes.

Chapter 558 - Fruit Of Wisdom

Lin Mu could tell that Little Shrubby was definitely interested in the beast Qi in his hand. The way he was looking at it was of absolute attention and it would not even blink, no matter how much Lin Mu moved his hands around.

"Beast Qi really is every attractive to beasts huh..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He looked at little Shrubby who was still enthralled by it and coughed lightly.

~Ahem~

"So I presume you want it?" Lin Mu questioned.

"YES!!" Little Shrubby responded hurriedly.

"Okay, I'll give it to you. But you need to tell me what effect it has on you." Lin Mu replied.

"Okay!" Little Shrubby said in an impatient tone.

Lin Mu then sent the Beast Qi flying towards Little Shrubby, who quickly sucked it in. He then closed his eyes in pleasure as if he had eaten something very delicious and his stomach was full.

"This feels good." Little Shrubby said before laying down on the ground.

"What are you doing now?" Lin Mu questioned.

He wanted to know how exactly was little Shrubby processing the spirit Qi as he had only seen him do this unconsciously. He reckoned that it was the passive absorption that his body did automatically, which must have been slow.

Lin Mu wanted to see how it worked when Little Shrubby was awake.

"The Beast Qi... it feels good... it is spreading in my body and my spirit Qi, feels to be flowing smoothly. It feels warm." Little Shrubby said.

~Sigh~

'Must have guessed that he wouldn't be able to fully explain how it works.' Lin Mu thought.

Lin Mu then extended his spirit sense and probed little shrubby's body. The beast did not mind it at all and Lin Mu's spirit sense easily entered his body with no obstructions. Inside little Shrubby's body, Lin Mu could see that the beast Qi had fully assimilated into his cells.

There were only faint traces left with which he could tell that the beast Qi was still here. The beast Qi was stimulating his cells and was causing them to produce a lot of vital energy which coursed through the blood, nourishing his body further. After a few circulations, Lin Mu could even see that the vital energy was being converted into Vital essence.

"So this is how it works... the beast Qi stimulates the cells, producing vital energy which nourishes his body, prompting it to further refine the vital energy to vital essence. This vital essence then increases the overall quality of his body, thus causing the bloodline to improve." Lin Mu hypothesized.

It was quite similar to how Lin Mu had reached the Xiantian physique after breaking through the thirteenth stage of the body tempering realm. It had triggered a qualitative change that caused his body's cells to be replaced by Xiantian cells which could produce vital essence.

It was a like a feedback loop that amplified itself as time went by and more energy was fed to it. Though Lin Wu reckoned that the Beast Qi was only compatible with beasts and not humans.

At first, Lin Mu was doubtful that since it worked on the bloodline, it should have worked on the cultivators who had assimilated bloodlines of other beasts too. But seeing its actions and workings in Little Shrubby's body, he realized that it would not work on any humans.

The Beast Qi did not directly act on bloodline but rather influenced their body, increasing its quality till it reached a level where the bloodline would improve on its own.

"Hmm... no wonder the Fire Fang Snake and Black Water Snake had such reactions." Lin Mu muttered.

Xukong was impressed by the thinking process of Lin Mu and had seen how he had come to the conclusion.

"While most of what you have come up with is right, that is not all what Beast Qi does." Xukong said after thinking for a bit.

"Mm? What do you mean, senior? What did I miss?" Lin Mu questioned.

"There is one important thing you missed in this. Can you tell me what it is? It's related to your Nine divine heart sutras too." Xukong replied.

"Related to the Nine Divine Heart Sutras?..." Lin Mu muttered before closing his eyes and thinking deeply.

About five minutes later he opened his eyes, which dawned with the light of realization.

"THE PATHS! I forgot about the Paths!" Lin Mu said.

"Indeed. And what did you exactly forget about them?" Xukong added.

"The Nurturing Heart Sutra is representative of the Beast Path and can make Beast Qi. With that relation, Beast Qi itself should also contain insights of the Beast Path." Lin Mu answered.

"That's correct. Nearly every beast will follow the Beast Path, whether knowingly or unknowingly. Many of them will follow more than just the beast path though, they could follow some other path like the Demonic path, if they have the bloodline of demons in them.

Each path is the cumulation of the entire type of cultivation. The beast path is that of the beasts and how they cultivate. It collectively has the experience and insights of every beast that ever came into existence, whether it be a tiny worm crawling in the ground or a mighty dragon soaring through the skies.

If a beast assimilates enough beast Qi, you should know what else they would be able to do with it." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu's eyes lit up with the spark of knowledge and he thought over senior Xukong's words understanding that there was a lot more to Beast Qi. The only reason why he could not see it right now was his lack of experience.

He knew he could not rush it and that he would have to slowly observe the fine changes that happened in the long term.

'The fruit of wisdom is not grown in one day and a life is not lived in one day... the only way is to have a steady heart that sees all and observes all...' Lin Mu learned.

Chapter 559 - An Egg

Lin Mu watched as Little Shrubby assimilated all the beast Qi in his body. He could see that while his cultivation base was not directly affected, his body was definitely improving little by little.

Lin Mu knew that the changes will be slow, but as long as he kept on supplying the beast Qi, Little Shrubby will progress steadily.

"I guess that's another thing to add to my routine now... hopefully, once I break through to the Nascent Soul realm, I'll have higher spirit Qi stores so I can produce more beast Qi at once." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

About two hours later, Little Shrubby had fully assimilated the beast Qi, which was much faster than before when it took over twelve hours.

"Are you done?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yes." Little Shrubby replied.

"Can you take more Beast Qi?" Lin Mu asked.

"No... I don't think I can for now. Even though I have absorbed all of it, I still feel 'full'." Little Shrubby explained.

Lin Mu nodded his head while thinking, 'just as I thought. The growth of the body isn't the only effect the beast Qi is having. There are extra aspects that make it take longer even though it has been fully assimilated.'

Lin Mu stood up and walked out of the cave, which prompted Little Shrubby to follow behind him as well.

"Where are you going, master?" Little Shrubby asked.

"I'm going to give another beast the Beast Qi." Lin Mu replied.

It was as if Little Shrubby had been hurt, and his ears drooped.

"Why would you do that?" Little Shrubby asked.

"Ahaha," Lin Mu chuckled upon seeing little shrubby's betrayed reaction. "I'm giving it to that beast so that it can break through to the Nascent Soul realm and I can take advantage of its heavenly tribulation."

"Also, you don't need to worry. I can give you more beast Qi later, I can keep on making it as long as I have spirit Qi." Lin Mu assured.

Little Shrubby's eyes lit up after hearing Lin Mu's words and he felt relieved.

"Okay." Little Shrubby replied.

Lin Mu nodded his head and flew towards the location of the nest of the Fire Fang Snake. Little Shrubby followed behind him and curiously checked out the entire area as his spirit sense also wandered.

"There she is," Lin M pointed for Little Shrubby.

Little Shrubby raised his head and observed the Fire Fang Snake, which was curled up in the hollow of a broken tree.

"Just wait, here. I don't think she will like it if another beast gets closer." Lin Mu advised.

Little Shrubby just nodded his head in response and jumped to the top of a tree, wanting to observe from a vantage point. Lin Mu on the other hand, approached the fire fang snake who had already sensed him as well.

~hiss~

The fire fang snake hissed in greeting.

"Ah, so you were already expecting me." Lin Mu said upon seeing the action of the beast.

He then looked around and saw that the Black water snake was also nearby. It seemed to be deep in sleep, and Lin Mu could already sense the aura of his body changing.

"Oh? His bloodline is already progressing?" Lin Mu said upon seeing this.

The Black Water snake was at the Late stage of the core condensation realm when Lin Mu had given it the half strand of Beast Qi. But now, it was already at the peak stage of the Core condensation realm. It was evident that the beast Qi had contributed greatly to this.

"Seems like I'll have two candidates for the Heavenly tribulation..." Lin Mu muttered before looking at the Fire Fang Snake.

"Are you ready?" Lin Mu questioned.

~hiss~

The Fire Fang snake nodded her head, almost like a human.

Lin Mu then chanted the nurturing heart sutra and refined a string of Beast Qi in his Dantian before sending it out to the Fire Fang Snake.

~shua~

~HISS~

As soon as the Fire Fang Snake consumed the strand of Beast Qi, her body's aura skyrocketed at a great speed. Her scales shined with a red light as the sound of loud heartbeats could be heard.

~hiss~

But then a change happened. The fire fang snake let out a hiss that sounded painful. Its body twitched and turned in unease.

"What's happening to her?" Lin Mu wondered and used his spirit sense to probe it.

He understood the reason behind it quite quickly.

"She's laying the eggs!" Lin Mu realized.

He kept on observing, and about thirty minutes later, the Fire Fang Snake had successfully laid an egg. But it felt strange to Lin Mu, as it was not normal.

"Why's there only one egg? Don't the Fire Fang Snakes lay over ten eggs at once? And why is it so big?" Lin Mu questioned.

But that was not all, as once the mucus and blood from the egg were cleared, Lin Mu saw its color.

"Its... Grey?" Lin Mu spoke in a doubtful tone.

He quickly took out the records of the beasts he had and checked more about the Fire Fang snake. He learned that the Fire Fang Snakes laid more than ten eggs at once and their eggs were red in color, like their eggs.

While the egg that was laid by this Fire Fang snake was grey and only one in number. Though if he considered the size, this single egg was probably the size of the ten eggs combined.

"Seems like a change caused by mixing of two different snakes," Xukong said.

"Oh, yes! I almost forgot that the Fire Fang Snake's mate is a Black Water snake." Lin Mu spoke.

He then checked the characteristics of the Black Water snake eggs and learned that they laid about four to six eggs at once that were the size of chicken eggs. They were also black in color along with some blue patterns. The egg that the Fire Fang Snake had laid was nothing like that one.

"This is certainly peculiar..." Lin Mu muttered.

Chapter 560 - Rejected Egg

Looking at the egg of the Fire Fang Snake Lin Mu could only think that it must have been something like a mutation of some kind.

"Wait, is the egg even viable?" Lin Mu wondered and probed it using his spirit sense.

He couldn't tell what was inside the egg as it was just liquid, but he could feel the aura of life from it.

"It's alive at least..." Lin Mu muttered.

The Fire Fang snake was also looking at the egg with a strange gaze. She touched it and sniffed it a few times before shaking her head.

~hiss~

She then nudged the egg with her head and moved it to the front of the nest.

"Huh?" Lin Mu was confused by this and wondered what the beast was doing.

"Seems like the Fire Fang Snake is rejecting the egg." Xukong spoke.

"Rejecting? Why is she rejecting her own egg?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Most beasts will reject eggs that they think are not viable or unusual. They do this due to their ingrained instincts." Xukong spoke.

Lin Mu looked on as the Fire Fang Snake finally pushed the egg out of the nest.

~thud~

It hit the ground with a light thud and rolled all the way to Lin Mu's feet. Lin Mu himself was a bit shocked and checked if the egg was cracked or damaged.

"It's... fine?" Lin Mu said, feeling surprised.

"Of course. Beast eggs aren't so fragile as to break from such a small fall." Xukong said.

Lin Mu looked back at the Fire Fang snake, who was now busy cultivating. It had not even been five minutes since she had laid the egg, and she didn't seem worried about it at all. It felt quite strange to Lin Mu at first.

But then he realized he could not judge it according to his standards. These were beasts and he had no right nor logic to judge them by his own standards as a human.

~Sigh~

"What will become of this egg now?" Lin Mu muttered.

"Well, since the snake has rejected it... you may as well take it with you. If anything, it will make a good meal." Xukong suggested.

Lin Mu felt the corner of his lips twitch, but he just shook his head. He opened his eyes and looked at the egg, not feeling like eating it. He instead felt a strange curiosity towards the egg now. Unlike the Fire Fang Snake, Lin Mu could very well tell that the egg was alive and had the aura of life within it.

"I wonder what kind of a snake will be born from this... one egg instead of six or ten... that too of a different color... there is bound to be something unique about it." Lin Mu murmured.

Lin Mu made up his mind and picked up the egg. He was about to store it in the ring when he realized something.

"Can I keep the egg in the ring or will it die, senior?" Lin Mu asked, unsure if the same rule applied to an egg instead of a grown animal.

He didn't know if it would be the same or not, as the egg didn't really need air for now.

"Hmm... it is hard to tell. For a short period, it should be fine. The spatial energy streaks and distortions shouldn't cause many problems if it is not there for long." Xukong said.

"So if I take it out every so often it will be fine?" Lin Mu asked.

"Yes, that should work. And just in case, you can keep it near the Altar. From what I've seen barely any spatial energy streaks get near there." Xukong replied.

"Alright." Lin Mu said before storing the egg in the ring.

He even took a few extra looks there to ensure that it was fine before nodding his head.

~Huala~

Suddenly a faint cyclone of spirit Qi could be felt revolving around the Fire Fang Snake.

"Huh? It's close to a breakthrough?" Lin Mu's gaze went back to the Fire Fang snake.

Spirit Qi lightly revolved around the beast and was absorbed by it.

"Looks like the Fire Fang Snake was actually being restricted by the egg in her belly. Now that she has laid it, she can cultivate freely." Xukong said.

"You mean to say senior... that she rejected the egg because she knew was close to a breakthrough?" Lin Mu asked.

"Yes. Usually, the stronger the beast's cultivation base is, the better offspring they will birth. So if she successfully breakthrough to the Nascent Soul realm, her offspring will be better than when she was in the core condensation realm." Xukong stated.

"I see..." Lin Mu nodded his head in understanding.

Lin Mu observed the Fire Fang Snake for a bit and realized that she was in the same preparatory period as Alchemist Bilao when he was awaiting the Heavenly tribulation.

"Wonder how Bilao is now... there was no news about him..." Lin Mu was reminded of the man.

Bilao himself was not bad and had been polite to Lin Mu, as far as he had seen from his interaction. Lin Mu did feel sorry for the man as he could not break through to the Nascent Soul realm, but he also understood that this was for the best.

If Bilao broke through to the Nascent Soul realm, Gu Yao would have likely made him his pawn as well. Thus putting his life in danger.

'I'll make up to him sometime...' Lin Mu thought to himself, while taking a seat in one of the trees near Little Shrubby.

He was going to wait here for the Fire Fang Snake's tribulation to come so that he can take advantage of it as soon as possible. Little Shrubby on the other hand, was already sleeping and his tail was swinging from side to side. Though Lin Mu could also sense the spirit Qi moving around him, being slowly absorbed by his body.

Light winds blew, bringing leaves with them, painting a rather serene picture; man and beast lounged around while waiting for the heavens to crack open.