

Walker 621

Chapter 621 - Grasping Meld

Jing Luo, who had been defending and dodging the attacks from the mist weapons all this time, suddenly found them dispersing.

"Huh? What happened?" Jing Luo said, feeling a bit confused.

He looked around, but the mist was still blocking his field of view. He started to search for the core area of the technique and flew around. But he ended up finding someone completely unexpected.

"Haha! Even if it is not that first elder, at least I got you!" Jing Luo said to himself as he found the third elder hidden in the mist.

The first elder had evidently made a defensive layer around him that hid him and protected him, so that he could recover from his injuries, but now that layer had disappeared along with the mist weapons.

The third elder, who was sitting cross legged on a floating mist cushion, didn't hear anything at first, but then a moment later he could hear the sound of winds tearing.

~SHUA~

By the time he reacted, it was too late.

~SPLAT~

A spear now embedded into his skull. It went through his right eye and came out through the back of the skull, easily shattering the bone. Blood and brains spilled out from the back and his mouth as his neck slogged to the left.

Jing Luo quickly approached the man with the dagger in his hand. The dead man's body slightly glowed and his Nascent Soul was just about to leave it when Jing Luo stabbed the dagger into it.

"AAA!!!!!" The Nascent Soul screamed in unwillingness.

The third elder could not understand how this all happened. One moment he was calmly recovering in a safe space the first elder had made and now in the next moment, he was dead.

Had he not been off guard, Jing Luo might not have been able to kill the man so easily. He had after all, managed to defend against multiple high grade spirit weapons at once when he had been attacked by Jing Luo.

"Hmm... now where is that Spatial storage treasure..." Jing Luo said as he searched the man's body.

The thing Jing Luo was after was the shawl that the third elder had used. Its defenses were far too stronger than they should have been, and Jing Luo felt suspicious about it. After taking out the spatial storage treasurer of the third elder, which was a shoulder band. Jing Luo put his brand on it and checked it.

"I KNEW IT!" Jing Luo said, as his eye turned bloodshot.

He pulled out the Shawl from the spatial storage treasure and looked at it. His spirit sense probed it and checked the formations on it, along with the building materials.

"Ripple mist sect... I swear the Jing clan will have its revenge!" Jing Luo said out loud.

Jing Luo then sensed something in the distance and furrowed his brows.

"Spatial fluctuations? What's Lin Mu doing?" Jing Luo questioned.

Back in the mist fortress, Lin Mu had split it apart using meld.

His hands trembled as Lin Mu gritted his teeth.

"This is much harder than I thought!" Lin Mu said with difficulty.

He was currently trying to control the two chunks of space that he had separated using meld but was finding it to be extremely difficult. He wanted to find the first elder who was hidden there, but to do that he would need to split it once more.

Not only that, but Lin Mu also realized that his spirit Qi consumption right now was through the roof. Using meld on such a large area was consuming it like a camel in an oasis. Lin Mu tried to estimate his consumption and saw that despite his increased cultivation base, controlling an area as big as this used up one percent of his entire spirit Qi stores every second!

It had been twenty seconds since he used Meld and he had already used up about one third of his spirit Qi stores, inducing the previous consumption during the battle. Normally it should not have been this high as his body would also absorb spirit Qi passively from the air.

But due to the effect of the Weapon mist domain, Lin Mu could not absorb spirit Qi from the air. If he was still able to passively absorb spirit Qi, the consumption of spirit Qi might have been sufficiently offset by that.

"You need to focus! Sense the fine details of the spatial fabric, and find its flaws. There are always flaws in the spatial fabric. Once you grasp them, you will know where to tear it from." Xukong spoke in Lin Mu's mind.

~huu~

Lin Mu took a deep breath and closed his eyes. The next moment he opened his eyes, he started to chant the severing heart sutra and used his spatial perception at the full potential.

~hummm~

The scene in front of him turned as dark as the night and it was as if an endless sheet made out of cloth had been spread in front of him. The sheet had millions upon millions of threads in it that interwove.

Lin Mu could see that Meld had currently ripped the sheet from one part and had spread it apart. While in the real world it looked like the cut was clean, here Lin Mu could see that it was not like this.

Instead of being fully cleaved into two, the cut was more like someone had stabbed a knife in the middle of a napkin and created a hole. The then edges of the napkin were pulled apart to broaden the cut.

This was exactly what Lin Mu had done right now. Having learned this, Lin Mu quickly grasped the proper method. He lessened his control over meld and started to shrink the area that he controlled.

~shua~

The mist at the edges started to flow once again and was no longer frozen. Lin Mu continued to shrink the area till it was about twenty meters wide and he was sure that the First elder was contained in it.

Chapter 622 - Killing The First Elder

Having reduced the area that he was effectively controlling also reduce the amount of spirit Qi meld was consuming. From one percent every second, it fell to one percent every ten seconds. While this still seemed to be quite a lot, there was no way Lin Mu could go below it.

This was not a problem of consumption due to the quantity right now but rather due to the quality. Meld would consume different amounts of spirit Qi depending on the area that it was being used on and also the 'quality' of the area.

The quality in this sense meant what that area contained. For example, if that area contained a cultivator that was at the Qi refining realm, Lin Mu would easily be able to use meld for over an hour with just one percent of his spirit Qi.

But if that same cultivator was at the Nascent Soul realm, the consumption was increased to one percent needed for every ten seconds. It would also be the same for high energy areas like formation arrays and such.

Areas that had high spatial stability would also be very difficult for meld to manipulate and thus, the consumption would be high as well. That was the reason why Xukong had told Lin Mu to find the flaws in the spatial fabric.

While Meld could cut space from any part, cutting it from the weaker parts would use far less energy and would also be easier. And now that Lin Mu could grasp that he found himself being able to move around much easily.

His hands that felt like they had been stuck in a swamp, were now finally free to move.

"Now... SPLIT FOR ME!" Lin Mu said as he turned his hand and pulled away.

~shua~

With his gesture, that area that was currently under the influence of Meld was split apart. It was like he was cutting pieces of a pie, but they were unequal. Once they spread apart though, Lin Mu could see within them.

"THERE YOU ARE!" Lin Mu exclaimed as he spotted the first elder in one of the pieces of the 'pie' slightly off the center.

But he was not fully contained in that section. Rather than that, one of his arms was in a different section and a part of his waists was in another section as well. Seeing this, Lin Mu turned his hands and curled his little finger and index finger.

The two parts that contained the majority of the First elder were pulled towards him while the rest he freed from meld.

~shua~

The mist started to flow again and only the two pieces that Lin Mu was currently controlling meld were consuming his spirit Qi. His consumption of spirit Qi finally reached a more tolerable level that he did not need to worry about right now.

Lin Mu brought his hands closer to him, pulling the two chunks that were currently being controlled by him that contained the first elder. Lin Mu looked the elder straight into his eyes and saw his taunting expression that was frozen.

"This man..." Lin Mu muttered and extended his left hand to grasp the elder's head.

~thud~

He then pulled on it, easily separating the head from the body. Since the space was still frozen, Lin Mu had not actually cut the head apart, but rather just split the space. If the head was put back right now, it would still return to normal.

But Lin Mu did not have that intention at all. Instead, he lowered his right hand and stopped using meld.

~shua~

The space returned to normal once again, except for one major change. The body of the First elder was no divided into four unequal parts. His left arm was in a different fragment and the rest of his body was in a different part. Then a small part of his waist was also taken up by another chunk of space.

And finally, his head was now in Lin Mu's hand, which blinked a couple of times before going dead.

~Huala~

The body of the elder that was now falling down started to glow for a moment as a Nascent Soul flew out from it.

~Nom~

Alas! Before the Nascent Soul could even have a chance at escaping, Little Shrubby took the opportunity to devour it. His eyes closed in pleasure and turned into two 'U's as he enjoyed the treat, which was probably one of the most luxurious treats a beast could have... a Nascent Soul.

"Uh... I guess that's fine too?" Lin Mu said upon seeing Little Shrubby eat the Nascent Soul of the first elder.

The poor man had no chance to say any last words and was eliminated rather quickly.

~WHOOSH~

With the demise of the first elder, the Weapon Mist domain started to dissipate and Lin Mu found himself being able to use spirit Qi once again along with his spirit sense.

"There you are!" In the very next moment, Lin Mu heard the voice of Jing Luo coming from the back.

He turned around and saw the man flying towards him at great speed. Lin Mu understood that now that the Weapon Mist Domain was not effective, Jing Luo would be able to use his spirit sense and find him quickly.

In the next second, Jing Luo was right beside him and looked at the head of the First elder in Lin Mu's hand.

"Seems like you handled it pretty well..." Jing Luo praised.

"It was tricky... but I managed," Lin Mu said with a nod.

~GRRR~

"Oh, and little Shrubby helped a lot too," Lin Mu said with a smile upon hearing the growl of Little Shrubby.

~pew~

"We should get out now. The death of these many elders should have definitely caused panic at the sect. As much as I would like to decimate the entire sect, I think it would be best we leave this place." Jing Luo said.

"Mmm... let us leave." Lin Mu said.

Chapter 623 - Escape From The Ripple Mist Sect

"Did you manage to break the barrier? I saw that you had managed to put a crack in it before." Jing Luo asked.

Lin Mu, Jing Luo and Little Shrubby had just come out of the remnants of the mist and were looking at the barrier at the border of the sect. The place where Lin Mu had used the Boulder Collapsing fist was now looking normal, and it did not look like it had ever been attacked at all.

"Looks like it managed to recover on its own. We should have expected it with a sect protecting formation array like this." Lin Mu said.

"But... we have another solution now..." Lin Mu said as he pulled out the Spatial storage treasures from the First elder's body before pulling out a token.

Lin Mu had put the body of the first elder in his ring after killing him and had thought that he would check his palatial storage treasures later. But didn't expect for the opportunity to come this quickly.

"Aha! Perfect! With that token, we can bypass all barriers now!" Jing Luo said with joy.

Lin Mu nodded and the three of them headed towards the barrier, while Lin Mu held the token in his hand.

~Huala~

The moment they got within a two meter radius of the barrier, it opened up an entrance for them to pass through.

"There we go," Lin Mu said as they very easily went through the barrier.

~Sigh~

"If we had this token from the start, it would have been so much easier." Lin Mu muttered.

"That's true... but in exchange, at least we managed to weaken the Ripple Mist sect a bit. If this was a normal battle, I doubt we would have been able to kill these many elders as the Dao Shell realm experts of the sect would have interfered." Jing Luo replied.

"Hmm... that's quite likely. Though why did they not come right now?" Lin Mu wondered.

"From what I've seen and know, the Ripple Mist sect is a bit cautious. They recalled the disciples to the main area of the sect so that they would be safe from us. As they don't know what kind of means we have, they wanted to protect the sect's core.

Thus, with their strongest experts there, they would not have to fear much. But I'm sure they would have never expected for all of their elders to die like this, haha!" Jing Luo chuckled.

"We shouldn't delay this and wait anymore, then. Let's take advantage of this," Lin Mu said as he sat on the back of Little Shrubby and strapped into the harness.

"We follow the same plan?" Jing Luo asked for confirmation.

"Yes, we first get as far as possible and then we regroup." Lin Mu said as he patted the back of little Shrubby.

Jing Luo nodded his head and took out a pair of boots from his spatial storage treasure and put them on. He then took out another belt and put that on his waist as well. He then skipped a few times before flying away at a sonic speed.

"Whoa!" Lin Mu exclaimed upon seeing it.

Lin Mu knew for sure that this was not Jing Luo's real speed. The man was not this fast even when he had used that blood essence ignition technique. But right now, his speed was nearly the same as that of Little Shrubby's speed.

Since Lin Mu saw the man put on the new spirit tools, which were the boots and the belt, he reckoned they were the reason behind his increased speed.

"That is some impressive work..." Lin Mu muttered.

But just as he was about to leave, he sensed some really strong spirit Qi fluctuations coming from afar.

"WHO DARES!!!!!" The sound of a man thundered from afar.

From the strength of the spirit Qi fluctuations, Lin Mu knew that this must be a Dao Shell realm cultivator, most likely to be a grand elder of the Ripple Mist sect.

"The couldn't hold back anymore. Seems like it..." Lin Mu said as he told Little Shrubby to start running.

~thud~

Little Shrubby's running speed was faster than his flying speed, and thus he mostly ran on the ground. His paws dug into the ground with force as he shot ahead at great speed. He pushed a few more items with his paws and accelerated again.

"YOU DARE RUN AFTER KILLING OUR ELDERS! NEVER!!" The voice thundered again.

This time, Lin Mu could see the outline of a man approaching from the main area of the sect. He was coming at a great speed and was sitting on what looked like a large Oar. The oar was also emitting strong spirit Qi fluctuation and Lin Mu understood that it was also a High grade spirit tool.

To Lin Mu now, High grade spirit tools looked to be common since he had been with someone who could literally make them as he wanted to. Lin Mu had gotten to learn quite a few things from Jing Luo and if he wanted to, he could actually make his own spirit tools and spirit weapons now.

Albeit they would only be of the Low grade level, or the mid grade if Lin Mu was a bit lucky. Still... all that he lacked was experience and practice in making them. He already had the knowledge in the form of the jade slip that Jing Luo gave him and also the various books that he had collected from many places now.

All combined, Lin Mu should be able to learn to make spirit tools and weapons on his own after a while. But he didn't know if he would really do it right now as there were a lot of things that he needed to do before that.

Lin Mu had gained a lot of materials on the various occupations of cultivators such as the formation creation, Alchemical pill refinement, some beast taming and now Spirit tool/spirit weapon forging.

Chapter 624 - Speed

There were simply too many things for Lin Mu to do and he felt a bit overwhelmed. But eventually, he decided that since he had started with the formation creation first, he would stick with them. All the other occupations needed formations in some way or the other anyway and thus it would be helpful to him later.

~shua~shua~shua~

Little Shrubby's speed kept on increasing, and Lin Mu realized they were now faster than ever before. If it were not for his enhanced vision due to a higher cultivation, he would not have even been able to see things going by, as it would have all just been a blur.

"And the speed is still increasing..." Lin Mu muttered.

With every little step, Little Shrubby accelerated even more. Looking at the area, Lin Mu was sure they had already left the territory of the Ripple mist sect by now. Even though Little Shrubby had only been running for about five minutes now, they had quite likely went past at least a hundred kilometers.

Lin Mu looked back and could not see any signs of the Dao Shell realm cultivator at all.

"Seems like we left him far behind," Lin Mu said.

"With the speed you two are going, it would have been a joke if he was able to catch up." Xukong said. "Do you even know the speed at which you are traveling?" he asked.

"No... I can't really estimate it..." Lin Mu said.

"You two are traveling at nearly the same speed as sound." Xukong replied.

"The speed of sound?" Lin Mu repeated.

"If you go any faster your voice would be left behind if you talk." Xukong explained shortly. "Try it, try speaking."

"Ok-ay..?! wh-at?" Lin Mu spoke in a shocked tone.

To him, it felt like his voice was lagging behind him. And then it happened.

~BOOM!!!~

Lin Mu felt a shock wave emitting from around them as Little Shrubby's speed increased once more.

"Now you're moving faster than sound. That was a sonic boom. It happens when you break the sound barrier." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu and Xukong were talking using their connection and thus didn't actually need to speak verbally. All they needed to do was thinking and their thoughts would be transmitted to each other. Though Xukong had said to Lin Mu that it wasn't exactly that, as that thing would be called telepathy instead.

What actually happened was that both Lin Mu and Xukong's thoughts came to a common place that was made from a fragment of both their minds. In this 'shared space' their thoughts would appear and interact.

This was also where Xukong would be able to 'see' Lin Mu's memories when he shared it with him. Usually Lin Mu directed all his current memories to this place unfiltered because of which Xukong was able to see and experience the real world without causing problems.

But Lin Mu could also simply talk, and Xukong would be able to hear him. But now it was obvious that speaking was of now help as his voice would be transmitted but would be left behind. The only sound that Lin Mu heard while speaking was his own voice in his head that echoed in his skull.

But even then, he could clearly hear the difference between the sound that echoed in his head and the sound he heard externally. This was Lin Mu's second time experiencing this technically, but the first time he was not conscious.

The first time this happened was when Little Shrubby used the Seven Beasts Burst for the very first time. But now Little Shrubby could achieve the same speed without needing to use that innate skill.

"How fast would he be once the Seven Beasts Burst is used now?" Lin Mu couldn't help but wonder.

Lin Mu turned back to see if there was anyone following them and did not see the Dao Shell realm cultivator anymore. It was obvious that they had left him in the dust. Though, when he looked to the upper side, he saw none other than Jing Luo.

The man's long hair was blowing back due to the wind and every step he would soar forward. The boots that he was wearing allowed him to step onto the air and created a strong jet of wind from them.

As for the belt that he was wearing, it continued to emit spirit Qi fluctuation and had several points on it that glowed. Though when Lin Mu looked at it, he found that after a few seconds, one of the glowing points stopped glowing.

And after another minute, one more point stopped glowing.

"What is that...?" Lin Mu muttered to himself as he focused on the belt.

Still, it was hard to do so when they were moving at a great speed and thus he decided to improve it a bit. He chanted the calming heart sutra and felt everything slowing down a bit. He opened his eyes and gazed at the belt again, and finally understood what those glowing points were.

"High Grade spirit stones?" Lin Mu recognized.

Each of the glowing point was a high grade spirit stone, that had been embedded into a socket around which a small formation was inscribed. The glow that he saw was actually coming from the formation itself rather than the high grade spirit stone.

And the reason why it stopped glowing was that the high grade spirit stone was depleted of its spirit Qi. Once that happened, the high grade spirit stone would crumble to dust and scatter, deactivating the formation.

Lin Mu couldn't really tell how this all functioned just from seeing and decided to ask Jing Luo once they stopped.

"How long can you run at this speed for Little Shrubby?" Lin Mu questioned the beast.

"I don't know. I feel like I can just keep on running." Little Shrubby answered.

"Hmm... keep on running till Jing Luo can run. Once his speed is reduced and he needs to rest, we shall stop as well." Lin Mu replied.

"Okay~" Little Shrubby said and kept on running at the same speed.

Chapter 625 - Wind Strider Boots And Spirit Qi Infusion Belt

Lin Mu knew that if they went any fast, they would leave behind Jing Luo as well. And it was better for them to run alongside for now, just in case anything happened that they had not expected. They continued like this for about twelve more minutes before finally stopping.

~Crack~

An audible crack was heard as Jing Luo slowed down and stopped. Lin Mu and Little Shrubby stopped along with him and looked at him.

"Ran out of power?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Indeed..." Jing Luo said as he took a look at the belt he was wearing.

All of the high grade spirit stones that were embedded in them were broken and now there were only empty sockets left in their stead.

"So this was why you were assured you would be able to keep up with Little Shrubby?" Lin Mu questioned.

Little Shrubby was also looking at Jing Luo in intrigue and felt a bit threatened. He was the fastest being right now, and he didn't want someone else to be faster than him, especially not Jing Luo.

"Yes, these are the spirit tools I made in case we needed to escape and they did end up coming in handy." Jing Luo replied as he took off the belt from his waist.

"So what are these exactly?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Hmm... you can think of the belt as a disposable high grade spirit tool while the boots are just normal high grade spirit tools." Jing Luo answered.

When Lin Mu heard the word disposable High grade spirit tool, he didn't know what to think of it. Perhaps in this world, only Jing Luo and a few handful of people would say the words Disposable and High grade spirit tool in the same sentence.

"I see. So the belt functions as a battery?" Lin Mu asked, remembering some of the concepts from the jade slip Jing Luo had given him.

"Yes. But a very high powered one. I had to use high grade spirit stones to make this work for the boots. While I can make a lower quality version of this as well, I finally found out the upper limit of what the belt can handle as of now." Jing Luo replied.

Lin Mu felt quite a bit intrigued by this and wanted to know more. His curiosity had always been high and every time he got to learn something new, he would benefit from it. He definitely wanted to know how these two worked.

"How do they work?" Lin Mu questioned.

"I'll tell you, but I think we should find a place to rest first. I don't know about you, but using these two spirit tools put a bit of a strain on my body. I don't know how you two can keep up with a speed like that." Jing Luo said as he massaged his neck.

"Oh! Okay, let's find a place to rest for a bit." Lin Mu said and the two men looked around with their spirit sense.

It didn't take them long to find a dense thicket of trees some distance from them. The crown of the trees completely covered the sky while the bushes and smaller trees around, blocked the view of what was hidden within it.

Of course, a location like this was quite unusual and Little Shrubby told them that this was the nest of a beast. Currently, the beast was not there thus they could go there and would not need to bother with it... hopefully.

And if the beast came back before they were done resting, it would be unfortunate... for the beast.

Jing Luo didn't rest right away though. He first threw out four flags, that implanted themselves into the four cardinal directions around the thicket. Once that was done, a thin barrier appeared around it and a few runes floated around.

Jing Luo scanned it over with his spirit sense and they all faded away into nothingness as if they never existed. The flags also went deeper into the ground, completely disappearing from their view.

"This should be a bit safer," Jing Luo said as he sat down with his back to a tree.

Lin Mu could see the visible fatigue in the man and knew that he was truly affected by the spirit tools.

"Why are you so tired from that?" Lin Mu asked curiously. "Being at the Adolescent Soul Stage of the Nascent Soul realm, you should be stronger than that."

Jing Luo had a bitter expression on his face after hearing Lin Mu's question.

"Not everyone has a body like you and cultivates all the way to the thirteenth stage of the Body tempering realm. I don't even know how the hell you accomplished that." Jing Luo said, feeling a bit insulted.

But then he saw the look on Lin Mu's face that showed pure curiosity and understood that Lin Mu didn't really mean to insult him like that.

'What kind of a master does this guy even have? How did he train him like this?' Jing Luo wondered.

~Sigh~

"The speed at which we ran... you must have seen that we outran the Dao Shell realm cultivator, as well. From that, you should be able to tell, how much power it would require to do the same for a normal cultivator." Jing Luo hinted.

Lin Mu went over it in his mind and realized that it was truly far more than should have been possible for any normal cultivator, even if they were at the Dao Shell realm.

"Ah, no wonder your body hurts." Lin Mu said in an understanding tone.

"Exactly. While the Wind strider boots are extremely fast, they need an equally strong spirit Qi supply. And while I can provide it with my body as well, the speed of infusion that it needs would not be enough. Thus I ended up adding the spirit Qi infusion belt to the combination." Jing Luo said and took a pause.

He took out a couple of alchemical pills from his spatial storage treasure and ate them.

Chapter 626 - A New Destination

After feeling a bit better in a minute or so, Jing Luo decided to continue his explanation.

"The belt can be socketed with spirit stones of different grades and can provide a steady high output of spirit Qi that a cultivator cannot provide himself normally. But... I expanded the belt to the max and eighteen high grade spirit stones seem to be the limit for it." Jing Luo said as he withdrew the belt from his spatial storage ring.

Lin Mu looked at the belt and saw that most of the inscriptions on it were destroyed and looked like they were burned off.

"The amount of continuous spirit Qi needed by the wind strider boots destroyed a high capacity spirit Qi infusion belt as well." Jing Luo said with a sigh.

"So if it were a lower number of High Grade spirit stones, the formations would not have been destroyed?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Exactly. But Wind Strider Boots require far too much spirit Qi to function. Originally, they aren't even supposed to work for extended periods of time like this. They are supported to be used for short bursts of speed.

I just modified the design a bit and made it so that they can work continuously as long as I want, but the counter problem to that is that they need a high volume supply of spirit Qi.

This was one of my projects that I worked on before I left the clan, but never got to finish. Didn't think I would work on it again after so long." Jing Luo answered.

Lin Mu could see the hints of sorry in Jing Luo's eyes and understood that he must be missing his clan now. It had been a long time for the man, over fifty years, and he could not even begin to guess how that felt.

It had been barely six years since Lin Mu's parents had died and he still missed them from time to time. For Jing Luo, Lin Mu could only guess that it was many times more painful.

"We should figure out what to do next." Jing Luo suddenly said.

"Ah, yes. Seeing as there have been no signs of anyone pursuing us, we should be safe." Lin Mu replied.

"That was inevitable. Unless the one pursuing us was a Dao Treading Realm Cultivator, they would not have been able to keep up with our speed. Though I now don't know where we exactly are..." Jing Luo said as he stroked his beard.

"Hmm... let me check where we exactly are." Lin Mu said before withdrawing a jade slip from his ring.

'Since we ran in the southeastern direction from the Ripple mist sect, we should have already left the borders of the previous kingdom. And considering our speed and how long we ran, we should be about... four hundred kilometers away from the sect.' Lin Mu calculated and checked on the map.

"I think I have an idea of where we are." Lin Mu said.

"And where is that?" Jing Luo questioned.

"We have come about four hundred kilometers from the Ripple mist sect to the south eastern direction. This roughly puts us at the border of The Kingdom of Shu." Lin Mu said as his brows furrowed.

Jing Luo noticed Lin Mu's reaction and wondered if something was wrong, but then recalled his own memories.

"Is there one of the sects that is under the influence of Gu Yao in the area?" Jing Luo asked.

"Indeed. It is a mid level sect called Mountain Brush Sect." Lin Mu replied.

"The Mountain Brush sect... I remember them. They were one of my attackers as well and took part in the assassination." Jing Luo said as a spark of fury appeared in his eyes.

"We need to leave this area as soon as possible. We still don't know if Gu Yao has been alerted or not yet. While we do need to gather more information about the current condition of the empire, I don't think this will be the right place.

While we personally would not be harmed by this, if they get a whiff of our presence so soon, our latter plans might become troublesome." Lin Mu explained.

Jing Luo went over Lin Mu's words and found his hypothesis to be reasonable.

"That does seem likely. We are only four hundred kilometers away from the Ripple Mist sect anyway. We need to go much farther than this, they can still inform their allies at this range using communication jade slips." Jing Luo said.

"Exactly. We best get going." Lin Mu said.

"Where do we go, though? I know about the kingdoms, but seeing as how it's been over fifty years, their situations might have changed and thus my judgment could be wrong." Jing Luo asked.

Lin Mu thought over it for a minute and saw the map. Currently, they were in the upper mid part of the Great Zhou Empire. They literally had the entire southern part that they could go to as of now. But after thinking for a bit, a specific kingdom popped up in Lin Mu's mind.

"We do have a lot of places that we can go to, but the closest location that I think would be safe is the Fenlong Kingdom." Lin Mu stated.

"The Fenlong Kingdom? Hmm... they are quite small, aren't they. They don't have that many cultivators there that belong to sects there either." Jing Luo muttered.

Both of them deliberated over it and discussed the advantages and disadvantages before coming to a final decision.

"Fenlong Kingdom it is then. If we go two thousand kilometers further south and then a couple of hundred kilometers east, we should arrive there." Lin Mu said.

"We should set off, then. Though I will not be able to keep up with the same speed. At least not for a while, till my meridians are a bit rested, and the belt fixed." Jing Luo replied.

"That will be fine. We will stop by some smaller villages on the way and see if we can find some information there as well." Lin Mu assured.

Jing Luo nodded his head and the two of them, along with little Shrubby, began their journey again.

Chapter 627 - First Time Seeing The Ocean

Lin Mu, Jing Luo, and Little Shrubby had now been traveling for about two days now. Since they had to travel at a bit more relaxed pace than before, they only covered about a thousand kilometers in a day.

Plus, Jing Luo needed to rest to recover his meridians as well. This showed to Lin Mu how much of a difference having a complete Body Tempering cultivation made, along with him having the Xiantian.

Though there was still the question of Little Shrubby, who was the one who could run at that speed for a long period of time. Little Shrubby said that he could still run at that speed and did not feel tired at all, so they were yet to find the limits of little Shrubby.

As for the pace at which they were traveling at currently, they could do so without stopping for weeks upon weeks had it not been for Jing Luo. Though there was also the fact that every time they came across a village, they would pause their journey and gather some information.

This was the additional reason why they were even slower. If it were not for them halting, perhaps they would have covered twice the distance they had by now. The villages that they came across were mostly small and relatively isolated communities.

In total, they had seen seven villages in the past two days and only two out of these seven villages even had a cultivator in them. The rest of them were just filled with commoners and warriors in the body tempering realm.

And just as Lin Mu and Jing Luo had thought, they were looked at with suspicion when they entered the villages. It took them quite a bit of effort before even getting some interaction with the villagers.

Jing Luo, who had been deprived of normal human interaction for over fifty years now, was still quite enthusiastic and tried to talk as genially to the villagers as he could.

Alas! When Lin Mu showed them a bit of gold, the villagers turned into chatter birds, showing that Jing Luo's efforts were a bit inefficient.

Still, even when the villagers did start to speak, Lin Mu and Jing Luo didn't really get any information that they could consider to be useful. They mostly talked about their daily lives, about who's kid got married, whose cow gave birth, whose wife beat up their husband, and stuff like that.

Lin Mu could simply rub his forehead in helplessness while Jing Luo fully enjoyed it all, laughing with the villagers. Lin Mu even wondered if the villagers were hiding something and spied on them using phase, but it turned out that they were speaking the truth.

Lin Mu then wondered if these villagers were too isolated or something. Only when he reached the final two villages where there were cultivators did they get some actual useful information.

Lin Mu and Jing Luo learned that the Fenlong kingdom was currently in a complex situation. Their royal family was undergoing an internal conflict, and the aristocrats were also vying to pull some power under them.

The prices of commodities had risen up and the merchants were fully taking advantage of it all. While they did not find out the reason behind this, Lin Mu reckoned they should get the information quite soon.

The Fenlong kingdom was the third smallest kingdom in the entire Great Zhou continent and was comparable to the Wu Lim County in size. It only had two major cities, with one of them being the capital and the second one being the Port City Jiao Long.

The Fenlong Kingdom was located on the eastern coastline of the continent and thus had access to the ocean. This was Lin Mu's first time seeing an ocean as he hadn't even seen a sea before this in his life, thus he was amazed.

The Port City of Jiao Long was the first major city that they came to and thus the two men, along with Little Shrubby, came to a stop in front of a cliff that faced the city on one side and the ocean on the other.

"This... I've never seen so much water before..." Lin Mu said with awe in his voice.

The glistening, blue expanse of water looked mesmerizing to him. There was a strange calmness he felt upon seeing it that he could not explain.

"Ahahah! You'll get used to it. Water is water, once you see one sea you would have seen them all!" Jing Luo said with a laugh.

"If you say so..." Lin Mu replied, not knowing if the man was being serious or not and his choice of alliteration.

"Mmmhmm, I don't like it." Little Shrubby said upon taking a long stare.

"You don't?" Lin Mu asked, while looking at the beast.

"Seems too wet," Little Shrubby replied.

"Ah... I guess that's okay?" Lin Mu said, thinking that little shrubby was still a cat in the end.

"It's my first time here and I've heard that this place is small, but yeah it really is." Jing Luo said while gazing at the Jiao Long port.

Lin Mu turned around and took a look at the city as well. Calling it a city was a bit of an overstatement as the entire Jiao Long Port was the same size as that of the Northern town.

"It really is small, though they do have a lot of boats and ships to compensate for that I guess." Lin Mu said while gazing at the large blanket of floating vessels.

There were easily over a thousand boats and ships on the port and in the water surrounding it. The ones that were near the port were densely packed and dangerously treaded.

If there was any mistake made, they would quite likely collide with other vessels that were passing by. It was evident that the sailors and fishermen were quite skilled at controlling their ships and boats.

"Indeed. Jiao Long Port is said to be one of the cities with the best shipwrights and sailors in the entire Great Zhou Continent."

Chapter 628 - The Smallest Kingdoms

Lin Mu felt a bit surprised upon hearing Jing Luo's words. He could not think that in such a large continent filled with cultivators, a small place like this would have the best shipwrights and sailors.

"Why is that so, though? Can't the cultivators make better boats and ships?" Lin Mu questioned, feeling curious.

"Well, that's mostly because these ships and boats are used by the cultivators that are below the Nascent Soul realm and commoners that are barely in the Body tempering realm. Another reason is that not many people actually go out that far into the ocean as there isn't really a need.

There are no locations to go to specifically in the ocean and the islands there are far too sparse to be profitable. The danger is especially high and deeper in the ocean there is no lack of aquatic spirit beasts that are Nascent Soul realm and above.

If it were not for the fact that these beasts cannot leave the ocean, the Human race and even the entire Great Zhou Continent would have long since been overrun." Jing Luo answered.

"Hmm... but there are the two kingdoms in the ocean, right? The two smallest kingdoms in the world?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Oh? You mean the Echo Conch Kingdom and the First Sun kingdom?" Jing Luo asked for clarity.

"Yes, those two. They are island nations, right? Thus they would need ships and boats for trade." Lin Mu replied.

"Oh, those do use ships and boats, but they aren't that far from the coastline of the continent. In fact, the First Sun Kingdom is located close to the Fenlong kingdom and is one of the allies of the Kingdom.

It's located Southeast of the Fenlong kingdom and is in the ocean about two hundred kilometers away from the coast. The two nations trade a lot and that is one of the reasons why the shipwrights and sailors here are said to be the best in the continent." Jing Luo further explained.

"Ah, I understand now." Lin Mu said, recalling the locations of the two smallest kingdoms.

While the First Sun Kingdom was located close to the Fenlong Kingdom, the Echo Conch Kingdom was located quite far to the very southern end of the continent. It was also a bit reclusive and people seldom came traveled to and from it.

It was also said to be backward and thus not many cultivators had any interest in it. Their economy was mostly dependent on fishing and some local products that they grew on their island and thus it was mostly self sufficient. The only thing they bought from the mainland was metals that they lacked on the island.

"We should head to the city now and see what news we can gather." Jing Luo said.

"Yes, we should do that." Lin Mu said as his spirit sense spread over the entire area, looking for a suitable place.

"What do I do?" Little Shrubby questioned.

"Hmmm... you can go fish?" Lin Mu suggested, but then saw the wronged look on little Shrubby's face.

"You can fly now, so you won't need to touch the water and you can probably figure out more ways to fish." Lin Mu placated the beast.

Little Shrubby thought over it and nodded his head.

"I'll do that then. I haven't made roasted fish and stewed fish lately." Little Shrubby said before flying away.

Jing Luo saw the little interaction between Lin Mu and little Shrubby, but didn't really question it. He reckoned it was just something related to what the beast wanted to do until they were in the city.

They obviously could not bring him into the city as it would be way too eye catching and people would get suspicious.

"We'll split up and return to this spot at midnight then." Lin Mu spoke after thinking for a minute.

"That seems okay, I'll take my leave then." Jing Luo said before flying away.

Lin Mu could see that the man was going to circle around the port city to go to the southern end. Two Nascent Soul realm cultivators entering together would probably pull the eyes of a few spies that usually loiter around, and that was not something they wanted.

Plus, with the increasing influence of Gu Yao, Lin Mu and Jing Luo couldn't be more careful. Plus another one of Lin Mu's goal was to see if he could find an outpost of the Hei Corps here.

"Hmm... Wu Hei had told before that he came to this kingdom in his travels and thus he should have one of the outposts of the Hei Corps here, too hopefully." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Lin Mu didn't fly like Jing Luo did, instead, he walked to the entrance of the city once he had changed into some sober robes. While most cultivators would not be able to tell his cultivation base as long as they weren't at the core condensation realm, if he wore the flashy robes, he would definitely bring attention to himself.

Lin Mu took in the sights as he walked calmly to the gate of the city and paid the entry tax, which was a single silver coin.

"Hmm... at least they are not ripping us off." Lin Mu muttered to himself as he continued on.

The guards didn't even check anything and merely asked his name before writing it down onto a register. Lin Mu casually gave out a fake name, and the guards accepted it right away.

"They don't seem that worried about security, huh?" Lin Mu said after leaving the gate.

Once inside the city, Lin Mu spread his spirit sense out fully and grasped the situation in the city. With his spirit sense that had expanded once more, it was easily possible for him to cover the entire city in it.

Lin Mu could very easily sit in one place and observe the entire city as he pleased. And with this thought in his mind, he decided to find a suitable spot to wait in.

Chapter 629 - Jiao Long City

Lin Mu soon found a tea shop that was bustling with people on the main road of the Jiao Long City. The shop was located on the third floor of the building and overlooked the port, allowing the patrons to take in the pleasant sight of the sea.

Of course, it was no common tea shop and from the attire of the people that entered it, it was a rather luxurious shop that the rich people of the city visited. At this point, Lin Mu didn't really care for the price despite it being a gold coin.

He was quickly brought to a suitable table by the open gallery and allowed him to see the city and the people below. With his eyes, it was easy for him to see even an ant crawling on the ground clearly.

"Hmm... the people here are mostly commoners." Lin Mu muttered to himself as he looked around the tea shop.

The waiter had already gone to get him a pot of tea with some snacks, allowing Lin Mu to freely look around the shop. There were around a hundred people on the floor easily and even then there was room for more.

It was evident from this that the tea shop was rather large. Lin Mu's spirit sense quickly picked up the cultivation bases of everyone in the shop.

"The strongest person is at the Late stage of the Qi refining realm while the weakest is at the fourth stage of the body tempering realm." Lin Mu assessed.

A few of the women and girls in the tea shop stole some glances at Lin Mu as well. His handsome face made it hard for them to resist, which earned him the envy of a few men that were accompanying these women.

But since Lin Mu kept to himself, he looked out of the shop, they didn't mind it after a bit.

~Sigh~

A few women sighed at the face of Lin Mu, who they found to be longing for something. In their minds, they had already made up some elaborate stories about him as they wondered who he was.

Lin Mu was unaware that he had gained multiple different identities in the minds of these women in the span of mere minutes.

"Here you go sir, this is the best tea of our establishment." The waiter said upon serving the tea.

Lin Mu looked at the tea that seemed to have a greenish yellow color. A few tea leaves floated gently on the surface of the tea, looking like dancing grass in the wind. Lin Mu had an idea after seeing this.

He took out a couple of silvers and handed them to the waiter.

"I'm new to the city and would like to know more about it. Why don't you accompany me and tell me." Lin Mu asked.

"Of course, sir! It will be my pleasure!" The waiter hurriedly agreed.

Lin Mu gestured to the chair next to him and picked up the cup of tea before taking a sip of it.

'It's... bland?' Lin Mu thought.

While Lin Mu hadn't really tasted that many types of teas and was not really a 'Connoisseur' he still had enough sense to tell good tea from bad tea when it was this obvious. He even wondered if they had made a mistake or something like that.

But for the sake of this time, he decided to keep his mouth shut and listen to the waiter's words.

"I'll start with the history of the city then. Jiao Long city was established over a thousand years ago and is considered to be one of the oldest cities in the continent." The waiter spoke.

Hearing this, Lin Mu was truly intrigued.

"Oh really? But with a kingdom this small, how can this city be so old?" Lin Mu questioned the man.

"Ah, that's a common doubt that people have, sir. In fact, Jiao Long city is even older than the capital of our Fenlong kingdom. The city has had many names throughout the years and had changed with every new dynasty.

The current name was given to the port by the current royal family about eighty years ago. They named it so that the city would rise up like a flood dragon from the sea, shocking the masses. And thus they called it 'Jiao Long'.

The city was used by many kingdoms as a point of transit if they were involved in sea trade. Our Jiao Long city is also the main port from where one can take a ferry to and from the First Sun kingdom." The waiter explained.

"I see... please continue." Lin Mu said as he took another sip of the bland tea that was no different from warm water at this point.

He took a look at the fried dough sticks that were given as snacks and picked one up before eating it. The dough stick broke in his mouth with a crisp ~Crack~ and a pleasant flavor spread in his mouth.

For a moment there, Lin Mu was reminded of his childhood in the norther town. His mother would make freshly fried dough sticks in the morning for breakfast and Lin Mu used to enjoy them hot.

But in the next breath, his heart stilled, and he opened his eyes calmly.

'That time has long past... dwelling on the past is only asking for more pain and sorrow...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu continued hearing about the city and its people from the waiter. He learned that the city was actually run by a group of merchants than a single mayor or someone like that. In fact, even the king of the Fenlong kingdom didn't really have as much authority in Jiao Long city as the council of merchants.

These merchants traded all over the continent and surprisingly became part of the council of such a small city. Lin Mu found this to be a bit strange and did not know why. While the waiter told him that it was because of the merchant ships that all alighted here, Lin Mu knew that there was something fishy.

Chapter 630 - Two Familiar Names

Lin Mu got interested in this so called Council of merchants and asked more about it. He discovered that it was composed of ten merchants, some of which represented large and prominent merchant families.

Though there were two names that caught Lin Mu's attention. The first name was none other than the Mu clan which Wu Hei had visited in his younger years. This was also the clan from which Lin Mu had disguised himself as.

The second name that caught his attention was actually an individual merchant who had made his own company and grown it quite a bit. He recently reached the point where he had managed to buy a position in the council by outbidding others.

This individual merchant was actually someone Lin Mu had met before, Jingming Shang!

"Tell me more about the Mu clan and Jingming Shang." Lin Mu asked.

"Hmm... the Mu clan is in a difficult state right now." The waiter spoke.

"Oh? Why's that?" Lin Mu questioned.

"We do not know exactly why, as the matter was suppressed by both the royal family and the other members of the merchant council, but we do know that the Mu clan has fallen greatly in their status.

Even their position in the merchant council is now threatened and could be taken away at any moment." The waiter replied.

"But how could such a drastic change happen?" Lin Mu asked further, having a bad feeling about it.

"It all happened around three years ago. The people of the Mu clan suddenly went into hiding, and only a few external workers were left to run their businesses. Of course, this couldn't be kept up as without the guidance of the main members, the businesses started to fall into a loss.

The clan didn't reappear for about two years and even the merchant council wondered if they were okay or not. They sent many letters to the clan, but all of them were unanswered. If it were not for the fact that the Mu clan had several cultivators, the merchants might have even gone to visit them directly.

But then about a year ago, the clan reappeared, or more like their people did. The person that appeared was not someone we had expected though. The person was the youngest son of the Mu clan patriarch, Mu Tao.

He is the one who took over the administrative part of his clan and declared that their patriarch had passed away. The merchants were suspicious about it and did their own investigations.

They ended up finding out that the majority of Mu clan's people were killed two years ago one a single night!" The waiter revealed.

Lin Mu's brows were raised after hearing the words of the waiter. He even doubted the authenticity of his words, but then realized that he could confirm this very well himself.

'That's one thing I definitely need to find out more about... if it's who I'm thinking it is, then...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

"What about Jingming Shang?" Lin Mu asked next.

"This man joined the council about a year and a half ago. Because there had been an increase in trade in the kingdoms that surround the top sects of the world, the overall wealth of merchants that got involved in it has also grown.

This made it so the council decided that they can now add another seat to it. Originally, the Mu clan was in disagreement but then they were placated by the other merchants who wanted new positions to be opened. And since the Mu clan was in need of money to pay back their debts, they finally accepted it.

Jingming Shang is said to have capitalized on the trade boom and made a sizable fortune. He easily outbid his competition for the tenth seat in the merchant council and was even said to be one of those that sent a big gift to the Mu clan.

Plus, he is also a cultivator that is at the Core Condensation realm and thus not many can afford to oppose him either." The waiter explained.

"Hmm... I see. A rather interesting man." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Lin Mu sat in silence for a couple of minutes, analyzing the information that he had just been given. The waiter also sat patiently, not daring to interrupt Lin Mu. From Lin Mu's demeanor, he could tell that he was not simple and the ease with which he tipped him also showed that he was definitely wealthy.

'Since he's asking questions about the merchant council, he must be a rich merchant too...' The waiter thought to himself.

"What can you tell me about the cultivators of this kingdom? Oh, and also the royal family." Lin Mu questioned.

"The Fenlong Kingdom isn't particularly known for our cultivators, but we still do have quite a few of them. While we don't have any cultivation sect in our borders, we still have a lot of martial schools.

Every rich merchant would either be a cultivator himself if he had the talent or would have other cultivators as his guards and assistant. As for those that belong to merchant families, they have plenty of cultivators of their own.

The strongest cultivator in the Fenlong kingdom is said to be the General of the Fenlong kingdom. He's at the Nascent Soul realm and is the uncle of the current king. The king himself is at the Core condensation realm while the patriarchs of the merchant families, who are also the aristocrats of this kingdom, are also at the Core Condensation realm.

Even the Mu clan's patriarch was at the Core Condensation realm, which was one of the reasons why all the other council members were shocked after hearing of his demise. They were scared that whoever did that to the Mu clan could come after them as well and thus they were very cautious during that time.

As for the Qi refining realm cultivators, there are plenty of them spread around the kingdom, but most of them should be concentrated around the capital and this city." The waiter answered.