

Walker 671

Chapter 671 - Exponential Growth Of Allies

Lin Mu sat in a private courtyard that had been built for him by the Mu clan. He was going through the tens of reports that had been given to him by the various allies that they had now.

~Sigh~

"Is this how Wu Hei felt, managing an organization?" Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Lin Mu's plan was going forward steadily, and another month had passed just like this. The Fen clan had finally managed to release their bloodline seal and had shot forward in cultivation base.

In less than two weeks, they had six Nascent Soul realm cultivators appearing in their clan, including Miss Fen herself. This was a shocking increase, even for a top cultivation sect, and had made Lin Mu question Xukong about it.

"Seems like this was more of a cursed seal rather than an actual bloodline seal. This inhibited their own talent and prevented them from progressing." Xukong replied.

"What's the difference between a cursed seal and an actual bloodline seal, senior?" Lin Mu questioned.

"If it were an actual bloodline seal, even if they had released it, their potential would have taken quite a while to recover. It's like a paralyzed patient. Even if they are cured of their paralysis, it still takes them a long time to recover full control of their body.

Whereas in a cursed seal, even if the seal was suppressing them from progressing, their potential was still there. I reckon when the seal was originally placed it would have been successful in suppressing both their talent and potential, but over the years as more and more descendants were born, the grip of the curse weakened.

The potential of the cultivators was still being suppressed, but their talent had already recovered and now, with the seal removed, it was like a dam being broken. Plus, we say before that they had very stable foundations." Xukong explained.

"I see... I guess having the Fen clan as our allies will be far better than I thought. It still feels unreal how someone this powerful was living here, hidden in plain sight." Lin Mu said with a sign.

"Hidden dragons and crouching tigers are everywhere in the world. All you need to do is look properly.

Besides, we know that this world has been in a decline for a long time now. With the potential, this world had, it should have easily had a lot more strong cultivators, but the constant wars and invasions in the past have weakened it considerably.

The degeneration of cultivation knowledge is also one of the main causes for this, I must say." Xukong replied.

Hearing this, Lin Mu was suddenly reminded of something.

"Is this how... the other cultivation worlds are senior?" Lin Mu asked.

"Indeed. Clans with talent similar to the Fen clan are abundant and can even be considered average. The only reason, why the world you live in is not at the lowest rank is because it still has cultivation.

There are many worlds out there in the universe that have no cultivation at all. Most of them are just newborn worlds and are still weak, but there are some worlds that are forbidden.

There are even worlds whose inhabitants are as strong as cultivators despite not having a shred of Qi in them. Then there are worlds that can control the wind and clouds as if their own limbs, despite having no cultivation base.

The more you see, the more you learn. Even I don't dare say that I know everything in the world. If one was able to learn even 0.01% of the knowledge of the entire cosmos, they would be proclaimed as a saint.

Forget cultivating, the heavens themselves would give them their approval and call them to them directly." Xukong enlightened.

Hearing this, Lin Mu felt his views expand. While he had seen and read a lot of things from the memoirs of the Lost immortal, it could still not be compared to the wisdom that senior Xukong had.

Lin Mu knew one thing that, even if the Lost Immortal had reached a high level of cultivation and lived for perhaps thousands of years, Senior Xukong had lived exponentially longer than that.

It was at a point where Xukong admitted even he did not know how old he truly was.

In addition to the Fen clan, the Mu clan had also grown significantly. Mu Tao had also broken thought to the Nascent Soul realm, albeit with more assistance. Unlike his uncle Mu Niu, Mu Tao needed a tribulation platform for him to safely break through.

The platform was made by none other than Jing Luo, and the Mu clan was tremendously grateful to them such that the few females left in the clan had often sent flirtatious glances towards Jing Luo.

The man simply laughed to himself and politely declined their advances, telling them that they were old enough to be his granddaughters. Lin Mu even learned that Jing Luo apparently had a betrothed and was to get married a long time ago, if it only were not for the destruction of the Jing clan.

Ever since then, Jing Luo had simply chosen to focus on the recovery of his clan and avenging it, vowing to not do anything else until his clan was revived. Lin Mu couldn't help but feel awed by the man's dedication and determination.

On the side of the merchants, there had also been some progress though mostly for the intelligence. Lin Mu had been given a report on the suspected whereabouts of a Hei corps outpost.

Though this was what they had assumed and might not be fully true.

"Hmm... if there is one member, there should be more. Plus, since they were this far from the Shuang Qian kingdom, they had a longer time to hide. They should definitely be there." Lin Mu analyzed.

He continued to read the documents and saw that the location mentioned was a kingdom called the Hong Lin kingdom.

"Hmm... so the Hong Lin Kingdom is the next destination..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Chapter 672 - Introducing Little Shrubby

Lin Mu and Jing Luo stood at the gate of the Mu clan while the others waited for them there.

"We shall be in contact at all times." Jingming Shang spoke. "With the communication jade slips senior Jing Luo made, it will be far more convenient and easy for us to talk." He added.

"Indeed, I never thought I would see high grade communication jade slips out of top sects before." Miss Fen added.

"Very well. Inform us if anything comes up. Although with the increased strength, I doubt you guys should have a problem unless Gu Yao sends tens of Nascent Soul realm cultivators or even a Dao Shell realm cultivator." Lin Mu spoke.

"Yes, senior. Plus, no one has an idea that our clans have progressed this far and increased in strength. Thus, even if Gu Yao does send his people to kill us, he will make a mistake and that will give us time to readjust our strategy." Mu Tao added.

Lin Mu nodded to himself and looked towards the northern end of the Jiao Long city. Seeing that the two of them were not moving, Mu Tao and the others felt strange.

"Is there something left?" Mu Tao questioned.

"Ah, we're just waiting for someone." Lin Mu answered.

"Someone? There's another person with seniors?!" Miss Fen was rather surprised.

Till now, they had only seen Lin Mu and Jing Luo and did not know that there were more people. From Lin Mu's words, they could tell that there was at least a third person in their group.

'Just how many more people does senior have? Four? Ten? Or even a hundred? Senior Lin Mu's planning is truly profound.' Mu Tao thought to himself.

"Oh yeah, I never told you guys did I... it's not a person I'm waiting for," Lin Mu spoke.

~shua~

Just as Lin Mu spoke, the sound of wind coming from the far could be heard.

"Not a person?" Jingming Shang narrowed his eyes as he suddenly had a hunch of what it might be.

~Roar~

A rumbling roar could be heard coming from afar, pulling the attention of everyone. But to Lin Mu's surprise, it was actually coming from the sea.

"No wonder he's been silent... he's been enjoying his time, huh." Lin Mu said upon spotting his companion of years in the distance.

A red streak was coming in from the sea and some turbulent wind accompanied it. There seemed to be a massive object behind it that was at least ten times as big as the red streak.

"No way! Is that..." Jingming Shang said in shock.

~boom~

The speed of the red streak increased even more as the object behind it sped up too, turning it into a blur as well.

~thud~

Finally, the red blur slowed to a halt next to Lin Mu and its appearance was revealed.

"Look, I got us food for the journey!" Little Shrubby spoke excitedly.

Lin Mu looked at the object, which was now seen clearly. It was a large fish that had sharp teeth and a long tail. It was dark silver in color and its scales glistened under the sun. Even while dead, the fury in its eyes could be seen.

"Heavens! That's the Saw Tooth Tuna! It's a Nascent soul realm beast that has been plaguing the ocean near the First Sun Kingdom." Mu Niu identified.

The large fish was blocking the view of Little Shrubby, and thus the others had not seen him yet, but once Lin Mu stored the Saw Tooth Tuna in the ring, they could see him.

~gulp~

Jingming Shang couldn't help but swallow his saliva upon seeing Little Shrubby. He had known very well who this beast was. Mu Tao and the rest though had no idea who little shrubby was and neither had Lin Mu told them.

It wasn't that he didn't want to, but that simply never came up.

"I guess I should introduce. This is Little Shrubby, my tamed beast." Lin Mu spoke.

"Grrr!" Little Shrubby responded with a growl that only Lin Mu could understand.

"So these are the people who are helping master? Hmm... they seem weak." Little Shrubby spoke.

Lin Mu almost chuckled upon hearing this, but managed to suppress his laughter. He didn't want the others to feel bad.

"Seniors tamed beast..." Mu Tao muttered.

Unlike Lin Mu and Jing Luo, the cultivation base of Little Shrubby was in full display and that, added with the strong bloodline he had, caused some pressure to be exerted on them all.

Even those at the Nascent Soul realm felt like they would not last for even a second against the beast. While little Shrubby was calm right now, they could feel the predatory aura that exuded from it.

If not that, then the Saw Tooth Tuna was the best proof. One must know that beast was a nuisance and the only reason no one could do anything to it was because it was at the child soul stage of the Nascent Soul realm.

Even Mu Niu and Mu Tao would have to think twice before fighting against a beast like that, not to mention the advantage it would have in the ocean.

Miss Fen though had a completely different reaction. She had cold sweat break out on her forehead when she saw Little Shrubby.

'What is this beast... this fear... why's my bloodline telling me to run away?' Miss Fen thought.

Unlike the Mu clan, the Fen clan had recently awakened their bloodline and they were sensitive to the other bloodline auras now. And for Little Shrubby, who had not one but seven strong bloodlines, it was as if a mountain was hanging above their heads.

Seeing as how Lin Mu calmly petted the head of Little Shrubby, Miss Fen didn't know what to think. No Nascent soul realm cultivator would dare do that to a Nascent soul realm beast easily, even if they were a tamed beast.

After all, both being in the Nascent soul realm allowed them to command a certain respect.

Chapter 673 - On To The Hong Lin Kingdom

After a couple of minutes, the people had gotten comfortable with Little Shrubby's presence. Seeing that it did not do anything, and it was only the aura that was imposing helped a bit to condition their minds as well.

"Alright then, we'll take our leave." Lin Mu said as Little Shrubby made the harness appear on his back.

Strapping into the harness, Lin Mu looked at Jing Luo. The man tapped his feet together, making the wind strider boots replace the ones that he was wearing before.

"Take care, senior!" Mu Tao and the rest said as Lin Mu and Jing Luo soared into the sky.

~boom~

In the blink of an eye, the three of them disappeared, causing a small sonic boom that blew the hair of everyone back.

Their destination was the Hong Lin Kingdom, which was located about five hundred kilometers from the border of the Fenlong Kingdom. It was also the home to a couple of small sects but they were unranked and thus didn't really matter to Lin Mu and Jing Luo.

For unranked sects, the strongest cultivation in their sect would be at most in the Nascent Soul realm. Such unranked sects were many in number all over the empire and would rise and fall every couple of years.

There was no lack of ambitious Nascent soul realm cultivators who had newly broken through, wanting to establish their foothold in the world. Of course, while they did have the qualifications to start a sect, it didn't really mean their sect would get members or that they would have resources.

Sure, there would be many that would want to join the tutelage of a Nascent soul realm cultivator, but whether they could provide the resources to cultivate was also an important point that was often missed by people.

If one did not have resources, it was better for them to be an itinerant cultivator rather than a sect head. Only after spending several years as an itinerant cultivation and gathering sufficient resources might one think of establishing a sect.

If they were lucky, they might even find a suitable location that was rich in spirit Qi for the sect. But such locations were rare and few in between, as they would need to have a spirit stone mine or spirit Qi spring at the very least under them.

Such locations had mostly been discovered by the majority of the cultivation sects and others would have to be incredibly lucky to find one in a deserted location or a completely new born spirit Qi spring to even had a chance.

Lin Mu and Jing Luo reached the border of the Fenlong kingdom in about ten hours, and this was when they weren't going at full speed. After all, they weren't running away from anyone and weren't in danger.

Even if Jing Luo had put on the wind strider boots, he was mainly using them with his own spirit Qi rather than the spirit stones. And the only reason why Lin Mu was sitting on the back of Little Shrubby and not flying on his own was because he was cultivating right now.

As days passed by, Lin Mu understood that he needed to increase his own cultivation base as much as he could in the shortest time. In the past two months, his cultivation had been increasing steadily and while he was not close to a breakthrough, Lin Mu knew that he was half way to the Adult Stage of the Nascent Soul realm.

Little Shrubby had some shocking gains in the past two months as well, and had reached the Adolescent soul stage of the Nascent Soul realm.

"How did you break through again?" Lin Mu questioned Little Shrubby through their link.

"I've been hunting beasts in the ocean and eating them. I found that, unlike the forest, there are a lot of Nascent soul realm beasts in the water. I don't even need to do much and they come out on their own to die." Little Shrubby said smugly.

Lin Mu had a wry smile on his face, understanding that Little Shrubby had basically eaten his way to a breakthrough. He had been aware of his taste for Nascent souls and knew that he had been desiring them for a while now.

Seeing the Saw toothed Tuna, Lin Mu knew that while the beast's body was intact, its Nascent soul had already been killed and possibly eaten by little Shrubby.

Lin Mu curiously checked the body of Little Shrubby and saw that it had become stronger than before. The Beast Qi that Lin Mu had given little Shrubby two months ago was fully assimilated and had brought about several minor changes that were hard to notice on the outside.

His bloodline also felt a bit more stable to Lin Mu and was possibly affecting him more than he could understand right now.

Once Lin Mu and Jing Luo reached the border of the Fenlong Kingdom, they could see the dense forest that started from there. Most of the area of Fenlong kingdom was sparse hills and trees, but on the southern border, the forest started.

"Once the trees of this forest start to turn red, we'll know that we have entered the territory of the Hong Lin kingdom." Lin Mu informed.

"Hmm... I've heard of this before. The Hong Lin kingdom is also known as the crimson leaf nation and is filled with the Hong Lin Trees. There are some special herbs that are only found here too." Jing Luo replied.

"Have you been here before?" Lin Mu questioned cursorily.

"Once when I was a child. I came here with my uncle to get some thousand year old Hong Lin wood. They are used as a material for weapons and are very good for use with fire attribute materials." Jing Luo answered.

"I see... anything of use we can get here in addition to our mission?" Lin Mu asked again.

"Hmm... nothing that specifically comes to my mind, but I guess we can get some resin of the Hong Lin trees here. I'll be able to make some more formations with it as it can be used in several unique inks." Jing Luo replied.

Chapter 674 - A Horde Of Monkeys

Lin Mu had heard of the Hong Lin tree resin before. It was harvested in the winters when the trees let out their sap and only those that were over a hundred years old produced this resin.

It was used to make ink, which was used in the creation of talismans and other formations. While most of the formations could be made with spirit Qi as the ink and spirit sense as the brush, the direct method of using actual ink and brush was also quite popular.

In some cases, that was the only way to make several formations that were above the capabilities of one's cultivation base. Many formation masters who had great skills with formation but were restricted due to their cultivation base used this method.

The ink used to make these formations and talismans was made by mixing and processing several materials. There were an almost endless amount of combinations that could be used, which led to several different formations.

Since the Hong Lin tree was innately of the fire element, its resin was the same and used in the creation of offensive fire attribute formations.

Of course, the number of Hong Lin trees that reached the age of over a hundred years were quite rare. This was because they had a hard time reach that age as they would either end up being cut down or dying due to some other problem.

As for the thousand year old Hong Lin trees, they were the rarest and there were no specific records of such trees. One could only wander around the forest trying to find one based on their luck.

"When you went with your uncle, did you even find the thousand year old Hong Lin tree?" Lin Mu questioned.

"We did find one... it was mostly dead through and only a single branch was viable to be used." Jing Luo answered.

"I see. I guess, we may as well get some of them while we are there, just in case we need it in the future." Lin Mu replied as they continued on their journey.

After about three more hours, they decided to take a break. Lin Mu and Jing Luo ate the grilled fish that was made by little Shrubby and were impressed.

"You've gotten so much better at cooking now." Lin Mu praised.

"Of course! I've been practicing every single day." Little Shrubby replied.

Jing Luo on the other hand, was confused.

'Why does a beast really like to cook so much though?' he had asked himself this question many times till now, but had eventually decided to give up.

He looked at the prosthetic hands he had made for little Shrubby, flipping and rotating the skewers that were being cooked on top of a grill with a wry smile. He silently shook his head and just decided to finish up eating his food.

After about an hour of rest, Lin Mu and Jing Luo were energized and returned to their journey. It was now night time, but it was no trouble for the trio to see in the darkness. Little Shrubby could see in the night even when he was a normal beast, while Lin Mu and Jing Luo just used their spirit sense.

"Eeeeeekkk!" The sound of a beast was heard echoing through the air and made Lin Mu and Jing Luo alert.

Traveling at night was not safe, and they had encountered their first obstacle.

"What was that?" Lin Mu questioned.

~sniff~

"There's another beast nearby, five kilometer away." Little Shrubby informed.

Jing Luo on the other hand, furrowed his brows and spread his spirit sense around.

"It's a Green Tail Howler monkey. This one is at the core condensation realm." Jing Luo spoke.

"Huh? Just Core condensation realm, that's nothing to us." Lin Mu replied.

"That's not the problem..." Just as Jing Luo was about to speak more, a cacophony of cries interrupted him.

"Eeeee! Eeeee! EEEEEEEK!" Hundreds if not thousands of cries of Green Tailed Howler monkeys could be heard now.

The sound was loud enough that Lin Mu and Jing Luo were forced to close their ears.

"DAMMIT! IT'S TOO LOUD!" Lin Mu yelled.

~Grrr~

Little Shrubby got annoyed by this too, and his eyes glowed in a dangerous light.

~ROAR!~

A thunderous roar was let out by him as a massive fire ball shot out of his mouth. The fireball traveled far, before exploding in the sky.

~BOOM~

The explosion of the fireball illuminated the area of around five kilometers, allowing Lin Mu and Jing Luo to see the beasts that were hiding in the shadows. They seemed to be a bit intimidated by Little Shrubby's roar, but soon a stronger presence was felt in the distance.

On one of the bigger Hong Lin trees, a Green Tailed Howler monkey was standing. Its back was straight and fangs jutted out of its mouth. It was nearly twice as big in size as a normal Green Tailed Howler monkey and seemed to be its leader.

"KIIIIII!" The Chief Green Tailed Howler monkey let out an oppressive cry as if ordering his kin to attack.

"EEEEEE! EEEEE!" The other Green Tailed Howler monkeys became bold upon hearing their leaders cry and charged towards Lin Mu and Jing Luo.

~Sigh~

"Seems like we get monkey meat added to the menu now." Lin Mu spoke.

"Hmm... that chief monkey is good, too. Its bones are one of the ingredients in making a fluted staff." Jing Luo added.

~shua~shua~shua~

"I guess, we fight." Lin Mu said as tens of spirit weapons appeared around him.

He held the black thorn spear in his hand and pointed at the beasts.

"KILL!" Lin Mu ordered.

~ROAR!~

Little Shrubby burst forward, going directly towards the chief green tailed howler monkey. With its speed, none of the weaker monkeys were able to stop him and he directly went to clash with the chief.

~Bam~

The sound of collision between Little Shrubby and the Green tailed howler monkey chief made a lot of weaker monkeys flinch, but this gave Lin Mu and Jing Luo the perfect chance to begin their slaughter.

Chapter 675 - The Hong Lin Forest

Swords and spears flew around as they decapitated, pierced and killed the Green tailed howler monkeys. In less than five minutes, the entire horde of monkeys was eliminated while Little Shrubby finished up fighting the chief.

He too returned with the corpse of the Green Tailed Howler monkey chief, which was being carried by the prosthetic hands.

"Well... that was quite a bit of action." Lin Mu said upon seeing the hundreds of corpses that littered the forest now.

"This is unusual though. They should not have been active at this time, not to mention attack us like this." Jing Luo commented.

"Indeed, this does not seem like their natural behavior." Lin Mu agreed.

He then looked at all the corpses and didn't feel like letting them go to waste.

"Little Shrubby, can you pile all the corpses up here?" Lin Mu asked.

~shua~

Little Shrubby didn't even wait to answer before he started collecting all the corpses. With his speed, only two minutes were needed before all the corpses had been stacked into a pile near Lin Mu.

Lin Mu then simply placed his hand on them and stored them into the ring, leaving only the Chief Howler monkey outside.

"You want its bones, right?" Lin Mu asked.

"Yes, I can use that to make a fluted staff." Jing Luo replied as he flicked his hand and set a spirit dagger to butcher the corpse.

"What's the Fluted staff exactly?" Lin Mu asked while watching Jing Luo dissect the Howler monkey chief.

"It's a high grade spirit staff that makes sounds when it is used. It has special holes and groves in it that makes sounds while passing through the air. These sounds can be modified with formations to cause disturbance to the opposing enemies." Jing Luo explained.

"Ah, I see." Lin Mu nodded his head.

While he also knew about staffs and had used some according to the thousand armament blade scripture, those staffs were different as they were all bladed, unlike normal staffs that were blunt weapons.

Overall, Lin Mu had not used as many blunt weapons and thus did not have as much experience with them. Once they were done with the clean up, the trio continued their journey and eventually reached their destination.

"That's the capital of the Hong Lin kingdom." Jing Luo spoke.

The two men stood on top of a hill as the sun rose from the horizon, casting a glow that made it seem like the forest was lit up with red flames. In the center of the forest, a city could be seen which was populated by over a million people.

The city didn't seem out of place in the forest though, as if in harmony. There were Hong Lin trees in the city as well, but they were more uniformly arranged, along with other normal trees and plants.

The Hong Lin forest was a rather unique ecosystem, which was able to sustain itself despite having only one kind of a tree as the majority. All other plants were in the minority, such that only ten percent of the entire forest consisted of normal plants.

It was considered to be one of the miraculous areas of the Great Zhou continent that could be witnessed by both commoners and cultivators alike. Most miraculous areas were inaccessible to commoners and thus were hidden.

Lin Mu could feel the beauty of the forest and felt rather calm.

"This place feels good... it's very comfortable for me." Little Shrubby spoke too.

"Indeed. For you, the fire element of the trees is also a plus point, I guess." Lin Mu replied.

Lin Mu closed his eyes and sensed the spirit of Qi in the area. After a bit, he could sense a different kind of spirit Qi in addition to the basic attribute less spirit Qi.

"Fire attribute spirit Qi..." Lin Mu muttered as he took a deep breath.

Spirit Qi rushed into his body from all seven of his apertures along with the millions of pores on his body. This spirit Qi had the fire attribute spirit Qi mixed in and thus automatically elicited a new response from his body.

As the fire attribute spirit Qi flowed through his meridians for the first time, they reacted to it and it was a bit uncomfortable for Lin Mu at first. But as he kept on breathing more and more, his meridians started to adapt to it and soon formed a small pool of fire attribute liquid spirit Qi in his Dantian.

The pool was small, containing only ten drops of liquid spirit Qi, but the rate at which Lin Mu had made it was astounding. If it were any other cultivator, it would have taken them several days just to be able to sense the fire attribute spirit Qi in the air if they did not have an affinity with it.

Lin Mu was someone who had the affinity with earth elemental Qi and none of the other elements. But despite that, his speed of absorbing was no less than that of a cultivator who had been cultivating using fire attribute cultivation technique their entire life.

In ten breaths, Lin Mu had expanded the pool of fire attribute spirit Qi to a hundred drops. At this point, something else started to change within his body. His heart suddenly started to heat up as waves of energy started coming off it.

As soon as Lin Mu sensed it, he realized what was happening.

'The five Treasures realm... it's progressing!' Lin Mu thought.

Unknown to himself, he had already entered an extremely focused state of cultivation. Jing Luo, who watched the change happening in a matter of minutes, was left with a wry smile.

~Sigh~

"Comparing oneself with geniuses will only hurt our Dao hearts..." Jing Luo shook his head and sat down, deciding to wait till Lin Mu was done with his cultivation.

Little Shrubby joined Lin Mu as well and started to absorb spirit Qi like crazy. To him, who had two beast bloodlines that were of the fire element, it was even faster than Lin Mu!

Chapter 676 - A Pair Of Nascent Soul Realm Brothers

Inside Hong Lin city, a large circular building with multiple smaller buildings stood. Its roof was painted red, while its walls were white. Looking at it, one could tell that it was made from Hong Lin tree wood, while the paint was made from the leaves of the tree.

At the front of it, a twin towered gate was built, at the top of which a board hung that mentioned the name of the building.

'Hong Lin Royal Palace'

There were hundreds of people entering and exiting the palace and guards stood at the sides, observing each and every person. There were both commoners and cultivators mixed into the crowd and all of them seemed to be following the proper etiquette.

Within this crowd of people, a couple of men wearing Daoist robes were also walking. They kept a calm expression on their faces and entered the gate. The guards at the gate observed them like all others and spirit sense spread over them.

After a couple of seconds, the guards nodded and let them in.

"Ugh, do we really need to do all this? Following the rules like commoners, this is humiliating." One of the men said in a low voice.

"Master named you Dai Heng so that you could have some perseverance while also being patient. Why don't you follow his wishes?" The other man replied.

"But senior brother, why do we have to be like this? We are at the Nascent Soul realm. If anything, all of them should bow to us when we are here." The man named Dai Heng asked.

"Master sent you out so that you could experience the world better. Just because you are a Nascent Soul realm cultivator does not mean that you can just exert your might and suppress others.

There is a place and timing for everything. Doing that here would bring you no benefits and you will only lose face for Master and yourself." The senior brother replied.

"Fine... I won't..." Dai Heng replied.

The two of them continued onward to the second gate, where they were checked as well.

The entire area of the place was divided into four circles. Each circle had different buildings and the innermost circle was the one that held the royal palace and the royal court.

All the other circles held other important buildings of the kingdom, such as the ministry of labor, the ministry of agriculture, the ministry of culture, and so on and so forth. Depending on their importance, they were all assigned in different circles.

The buildings in the outermost circle were the offices of minor officials and workers that took care of the miscellaneous tasks of the administration. The buildings in the second circle were those that housed the more important buildings, such as the royal library, the royal repository and many more.

The third circle contained all the ministries, while the final fourth circle was the one that held the actual royal palace.

All this took up half of the area of the capital city and looked like a large crown set upon the earth, with the buildings the decorations of the crown.

The two men in Daoist robes were halted at the second gate and were checked more thoroughly. The security increased the deeper one went into the circles, with the outermost circle being accessible to nearly everyone, including commoners, while the second circle and onwards needed special identity tokens to enter.

"Halt! Show us your identity token." The guard at the second gate spoke.

The senior brother among the two took out a relatively plain piece of paper and handed it to the guard.

"We do not have tokens, we were given a temporary pass. We have been invited to the palace." The senior brother spoke in a humble tone.

The guard narrowed his eyes and took a look at the pass. Only two lines were written on it and the words were written rather casually.

'Please grant entry to the bearers of this pass.

-Daoist Hua'

In addition to these lines, a red stamp that was in the shape of a leaf and another stamp that read 'Noon' was imprinted at the bottom.

The guard found it to be rather dubious and wondered if these men were here to ridicule them with a thing like this. But when his eyes fell on the red leaf stamp, he knew that it was genuine.

"Hmph! Enter, but next time tell whoever issued you this pass to use a better quality. It is very rude to use this kind of format for official documents." The guard warned.

The senior brother could only smile wryly, knowing that he couldn't really say anything to the person who issued them this pass.

"I'll keep that in mind, brother guard." The senior brother said before they walked ahead while the junior brother hid his face in embarrassment.

"Why doesn't master think of us when he sends us out on errands like this? His style is far more casual than it should be for someone of his stature." The junior brother stated.

~Sigh~

"Do you want to tell master? Feel free to do so. Just remember that fifth junior brother ended up plucking the grass of the back mountain one blade at a time, without using his cultivation for three years when he did the same." The senior brother warned.

~gulp~

"I... I'll keep it to myself." The junior brother hurriedly replied.

"That will be best." The senior brother said before they continued onward.

They were now at the third circle's gate and about to enter it.

"Show us your identity tokens!" the guards ordered.

The senior brother was about to hand the pass to the guard and the junior brother was about to hide his face to save the embarrassment, when suddenly he felt a spirit Qi wave coming from the back.

~thud~ thud~

Both of them turned around at a lightning like speed and took defensive postures. The guards who saw this became alert as well and thought that these two were here to cause trouble.

"Senior brother that..." the junior brother spoke.

"Someone powerful is here..."

Chapter 677 - Heart Refinement

The two brothers' action had made the guards alert too and they wondered if these men were about to do something problematic, but they just stood there talking amongst themselves.

Suddenly the guards realized that they couldn't hear what they were speaking and nor could they sense their cultivation bases.

"What?" one of the guards said.

One moment, these men looked like they were at the Qi refining realm and now they were unable to tell what realm they were at.

"What realm are they at senior brother? Peak of the Nascent Soul realm?" The junior brother asked.

"Possibly higher... unless it's something else." The senior brother said.

~shua~

But then the next moment, his expression changed as he felt another wave of spirit Qi coming from the distance, this time a bit weaker.

"Another one?!" The junior brother sensed it as well.

"Yes... there are two now..." The senior brother replied as he narrowed his eyes.

His spirit sense spread around, but was unable to find the source of the spirit Qi wave within the city.

"What should we do now?" The junior brother asked. "Do we go check it out?"

The senior brother thought for a bit before shaking his head.

"No... we need to finish our task first. Besides, as long as they are not causing trouble we have no need to interfere... and it's not our responsibility either." The senior brother answered.

~gulp~

"Okay," The junior brother replied as he lowered his spirit sword and stored it away.

The senior brother did the same and turned back to look at the stunned guards.

"Forgive me, brother guards. We have embarrassed ourselves. Please let us pass." The senior brother cupped his hand and spoke with a smile on his face.

"E... E-Enter," The guards opened the gate for them.

Back at the hill where Lin Mu and Little Shrubby were having an impromptu cultivation session, Jing Luo had set up a couple of barriers. He was writing in air, and making runes that floated to join the formation that he had made.

"There... this should be fine for now." Jing Luo said before turning to look at Lin Mu and Little Shrubby.

"These are guys... *~sigh~*" Jing Luo shook his head and sat down as well.

He then took out a few of the materials and started refining them. Jing Luo had not forgotten that he still needed to make the entrance token that would grant him the passage to the ancestral land.

He was barely ten percent done with the refinement of materials and he wanted to be done as soon as possible. Thus to not waste any time, he made use of all free periods of time he had while waiting.

Lin Mu and Little Shrubby on the other hand were having rather great progress and their cultivation bases were experiencing an increase once again. Except in the case of Lin Mu, it was his body cultivation that was increasing and for Little Shrubby, it was his Qi cultivation.

Inside Lin Mu's body, the fire attributive spirit Qi had now made a complete cycle and was ready to be assimilated by his heart. The pool of liquid fire attribute spirit Qi started to be guided towards the heart while the other meridians kept on refining more of it and depositing it into his Dantian.

It was a relatively balanced speed, though the process of consumption of fire attribute spirit Qi was still higher than that of refinement. Bit by bit, the fire attribute spirit Qi reached his heart and started being absorbed into its cells.

The heart was one of the five treasured organs and belonged to the fire element. It was responsible for providing blood to the entire body and was a vital organ. The stopping of it would cause even a cultivator to die.

The stronger one's heart was the better stamina they would have. Plus the other organs would also benefit overall, if a heart was strong and could withstand strains and stress, stably. If it were up to Lin Mu, he would have chosen to refine his heart first as well among the five treasured organs.

But unfortunately for him, he only had a technique for the earth element and thus had chosen to refine his spleen instead. While it was also an important organ, it wasn't directly useful for Lin Mu as much as a heart was.

Even right now, Lin Mu did not have a body cultivation technique that could cultivate fire attribute spirit Qi. The situation that he was in right now was because he was lucky and he had a bout of enlightenment due to sensing such high amounts of fire attribute spirit Qi for the first time.

It was his body's natural response and it was also the fire attribute spirit Qi in the air responding to it. It was the same as water moving from a high point to a lower point, until equilibrium was reached.

The fire attribute spirit Qi found his body conducive under its absorption and started entering it. Lin Mu took advantage of it and let his Heart take up as much fire attribute spirit Qi as it could right now.

Since the refinement of organs was easier at the start, even direct spirit Qi could help it. But in the latter parts, one ended up needing spirit herbs and pills to assist it as the process only got more and more difficult.

Lin Mu had plenty of fire attribute spirit herbs and even several pills and thus he chose to use the infusion of fire attribute spirit Qi he was experiencing right now to refine his heart as much as he could.

'This is rather different... I can feel the fiery warmth in my chest...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

The cells of Lin Mu's heart absorbed the fire attribute spirit Qi and started to change. They began to replicate and divide but the new cells that were born were better than the original cells.

These were the newly refined cells!

Chapter 678 - 30% Refinement Completed!

Lin Mu's heart started to change cell by cell and became stronger. The fiery warmth he was feeling in his chest was now accompanied by an itch. The itch was similar to what one would feel on their scabs and wounds when they were healing, but Lin Mu could not scratch it at all.

'Ugh... this is far more uncomfortable than I thought it would be...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

After all, while the pain was something he could tolerate and suppress, itching was something that went beyond that and could not be suppressed easily. Even being at the Adolescent stage of the Nascent Soul realm and the second level of the Five Treasures realm was not enough.

Lin Mu held on for about ten minutes, but it was getting a bit too much.

'Need to do something...' Lin Mu thought to himself and went to the solution he had used many times before.

Lin Mu started to chant the calming heart sutra so that it could calm the itch on his heart!

The effect of the sutra was rather effective as in less than ten seconds, Lin Mu felt the itching subside. The refinement of his heart still continued though and was now reaching fifteen percent completion.

This was a rather rapid pace, but Lin Mu knew that he would not be able to keep this up for long. Once the state he was in passed and the infusion of Fire Attribute spirit Qi stopped he would not be able to do it again.

'I need to find something that can be used to further my Five treasures realm body cultivation.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu let the process continue for as long as possible and focused on it so that it could be drawn for even longer. But eventually as an hour passed, he had to stop as the infusion of fire attribute spirit Qi stopped as well.

~huu~

Lin Mu let out a breath that was hotter than normal and opened his eyes. He checked his Heart and saw that it had reached thirty percent refinement successfully.

"Well... this was an unexpected gain... unexpected, but surely a welcome one." Lin Mu said.

Little Shrubby too woke up seeing that Lin Mu had woken up and stretched his body. Lin Mu couldn't sense anything particularity different in his body, but that was obvious as the beast had only recently broken through to the adolescent stage of the Nascent Soul realm as well.

Within his Dantian, the baby kitten was now the shape of a tiger cub. Once it reached the Adult stage, it would look the same as what Little Shrubby looked in real life. It was the same for Lin Mu too, as his nascent soul currently looked like what he used to look five years ago when he was fifteen.

'I'll need to keep in mind when I reach the Adult stage of the Nascent Soul realm... my appearance will become fixed after that.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu turned his gaze and saw Jing Luo busy with his own refinement. But what he was refining was far different than him, he was refining materials needed to make the entrance token.

Currently, Lin Mu could see three blocks of metal ores floating in front of Jing Luo as three different intensities of fires burned beneath them. All three of them were being held by what looked like a very compressed formation array and were floating stably.

Lin Mu was rather intrigued upon seeing this as he had not read or seen a method of refinement like this ever before.

"How's it going?" Lin Mu questioned Jing Luo in a low voice, so as to not disturb him much.

"It's going well... it's just that the refinement process for these metals is just too slow and there is nothing I can do to speed it up. It's not even that I need to make it reach the best quality I can, but rather to create a specific set of tempering patterns that only appear after a certain period of tempering." Jing Luo answered, his voice sounding a bit frustrated.

"Ah, I see. It does seem like a hectic job." Lin Mu replied, not knowing what much to say.

"It's just the constant changes that need to be done. This is way below my skill level, but the time period needed to do this all is what tires one out more." Jing Luo stated.

Lin Mu simply nodded and looked on at the small formation array that was in the form of a small forge.

"And what's this formation array? Did you design this?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Oh, this? This is our Ji clan's: Ji All-refinement Formation Array. This was designed by one of our ancestors a long time ago and is used by nearly every member of our clan. Though it is often modified according to the preferences of the refiner themselves.

It is rather modular and we can make changes as need be. This very same array can be reduced to only refine a single material as well. I currently have it set to three, but if the need arises it can even be expanded to hundreds of items.

These formations can also be inscribed onto a physical forge directly, making them even more powerful and efficient." Jing Luo explained enthusiastically.

Hearing the explanation Lin Mu felt rather impressed. Even in the records about formations that Jing Luo had given him, it didn't actually include any inheritance techniques such as these. The things that Jing Luo had given Lin Mu mostly involved the parts that he had researched himself and could give it out since he owned it.

As for the knowledge of his clan, he could not give it out without the permission of the patriarch. But if it were really up to Jing Luo, he wouldn't mind giving it all to Lin Mu anyway.

Having heard of Jing Luo's woes a realization suddenly occurred to Lin Mu.

Chapter 679 - Giving Jing Luo The High Leveled Knowledge

Lin Mu wondered why he had not done this before and then realized that he and Jing Luo had simply been far too occupied with other matters and did not come to the issue of refinement as much.

And even when Jing Luo did do refinement, he mostly did it on his own and alone. This didn't let Lin Mu think about it either and thus the current situation arrived where he had missed out on an upgrade that could have been done a while time ago.

"Senior Xukong, can you give Jing Luo the same weapon forging and spirit tool refinement knowledge that you gave to Jing Wei?" Lin Mu questioned.

Xukong, who had not spoken for a few days and had been mostly engrossed in his own cultivation, woke up upon hearing Lin Mu's voice. The first thing he did upon waking up was to check his surroundings.

'Huh? The fire element is rather concentrated here...' Xukong thought to himself.

He then went through the more recent memories that were stored in their shared consciousness and learned all that had happened in the past few days.

'A battle with a horde of monkeys and a lot of corpses... Hong Lin kingdom... fire attribute spirit Qi and a small bout of enlightenment.' Xukong saw.

"Oh? He even had some progress in the five treasures realm, that's good. Especially without the use of a body cultivation technique too..." Xukong muttered to himself.

Having seen the recent memories, Xukong now had a hang of all that happened and also learned what Lin Mu had asked for.

"I can give it to him as well, but it will come at a cost." Xukong spoke.

"Cost? You mean the ward?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Indeed. Every time it is used as an interface, it will weaken and run out of the energy it had. It cannot be replenished either and the world itself will interfere if we prod around too much." Xukong answered.

"How much will this take?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Currently you have about sixty percent of the ward left, doing this will take another ten percent of the energy," Xukong answered.

"I see..." Lin Mu said before thinking over it a bit more.

So far, the ward had only activated twice. The first was with Jing Wei and the second time with Gu Yao. That was because Lin Mu was far too weak before and compared to the overpowering enemies he had to face, it was necessary.

But now that he thought of it, he barely had any difficulty fighting against most enemies. Even at his Adolescent soul stage Nascent soul realm cultivation base, he didn't really have much trouble fighting Adult soul stage Nascent soul realm cultivators.

And while he had not fought any Dao Shell realm cultivators till now, Lin Mu was getting confident that he might actually be able to hold up against them. And even if he could not do that, he was more than confident in escaping.

Plus, he would enter the Adult Soul stage of the Nascent Soul realm soon and that would allow him to fight even stronger enemies.

'There is the Five Treasures realm cultivation too...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

After thinking to himself for a minute, he realized that he could easily sacrifice such a percentage of the ward with almost no problems. Besides, this would allow Jing Luo to speed up his work and get far more stronger than before.

In the long term, this was only going to benefit Lin Mu as well.

"Alright, senior... I've decided to do it." Lin Mu stated.

"Very well. I'll do it then... you may want to warn him before that though." Xukong suggested.

"Ah, yes. I'll do that." Lin Mu replied before opening his eyes and looked at Jing Luo, who was still busy with his work.

"Jing Luo," Lin Mu called out.

"Yes? Need something?" Jing Luo turned around.

"I have a way to speed up the refinement process." Lin Mu replied.

"You do? How?" Jing Luo questioned, feeling interested.

"My master has agreed to pass the weapon and tool refinement knowledge of the higher worlds to you." Lin Mu answered.

"He? What? Master?" Jing Luo was stunned to say the least, upon hearing this.

"Be ready." Lin Mu said as he pointed his finger towards the man.

Before Jing Luo could even say anything, he felt his vision go dark as a stream of information started to pour into his mind. After a point, he started to get a headache, but when he saw the information, he got excited.

"How..." Jing Luo couldn't help but marvel at the techniques and skills of the higher worlds.

About five minutes later, the process was complete, and Lin Mu lowered his hand. This time, not only had Jing Luo gotten all the information, but Lin Mu had obtained it too. But to him, the information was too high leveled and he could not apply it.

It was the same as giving a grade schooler the books to make a terrifying missile; It was useless. If they did not have the foundational knowledge that was needed to even reach that point, the rest of the information would just be useless.

But for Jing Luo, who was proficient and very experienced, all of this information was as if an oasis at the end of a desert. The oasis was the enlightenment he needed while the desert was the block he was going through, unable to pass and think ahead.

Jing Luo stayed in a state of comprehension for about an hour. During this time, Lin Mu ensured that nothing happened to him and guarded him. It was only fair, since he had done the same for him before.

Still, it wasn't really any trouble since they were in a relatively safe place and any beasts that could even come close were quite weak compared to them. Finally, after the hour passed and Jing Luo opened his eyes, joy was filled in them.

"This... WE WILL BE INVINCIBLE NOW!" Jing Luo declared.

Chapter 680 - Into The Hong Lin Capital

Seeing Jing Luo's response, Lin Mu knew that he had definitely figured out a solution to his problems from this.

"I reckon you had some good gains from this?" Lin Mu asked.

"Good Gains? That will be a grave understatement... this knowledge... I... If I'm given enough time, I can bet my life that I can make hundreds of peak grade spirit tools, pseudo immortal tools, or even ... an immortal tool!" Jing Luo spoke.

Seeing Jing Luo's enthusiasm, Lin Mu knew that the man was quite pleased.

"Very well then, I guess you should finish up on the entrance token first?" Lin Mu asked.

"I'll do that later. First, I need to assimilate all this information." Jing Luo spoke.

"Ah, yes. Your grandfather needed to do the same. That was also one of the reasons why he chose to go to the ancestral land." Lin Mu replied.

"That would be the most optimum decision. There is said to be a comprehension and enlightenment room there which can greatly speed up the process of learning new techniques and skills.

Though it does require a large amount of spirit Qi to operate." Jing Luo said.

"Oh really? Interesting..." Lin Mu stated, taking note of this.

"We should enter the city and get a place. It'll take me a few days to comprehend and assimilate all this. Plus, the target we want to find is also rather intricately hidden. We will need to be careful, lest they go further in hiding." Jing Luo said.

"Yes, that would be for the best. Let's head in," Lin Mu said before turning to look at little Shrubby. "You know what to do."

"I'll just stay here and cultivate. It feels good here." Little Shrubby replied.

"Yeah, do that. We'll be close by, anyway." Lin Mu replied before leaving with Jing Luo.

"Wait, the beast Qi." Little Shrubby reminded Lin Mu.

"Ah, yes. Let me give you some before leaving." Lin Mu stated before chanting the nurturing heart sutra.

In this area, the concentration of fire attribute spirit Qi was higher than normal and it was very conducive to Little Shrubby's cultivation. Normally, with the assistance of the beast Qi, the speed of cultivation was already increased by a certain level. Lin Mu could only imagine the speed little shrubby might have with a suitable area like this.

"Here you go," Lin Mu said as she sent a thick stream of Beast Qi to Little shrubby.

Little shrubby absorbed it and quickly sprawled on the soft grass before falling asleep.

Jing Luo looked at the barrier formations and spoke, "I guess we'll leave the formations here just in case."

"Mhmm, it'll prevent most people from coming close or even seeing him." Lin Mu agreed.

Jing Luo had already wended up the Ji All-Refinement formation array and was ready to leave. The two men flew towards the city before landing at a short distance away from it. Even if they would have no problem revealing their cultivation base in the Hong Lin City, it was still better to keep as low of a profile as possible.

After all, Gu Yao's spies could be everywhere and who knows if they report about them, which reached Gu Yao and he takes an interest in them. Plus, they also needed to ensure that the members of the Hei corps they were looking for wouldn't be scared off.

The remaining members of the Hei corps have been in hiding for years now and had only gotten warier and warier of the enemies. Even from their own companions and other members, they were barely keeping any contact.

'Hopefully, these members and Wu Hei are still in contact. If they are hiding, it should be under the guidance and instructions of Wu Hei.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu and Jing Luo had no problems entering the city and quickly found a suitable place to live in a rather isolated courtyard. The costs of these things were irrelevant to them with the amount of fortune they had and thus they directly picked a place that was the best one.

"This should be good enough. Take any room you fancy. I'll go out and take a look around the city." Lin Mu spoke.

"Alright, just be a bit more careful. We are now in the central area of the continent, which is far closer to several top sects and also the imperial capital. You are far more likely to encounter stronger cultivators here." Jing Luo warned.

"I'll keep that in mind." Lin Mu said before taking his leave.

He then spent the rest of the day wandering the city and learning more about it and its people. Lin Mu learned of the royal palace of the Hong Lin Kingdom that was located in the center of the city. It was the most eye catching piece of infrastructure and also took up nearly a quarter of the entire city's area.

He learned how it was divided into the different sections and the people that worked in it. Lin Mu also took the opportunity to find out more about the Hong Lin trees and where he could buy the type that Jing Luo wanted.

Even though it wasn't really the focus of their mission, it wasn't something that really caused Lin Mu any problems, so he thought he may as well do it.

"Huh... hundred year old Hong Lin wood is still available to buy at a high price but the thousand years old is nowhere to be seen. Just as Jing Luo said, they can only be found with luck..." Lin Mu muttered to himself while walking.

He had just consulted several traders that sold Hong Lin Wood and got the same answer.

'Looks like we'll just have to shelve this for later. I'll get started on the possible locations of the Hei corps members.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

The location that he was heading to was actually the royal palace, or more accurately, the second circle of the royal palace. This was the place where the law enforcement records were stored.