

## Walker 711

### Chapter 711 - Questioning Fu Delun

King Hong looked at the minister of law in front of him and so did advisor Liu.

Both of them were a bit upset at the time Fu Delun had taken to approach them. Usually, any minister that was within the city would be able to reach them in less than twenty minutes, as for the ones that were in the central district would be able to do the same in less than ten minutes.

As far as King Hong was concerned, Fu Delun was supposed to be in the ministry of Law and thus it should have taken him at most ten minutes, if not even less.

"Was Minister Fu Delun busy? It is uncommon for you to take this long." Adviser Liu took the lead this time.

Lin Mu accusing on their people had already put a bad taste in his mouth and now seeing that very same accused delaying royal summons only made him that much upset. It instead made it seem like it was the King who was actually incompetent and allowed his official to be lacking.

While Lin Mu didn't really think about them like this, to adviser Liu and King Hong, this would be the norm. If one of the court officials acts in a manner that is ill of their position, it reflects the situation of the royalty.

"Ah, indeed adviser Liu. Work has just been more and more hectic these few days. With the autumn festival on our heels and his majesty taking time due to his imminent breakthrough, the work is just even more intense.

I am working to ensure that his majesty is not troubled; not now and not after his successful breakthroughs." Fu Delun skillfully spoke.

He knew he was at fault here. He had not spent years in the royal court for nothing and knew how to read people. That minute change in the tone of the adviser was enough for him to know that the king had asked him here for something important.

'And who are these three? Their cultivation bases... that one is at the... NASCENT SOUL REALM? And the other two... I can't even sense them.' Fu Delun thought to himself.

While he didn't get fully nervous, he still became a bit more cautious. Right now he was in a situation where he didn't know why he was called here and there were even unknown people here.

"I see... I have called you here to meet three very respected cultivators. Meet Disciples Hua San and Hua Wu. Their master is the sect master of the Noon Grass Sect. And finally, we have brother Lin Mu, he is also someone of a standing equal to the previous too." King Hong introduced.

Fu Delun raised his brows upon hearing this as the gears within his brain started to move.

"Ah, did the Noon Grass sect decide to help his majesty?" Minister Fu Delun asked.

"Indeed." King Hong nodded his head.

"Good, good, good." Fu Delun nodded his head. "But what is it that respected seniors need of me?" he asked again.

"I am the one that asked King Hong to call in Minister Fu Delun today. It's just that I had certain questions to ask of you regarding some incidences and policies." Lin Mu replied.

Hearing this, Fu Delun became even more confused.

"Incidences and policies? What does senior need specifically? Did something happen to cause trouble for senior?" Fu Delun asked, thinking that this might be the only reason why he would be summoned.

It was obvious to him that Lin Mu was a strong and influential cultivator. And thus he was offended somehow and ended up contacting King Hong who then ended up summoning him to give the answer.

Fu Delun now started to sweat and wondered what could have been the problem.

"You see... I found minister Fu Delun's previous words to be a bit confusing. A few days earlier I visited the law enforcement department and saw quite a bit of disarray there. Most of the officials there seemed to be inept and the only qualified official, the head of the department, seemed to be handling all of the work.

He not only seemed overworked, but also troubled by the others working in the department.

In addition to this, I also found some past actions of minister Du Delun that interested me; such as the fact that you personally went ahead and arrested a certain group of suspects that go by the name of Hei corps." Lin Mu laid down the facts.

Fu Delun was confused at first but the more he heard, the more he sweated. And when he heard the name of Hei corps, he became alert instead.

"As I said before, work is piling on due to unavoidable circumstances that have led to all of us officials becoming very busy. As for the matter with the Hei corps, it was of utmost importance, after all, it was according to a decree sent by the empire itself." Fu Delun stated as a matter of fact.

"Hmm... is that so... they may I ask adviser Liu what are the policies on keeping official documents related to law enforcement? I mean the specific protocol of storage and records keeping?" Lin Mu questioned.

Adviser Liu was also a bit confused by Lin Mu's question, but answered it nevertheless.

"For any ministries, including the law ministry, all official records are to be stored in their designated records departments." Adviser Liu replied.

"I see. Then what if someone higher in power gives an order to shift certain records to a different location not officially designated?" Lin Mu asked further.

"That will be a gross misuse of power and will be met with swift punishment. Records are only to be withdrawn when needed for official work and the official designation for storage cannot be changed unless the king approves of it." Adviser Liu stated.

"Then I must ask King Hong a question... Did you permit Minister Fu Delun to shift records to the royal repository?" Lin Mu asked.

### **Chapter 712 - Treasonous Confirmation**

Hearing Lin Mu's question, King Hong was confused.

"I haven't had any official actions in the past three months and I have certainly not given any permission to Minister Fu Delun." King Hong stated.

"I see. Then I wonder why Minister Fu Delun ordered some records to be moved to the royal repository?" Lin Mu asked again.

King Hong and adviser Liu narrowed their eyes as they looked at Lin Mu.

"This is absolutely wrong your majesty. I have never done such a thing." Fu Delun lied right away.

Lin Mu could feel the nervousness of the man and the faint tremble of his legs rather easily.

"Oh, is that so minister Fu Delun? Then King Hong should be fine with us checking the royal repository, shouldn't he?" Lin Mu questioned further.

"This..." Fu Delun was now stuck, he didn't know how to proceed.

It was now that he suddenly had an idea.

"You are lying, there are no such records in the royal repository. After all, they have not been accessed since the king began preparing for his breakthrough." Fu Delun stated.

"Like I said, if King Hong or adviser Liu checks it, I believe we will find what are facts and what is fiction." Lin Mu replied calmly.

King Hong deliberated on it a bit and seemed to be hesitating. But then he took a deep breath and looked at his uncle.

"Please go and check the Royal repository adviser Liu." King Hong ordered.

"At once, your majesty." Adviser Liu said.

And just as he said this, it happened.

*~BOOM~*

Fu Delun threw out an explosive talisman that blasted the flooring and the chairs around, which knocked up a lot of smoke and dust.

"Got you..." Lin Mu said as he disappeared the next instant.

*~KACHA~KACHA~KACHA~*

"HNGMPGF!!!!" The sounds of multiple things cracking could be heard along with a muffled cry.

"YOUR MAJESTY!" Adviser Liu flew to the protection of King Hong while Hua San and Hua Wu also became alert.

They looked for Lin Mu but found him to be missing.

"What?" Hua San suddenly detected something with his spirit sense hidden behind the smoke.

*~WHOOSH~*

He waved his hand and executed a technique, blowing away all the smoke. Once the smoke was gone, they could finally see the scene behind it. Lin Mu stood there with his hand extended.

In front of him, Minister Fu Delun was as if frozen, while there were also shattered pieces of objects on the floor. If one looked at it, one would see that they belonged to a communication jade slip and two spatial storage tools.

"He made the wrong choice." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Escaping in front of Lin Mu was an impossible option. Even the use of the explosive talisman by Fu Delun was something under Lin Mu's control. Lin Mu knew he would need to show proof of action to the king and thus he simply made Fu Delun think that he was caught and act accordingly.

If Lin Mu truly wanted to, he could have frozen the man in the very first second he saw him move. But Lin Mu intentionally let it happen. Now there was inexplicable proof that the minister was acting against the interest of King Hong.

Even if he was not under the control of Gu Yao, he would have still been arrested for an action like this. The action of using the explosive talisman went beyond any common misdemeanor that the king might tolerate and was now the same as an attempt on his life.

After all, the explosive talisman that Fu Delun had used could very well hurt the king, and the smoke was enough for him to take advantage of and kill the king. Alas for him, there were four Nascent Soul realm cultivators in the room and all he wanted to do was escape.

*~THUD~*

"FU DELUN, YOU DARE!" King Hong was now truly angry.

He stood up with a bang and pointed his finger at the frozen man. Of course, he didn't know that Fu Delun was frozen and he just thought that the man was looking away from him.

Adviser Liu didn't speak about anything right now and closely protected his nephew while keeping an eye out for danger. He looked at Lin Mu, who was holding back Fu Delun with some unknown technique.

Of course, due to being at the Child Soul stage of the Nascence soul realm, his senses were also stronger and he was able to tell what the objects broken on the floor were.

"A communication jade slip and... two Spatial Storage treasures?!" Adviser Liu was shocked now as well.

He would have understood Fu Delun having one spatial storage treasure but two was beyond anything that the man should have been able to afford at his current income. Even he himself only had a single spatial storage treasure and only the king had two such.

In their treasury as well, they only had a couple of spatial storage treasures. And even those were just low grade ones and not the mid grade one that minister Fu Delun had. Adviser Liu knew at this moment

that even if Fu Delun was not being controlled by Gu Yao, he was obtaining ill gotten wealth from somewhere.

He finally looked at Lin Mu, who was casually standing there with his right hand extended out flat towards Minster Fu Delun. He then saw Lin Mu mutter something in a very low voice.

Upon hearing the words, he couldn't understand them and even felt strange. It felt like a daze, and he certainly didn't want that to happen to him in this situation. Thus he decided to ask the only person who could answer him.

"What is happening, brother Lin Mu?" Adviser Liu questioned.

King Hong watched on as he came back to the front from his Uncle's back.

"I believe this should be enough of an explanation." Lin Mu said, pointing to Fu Delun.

"Yes... it is enough..." King Hong finally spoke.

### **Chapter 713 - Another Ally**

To King Hong who had seen minster Fu Delun for a long time, he knew the nature of the man. He also knew that the man would have never acted like this before. A sudden change like this could only be attributed to a few things.

Either it was that the man was an imposter or that he was being controlled, just like Lin Mu had said.

"King Hong, perhaps we should still confirm this first." Adviser Liu asked.

"Go ahead, check the royal repository." King Hong replied before looking at Lin Mu and the other two disciples. "I believe you all can hold him?" he asked.

It was now that Lin Mu spoke.

"Oh, he won't move anymore." Lin Mu said as he moved towards Fu Delun and pushed him back with one finger.

*~THUD~*

The man helplessly fell on his back and did not react at all. His expression was stuck in a strange daze and his eyes were glazed over.

"He'll stay in this state for a couple of hours. You don't need to worry anymore." Lin Mu explained.

While there were many questions arising in the minds of King Hong and the others, they knew it was best to process and not think too much. Lin Mu had certainly used a skill that was beyond them, and they didn't want to pry into his secrets for the fear of offending him.

Lin Mu's might was already established by now and there was no need for them to test it beyond this.

King Hong sat back down on his throne and wondered where was it that he had gone wrong. He questioned himself if he had noticed all this earlier perhaps none of this might have happened.

Lin Mu, who looked at the perplexed expression on the king's face, guessed what he was thinking.

"Is King Hong wondering how all this happened?" Lin Mu questioned.

"How did you know?" King Hong raised his brows in surprise.

"It is not hard to guess. With Gu Yao... a lot of people have the same reactions. That is just how he operates. One day everything will be fine, then a few days later you would find people betraying you and everything flipping around.

That is how Gu Yao controls people and causes devastation." Lin Mu answered.

*~Sigh~*

King Hong sighed and didn't know what to make of this. He waited for Adviser Liu to appear and just kept on looking at the minister, whom he knew very well.

"Your majesty!" Adviser Liu's voice could soon be heard from the side.

In his hand were several documents, and a troubled expression was also on his face.

"Looks like... what brother Lin Mu said is true." Adviser Liu stated.

"Let me take a look myself." King Hong said as he took the documents in his hands.

He went through them one by one and saw the stamps of approval on them. The more he read, the more infuriated he got.

"This is atrocious! This is a joint seal of authority! How did Minister Fu Delun even get access to it?" King Hong said out loud.

"I wouldn't be surprised if they have forged even more documents and seals by now, King Hong. You may want to do a full audit of the officials. While I'm sure there won't be any more people being controlled by Gu Yao directly since he has limited numbers that he can control like that, I wouldn't be shocked if there were corrupt officials within." Lin Mu explained.

Adviser Liu and King Hong understood what Lin Mu meant and nodded their heads.

"Seems like we were this close to drowning and we would have never even realized it had it not been for you, senior Lin Mu." This time King Hong addressed him with even more respect.

"It is fine, King Hong. After all, this is what I set out to do. I want to prevent Gu Yao from completing his goals and I want your help in it as well." Lin Mu proposed formally.

*~clap~*

King Hong cupped his fists formally and spoke, "you have my word now, senior Lin Mu. You have saved the Hong Lin Kingdom from a grave disaster.

And seeing the severe implications of it, I don't think we will be able to keep ourselves away from the muddied water. It is best that we join you now."

Lin Mu nodded his head in approval, as this was exactly what he had set out to achieve.

"I'm happy that we could come to an agreement." Lin Mu spoke.

"This is great!" Hua Wu chimed in as well.

"Forgive me senior Lin Mu, but i need to get the things in order quickly. Can you pardon my leave?" Adviser Liu asked.

"Sure, please go ahead and do what you have to do, adviser Liu." Lin Mu replied.

"Thank you once again." Adviser Liu said while cupping his hand.

He then rushed out of the court hurriedly. Midway, his expression turned fierce and one could imagine the anger boiling over in the heart of the man. After all, today he had been through a lot. Not only did they find out about a massive plot to take over the entire great Zhou empire, but also about people being controlled.

And now that he learned that there were other corrupt officials as well, Adviser Liu's cap had blown off finally.

*~Sigh~*

King Hong sighed once again, and he now seemed a bit more fatigued.

"Perhaps King Hong should focus on his breakthrough for now. We shall wait here for today, at least till things get somewhat in order and nothing problematic occurs." Lin Mu said.

"If you can do that I will be grateful, Senior Lin Mu." King Hong stated.

"I believe you two are fine with this as well?" Lin Mu questioned Hua San and Hua Wu.

"We shall follow the words of senior Lin Mu." The two answers right away.

And with this, Lin Mu had added another ally to his alliance... this time an entire kingdom.

### **Chapter 714 - Hidden Problems**

The day after that passed rather quickly and a lot of new discoveries were made during that time. Lin Mu, Hua San and Hua Wu were still in the court so they got to see everything first hand.

King Hong also realized that his kingdom was in a lot more trouble than was being let on to him. It had become especially severe in the past months, ever since he entered the 'seclusion' for his breakthrough.

There were piles of criminal matters that had accumulated and the poor department head of the law enforcement office was handling it as much as he could. He was also the reason why the entire structure had not collapsed yet.

That single man had somehow managed to keep the department running while pushing the incompetent fools he had for subordinates. This also kept the other departments running somewhat.

The King was highly impressed by this and even Lin Mu was since he had personally seen the man back then. The name of the man was Xian Po, and he had been the head of the department for less than two years.

He had been made one when the last department head died two years ago due to an unexpected illness. Of course, Lin Mu found this suspicious and so did adviser Liu. Upon a bit more investigation, it was found that the death of the former department head was also due to the orchestration of Fu Delun.

The minister of law had been in control of Gu Yao for a long time now and according to what Lin Mu could analyze, had been in that state for at least three years. Lin Mu felt where this was linked since there was no way Gu Yao came to the Hong Lin kingdom to personally control the man.

He thus asked Adviser Liu for the records and even the king agreed since he wanted to know the weak link in his administrator and where was it that everything started to go wrong.

It was then that he found out that minister Fu Delun had attended the wedding of one of the sect elders of Light Harmony sect. This was a mid ranked sect of a similar size as the Tri Cauldron peony sect.

It's located to the west of the Hong Lin kingdom and is also part of the Zither wind alliance now. It wasn't just minister Fu Delun that had attended it either. A lot of high officials from nearby kingdoms had done the same, and now it was safe to assume that all of them could be under the control of Gu Yao.

In the case of Hong Lin kingdom, it was especially bad since Fu Delun was the minister of law and thus his position was rather special. Other than the king and adviser Liu he was the only man who could command the military power of the kingdom and also influence the policies of the kingdom.

Whenever a problem happened and something needed to be done, he was the first one to hear it, and then if it was deemed worthy he would elevate it to adviser Liu who would then present it to King Hong.

But with Fu Delun in Gu Yao's control, one could only imagine the level of changes he could cause. Corruption was one big thing which he used to influence other ministers and officials of the kingdom.

Right now, the Hong Lin kingdom was in such internal peril that over half of its officials were corrupt. The public had long since felt their impact, but the King was grossly unaware. Adviser Liu had his suspicions too all this time, but due to the many diplomatic changes occurring across the empire, he had been busy outside.

One could only imagine the luck of King Hong that it wasn't adviser Liu that was controlled rather than Minister Fu Delun as it would have meant the end for the Hong Lin Kingdom effectively.

One must know that if the king died, the next in line for the throne would be his heirs. But Adviser Liu being their grand uncle, would be able to usurp power rather easily. After all, he had his Nascent Soul realm cultivation on his side.

Though Lin Mu also knew that there was an additional Nascent Soul realm cultivator hidden underneath the royal palace. But he didn't let that out. He also gave an excuse about how he found out about the records kept at the repository and the law enforcement department.

The excuse he gave was that he had some special skills. Seeing his standing, King Hong and Adviser Liu didn't question him in detail, of course. They could care less that Lin Mu may have just spied on their secrets as their entire kingdom was close to grave danger right now.



But in addition to this, there were still more shocking things to come. Lin Mu and the rest were drinking some tea in the royal court, nursing their headaches when an official came running in frantically.

"MY KING! MY KING! ADVISER LIU! DISASTER! IT IS A DISASTER!" the voice of the official could be heard coming right from the corridor.

Hearing this, the brows of everyone in the room furrowed even more. The headache that they had borne came back and the tea they had drunk was wasted.

"What is it?" King Hong questioned, no longer caring for decorum.

"The... the... The Royal Reserve Storage... its... it's empty!" The official spat out with difficulty.

"WHAT!?" Both King Hong and Adviser Liu said out loud.

Lin Mu and the two Hua brother also focused on the official as they quickly scanned him from top to bottom with their spirit senses. They couldn't help but be suspicious about everyone now.

"Are you sure? I literally checked the storage a week ago and everything was right there." Adviser Liu stated.

"That's the thing... the things in the storage were never there! We went to do a manual inventory today and discovered that the entire place is under an illusory formation. There are no actual items in it!"

### **Chapter 715 - Empty Reserves?**

Hearing this information, the King didn't know what to think of.

"How can this even be?" King Hong said before looking towards his uncle.

"When you checked it was it the same?" He asked.

"No... I... when I checked it I just did a visual check with my spirit sense. I didn't actually touch them physically." Adviser Liu said in a sorrowful voice.

"I should have checked it dammit! If I did, then perhaps we would have found all of this earlier." Adviser Liu cursed himself.

"It is not your fault Adviser Liu. If they were able to set up a formation that could fool even your spirit sense, then there was nothing you could do. They may have even taken a harsher approach if they were outed back then.

At least now, we have several excuses for the discovery of the corrupt officials. Even if Gu Yao finds out that his plan has been derailed, he wouldn't know that we know of him. All that he will know is that some investigations were done, and the truth came out." Lin Mu consoled the man.

But he knew that no matter how much he did, the adviser would likely blame himself for a while.

"Senior Lin Mu is right. There is nothing you could have done, Uncle Liu." The king said a bit more affectionately. "You cannot blame yourself. We need you to be in the right place in these tough times."

~hoo~

Adviser Liu took a deep breath and closed his eyes before looking up.

"That is right... I can't be like this. Rather than moping about it, it's better to focus my energy on making things right." Adviser Liu said with determination.

"Indeed." Hua Wu chimed in.

Hearing him, the king looked at him and sighed.

"I'm afraid we won't be able to give you a payment for the help you've provided us," King Hong said to the two disciples.

To this Hua San just smiled and spoke, "there is little we can do now. Besides, the Hong Lin wood matters less now as we are in a more complex situation. While we do really need it in the sect, I'm sure the sect master will be able to figure out something else."

The reserve storage being emptied out also meant that there was no Hong Lin wood that was promised to the two disciples.

"What exactly is it that you need the Hong Lin wood for?" Lin Mu questioned.

He wondered what could be so important to them that they would need it.

Hua Wu looked at Hua San before seeing the approval in his eyes.

"Our supreme elder... he experienced Qi deviation and is now injured. To heal that we need to make a pill which needs the Thousand year old Hong Lin wood as one of the ingredients." Hua Wu answered.

"Master is looking for other options while we are here, and we aren't the only ones looking for resources. There are some others that we need and my fellow disciples are looking for them.

Thankfully, our sect is located near the edge of the Grand Southern Forest and most of the spirit herbs can be found there along with other beast materials. It's just some special herbs and minerals that can't be found there." Hua San added.

Hearing this, Lin Mu nodded his head and understood their situation.

"If you are willing to wait a month or a bit more, I may be able to help you with the thousand year old Hong Lin wood." Lin Mu said, much to the surprise of the two brothers.

Lin Mu then looked towards the King and asked, "King Hong you must know if there is still the possibility of thousand year old Hong Lin trees in the forest right? Your clan has been revering them for centuries now."

"Hmm... there are two locations where there are definitely thousand year old Hong Lin trees." King Hong spoke after thinking for a bit.

"There are?" Lin Mu asked.

"Indeed... one of them in the home of the first king. It is also the sacred land of our Hong clan. But going there is prohibited and the Thousand year old Hong Lin trees there are not to be touched.

They are the trees that keep the entire Hong Lin forest alive and even if one of them is damaged, the entire forest away suffer." King Hong revealed.

"I understand... that is indeed a very important location. But what about the second one?" Lin Mu questioned.

Even the two Hua brothers were surprised as they were not told this information when they came to ask them for help. They could understand about the sacred lands as that was something they could definitely not ask for.

"The second location... that is a difficult and dangerous one. Over the many years, many rumors have sprung up about that location. It is called as the wandering sinkhole." King Hong spoke.

"The Wandering Sinkhole?" Lin Mu questioned.

"I think I've heard of this before." Hua Wu suddenly spoke. "It is said to be a mystical location that is rarely stumbled upon by travelers and woodcutters. It has no fixed coordinates and has been reported to be in multiple locations. But whoever truly enters it either doesn't return or dies." He explained.

Lin Mu was intrigued by this and wondered what could be the reason.

"What you said is correct. We do have confirmation that the location is real, but it is also filled with a myriad of dangers. The only problem is that we have no method to enter it. The location is filled with treasures through and thousand year old Hong Lin trees aren't the only spirit plants there." King Hong answered.

"Huh? If you don't know its exact location, then how do you know what things it has? Someone must have seen and returned to tell the tale, right?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Yes... someone has indeed seen it and recorded his experience." King Hong answered.

"Can't we just ask them for more information, then? Perhaps we'll get some clues.." Lin Mu suggested.

### **Chapter 716 - Former Adviser**

Hearing Lin Mu's words, King Hong sighed.

"The person who returned and recorded his experience... is already dead." King Hong replied.

"Huh? Who was it?" Lin Mu asked.

"Back then he was just a common woodcutter that went a little too far to get some good timber and stumbled into the Wandering sinkhole. Five hundred years later, that man found a way to leave the wandering sinkhole and returned to the kingdom.

He then became an adviser for the king due to the extensive knowledge he had gained during his time in the sinkhole.

He is the Royal adviser from three generations ago surnamed Chu. He died about a year ago and had been serving as the protector of our kingdom all these years. He simply ran out of lifespan. That is also the reason why I am in a hurry to breakthrough since we only have a single Nascent soul realm cultivator in our kingdom now." King Hong replied.

"Huh? Wait a minute, how did you know he died?" Lin Mu questioned, remembering a certain someone.

"We stopped sensing his spirit Qi since then." Adviser Liu spoke.

Hearing this, Lin Mu was quite sure that these people were mistaken.

'If it really is that old man downstairs then it's now wonder that they don't really have a proper clue.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

"Just to confirm... did you see his dead body?" Lin Mu questioned.

To this, both King Hong and Adviser Liu shook their heads.

"No... we don't even know where the former adviser's seclusion chamber is. All that we know is that it is somewhere in the central district." King Hong spoke.

Hearing this, Lin Mu was absolutely sure that these people were mistaken.

"Well, if that is true then... I have both good and bad news for you." Lin Mu said.

"Good and bad news? What?" King Hong asked, feeling curious.

"I think I know where your former adviser is, and the good thing is he is still alive." Lin Mu replied.

"WHAT!" King Hong and Adviser Liu said in shock.

"Indeed... but not for long. His life is slipping away as we speak... I can still sense him. I understand that you all might not be able to sense him, but my spirit sense is far greater than most others." Lin Mu explained.

"WE HAVE TO SEE HIM!" King Hong stood up urgently.

"Before we go, let me just inform you that he might not even be conscious. If his spirit Qi signature fell this much, then there is a great chance that he didn't do it himself but rather his body did it for himself." Lin Mu warned.

He couldn't just say that he had seen the old man and thus this was the best excuse he could come up with.

"We understand. If I get to see him just once, I'll be content. A man like that needs a proper burial!" King Hong stated righteously.

Lin Mu nodded his head and hoped the old man was still having a bit of life left in him. At least enough to talk with them.

"Where do you sense his spirit Qi?" Adviser Liu asked.

"Far in the depths of the palace." Lin Mu replied.

"Below? But there's only the repository and the meeting room there... what else?" Adviser Liu muttered to himself.

"If it is the former adviser, perhaps he got a seclusion chamber made for himself unknown to us. After all, he has been part of the royal court for over five hundred years." King Hong suggested.

"Hmm... that could be it. It isn't unheard of for certain experts making their secret seclusion chambers. A lot of elders in the cultivation sects do the same." Hua San spoke up.

"Very well, we should hurry, then. Every second is precious!" King Hong stated.

"Follow me," Adviser Liu said and brought them downstairs.

The Hua brothers had already seen a few of the floors but the ones below it were only seen by adviser Liu, and King Hong. Lin Mu had seen them too of course, but that was under different circumstances.

About five minutes later, Lin Mu and the rest reached an old room that was filled with old and dusty furniture and objects that were not used for a long time.

"What is this room?" Hua Wu questioned curiously.

"As far as I know, this used to be the personal study of some of the advisers in the past. Later on we added more floors to the palace upward and expanded it a bit, thus the past two generations of advisers have been using a different place." Adviser Liu answered.

"Is the seclusion chamber really here? If it was, we should have known or discovered it at some point." King Hong spoke doubtfully.

"It's below this... I can sense it to be stronger." Lin Mu spoke.

"Then how do we get there?" King Hong asked.

Lin Mu closed his eyes and let his spirit sense wander. Adviser Liu, and the two Hua brothers did the same and tried to see if there were any hidden entrances. When Lin Mu had used phase to go below, he hadn't really paid much attention to the entrance.

He observed the area and realized that there really wasn't a specific entrance to it.

"He may have sealed it entirely when he entered it. He probably decided it to be his final resting place." Xukong suddenly spoke.

"Seems like it, senior. They even placed a spirit sense dampening formation below the floor, thus they can't even tell there is empty space there." Lin Mu replied.

"Just go in, directly. If there is no entrance, make one," Xukong suggested.

Lin Mu internally nodded and looked at King Hong.

"If you don't mind, I can just make an entrant for us?" Lin Mu asked.

King Hong thought for a bit, but agreed.

"This matter is of grave importance. You can go ahead, it doesn't matter if this place gets, damaged we can always repair it.." King Hong replied.

### **Chapter 717 - Old Generation's Gift?**

King Hong's reply was exactly what Lin Mu wanted, and he was pleased.

"Very well then, please get back." Lin Mu spoke.

He picked a location that was a bit far from the old man's position just so that he would not be disturbed excessively.

*~shing~*

The short sword was summoned from his ring and floated in front of him. Lin Mu had stopped keeping the short sword on his waist for a few weeks now. It was mostly because of the new disguise he had taken up, though.

King Hong and Adviser Liu gazed at the short sword, finding it to be of impeccable quality.

"Excellent blade! I don't think I've ever seen anything of this level in our sect.." Hua San praised.

"Where did you get this Senior Lin Mu?" Hua Wu asked.

"Oh, I got this from the patriarch of the Jing clan." Lin Mu said, stunning the three.

While he had told them that the Jing clan was still alive, they had not expected Lin Mu to have a weapon like this.

"No wonder..." Hua San muttered.

*~SHING~*

Lin Mu controlled the Short sword expertly and let it slide into the floor as if it was a hot knife sinking into butter. Seeing this, the others were even more shocked. The floors were tough and made out of dense rocks that were hard to break.

Yet here Lin Mu was cutting through them as if they were paper. A circular opening was quickly carved out onto the floor.

*~shua~*

*~thud~*

"No, no! You can't fall!" Lin Mu said as he quickly grabbed onto the circular piece of floor that he had cut.

His fingers directly dug into the solid rock as if they were a block of tofu.

*~gulp~*

Seeing this, Hua Wu couldn't help but swallow his saliva. He knew how much strength a Nascent Soul realm cultivator had and it was even different when just physical strength was considered excluding spirit Qi.

And from that he knew for sure there would be very few that would be able to puncture through a meter thick rock with the same ease as Lin Mu did.

Having grabbed the piece of the floor, Lin Mu set it to the side and the five men finally felt the gush of spirit Qi coming from it.

"So much spirit Qi? But how?" King Hong couldn't help but feel curious.

"Seems like there is a spirit Qi gathering formation along with several spirit herbs in here." Lin Mu said.

They breathed in the dense spirit Qi for a bit before coming to their sense.

"Let's get in." Lin Mu said and flew down.

The others followed behind him and they finally reached the seclusion chamber, which was made out of several halls and a huge outer courtyard. There were spirit herbs planted according to formation array which promoted their growth and increases spirit Qi.

"I could have never believed this... so many rare and precious spirit herbs..." King Hong said in surprise.

"I believe this might have been an additional security that the former adviser had for the kingdom. I reckon once he died, the formation array that concealed this place would have stopped working and you would have sensed the place." Lin Mu spoke.

"Hmm... that does seem like what the former adviser would think. He was that kind of a man..." Adviser Liu spoke.

"You met him, uncle?" King Hong asked.

"I have indeed... though only a few times. Back then I was quite young and was barely in the Qi refining realm." Adviser Liu spoke.

"How far ago was this?" King Hong asked.

"About two hundred years ago, I suppose. The adviser back then was your grand uncle. And the old adviser here is two generations before that." Adviser Liu replied.

"That was a long time ago..." King Hong muttered. "I wasn't even born then..."

The five of them looked around a little bit and finally reached the end of the corridor where an old hall was located. At the center of this hall, a cushion was on which the old man was sitting.

"It... it's really him... it's Former Adviser Chu!" Adviser Liu said in disbelief.

The others were a bit taken aback by the old man's appearance, though. This was perhaps the oldest looking person he had seen.

"Senior brother, is he...?" Hua Wu whispered.

"Indeed... he's undergoing the final decay of mortals." Hua San replied.

Lin Mu heard what the two brothers were speaking and knew of the 'Final Decay of Mortals'. This was nothing but a term that was used when a cultivator used the end of his lifespan.

The strange thing was, it was actually a rather rare thing to see. Most cultivators never actually reached the true end of their lifespan and would mostly die before that due to other reasons.

Either they would die due to a mistake during cultivation or die due to some other external danger, including being killed by cultivators, beasts, heavenly tribulations, and many more.

Another reason why it was hard to observe it was because most cultivators that underwent it would enter seclusion and would thus not be seen. By the time people found out about them, they would have already turned into dust and bones.

The old man who was named Chu did not respond when the five men got close, and it was obvious that he was in an unconscious state.

"What do we do now?" Hua Wu asked.

"Seeing his state, I don't think we can wake him up directly. That may just end up killing him." Adviser Liu spoke.

Now they were in a dilemma about what to do. While they had managed to come here, waking up the old man and gaining information was another obstacle.

It was now that Xukong spoke again.

"Use the healing technique. While it won't heal his deep seated injured due to aging, it should still give him enough to wake up. If we're lucky, it might just work." Xukong suggested.

"Let's try it then..." Lin Mu said and walked ahead.

### **Chapter 718 - Third Attempt At Healing**

Lin Mu placed his hands on the old man's chest gently while keeping an eye on whether he would respond or not. Usually, cultivators such as these that entered such a deep seclusion would only wake up in times of distress.

Thus there was a chance the old man might still wake up if Lin Mu touched him, but surprisingly, he did not.

'He's far deeper in this...' Lin Mu thought and used his spirit sense to check the body of the old man.

There he could see the years of damage and aging. Over sixty percent of his meridians were damaged and the spirit Qi flowing within them was weak. His muscles had already degraded to a dangerous level and there was no chance of them getting healed.

The same could be said before his skin and bones, which had turned weak. His blood vessels were also blocked with hundreds of small clots that obstructed the blood flow and prevented proper circulation.

While Lin Mu was checking the old man, the others were observing him. They didn't know what he was doing, but for now, Lin Mu was the best option that they had at getting out of this situation.

After about five minutes of a detailed check, Lin Mu finally decided to peer into the man's dantian.

'Huh? Why is it like this?' Lin Mu couldn't help but wonder.

The old man's Dantian was like a stone and it was hard for him to enter it. But with Lin Mu's spirit sense, he did manage to penetrate it, of course. Finally, in the Dantian he could see a dried up spirit Qi sea, which was more like a small pond now, and a Nascent soul that looked similar to the old man floating above it.



Seeing the scene, Lin Mu understood that this might be one of the effects of the Decay of Mortals. But having observed it all, Lin Mu now had an idea of how to use the healing technique.

This would be the third time he was using this technique, but compared to the last time, his cultivation base was vastly different.

*~shua~*

Lin Mu started injecting gentle streams of spirit Qi into the old man's body and they entered his meridians. There they started to first clear up some of the blockages made from injuries and impurities gained over the many years.

Lin Mu had to take it slow to ensure that no extra harm was brought to the old man. Bit by bit, his meridians recovered and by the time he was done, the old man's meridians were about seventy percent functional.

While they were not fully repaired, it was still far better than before. Lin Mu then moved on to his other tissues and muscles, trying to fix as much as he could using the spirit Qi that circulated within the old man's body.

Due to being old, the man didn't have much of his own vitality left. That was what the technique used to heal a person, but in this case, Lin Mu had to supply some of his own vital energy to the man.

Hua San and Hua Wu, that were watching Lin Mu were shocked at this point.

"Is he... Is he healing him?!" Hua Wu said in shock.

"What? That's not possible. Adviser Chu's injuries aren't direct but due to his age. They aren't something that can be healed with a pill or something like that." Adviser Liu said, unable to comprehend that a technique like the one Lin Mu was using even existed.

The king though kept his silence and let Lin Mu do whatever he was doing. An hour passed like this and by the end of it, the observers could certainly see some differences between the previous state of adviser Chu and the current state.

While his body was still old and wrinkled, the skin had eased up a bit and the age spots on his skin had also reduced.

*~Huu~*

Lin Mu took a deep breath and lifted his hands from the old man's body.

"How is it senior Lin Mu?" Hua Wu questioned.

"I've done all I could. Now the rest is up to him. He is in a deep slumber caused due to his body slowly shutting down. I managed to heal some parts, thus he should at least be able to wake up." Lin Mu answered.

"How long will it take?" Adviser Liu asked.

"Can be anywhere from an hour to a day." Lin Mu replied.

"I see..." Adviser Liu muttered.

"A day is nothing if we can get something out of this and get to talk with former adviser Chu." King Hong nodded.

"Exactly," Lin Mu said and sat down on one of the cushions that were lying around.

Lin Mu noticed one thing: that this hall was clean, unlike the other ones. He spread his spirit sense around and found the reason for it; there was actually a cleaning formation embedded into this hall as well.

Lin Mu remembered his own cleaning formation that he had placed in his old house in the northern city. While he had abandoned that place now, he had taken away the graves of his parents and thus his home could be wherever he wanted it to be.

The others also sat down and waited for the old man to wake up. The spirit Qi on the floor was concentrated and thus it was not like it was uncomfortable for the others. They could very well stay here for days if not months here with no problem.

Lin Mu took this time to observe the area in better detail. Last time he was afraid that the old man might wake up and thus he had not used his spirit sense as much, but now he had the full freedom to do so.

Though what Lin Mu was looking for was any old records or documents that might come to his use here. Seeing how old the former adviser was, Lin Mu reckoned there must be something.

### **Chapter 719 - Adviser Chu Wakes Up**

"He's... he's... moving!" Hua Wu said out loud.

Lin Mu and the rest ended up waiting about twelve hours, after which the old man moved for the first time. Their attention went to the old man and they could see his fingers trembling.

After a few more minutes, his face started to twitch as well and then his eyes opened with great difficulty.

*~HUU~*

The old man took in a breath and looked around with his hazy and glazed eyes. One of his eyes was possibly blind already, as there was a cloudy layer on it. His left eye though, looked to be fine enough.

The former adviser noticed the people sitting in front of him and for a second there, a strong wave of spirit Qi emanated from him.

Everyone except for Lin Mu trembled at the pressure that was exuded by the old man in that moment and a cold sweat broke on their backs and foreheads..

"That... strong..." Hua San muttered.

The pressure that the old man had just emanated was no less than some of the elders of his sect that he had met. This was a lot compared to most cultivators that did not belong to sects.

*~gulp~*

Hua Wu and Adviser Liu couldn't help but swallow their saliva upon feeling that pressure. King Hong, on the other hand, didn't really feel it accurately since he was not at the Nascent soul realm like the others.

While he did feel the spirit Qi fluctuation, he did not feel the oppressiveness from it. Lin Mu on the other hand, only felt like a breeze of wind passed by him. Though he was aware that this was emanated by the old man.

Lin Mu stepped forward and spoke, "can you hear me adviser Chu?"

The old man slowly lifted his gaze and looked into Lin Mu's eyes. Lin Mu felt as if the old man could almost peer through him and gaze into his soul. It made him shudder a bit, but he held on.

*~Sigh~*

The old man let out a sigh and lightly shook his head.

"The youth... overcome the elderly..." the old man said for the first time.

Hearing the hoarse and old voice of the man, Lin Mu felt uneasy. He was once again reminded of the mortality of humans and the limitations that they had. His determination to grow stronger was reaffirmed again.

King Hong and adviser Liu also came forward and kneeled on the ground before cupping their hands and lowering their heads.

"It is a great honor to meet you again, Adviser Chu. I am Hong Liu," Adviser Liu introduced himself first.

"And I am King Hong Qiqiang, grandson of King Hong Liqiang." King Hong said, relating himself to the king two generations ago.

Since he had never seen the adviser Chu before, there was no chance he would recognize him. Even his father's name might not do well since the man was very old and he didn't know if his memory would allow him to remember his father.

After all, when adviser Chu held his position, it was during his grandfather's and great grandfather's time.

After hearing these words, the old man did not respond and simply stared emptily at the people.

"How long has it been?" The Old man questioned.

"It has been two hundred years since the reign of King Liqiang, adviser Chu." King Hong answered.

*~Sigh~*

"It has been too long... I have been on this earth for far too long." The old man spoke in melancholy.

"If adviser Chu allows it, we would like to formally venerate you in the ancestral temple. We know that your lifespan is at its end and there is little we can do, but we can't afford to let your contributions go to a waste." King Hong spoke.

"Spare me the trivialities child... I have seen far too many of them in my time... speak, what is it that you need? This chamber is not something anyone should have discovered unless I was dead." Adviser Chu spoke in a calm voice.

"This... we have a request of you." King Hong spoke, calculating his words.

Adviser Chu looked at King Hong's face and suddenly spoke, "you want to ask me about the wandering SinkHole don't you?"

Hearing this, King Hong and adviser Liu were shocked and wondered if the old man had read their minds.

"How did you...?" King Hong muttered in surprise.

"When you've lived as long as I have, making prediction becomes easier. Besides, there are very few things that would be worth getting from me and my knowledge about the Wandering Sinkhole is the only thing that might be worth this effort.

I do not know how you managed to wake me up like this as I was sure my meridians had already shut most of my body down." Adviser Chu explained.

"I see... well yes, we do want information about the wandering sinkhole." Lin Mu was the one to speak this time.

"Hmm... fine. I'll tell you all that I know... I don't know how much time I have right now anyway." The old man stated.

Hearing this, the ears of everyone in the room perked up and they got ready to listen to it.

The old man closed his eyes for a couple of minutes and seemed to be meditating. Only after he was done with it did, he opens his eyes.

"The wandering Sinkhole is a unique phenomenon that occurs in the Hong Lin forest. Most people think of it as a mystery or even a curse. But in reality, it is nothing but the entrance to a minor plane.

I entered it accidentally when I was a teenage lad and fell into it. Thankfully, I fell into a body of water and managed to survive otherwise I would have been dead. But even then, a fall from that height into straight water was not without injuries.

I broke several of my bones and got a lot of bruises in the process." The old man said and took a pause, his breath heavy.

### **Chapter 720 - The Story Of Adviser Chu - I**

Having rested for a few seconds, Adviser Chu began to speak again.

"After falling in, I barely managed to pull myself out of the water. Only after coming out of it did I realize that it was a deep lake. I laid on the ground, tired and in pain, as I stared up at the sky.

It was then that I realized another thing... It didn't look like the top of the sinkhole anymore. Rather, it looked just like a normal sky to me with no borders.

I was naïve and didn't have any cultivation base back then and didn't know how all this happened. Terrified and confused, I laid there until eventually, the pain became too much for me to do nothing.

I crawled around to find something that may help me. I knew of some herbs and plants that could help with pain in the Hong Lin forest and I wondered if I could find one of them here.

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Since my Body tempering realm cultivation was only at the fifth stage of the Body tempering realm, I couldn't heal my bones faster either. I ended up spending two days in a helpless state.

In the end, I was far too exhausted and fell unconscious. When I woke up after an unknown amount of time, I found my body to be completely fine. My broken bones in my legs and ribs were fully recovered.

But that was not all as I also discovered far more strength in my body than before and along with it a different kind of an energy in my body other than the vital energy. I later realized that this was spirit Qi!" The old man spoke.

"Huh? You directly broke through to the Qi refining realm? How is that possible?" Hua San asked.

"Back then, I didn't know either. But after spending about a month there, I started to learn more about the place. The large lake I had fallen into actually had mysterious properties that healed my body and even increased my cultivation base.

I started to explore and wander around the area and learned more about it. The lake was just one part of the sinkhole and there were many more unique areas in it. There was the forest that was filled with dangerous beasts who could easily kill me at that time and poisonous plants that would kill me if I got too close to them.

The dangers were many and, knowing that I was in the blind about that place, I just observed from a distance. For food, all I could eat were some tubers I found growing near the lake.

Making fire was easy enough, and water was easy to procure as well. What I didn't know was that everything around that lake was beneficial for one's cultivation. The water contained medicinal properties while the tubers contained spirit Qi.

I spent about a year in that area, unable to proceed any farther because of the danger. The beasts would kill me the moment I would step out of a certain radius." Adviser Chu explained.

"Wait, then why did the beasts not attack you near the lake?" Lin Mu questioned.

"It was due to the water of the lake as well. Apparently, it was good to repel beasts though, for plants and humans. I guess it was very beneficial. Though in that one year I had a lot of gains.

My cultivation base reached the late stage of the Qi refining realm in that span. I of course, took full advantage of the lake water and the tubers around it, but I realized the lake water started to lose its effects after a few months.

While the tubers still provided me with spirit Qi, they started to run out of numbers. By the end of the first year, I had no tubers to eat. At that point, I realized that I had to leave the place or I would starve.

I had no cultivation technique and thus all I could do was to use my raw strength while strengthening my limbs with spirit Qi. My first battle was with a small beast that looked like a mix between a dog and a raccoon.

It was the most difficult battle I had gone through, and I was quite injured by the time I managed to kill the beast. It was a bit strange since the beast was actually at a far lower cultivation base than me.

I realize that unless I gained better control over my spirit Qi, I would probably not be able to fight many more beasts. I did my best to learn about spirit Qi while also hunting more and more beasts.

Another two years passed like this before I was able to continue onwards. It was also during this time that I broke through to the Core Condensation realm. After that, things became a bit easier for me and I could see the rest of the sinkhole.

The area was rather large and even after ten more years; I had barely covered half of the area. There were many different areas in the sinkhole, from lakes to swamps to forests and even some tombs.

I had not given up my search for an escape route but was unable to find anything. Even now I didn't have any cultivation technique and had to depend on external resources to increase my spirit Qi.

If I depleted my spirit Qi, I would not even be able to recover it actively. I would just have to wait for the spirit Qi to passively regenerate. This often led to some rather dangerous situations in the sinkhole.

The beasts, along with the dangerous areas, made for a bad combination and could make you stuck in one area for a long time.

It wasn't until a hundred years passed that I actually found a cultivation technique in one of the tombs. It was made by another cultivator who had perhaps fallen in an unknown amount of time ago." The old man spoke in detail.