

Walker 181

Chapter 181 - Father And Son

The scholarly looking man named Wu Hei stared at the person in front of him for a few seconds in silence.

"Fine. What is it that you need? And don't repeat the same thing, I know you have an excuse for coming here." Wu Hei spoke in a dismissive tone.

"Ah, look at you talking to your father like that. Your mother would be so disappointed in you." Wu Heir's father spoke in the same teasing tone as before.

~Hmph~

"As if! Mother hates you no less than me. If it were up to her, she would have left just as elder brother did." Wu Hei spoke in a condescending tone.

Upon hearing the harsh words of Wu Hei, his father's expression changed. It was no longer the teasing and playful one, but rather one of seriousness. The man's entire aura had changed, if it was mellow before now it exuded power and authority.

"Alright, as you wish. I'll just tell you what I am here for." Wu Heir's father spoke.

"That would be for the best." Wu Hei said with a straight face without moving his eyes from his father.

"The disciples of the Tri cauldron peony sect have been posted here. They will be living at a property here in the eastern district of the city." Wu Hei's father spoke.

~Chuckle~

"Oh? That's rather surprising. I thought nothing went past your eyes and ears, 'Mayor'." Wu Hei said, with a sarcastic tone. "Looks like your influence has fallen, such that even outsiders from a sect can go behind you and buy property here."

An irritated expression appeared on Wu Hei's father upon hearing his words.

"I've been busy lately, there are far too many things to handle lately. You would know this if you ever came and saw, but here you are spending your life in reading and more reading. At least your brother went and joined the kingdom's army; that is a thing of prestige. If you want to be a scholar, go and join the Royal Court, at least that way you would make use of your worthless life." Wu Xun said trying to insult, but elicited no reaction out of Wu Hei.

Wu Hei kept the same straight expression and did not mind his father's words. This was not the first time he had something like this, and over the years he had become far too used to them, that at this point he was just numb.

"And, what is it that you need with these disciples of the Tri cauldron peony sect?" Wu Hei questioned, completely ignoring the earlier words of Wu Xun.

~Sigh~

"I want you to keep an eye on them. Make sure they don't try anything too much. I don't want a repeat of last year again." Wu Xun answered.

"And, why would I do this?" Wu Hei asked in a sarcastic tone again.

"Because if you don't then I will nominate your name is the next annual gathering of the young aristocrats of the kingdom. You will be the person representing this county and before you tell me that you will not mind my reputation, know this that the King will be there this time. Your tricks won't work there." Wu Xun spoke in a slightly triumphant tone.

Wu Hei's expression finally changed upon hearing that, but he soon recomposed himself, not wanting to give his father this victory.

"I'll see to it." Wu Hei curtly replied.

"Hmm..." Wu Xun responded and looked around the room before speaking, "Seems like your collection of books has only increased. Ah! If only you were better at cultivation and spent more of your effort in it than this."

While Wu Xun was looking away, a slight hint of a smirk appeared on Wu Hei's face but quickly disappeared as soon as Wu Xun turned around.

Wu Xun's attention was then pulled towards the letter that was kept on the desk, more accurately on the unique pattern that was drawn on to it. He unceremoniously picked up the letter from the desk, not minding any manners or privacy.

Wu Hei's expression became tense for a moment, and he quickly snatched the letter from his hands before he could see the next page.

"You! Do not touch my things." Wu Hei responded in a cold tone that almost bordered on violent.

For a moment his scholarly and erudite aura faded and was replaced by that of power. It was almost the same as Wu Xun's yet was different in some aspects. It was as if there was a hint of rebelliousness within it.

~Humph~

"What is this? Another one of your, random musings? Are you still looking into the old myths and lores? Grow up and give up on them. That's all they are, 'myths'." Wu Xun spoke in a dismissive tone before leaving the office.

He soon left the manor and entered a luxurious carriage that had the crest of 'Wu Lim' on it. The carriage swiftly left the manor, leaving a cloud of dust behind.

A serious and grim expression appeared on Wu Hei's face as a wave of spirit qi was emanated from his body. The wave of spirit qi spread out of the manor and scanned all over the area. This was none other than Spirit sense and if one were to see the range of the spirit sense they would be shocked, for the area of the manor was more than three hundred meters.

A few seconds later the spirit sense returned to Wu Hei's body and he opened his eyes. The second door of the office opened and in walked a man that was dressed in a dark blue robe and had a mask on his face. The masked man seemed to be tense as he came and kneeled on his left knee in front of Wu Hei.

Wu Hei did not speak anything and silently stared at the masked man. The masked man only kept on getting more and more nervous, such that his back was covered in a cold sweat. An entire minute passed by and only then did Wu Hei speak.

Chapter 182 - Affinity And Idea

"Why was I not informed of the mayor's arrival?" Wu Hei questioned in a cold tone.

"My lord, we... could not. We sensed the spirit qi scanning over the manor before the Mayor's carriage entered the manor. As per your previous orders, we chose to hide and did not expose ourselves to the Mayor." The masked man spoke in a nervous tone.

A confused expression appeared on Wu Hei's face for a moment before he spoke again.

"The Mayor used spirit sense? But I did not detect it!? Are you sure of this?" Wu Hei questioned.

"Yes, my lord. I swear on my life." The masked man answered as he tapped his chest with his fist to show his determination.

"Hmm..." Wu Hei hummed as he rubbed his chin.

'Father is getting sneakier. He never did this before. Has he started to suspect something, perhaps?' Wu Hei thought to himself.

"Alright, it's fine then. But keep a closer eye next time. I want to know if he even gets close to the eastern district next time." Wu Hei ordered.

"Yes, my lord!" The masked man replied.

Wu Hei then continued thinking for about five minutes during which, the masked man stayed silent and waited.

"There will be some new guests in our district soon, the disciples of Tri cauldron peony sect. I want every single movement of theirs reported to me when they arrive." Wu Hei ordered.

"As you command, my lord." The masked man responded with his head lowered.

"You can go now." Wu Hei dismissed the man.

The man thus stood up and was just about to leave the office when Wu Hei called out to him again.

"Wait! Inform Hei Wan about this as well. Tell her that we may need the assistance of our 'ally' if something gets problematic. He should be useful if our assumptions about him are correct. So far, he's only lived up to it." Wu Hei said in a calm tone that changed to a more expectant one at the end.

"As you wish, my lord." The masked man replied before swiftly leaving to complete his assigned orders.

Wu Hei went to sit at his desk again and slouched slightly as he rubbed his forehead in fatigue.

~Sigh~

'What is father planning now? First, he turns a blind eye to the Northern town head's actions, and now this. There is certainly something bothering him, I need to find out.' Wu Hei thought to himself. 'And these 'culprits', I wonder if they found out anything new about them yet.'

In the Sleepscape, Lin Mu was sitting down below the spirit apple tree and had his eyes closed.

Lin Mu was currently on his second attempt at practicing the nameless technique created by the lost immortal. He was channeling his spirit qi according to the instructions in the wooden slip and did not find a difference this time either.

Lin Mu had exhausted nearly all of his spirit qi wisps and was barely left with a hundred wisps now, along with six drops of liquid spirit qi. He had successfully refined two more drops of them during the entire day.

He had thought that his speed of refining liquid spirit qi would improve, but no such thing could be seen for now. Still, he did not lose hope and knew that he should improve some time later. Senior Xukong told him the same thing as well.

~Huu~

Lin Mu let out a breath as he opened his eyes.

~Sigh~

"No difference even now. I wonder if I'm doing something wrong?" Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He thought for a bit and stood up to practice with his weapons. He took out the spear and practiced the routine demonstrated in the thousand armament blade scripture. While practicing, Lin Mu noticed a new thing. The spear seemed to feel comfortable to him now.

Although it was not at the level of his short sword, it was still better than any of his other weapons.

'Huh, looks like I have a second preference now.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

He continued practicing the moves of the thousand armament blade scripture and continued thinking about it.

"Perhaps, I should try visiting old man Jing again. Maybe he has a spear that is a spirit weapon as well." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

~pop~

Xukong suddenly appeared in front of Lin Mu and was almost at the sharp tip of the spear, being barely a millimeter away. Still, he showed no reaction and simply kept on floating there.

"Oh? Your control is getting better." Xukong said in a slightly praising tone.

"Ah, yes! I think that too senior. For some reason, my progress with the spear is much faster than the other weapons. Except for of course, my short sword." Lin Mu replied.

"Hmm, seems like you have some affinity with spears as well," Xukong spoke in acknowledgment.

"Senior should I... try visiting the Jing Wei's emporium again?" Lin Mu asked.

~Chuckle~

Xukong stayed silent for a bit before he let out a slight laugh.

"You could try, of course. Though I do not know if you will even be able to find the shop again." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu had a slightly embarrassed expression, but soon calmed himself again.

"Your right senior. Still, I'll try and see if I can sense it, if not there is no harm. My enhanced spirit sense should help now, I think." Lin Mu spoke.

Senior Xukong did not respond and simply floated around. He had been appearing at random times, testing out Lin Mu's response time. Unknown to Lin Mu, he had been secretly enjoying this too.

Lin Mu soon returned to his practice and thought of his plans. While he was doing so, he suddenly had an idea as his eyes went wide.

Lin Mu abruptly stopped and stored the spear away in the ring before sitting down. He then closed his eyes and tried to do what he had thought of. Lin Mu chanted the severing heart sutra and focused on a place at the very bottom of his dantian.

Chapter 183 - Reports-I

This was the place where the six drops of liquefied spirit qi were floating. Lin Mu willed it and guided a single drop of it into his meridians. He then repeated the method mentioned in the nameless technique, but this time with the drop of liquid spirit qi.

The drop of liquefied spirit Qi traveled through the meridians and reached the meridians in the stomach. Upon reaching there, it merged with the tissues of his stomach. A feeling similar to that of goosebumps spread in Lin Mu's body for a moment and quickly faded away.

Unknown to him, the obscure pattern that had appeared on Lin Mu's abdomen when he first bound the wooden slip to him, appeared again. It glowed for a brief moment before disappearing again.

A few seconds passed and Lin Mu stayed still. He had successfully used the drop of liquified spirit Qi in practicing the nameless technique of the lost immortal, yet he could feel no difference.

Lin Mu had expected something new to happen but alas, nothing of such kind happened.

~Sigh~

"Am I doing something wrong or I just need a lot more time?" Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Lin Mu thought about how to proceed for a bit and eventually came upon a decision.

'I'll cultivate and pour all my spirit Qi wisps into practicing the lost immortal's technique, and of the two drops of liquified spirit Qi that I refine I'll invest one into it as well. That way I'll be able to balance the both, hopefully.'

Having planned for the upcoming days, Lin Mu threw himself into cultivation. He repeated the same routine every day, assimilating vital energy, cultivating, refining liquified spirit Qi, practicing the lost immortal's technique and finally practicing the thousand armament blade scripture.

While the routine seems hectic to him at the start, soon he became habituated with it. He continued it for ten days, after which on the eleventh day he witnessed his progress.

Lin Mu was now able to refine three drops of liquified spirit Qi instead of just two in a single day.

~Huu~

"Finally, it increased!" Lin Mu said to himself in joy.

"It was bound to happen, eventually. Though your pace should only keep on growing from now." Xukong replied.

"Yes senior." Lin Mu replied before returning to his cultivation.

While Lin Mu was engrossed in his cultivation, something else had happened in Wu Lim city.

A few days ago.

In a large Manor beside a lake, Wu Hei was standing in a large room that looked like a library. He was facing towards a bookshelf and had a book in his hand.

Behind him, three men in dark blue robes and masks were kneeling on one leg.

While Wu Hei was reading, the three masked men stayed silent and waited for him patiently.

~clap~

The sound of a book closing resounded in the room, and the three masked men became tense upon hearing it.

"What do you have to report?" Wu Hei questioned.

One of the masked men that were kneeling in the middle took out a scroll and held it out in his hand.

"Leader Hei Wan has sent her report, my lord." The masked man answered.

"Hmm." Said Wu Hei as he took the scroll from the man's hands.

He opened the scroll and started reading it. It took him five minutes to read the entire thing during which his expression went through a variety of changes.

Wu Hei felt more emotions now than he had felt in the entire past month. He felt happy, excited, fearful, relieved, angry, and perplexed.

He was happy that the mission had been completed and excited that they had found out more about the culprits. He was fearful about the Beast storage treasure that had been found as knew what kind of a situation that they could lead to and was then relieved to find out that the beast storage treasure was damaged and unusable.

Also, he was angry that one of his higher corps members and one of the only three core condensation realm experts was injured in this mission and that too not because of culprits but rather because of the beast attack.

Finally, Wu Hei was confused after he found out the truth that the link behind all these happenings was none other than Lin Mu. If it were not for him, then perhaps the entire series of events would have become a biff tragedy for the Hei Corps.

Still, he could not understand how and why Lin Mu was able to uncover so many things. He wondered if he had still underestimated Lin Mu's capabilities and if he should do something more. This thought was soon affirmed once Hei Wan confirmed it and wanted to invest more into their new 'Ally'.

His strength had already been proven before and him being able to fight an entire pack of steel back wolves and coming out alive along with killing the alpha steel back wolf that was at the core condensation realm made it sure in Wu Hei's mind that he should not let him go.

Even the fact that Lin Mu knew healing techniques was quite shocking to him. Especially one that had been able to save a cultivator that was at the core condensation realm like Hei Yingjie from Qi deviation.

From all that he had learned about the healing techniques, Wu Hei knew that there were only a handful of sects outside of the top sects that had one of such a high grade.

~Sigh~

Wu Hei silently sighed to himself after he finished reading the entire scroll.

"What else do you have to report?" Wu Hei questioned.

The masked man that was kneeling to the left lifted his head and looked up at Wu Hei.

"My lord, as you ordered, we have been keeping an eye on movements of the Disciples of the Tri cauldron peony sect. We asked our comrades to follow their path and finally today they have arrived in Wu Lim City. As we speak, the Disciples are moving towards the eastern district and are going towards their property." The masked man spoke.

Chapter 184 - Reports-II

Wu Hei kept on listening silently and did not respond straight away. He thought for a bit and contemplated before speaking.

"Oh, so they're finally here. They were a little late than expected though, why is that?" Wu Hei questioned.

"My lord, we do not know either. The truth is, we lost track of them for a few hours in between and we do not know what they did in that time period. But from what we saw, they seemed to be tense after that time and chose to take a halt in another town." The masked man answered.

"Hmm, that is strange... How did you lose track of them?" Wu Hei asked in a calm voice.

But upon hearing his calm tone, the masked men only became more tense. They knew they had made a mistake before and were wondering if they were going to be punished for it soon.

"They... entered a pleasure pavilion and didn't come out for six hours. We thought something was wrong and went to check. From there they had somehow disappeared and we don't know where they went. We wanted to investigate the pleasure pavilion, but we couldn't. Six more hours later, one of our scouts reported to us that they had seen them in the next town in the path." The masked man replied in a hurried manner.

Wu Hei went silent and thought again about it. He was not starting to get more interested in the matter, along with being a bit perplexed.

"This pleasure pavilion, what town is it in, and who is it owned by?" Wu Hei questioned.

"The pleasure pavilion is in cliff rain town and is owned by... the Xiangwei Jin armaments." The masked man answered as a bead of sweat dripped from the side of the mask.

"Xiangwei Jin armaments? What are they doing in this kind of business? And that too in cliff rain town, which is a Small town. From my knowledge, there was no pleasure pavilion in cliff rain town before." Wu Hei spoke, feeling a little confused.

"That is the reason we were astounded too, my lord. Somehow we had missed this intelligence that a new pleasure pavilion was opened in Cliff Rain town and that too one owned by Xiangwei Jin armaments. But from what little news we gathered, the pleasure pavilion was opened with the orders from the new backers of the Xiangwei armaments." The masked man replied.

'The disciples of the top sect? Are they the same ones that bought the Xiangwei Jin armaments or someone else? It would be too uncouth for a disciple of any of the top sects to start an Establishment like that. There must be something else we're missing.' Wu Hei thought to himself.

Wu Hei turned his gaze back onto the masked men and asked, "The town that the disciples of the Tri cauldron peony sect appeared in after disappearing, its Blue mill town right? Where exactly did you see them there?"

"We discovered the disciples at the entrance of the town. Apparently, they had a small scuffle with the guards and injured a few of them. From what we could tell the disciples seemed to be bothered by something as even though they could have very easily crippled the guards they did not and only hurt them enough to give them pain by breaking some bones." The masked man replied.

Wu Hei was once again surprised by these words as the gears in his mind started turning.

'Hmm, so they are restraining themselves. That means they have been ordered to do so or perhaps been scared to do so as well. Seems like whatever power is behind the Xiangwei Jin armaments is doing this. We'll have to look into it further, I don't want any more surprises.' Wu Hei thought to himself.

"Alright then, how many of them are here right now?" Wu Hei questioned.

"My lord, there are four disciples currently here and all of them are at the peak of the qi refining realm. Though we suspect that one of them may be hiding their cultivation base. We did not dare to check it ourselves thus cannot confirm our suspicions." The masked man answered.

"Hmm, that's good. Stay low for a while, I have a bad feeling about this. Meanwhile, just observe them from far and tell me when they are completely settled in; I'll go pay them a visit then." Wu Hei ordered.

In the present day.

Lin Mu had just finished up cultivating for the day and was thinking of taking a short break as he had sensed something. The mysterious ring had hummed for a bit and Lin Mu instantly knew the reason for it. He was cultivating before and instantly opened his eyes upon feeling it.

"A spatial rift will be opening." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Ever since gaining better control over the ring, there had been no incidence of the uncontrolled appearance of the spatial rift. Instead, Lin Mu could not see and feel when one of them was going to appear or he could just choose to open one wherever he wanted.

But senior Xukong had told him that doing so would be a waste of time and his previous attempts were likely only because there were some items in the lesser void parallel to this world. At least in this area, Xukong doubted that he would find more items.

'Let's see what is it this time.' Lin Mu thought to himself before standing up.

He followed the mysterious ring's beckoning, which took him to the outskirts of the town. But this time it was talking him towards the southern exit instead of the northern one. Lin Mu exited the town and went a little distance to the southeast where he finally felt it.

Lin Mu could see a small black dot traveling across from the distance at a rather fast speed and understanding the peculiarity of the situation.

"Oh! So it's a teleportation channel and not just a normal spatial rift." Lin Mu muttered before going after it.

Chapter 185 - Another Letter

Ever since getting better control over the ring, Lin Mu had not used it to open anymore spatial rift and neither had he encountered any more teleportation channels either. He knew that while he could open a spatial rift anywhere he wanted, that would be useless, as it was likely that he had already taken all the items he could that were lost in the lesser void of this region.

He was now excited to see what he could find this time and was looking forward to it. Lin Mu ran along with the black dot and extended his right hand towards it. As soon as he got close enough, he willed it and the black dot stopped moving.

Soon the black dot started expanding and reached the diameter of a meter.

"Let's see what I can find this time." Lin Mu muttered before plunging his hand into it.

The familiar feeling of flowing water appeared on his hand as he roamed it around to catch whatever that was coming through the teleportation channel. Senior Xukong had explained to Lin Mu about the workings of a teleportation channel thus he knew what to expect this time.

Whenever an item is to be transported through a teleportation channel, the formation is activated. What the formation does is that it makes a safe and stable path in the lesser void through which the item can be transported through.

The change that happens is such that the spatial energy starts moving in a particular direction, taking the path of least resistance. Thus it is often hard to estimate how or where a teleportation channel may appear if one does not have a good understanding of spatial energy.

The spatial channels are often so random that even if you are transporting an item just one meter from its original position, it is likely that the teleportation channel it passed through was long and winding and could have extended for hundreds if not thousands of kilometers.

Still, even if this does seem like it is counterproductive and would take more time instead. It was not as such, because the speed of transportation is rather instantaneous over short distances in a single world. Only when something is being teleported over different worlds and passes through multiple layers of the void does it take longer.

Senior Xukong even told Lin Mu that teleportation between different realms could take years, if not tens of years to complete. The distance between each could not be imagined.

Lin Mu thought of trying something different this time. He extended his spirit sense and let it enter the spatial rift. As soon as his spirit sense entered the spatial rift, he felt a strong tug on it. The short tendril of spirit sense was quickly pulled to its maximum length and was flown along with the spatial energy.

"Ow!" Lin Mu groaned in pain as he tried to control the spirit sense.

It was hard for him to control his spirit sense under the flow of the spatial energy and decided to just reel it back in.

"You won't be able to navigate a teleportation channel with your current spirit sense. It is too strong for you. You will have to either reach the core condensation realm to strengthen it further or... You will need to gain an understanding of spatial Dao." Xukong spoke upon seeing Lin Mu's failed attempt.

"Spatial Dao?" Lin Mu muttered in confusion.

"Yes, Spatial Dao. I've told you about it, spatial Dao is the higher level understanding of the Spatial elemental qi. Once you learn more about the spatial elemental qi, you can start comprehending the spatial Dao." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu nodded in response, but was still a little confused. He wanted to ask more but thought it would be best left after he gets whatever is coming from the spatial rift.

And just as Lin Mu thought that something hit his palm. Knowing what it was, he immediately grabbed it and pulled out his hand. Lin Mu looked down to see what he had obtained and saw that it was a scroll.

The scroll was about ten inches long and seemed to be made of good quality paper. The cylindrical wooden handles of the scroll were finely polished and had additional tassels at their ends. Lin Mu could even smell the fragrant smell coming from the wood and could tell that it was made from the same wood the box within which the four vessels restoration pills were stored in was made of.

Finally, there was a wax seal placed on its opening and it also had a short tassel hanging from it. The wax seal had the imprint of three cauldrons with a peony flower above it.

As soon as Lin Mu saw it, he knew where it had come from.

"The Tri cauldron peony sect!" Lin Mu spoke out loud.

He wondered if he should open it or not, but after remembering the current situation he thought that it would be the best to open it. If there was any problem, he could still drop it back into the spatial channel as it was still open and would stay open for a while and could be opened for even longer if Lin Mu poured in his spirit qi.

But looking at the wax seal Lin Mu was a bit bothered and thought that if he opened it and the formation triggered, the other party may find out about it.

"Go ahead, place it in the ring. I'll open it for you so that the formation does not trigger." Xukong suggested.

"Alright," Lin Mu spoke before he stored the scroll in the ring.

A few seconds later he withdrew it and saw that the wax seal had broken in half and the scroll came undone. The first thing Lin Mu could see was the crest of the Tri cauldron peony sect at the very top of the scroll. Below it he could see the text, and from the format of it, he could tell that it was another letter.

Having understood this, he started reading the letter.

Chapter 186 - Formation Node?

"Mayor Wu Xun, as you may have noticed by now, a few of our disciples have been dispatched to your city and they will be posted there for the time being. The time period for which they have been assigned there is undecided, and they will be there until they have been ordered to return.

During this period you are to assist them in whatever task they may need assistance with and will ensure that they are not hampered in their work.

If you do so, your previous transgressions will be forgiven and our previous cooperative relationship will be re-initiated. You can choose to reject this but know that the consequences of such will be yours to bear."

The letter this time was much shorter than the one that Lin Mu had seen before, and seemed to be more of a threat than an actual letter.

"What is this? It's strange... could it be because of what I did before?" Lin Mu muttered in confusion.

"I'll tell you the same thing I said before, don't bother." Xukong simply said.

This time Lin Mu did not think much. He had learned a lot more and knew that if he's getting some benefits, it's best not to think much and just take them as it is. Unless of course there is some absurd reason behind it.

"Now then... what are we to do with this information?" Lin Mu questioned himself.

"Just keep it to yourself for now and wait for the right moment. See how it plays out and use it according to your judgment." Xukong suggested.

"I understand, senior." Lin Mu responded before rolling the letter and storing it into the ring.

Currently, it was evening, so Lin Mu had no problem in staying away from the eyes of the people. Even since the few incidents that happened before, people had been avoiding going out at night. This helped him as he couldn't really explain chasing after air, could he?

Still, Lin Mu did not know if others could see the spatial rifts.

"That is a little difficult to answer." Xukong intercepted his thought.

"Huh? What Senior?" Lin Mu questioned as feeling confused.

"I can't tell if the spatial rifts are only visible to you because of the ring or if they would be visible to others too once they are open. But it's most likely the latter. Still, the cultivators who have spirit sense should be able to sense it even if normal people can't." Xukong explained.

This was new information to Lin Mu, as he had not asked senior Xukong this before. He simply nodded and continued on to his way. He checked the gate and saw that the guards were still standing there. He didn't avoid them and simply walked towards the gate.

"Halt! Who goes there?" One of the guards shouted upon seeing Lin Mu.

The guard lifted a torch and brought it closer to see Lin Mu's face. Lin Mu too waked closer to show the guard that he was fine and there was no problem. Upon seeing his face, the guard felt relieved and let him enter the town.

Hei Wan and the others had done a thorough check of the town's guards and had ensured that there were no suspicious people in it. Unsurprisingly, a few of the guards had secretly disappeared, confirming their suspicion that there were a few of the people from the culprits mixed in.

Upon doing a deeper check, Hei Wan and the rest discovered that all the information about them in the registers was fake and seemed to have been forged. The absence of them was the reason why Lin Mu felt safe enough to directly walk in and did not go over the wall.

While returning to his house, Lin Mu passed by the alley where Jing Wei's emporium was located. He looked around and he still could not see the alley there. But upon using his spirit sense, he felt something different this time.

Far up in the sky, he could feel something. It was as if there was a solid object of some kind floating there.

"What is that?" Lin Mu muttered in wonder.

"Looks like you found one of the nodes of the illusory formation array," Xukong answered.

"A node? What's that?" Lin Mu questioned.

"A node is basically the point where the multiple formations continued within a formation array intersect. They are the points which are quite important to the stability and functioning of the formation

arrays and any damage or modification to it can lead to its deactivation or getting destroyed." Xukong answered.

"But how can I feel it senior? Isn't it supposed to be immaterial?" Lin Mu asked.

"Yes, but your spirit sense is different. There's a reason why it is one of the requirements to make formations because without it, sensing formations after they have been created is difficult." Xukong replied.

"Is that so..." Lin Mu muttered and started tracing over the invisible formation with his spirit sense.

He followed along with it and discovered that there were faint lines that extended from it. The place that he had sensed the node at was the only place that was a little broad. All the branches that arose from it were thin, like threads.

Lin Mu tried to follow them with his spirit sense and found it to be difficult. He soon lost focus and the branch of the formation that he was following disappeared. Even if he used his spirit sense to observe the place that he had last felt the branch at, he still could not find it.

"This is strange... why did it disappear?" Lin Mu questioned in confusion.

~Chuckle~

"It was to be expected, of course. If it was this easy to find formations, they would have never been used. Formations are much more complex than you think they are." Xukong answered in a slightly humored tone.

Lin Mu felt a little embarrassed upon hearing that and tried to look for it again.

"I'll give you a hint. Follow it back from the node again. Know that nodes are often the weak points of formations and if you can find them, you can trace the rest of the formation. Though this is valid only for formations of a low level such as this." Xukong explained.

Chapter 187 - Tracing The Formation

Following senior Xukong's advice, Lin Mu tried it again. He extended his spirit sense all the way to the place where he had observed the node and started tracing it from there again. Alas, he made a mistake again and lost track of it again.

~Sigh~

'I need to think of a better method.' Lin Mu thought.

Lin Mu didn't know why he was doing this. He just felt like this was something new and interesting, thus he wanted to know more about it. He had seen the beast storage treasure and knew that it had formations on it too. But their level was too high for him to be able to sense them.

Now that he had this opportunity to observe and study formation here, he didn't want to stop. Luckily it was night time and the place Lin Mu was in was a rather desolate part of the town, where people rarely went past in day time not to say at night.

After a few more attempts, Lin Mu decided to chant the severing heart sutra while tracing the formation. He had already tried the calming heart sutra, but it was not suitable for this situation where he needed to be completely still.

This time Lin Mu had better success and was able to go much further than before.

'Yes! This is it!' Lin Mu shouted inwardly in excitement.

But just as he thought this, he had accidentally stopped chanting the severing heart sutra and had faltered in his concentration. Swearing to himself that he'll focus better this time, Lin Mu tried again. He had been here for about an hour now and the snow had started falling again.

In his latest attempt, Lin Mu was able to trace the branch of the formation to the next node and found it to be present on the wall of one of the old shops. He walked closer and touched it with his hand.

"Nothing... Just as Senior said." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

When Lin Mu touched the wall, he could not feel it to be any different from a normal wall. But when he touched it with his spirit sense, he could see the difference in the texture. It was as if there were countless patterns made on the wall that could only be felt by him.

"That should be the second node," Xukong informed upon seeing Lin Mu feeling a little lost.

Lin Mu's eyes lit up at this, and he kept on exploring further. He must have spent nearly two hours there at this point and had forgotten about time. Because he was standing still for most of the time, a layer of snow had settled on his head and shoulders by now.

The sky above him was thickly covered by clouds, and all the stars and moon were hidden. The only source of light in the area was from far away lamps that were lit up. It was even more dark in the street Lin Mu was in and there was only a single torch burning at the entrance of it.

Because people rarely entered it, there wasn't anyone keeping an eye on this place either and thus had no one to light up torches here. Most of the torch holders were empty and had no torches placed in them. While those that did have torches in them had snuffed out a long time ago.

Because it was not a main street, it did not have any street lamps either. In the rest of the town, at least in the main areas, tall poles had been erected along the roads, from which lamps hung. These lamps were maintained by some people assigned by the town center and had to be refilled with oil every day.

Because maintaining the upkeep of so many lamps was difficult due to oil being expensive, the street lamps were only lit alternatively. One could also attribute this to the former town had not been taking care of the town and rather embezzling the funds assigned to it.

If the town head could steal the funds that were for the welfare of the people, then embezzling funds for the maintaining of the town was nothing compared to that. While Lin Mu was a lot bothered by this fact in the past, right now this situation was coming to his benefit.

Because if anyone were to see him, there would be likely to ask questions. Questions that Lin Mu would prefer to not be asked and did not want to explain. Over the past few days, as he engrossed himself in cultivation, Lin Mu realized that he was now getting used to it and was preferred to be alone.

Well... as alone as he could be, since senior Xukong was with him always.

Another hour passed by and Lin Mu was still standing there. He had barely moved, and the snow around him had gotten thicker. The snow layer had now reached a little above his ankles, and frost had settled on his eyebrows.

Every time he took a breath, a small cloud of steam was expelled from his nose and mouth. If there was anyone else standing out in the snow for such a while, they would have been incredibly cold and would have been shivering. But Lin Mu was not bothered by it and stood still.

He felt no stiffness or soreness in his legs, nor did he mind the layer of snow on his head. Strong winds would blow from time to time, removing the snow from his head, yet a few minutes later more would settle down there.

Even Lin Mu did not realize this, but he had entered a strange sense of mind. For him, the only things that existed right now were his spirit sense and the formation array in front of him. He had even forgotten why he was doing this, and his only aim right now was to reveal more and more of the illusory formation.

Just by doing this, he was unknowingly increasing his understanding and control of the spirit sense. Although he could not comprehend the runes from which the formations were made out of, he was still starting to get a rudimentary level of understanding of them.

While Lin Mu was engrossed in this, Xukong was thinking about something else.

"This kid... his talent in formations is monstrous..."

Chapter 188 - Distortion?

Xukong was currently floating around in the mysterious ring and a small distance away from him was the ethereal altar. During the time Xukong had spent in the ring he had tried to approach the altar many times, but he never could unless Lin Mu himself was present here.

Every time he would get close to the ethereal altar a mysterious barrier would appear and would block him. This prevented him from going any further and the closest he could reach was within a hundred meters of the altar.

The barrier that blocked Xukong was an enigma to him. He could not recognize any of the runes that were present on it and neither could he recognize the script. It wasn't written in the Dao scripts and neither was it written in any of the other common scripts that numbered in the millions.

From the countless years of experience that Xukong had, he had seen many incomprehensible things, yet this was one of the times where he was the most confused he had ever been. He could swear on his bloodline that this was perhaps the most complex array of runes he had seen.

Even though Xukong did not understand the runes, he could still tell that the formations that made up the barrier were beyond any grade that existed.

While he was floating near the ethereal barrier, Xukong was thinking of Lin Mu. He had been seeing what he was doing and could read some of his surface thoughts. From his memories, he could see that

he had revealed around seven of the nodes of the illusory formation array that was hiding the Jing Wei's emporium.

"How did I not notice this before? It just took him two hints before he was able to reveal an illusory formation on his own, even high grade spirit formation masters will take a day before they would be able to do the same." Xukong muttered to himself.

'Is it just formations or is his talent in other professions similar too... No! I need to make sure of this. Just his talent in formations is good enough to open up a lot of opportunities for him. If he has even ten percent of the same in any of the other professions, his potential would be endless.' Xukong thought while swaying in the empty space.

He was not floating around the barrier, the same ways a person would pace while they were thinking about something deeply. Along with Xukong's every movement, the spatial energy in the surroundings would stir while being attracted to him.

Ever so often a streak of spatial energy would be absorbed by his body and disappear into it. Even while thinking, Xukong was unconsciously cultivating. He then suddenly came to a halt as more thoughts appeared in his mind.

'While his talent in formations seems evident, testing for the others would be difficult at this point. He still needs to reach the peak stage of the qi refining realm before he would be able to ignite qi flame... no wait, his dantian's capacity is much higher than others! It should be possible for him to do it much earlier.

I'll tell him about it when the time is right. As for weapons forging and spirit tool refinement, we'll need to wait till he gets the proper equipment. Though if he can have a good understanding of formations, he would simply be to place formations on weapons and tools. He can take that route as well, although it may be much long-winded.

Beast taming... Hmm, that is a complex one. At his current cultivation base, it would depend on the beast itself rather than his talent. Perhaps I can ask him to try to tame a few smaller spirit beasts...' Xukong thought to himself and was interrupted.

Xukong suddenly felt a wave of energy in the ring and looked towards the ethereal altar. The altar was now faintly glowing, or rather more accurately a few of the runes of the altar were glowing. Unlike before, when Lin Mu received the skills or the nine divine sutras, the altar was less active.

There was no blinding glow of light but a rather more somber tone. Xukong could feel the change in the spatial energy as the streaks of it were moving in a uniform manner now. The silvery grey streaks of spatial energy in the mysterious ring were now circulating around the altar.

"What is happening?!" Xukong exclaimed, feeling confused.

Xukong realized that in his thoughts, he had forgotten to keep an eye on Lin Mu. He hurriedly used his connection with Lin Mu and saw what was happening. And when he saw it, he was surprised once again.

"How did he...?"

Out in the real world, the snow was still falling and Lin Mu had his eyes closed. His eyelids suddenly trembled, and he opened his eyes. The space that was in front of him stirred and a storage distortion appeared. The space turned blurry, as if there was a foggy mirror there.

While the things behind it were still visible, it looked as if one was looking at them through a fogged up glass.

The snow that had settled on Lin Mu's head and shoulders fell down as he moved. A hint of confusion appeared in his eye before turning to a look of understanding in the next moment.

"So this is the full extent of the formation..." Lin Mu muttered to himself as he walked closer.

He extended his hands towards the space in front of him and the ring on his middle finger hummed in response. The distortion in the space that looked like a foggy mirror at first soon changed to a twisting appearance.

The twisting appearance lasted for a few seconds before it settled and the fabric of space in front of him unraveled. A circular opening had now appeared in front of Lin Mu that was about two meters in diameter. But unlike the spatial rifts that he had opened before, this was not black.

Chapter 189 - The Courtyard

A pleasant fragrance entranced Lin Mu's senses as soon as the opening appeared.

An elaborate and luxuriant courtyard appeared, with flowers and trees everywhere planted in an auspicious pattern. Although it was night here as well, no snow was falling. A crescent moon could be seen high up in the sky and had as a slight tint of blue. A blanket of stars covered the night sky.

There were small rivers and streams along with fake mountains in the courtyard, giving one a feel of aesthetic luxury. At the end of the courtyard, there was a large mansion that looked more like a palace instead. Statues of auspicious beasts were placed in the surroundings and gave the place a strange yet calming aura.

Lin Mu subconsciously took a step forward and entered the courtyard. As soon as he was fully in the courtyard, the opening behind him closed up and disappeared. He snapped out of his daze and his eyes went wide. A sense of alarm washed over him as he turned around to look at the place where the opening was.

Looking back, he could see nothing but more trees and plants in the distance. And at the very end of it, he could see a tall wall that was at least ten meters tall. But even on that wall, he could see paintings of mountains and rivers that looked realistic.

If he did not look at the very top of the wall and see its edge he would have thought that's what was actually what existed.

"What is this place?" Lin Mu muttered in shock.

Still unable to believe it, he did a 360 degree turn, taking in all the sights of the place. In the opposite direction of the mansion, there was a small building. Compared to the size of the mansion, it was comically small and looked out of place for a courtyard such as this.

It seemed to be old and weathered, whereas the mansion was the epitome of luxury. Lin Mu thought that even the houses and courtyards in Wu Lim city would not compare to it.

"Seems like you have entered a minor plane." Xukong suddenly spoke up.

Xukong himself had been reeling in shock about what Lin Mu had done.

'How did he open a stable portal to a minor plane like this, wasn't he just studying the formations? How did it lead to this...?' Xukong internally thought.

"A minor plane, the ones that you talked about Senior?" Lin Mu questioned, feeling curious.

"No, what I told you was minor worlds, not minor planes. Minor worlds are entirely self sustaining while minor planes need to depend on an actual world to anchor themselves to. Minor planes are also much smaller than minor worlds, so small that this place you see, it only exists within the confines of the four walls." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu felt fascinated by this and had twinkling in his eyes.

"Also another big difference is that while a minor world is part of the great void, a minor plane exists in the lesser void. Although the way a minor plane exists is a bit unique in that, they can either be artificially created or naturally as well." Xukong added.

A string of questions popped up in Lin Mu's mind as he started walking around. Looking around, he could tell for sure that there was someone living here and he was sure that it was the pair of grandfather and granddaughter; Jing Wei and Duan Ke.

Still, Lin Mu wanted to ensure that it was safe before approaching the mansion. It didn't take him much longer to walk around the three sides of the courtyard, leaving the side with the mansion to the last. He wanted to take a closer look at the boundaries of this place thus went to the walls.

While the walls were ten meters tall, it was nothing to Lin Mu. He simply blinked to the top of a tree nearby and then blinked again to the top of the wall. While the wall looked sturdy from the inside, when he was at the top, he could see that it was actually very thin and narrow.

In fact, the area that he had to stand in was only about a foot wide. If he had not judged properly and was careless, there was a chance that he would fall into the other side, which he certainly did not want after seeing what existed there.

A vast black expanse came in the view of Lin Mu that expanded from one edge of the horizon to the other. When he was standing inside the courtyard, he could see a completely different scenery with there even being a sky above him.

But as soon as he was at the top of the wall, the scenery changed and all he could see was darkness. It was a darkness he was familiar with.

"The lesser void... but how?" Lin Mu wondered.

From the information he had received from Senior Xukong, Lin Mu leered that lesser void existed in parallel to the real world and enveloped it simultaneously. Although it seemed hard to understand and comprehend, it was just how it was.

"Think of this place like a bubble. There are multiple formations placed on this courtyard that isolate it from the rest of the lesser void." Xukong explained.

'Hmm, seems like the ring can open portals to minor planes as well, despite there being the isolation and barrier formation arrays. Did he actually manage to find a flaw in the formation array? That would be very impressive if it's true... or is it the work of the ring, perhaps.' Xukong thought.

While Xukong was thinking to himself, Lin Mu was walking along the wall, trying to get a sense of this place. While from the inside it looked large, from the top of the wall Lin Mu could see its actual size, which was of about a square kilometer. He then jumped down and walked towards the small building that was to the opposite of the mansion.

'This is rather peculiar, I wonder how it works...' Lin Mu was thinking to himself when he got interrupted.

"Who are you!"

Chapter 190 - A Shocking Visitor

Lin Mu immediately turned around after hearing the voice and recognized it.

"Duan Ke..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

The person who had called him was none other than Duan Ke. She was standing there a short distance away from him and had a sword floating above her. The sword's tip was pointed towards Lin Mu and Duan Ke herself seemed to be standing in an offensive stance.

The day had been normal for Duan Ke and she had spent it the same as she had spent these past two months. Especially after getting injured, most of her time was spent in rest and recovery. The rest of it was spent in either cultivating or staying in the library.

She and her grandfather had been trying to find the clues to all the incidents that had been happening until now, and were also looking into the identity of the hidden expert that had ascended along with the sword intent of the other.

While they were secretive, Duan Ke's grandfather was sure that the experts must have left some traces somewhere. Thus they were checking their records, which were perhaps the most extensive in the entirety of the empire.

Still, even after spending weeks on it, they had little progress. Today was a similar day, and Duan Ke had just finished reading another record. She was feeling spent after the repeated failures and felt like taking a walk.

In the past, she would secretly go out to fly around the county. But ever since the incident with Lin Mu, they had sealed the courtyard completely. Now all she could do was take a walk around the courtyard itself. Although she had become used to the courtyard over the years, it still felt refreshing to her.

But she had never expected that she would end up finding someone here that was not her grandfather. Duan Ke was a hundred percent sure that the formation arrays were still intact and had not been tamped with. Her mind quickly started to think of all the possibilities.

She wondered who could be able to enter a place as secure as this without them ever noticing or with the formation array breaking. With every possibility that came to her mind, her face only fell more, for each of those possibilities were bad.

There were far too few people who could enter this courtyard and she could count them on one hand, with two of them being her and her grandfather. The other three she did not think would ever enter here as they had long been dead.

The only other way she could think of was if there was a formation master who could enter through a flaw in the formation array and the other being even more dangerous. A cultivator that was in the immortal Ascension realm.

She could not think of anything else than those two possibilities. After a little thinking, she discarded the possibility of it being a formation master, as according to her knowledge there was no one that would match the age of the person in front of her.

Although she did not see the face of the person, she could still guess it from his back. The person in front of her was about 170 centimeters tall and had a slim frame with hair that was about three inches long and free flowing.

All the signs only pointed to her that the person in front of her was young and she knew that there were no formation masters of a grade that high in the empire. Her mind then went towards the second possibility. At first, she doubted it because of the same reason as the first. The person was way too young.

But then a story that she had heard from her grandfather came to her mind. There were certain exceptions where a cultivator would return to a youthful appearance. This combined with the existences of the hidden expert with the sword intent, Duan Ke only became more fearful.

Still, she did not back down and cower, instead she stood her place and decided to face it.

'If it really is an expert that strong, they were are doomed either way.' She thought to herself.

Taking a deep breath, she finally called out. But as soon as she saw the face of the person in front of her, she was shocked even more. For this was a possibility she had never expected.

"What!?!..." Was all she could mutter before she saw him move.

Lin Mu walked forward casually with a calm demeanor and came to stand in front of her. A gentle smile appeared on his lips as he spoke.

"It's been a while, Duan Ke." Lin Mu spoke in a genial tone.

Duan Ke's brain almost shut down after hearing him speak, and for a moment she felt like she was about to faint. The memories of that day came rushing back, the 'being' that she had witnessed. She clearly remembered it, for it was etched into her heart.

That day she had known what true terror felt like. She realized the reality of her existence and how minute she or her grandfather were compared to that being. And behind that encounter was none other than Lin Mu. While she had suppressed this deep in her mind, it all broke free upon seeing him.

"What... what are you doing here?..." Duan Ke let out, struggling to speak still.

Unknown to Duan Ke, her hands were trembling as she stood there staring at Lin Mu with a pale face. Lin Mu noticed all this and could sense a storage feeling coming from Duan Ke.

'What happened to her?' Lin Mu thought to himself.

"Umm... it seems like this may be my fault," Xukong replied in an unnerved tone.

"Why?..." Lin Mu questioned and then remembered what had previously happened.

"You mean to say she's still affected because of it?" Lin Mu questioned.

"It does seem like it. But I didn't expect this either." Xukong replied.

~Sigh~

Lin Mu let out a breath and looked at the still trembling Duan Ke, before an idea popped into his mind and he opened his lips.