

## Walker 221

### Chapter 221 - Leaving The Courtyard

The runes revolved around the books and then entered the jade slip. After they entered the jade slip, its color changed and it became completely green. The formation array that had lit up soon faded away and everything went to normal.

Jing Wei waved his hand, and the pile of books all went flying back to their respective places. He then picked up the jade slip and took out another jade slip from his spatial treasure. This jade slip was different in color being azure blue.

He tapped the green jade slip with the azure colored jade slip and made it glow again. He then stored the azure one away while passing the green jade slip to Lin Mu.

"I reckon you know how to use a jade slip, at least?" Jing Wei questioned in a teasing tone.

'Tell him yes. You can use it with your spirit sense.' Xukong spoke in Lin Mu's mind.

"Yes, I do know." Lin Mu affirmed.

"That's good. Though you should bind the jade slip to yourself. We do not want the information in it leaking and I also registered my own jade slip to it, so if you need to inform me about something you can." Jing Wei added.

Lin Mu nodded in response and took out his short sword before pricking his finger with it and dripping a little bit of his blood onto the jade slip. As soon as the blood touched the jade slip, it disappeared, and it was as if a connection appeared in Lin Mu's mind.

While he could feel the jade slip's position, he actually could not use it without holding it in his hand and using spirit sense. The only thing the blood binding did was increase the security of the jade slip, making it so that only Lin Mu could use it.

Lin Mu then stored the jade slip into the ring when Jing Wei interrupted him.

"You shouldn't put communication jade slips into a spatial treasure or they won't work when someone tries to contact you."

"Huh? But I can still feel it." Lin Mu replied without thinking.

"What, you can? Hold on..." Jing Wei spoke as he then held his jade slip for a moment before looking back at Lin Mu with a confused expression.

"Hmm that's strange, it does work. But how? Ahh... it is probably because of the spatial storage treasure that your master gave you." Jing Wei came to his own conclusion.

Lin Mu just kept on looking and neither confirmed it nor denied it. He realized that he may have let it slip accidentally, but was lucky that Jing Wei assumed on his own. A question then popped into Lin Mu's mind. He wondered what was the maximum range till which he could contact Jing Wei.

But before he could ask him that, Xukong suddenly spoke up.

"Depending on the grade of the communication jade slip, its range may vary as they are also spirit tools. But the most common feature is that the range of its transmission depends on the spirit sense of the cultivator. For example, a cultivator that has an extremely long ranged spirit sense will be able to multiply the transmission range of the communication jade slip even if it is of a low grade.

Similarly, if it's a higher grade jade slip, even if the cultivator has a short range of spirit sense, they will still be able to communicate up to long distances. In simple terms, the jade slip only helps to amplify the range." Xukong explained.

"Ahh, I understand now senior." Lin Mu thanked.

"Now then, what are you going to do now?" Duan Ke asked, seeing that Lin Mu had been silent.

Lin Mu snapped out of his thoughts and looked at Duan Ke before speaking.

"I want to go back to cultivating. I think I'll be in seclusion for a while. I want to be prepared for all that's to come in the future and don't want to be caught off guard." Lin Mu replied in a determined tone.

"Good... good... We need to make preparations of our own. But for now, we can't leave the courtyard. Still, if you want to talk to us you can come to the courtyard, you've found a method to do so anyway." Jing Wei said with a calm expression.

A troubled expression appeared on Lin Mu's face, which was noticed by both Jing Wei and Duan Ke.

"Go on, ask us. It's fine." Jing Wei spoke up.

"Why is it that you need to hide here in the courtyard?" Lin Mu questioned.

~Sigh~

Jing Wei let out a sigh that seemed to have sorrow and pain hidden behind it. His expression also fell and it was as if the memories of the past ran in his eyes.

"I cannot tell you everything, but I'll tell you as much as I can." Jing Wei spoke and took a deep breath.

"My clan had always been defending against the northern tribes, and we contributed by providing weapons to the sects and the kingdoms. But a few decades ago we were betrayed and our clan was wiped out, leaving only me and my granddaughter as the last remaining members." Jing Wei revealed.

Lin Mu was shocked by this and didn't know what to think of this knowledge. He couldn't imagine what it could be that would threaten even a cultivator that was at the Dao treading realm and make him hide all this time.

Still, Lin Mu knew that he shouldn't probe more than this and he could see that Jing Wei was already uneasy with this and did not want to continue.

"I understand. I will take my leave now." Lin Mu spoke in a straight tone.

Jing Wei nodded and spoke, "Go on, Ke'er will show you out." He then walked away without saying anything more.

~Sigh~

Once Jing Wei was gone, Duan Ke let out a tired sigh. She then gestured for Lin Mu to follow her and guided him out of the mansion and into the courtyard. They came to stand in front of the Small rundown building that was at the opposite end of the courtyard.

### **Chapter 222 - Returning To Seclusion**

"This is the main entrance of the courtyard. It opens in the shop so you can enter and leave from there. Don't use the method you used to enter before, I do not want you to accidentally damage the formation arrays of the courtyard. Even though I'm not sure if you are capable of doing that, still this would be the safe choice." Duan Ke explained.

Lin Mu nodded to show that he understood and entered the small building. Once they were inside there, he could see a lamp that was hanging from the roof, but the room was dark overall. The lamp was unlit and seemed to be filled with oil. Duan Ke walked up to the lamp and snapped her fingers.

As soon as she did, the lamp lit up and the room changed to a different look. There was now a door on the opposite side of the room and the door from where they had entered disappeared.

"This is the method to use the gateway lamp. Light it to return to the shop and snuff it out to enter the courtyard." Duan Ke explained.

They then took the sole door in the room and appeared in the dusty old shop that was the Jing Wei's emporium.

"Goodbye." Lin Mu bid Duan Ke farewell before leaving the shop and heading out to the alley.

But when he appeared in the alley, Lin Mu was greeted by a bright light shining on him.

"It's already day time?" Lin Mu spoke as he looked up at the brightly lit sky.

"Since the courtyard is separate from the main world, the time of the day in there can be set to whatever they want. According to my estimation, you spent about six hours there." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu nodded in acknowledgment before continuing on the way. As soon as he left the alley though, he felt the difference. It was as if the walls behind him merged and the alley disappeared. Taking a brief look at it, Lin Mu started walking towards his house.

Along the way, he could see the people going about their daily life. Lin Mu unknowingly let out a sigh as he contemplated this.

'All these people live their lives while completely being in the blind about what happens in the world. I do not want to be like this ever again.' Lin Mu thought to himself with determination.

Fifteen minutes later he reached his house and directly went to the bedroom to cultivate. Lin Mu now wanted to see what the difference will be if he uses the basic qi pills to cultivate.

Wanting to test this out, he withdrew one of the boxes that had them and opened it to take a pill out from it. He looked at it for a moment before consuming it. Lin Mu had expected for there to be some kind of taste to it, but it was not so. Instead, the pill was rather bland in taste, as if it was water.

A few seconds later the pill melted in his mouth and he swallowed it down to his stomach. When the liquefied pill finally reached his stomach, it started. Wisps of spirit qi were released from the liquid and started being absorbed by Lin Mu's body.

Lin Mu quickly chanted the severing heart sutra and guided these spirit qi wisps into his meridians and from there into his dantian.

Lin Mu's dantian was rapidly starting to fill up. He estimated that his speed of absorption of spirit qi from the basic qi pills was more than twice compared to when he cultivated normally. Ten minutes passed and Lin Mu had finally absorbed all of the spirit qi that was contained within the basic qi pill.

*~Huu~*

Lin Mu let out a breath as relaxed a bit. He observed his dantian and saw that it was now completely filled to the brim. That one basic qi pill was enough to replenish the depleted part of his dantian. He tried to calculate and came to the conclusion that he had obtained nearly five hundred wisps of spirit qi from the pill.

"This is rather nice. Still, I do not know how much qi does a low grade spirit stone give. I've used the defective mid grade spirit Stone's before, but they already had a majority of their spirit qi depleted. I should check it." Lin Mu thought out loud.

Still, to do this Lin Mu would have to deplete a part of his spirit qi to make more space, thus that's exactly what he did. Lin Mu then started to further refine the spirit qi wisps into liquefied form. An hour passed after which Lin Mu had depleted ever two-thirds of his entire dantian. And in exchange for that, he was able to obtain three drops of liquefied spirit qi.

Lin Mu then pulled out the pouch that contained the spirit stones and took one of them from it before holding it in his hand and starting to absorb it. Unlike the basic qi pill though, the speed of absorption was rapid and a large amount of spirit qi rushed into his meridians.

It wasn't as large as when he absorbed the mid grade spirit stone, but it was still quite large. It didn't even take him three minutes before the spirit qi within the spirit stone was completely depleted and it crumbled into dust.

'Let's see how much spirit qi did I obtain from this.' Lin Mu thought to himself before peering into his dantian.

To his surprise, he actually obtained around six hundred wisps of spirit qi from the spirit stone, which was slightly more than the basic qi pill.

"Senior, why is there a difference such as this? I thought they would have the same quantities of spirit qi." Lin Mu questioned.

"The amount of spirit qi in all spirit stones is never the same. There are always some differences, some may have more while some may have less. But usually, a low grade spirit stone is able to provide you with at least four hundred wisps of spirit qi. Similarly, with the basic qi pill, some of them may have more or less spirit qi." Xukong answered.

"I see... but then how much spirit qi does the other grade of spirit stones provide?" Lin Mu questioned with curiosity.

"A mid grade spirit stone is about ten times more potent than the low grade spirit stones while a high grade spirit stone is a hundred times more potent than a mid grade spirit stone, which makes it a thousand times more potent than a low grade spirit stone." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu had a slightly confused expression on his face as he compared the grades of the spirit stones and then realized that Senior Xukong had not spoken about the highest grade spirit stone that was the peak grade spirit stone.

"Then Senior, what about peak grade spirit stones? How do they compare?" He asked.

"The peak grade spirit stones are rather special. Unlike the other spirit stones, they do not provide you with spirit qi wisps... Instead, they directly provide you with liquefied spirit qi which makes them incredibly rare.

In fact, in a spirit stone mine, only five percent of all spirit stones are peak grade spirit stones, while the high grade ones are at fifteen percent, mid grade at thirty percent and low grade being the majority at fifty percent." Xukong explained.

### **Chapter 223 - A Steady Pace**

Lin Mu was astounded by this information. Just from this, he could imagine how rare peak grade spirit stones were. He could not help but wonder how much liquefied spirit qi he would be able to obtain from a single peak grade spirit stone.

But just as he had this thought, Xukong interrupted him.

"You shouldn't attempt to absorb spirit qi from a peak grade spirit stone at your cultivation level. It is quite likely that your meridians would not be able to handle the influx of spirit qi and may get injured. You would have to be at the core condensation realm at the very least in order to be able to use them safely." Xukong warned.

"I understand senior. Thank you for your advice." Lin Mu replied before returning to cultivating.

A surprising thing to Lin Mu was that he was actually able to refine three drops of liquid spirit qi using the basic qi pills in just one hour, compared to when it took him around ten hours to do the same without them. But another thing he noticed was that he was much more tired than normal.

'Seems like with the increased speed of refinement, I also have an increased rate of exhaustion. I need to pace myself, or there is a chance I may make a mistake while refining the spirit qi wisps to liquid form.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu had already learned that focus was essential while refining the liquid spirit qi as any mistake during that process could make the spirit qi go haywire and damage his meridians. In fact, whenever he failed in refining them, Lin Mu had to take a break in order to return his mental status to normal.

Even with the help of the sutras, the exhaustion of the mind was not something Lin Mu could easily escape. Thus keeping this in the mind, Lin Mu cultivated normally without putting too much effort into it and let his mind relax and restore.

~Huu~

Another hour passed before Lin Mu opened his eyes and let out a breath.

'Hmm, at least he knows his limits and does not rush mindlessly. Cultivating haphazardly will only lead to his foundation becoming unstable.' Xukong spoke inwardly with approval in his voice.

After ensuring that he was feeling fine, Lin Mu took out another pill and ate it, letting it release the spirit qi in it. He had already obtained around five hundred wisps of spirit qi by cultivating normally and only needed one more basic qi pill to restore it to the maximum.

"Let's start again..." Lin Mu uttered before beginning his refinement.

Having learned his lesson from before, Lin Mu slowed his pace by an appropriate amount and focused on the entire process. By doing this he was observing the points where he made mistakes and was also trying to find the solutions which would help him avoid making them again.

Slowly but surely, he was improving in this manner.

Two hours passed before Lin Mu had depleted all of his spirit qi wisps and in exchange had obtained three more drops of liquefied spirit qi. These three drops joined the other drops of liquefied spirit qi and continued to float around at the bottom of his dantian.

"Indeed, being steady is the way. Not only can I avoid mistakes, but I'm also able to pick up points where I can improve." Lin Mu spoke in a slightly joyful tone.

And just as he thought this, his stomach grumbled with hunger, making him realize that he hadn't eaten for over twelve hours by now.

He quickly finished his meal and set up more meat to cook while he assimilated the vital energy. Lin Mu now knew that it would be best if he always had meat ready for cooking before he cultivated, so that he would have it done by the time he finished his session.

Quickly returning to his session, Lin Mu repeated the process until it was night time and the snow had started falling again. The window was half open, which allowed some snowflakes to drift in with the wind that was blowing.

The snowflakes came and settled on his face, which made him snap out of his focus. He looked outside and realized that hours had passed by.

"Hmm, I should eat and rest. I'll continue in the Sleepscape." Lin Mu muttered to himself before having his dinner and swiftly falling asleep.

Appearing in front of the spirit apple tree in the Sleepscape, Lin Mu skillfully plucked four ripened spirit apples and stored them in the ring, before taking out a halberd to continue practicing the Thousand armament blade Scripture.

Lin Mu had learned a lot from the battle with Duan Ke and was able to pick up on the flaws that he had. Though in the process, he had also destroyed the seven weapons he had originally bought from Duan Ke. They were the first few weapons he had gotten and was thus feeling slightly sad.

But the sadness soon faded away once he realized the gains he had gotten today. Lin Mu had been able to obtain ten drops of liquefied spirit qi today. This was the largest amount he had obtained till now and had actually doubled his entire store of liquefied spirit qi, taking it to a total of twenty drops.

"Now that I know I can refine these many drops of liquefied spirit qi, I can resolutely use half of them for practicing the lost immortal's technique." Lin Mu stated to himself.

He continued practicing the thousand armament blade scripture until he felt like he had depleted half of his mental stamina.

'Let's see if there's a difference with the nameless technique or not.' Lin Mu thought to himself before sitting down below the spirit apple tree.

He then willed a drop of liquefied spirit qi to rise from his dantian and then merged it into the tissues of his stomach according to the instructions. Still, no effect could be seen from a single drop the same as before.

"Again..." He muttered.

Another drop of liquefied spirit qi rose and merge with his stomach. He repeated this five times, after which he was left with fifteen drops of liquefied spirit qi.

*~Huu~*

"Still no change. Perhaps, I'll see the difference when I wake up." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Now feeling completely tired, Lin Mu decided to call it quits for today and faded away from the Sleepscape.

### **Chapter 224 - Hei Wan's Frustration**

Lin Mu woke up to an aching stomach in the morning and instinctively withdrew the cooked meat from the Ring before devouring it. This time he was able to maintain his sanity and did not make a mess like the last time.

*~Phew~*

"Seems like I need to wait a bit more before I can see any change in the nameless technique. For now, the hunger seems the same although I haven't lost control over myself." Lin Mu spoke.

"This does seem like the better way. From the pace you are cultivating, you should be able to reach the peak of the late stage of the qi refining realm much earlier than expected. Maybe, you would even have some success with the nameless technique." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu hummed in response before starting his routine again.

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While Lin Mu was cultivating in seclusion, something else was happening in Wu Lim City.

Hei Wan had arrived in the Wu Lim city a while back and had been staying at her lord's mansion. Not only was she keeping up with all the reports that the Hei corps got from all over the Shuang Qian kingdom, but she was also managing the Northern town.

The investigations about the culprits had slowed to a turtle's pace, and no progress had been made for days now. This only made Hei Wan furrow her brows more, as she read the report in her hand.

'No more disappearances have been reported in the Northern town and the area around it. Neither have there been any more incidences in the entire county. Some of the mercenaries that had gone out to the northern forest finally returned and were expertly shocked after learning of all that had happened.

Apparently, they had also sensed some of the strange changes that had happened in the forest with the beasts and had sent some messengers to their respective camps. But due to the distance being rather large and the winter being in full swing, it was taking them much longer to communicate.

The beast corpses that were hunted by the mercenaries have also been steadily arriving at the Wu Lim city and were being taken by the Mayor's people regularly. Still, we are in the dark about what the beast corpses were being used for. All of our attempts at finding out more about it had been stalled by the lord as he did not want to rouse the Mayor's suspicion.'

Hei Wan rolled the report and tied it back before storing it on a shelf.

*~Sigh~*

She sighed and rubbed her forehead in frustration and fatigue.

'What more can we do, all our attempts seem to be failing. And even the investigation into the abandoned warehouse turned out to be useless.' Hei Wan thought.

*~Knock~Knock~*

Just as she was lost in her thoughts, someone knocked on the door of the room.

"It's me, leader." The voice behind the door called out.

"Come in." Hei Wan replied.

The door of the room opened and in walked a man whose face was hidden behind a featureless mask and was dressed in dark blue robes. The man came to stand in front of Hei Wan before cupping his hands in greeting.

"Speak," ordered Hei wan.

"The Lord had asked for your presence at this moment. We also have some news about the disciples of the Tri cauldron peony sect." The masked man spoke.

"Alright, I'll be there in a minute." Hei Wan spoke before letting out another sigh.

The masked man went away, and Hei Wan corrected her clothes before leaving the room as well. She walked to another room, which was the study of her lord.



The Lord was currently standing against a window and was staring out of it. He was tapping on the windowsill with his left hand while he had a cup of tea in the other. Hei Wan gently opened the door of the study and walked to stand behind the lord in silence.

She did not speak and patiently waited for her lord to be done with his thoughts.

Her wait did not last long, as it seemed like the Lord was in a hurry today.

"Something is wrong with the disciples of the Tri cauldron peony sect." The Lord spoke in a monotone voice.

Hei Wan's eyes were raised behind her veil as she took these words in.

"Is it something to do with the mayor, or perhaps is it because of their task?" Hei Wan speculated.

Wu Hei did not respond immediately and thought for a few seconds before responding.

"I am thinking both. I want you to investigate into them more, perhaps even... a banquet. Yes... Yes... A banquet will be good." Wu Hei spoke in a strange tone.

"I'll prepare the invitations right away. Should I set it up at the Qing Bao Restaurant? Or perhaps somewhere else?" Hei Wan immediately replied.

"Hmm..." Wu Hei hummed as he sipped his tea and rubbed his chin.

He thought for a minute before responding.

"What was that place that the disciples of the Tri cauldron peony sect took a fancy to? Set the banquet there. Hire some courtesans to entertain them." Wu Hei spoke with a slight smile on his face.

"Fang Yin pavilion would indeed be a good choice, my lord, I'll get to it right away. But should we invite a few more people, just us and them being there would seem strange?" Hei Wan answered.

"Do as you seem fit, I just want it ready as soon as possible." Wu Hei replied as he turned around.

"It will be done." Hei Wan replied before swiftly leaving the room.

Once Hei Wan was gone from the room, Wu Hei went to sit at his desk. He put the cup down and poured himself another serving before drinking it all in a single gulp.

*~Sigh~*

"It has gone cold... What a waste of good tea." He muttered before flipping his palm a making a jade slip appear in his hand.

This jade slip was light yellow in color and was about the length of a palm. Wu Hei firmly grasped it in his palm before speaking.

"How are you, Elder brother..."

**Chapter 225 - A Groggy Morning**

While some events and meetings were happening in the Wu Lim city, Lin Mu himself was completely oblivious to it. He was peacefully cultivating in his house and was simply following the routine he had formed.

Lin Mu would cultivate during the day, eat the beast meat, assimilate vital energy, cultivate till evening and then sleep. Even in sleep he would train in the Sleepscape increasing his proficiency with the thousand armament blade scripture and would then practice with the nameless technique of the lost immortal.

Just like this, a month swiftly passed by and Lin Mu barely noticed. No one disturbed him during this period and he simply stayed inside the house, not taking even a single step outside the courtyard. The neighborhood people had finally started to notice that he had disappeared for a long time and some tried inquiring.

But all of their attempts were blocked by Hei Ping, who would stand guard near the house every day and would just give the people excuses that Lin Mu had gone out or something else. The people were fine with it for a week before they started to get incredibly suspicious.

The people in Lin Mu's neighborhood had already found out that he had become a cultivator a while ago, as some of them had seen him visiting the town center and interacting with Hei Wan and the other officials. Some people had even seen him display his strength, thus they now had respect for Lin Mu in their minds.

This was also the reason why they thought that Hei Ping was assigned to the house. At first, even Hei Ping had tried to deny the fact that Lin Mu was a cultivator but eventually when Hei Bao and the rest realized that the entire neighborhood knew about it, they decided to reveal it officially and said that Lin Mu now worked for them.

This was done without the knowledge of Lin Mu, but Hei Bao and Hei Wan thought that this would help solve some unnecessary problems that would crop up in the future. The people from the neighborhood that knew Lin Mu since he was a kid felt slightly proud that someone from their neighborhood had become a venerated cultivator.

Another thing was that they had already been paranoid because of the disappearances and were relieved that they had stopped. The way that Hei Ping acted by giving excuses was only making them think that perhaps Lin Mu had disappeared as well, and the truth was being hidden from them for some reason.

Even the fear of the guards was not stopping them this time. It was as if the fear of an unknown threat was much greater to them than the threat of opposing authority.

"You can't stop us today, we are going to take a look inside ourselves!" A man spoke.

"People, people, people, trust me, Lin Mu is currently resting in his house and is taking a rest after a tiring task." Hei Ping tried to convince by putting up his hands.

While he himself was also a cultivator, he could not carelessly reveal his identity as that may point to how he reached this level by being a common guard. This was also problematic, as it could lead to his identity as a member of the Hei corps.

Since he could not exert his strength, all he could do was try to speak to the people and hold them back that way.

"No, enough is enough! We have seen Lin Mu grow up since he was a child, we've known him for a long time. He won't mind it if we go meet him." An old woman spoke.

Even more people voiced their opinion and a person eventually managed to get by Hei Ping, who was blocking the people. Seeing that this person was about to knock on the door, Hei Ping became tense. He had known that Lin Mu was in seclusion and also knew how important it was that a cultivator is not disturbed during it.

Even a small mistake could potentially be harmful and result in an injury. Thus he definitely did not want anyone to even attempt to get close to Lin Mu's house, not to mention knock on the door.

"STOP!" Hei Ping shouted.

But the man seemed to have ignored his words as his hand had already extended towards the gate of the courtyard.

But just as his hand was about to touch the gate, it opened by itself. The man froze in place and so did the other people who had been causing ruckus this entire while.

"What?" Spoke a person standing behind the gate in a groggy voice.

"Why is there a commotion so early in the morning?" He continued as he rubbed his eyes.

"Li-Lin Mu... You're alive! You're alive!" The old lady spoke in a surprised tone.

"Alive? Of course, I'm alive, what would happen to me?" Lin Mu spoke as a yawn escaped his mouth.

Hei Ping's eyes went wide as he came forward. He could see Lin Mu's expression and understood that he seemed to have awakened from sleep and was perhaps quite tired. He wondered if he had made a mistake by not using force with these people and whether he would get punished by his captain for this.

He had been ordered to strictly not disturb Lin Mu unless explicitly told to do so, thus he was even more tense.

"Se-Senior Lin Mu... I-I... I tried to stop them, but they just did not want to listen to me. Please forgive me." Hei Ping pleaded.

Lin Mu who was listening to the entire thing was only feeling confused and wondered what was happening.

"Wait, explain from the start, I'm confused." Lin Mu spoke.

"It's like this..." Hei Ping then went on to tell him everything.

How he had been told to not disturb him and not to let others disturb him either. About how Lin Mu was lightly in seclusion and that it would be bad to interrupt him.

Lin Mu listened to everything and let out a breath.

*~Sigh~*

"These people..."

### **Chapter 226 - Sick Lin Mu?**

A day ago Lin Mu had a rather long cultivation session and had a small breakthrough in his practice with the Thousand armament blade scripture. Even he had not expected something like this, thus he had spent the rest of the day practicing it in the backyard.

He had practiced straight for eighteen hours and had utterly exhausted himself. During this entire ordeal, he had not used even a single wisp of his spirit qi, and neither did he use the vital energy. All that he had done was done using the raw strength of his body.

This had left him incredibly sore and tired such that when his head hit the pillow, he did not even appear in the Sleepscape rather just falling into a deep dreamless slumber. All these weeks no one had disturbed him, thus Lin Mu had gotten incredibly used to the solitary life.

He had mostly forgotten about the people outside the courtyard and was fully focused on his training and cultivation. Thus when he was rudely woken from his sleep because of a commotion that was happening outside, he was groggy, to say the least.

In fact, now that he heard the story from Hei Ping, he was wondering when did his neighbors become so caring. While they had interactions over the years, the neighbors mostly kept to themselves after his parent's death, not bothering to talk with Lin Mu.

On one part this was due to them blaming Lin Mu for being an orphan and they did not want him borrowing any money from them. Although Lin Mu had never done that.

*~Hmph~*

"Hypocrites, how typical of mortal humans." Xukong scoffed in Lin Mu's mind.

Lin Mu paid little attention to Senior Xukong's words as he was still reeling from his sleepiness. He could feel that something strange was happening with his body, like it was sick. This was rather new for him, as he had not been sick ever since he became a cultivator.

'Perhaps it just a side effect of training without the use of spirit qi and vital energy. Bah! I'll deal with these people first.' Lin Mu thought to himself, feeling frustrated.

"Alright, you all can see me now, right? I'm fine, you all can go back. I want to rest now." Lin Mu spoke up in a louder voice than before.

This silenced most people, but some of them were still speaking a few things. Lin Mu did not mind them, as all he wanted to do now was rest. He thus turned to Hei Ping.

"I'll rest for a bit. Please don't let them disturb me." Lin Mu ordered before closing the door of the courtyard.

The people were now left standing in an awkward silence as they now didn't know how to respond.

"You heard him, go off now. Senior Lin Mu does not want to be bothered. If anyone dares to disturb him anymore, they would be reported to the town head and be punished." Hei Ping warned.

With the threat of punishment hanging over their heads and seeing that Lin Mu was indeed there, the people walked away, albeit reluctantly. It was almost as if they wanted more from Lin Mu, and they had now been restrained.

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*~Phew~*

Lin Mu let out a breath of fatigue as he laid down on his bed and closed his eyes. He had his hand on his forehead and was rubbing it to alleviate the headache that had now sprouted in his head.

Unable to bear it anymore, Lin Mu decided to ask senior Xukong.

"Senior, what is happening to me? Why do I feel... sick?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Hmm, I do not exactly know. It could be because of the training you did yesterday, but this seems too extreme for that." Xukong replied.

*~Sigh~*

"I guess I'll just sleep for a bit and see how I feel later." Lin Mu spoke before turning on his side.

A few minutes later, Lin Mu was deep in sleep and the silence once again descended in the room. Xukong though was lost in his thoughts.

"Hmm, is it time for that? It should be, he is already close to the limit. He had already refined enough liquefied spirit qi, his body should be ready." Xukong spoke to himself.

While Xukong had told Lin Mu otherwise, he actually knew what was happening to him, or rather had a good guess.

In this entire month, Lin Mu had accumulated about two hundred drops of liquefied spirit qi and had used up about one third of the basic qi pills from one of the boxes. He actually refined more than double this amount of liquid spirit qi, but he had been using most of it in practicing the nameless technique of the lost immortal and had infused it into his stomach.

If one were to look at Lin Mu's dantian, they would see that it was slowly expanding. Before Lin Mu had thought that he had the capacity of about two thousand spirit qi wisps when he had originally started to cultivate. But later he learned that he was simply mistaken due to his lack of experience and spirit sense.

Later on, he learned from senior Xukong that his dantian was actually increasing in capacity and had reached the capacity to hold fifteen hundred spirit qi wisps.

During the past month, his dantian had gone through a rigorous exercise, having been filled and depleted over and over again. And not only that, but every day the amount of liquid spirit qi in his dantian was also increasing, which exerted a certain kind of pressure on it.

For most other cultivators, this pressure was normal and came with the growth of their cultivation, but unlike Lin Mu's dantian, their dantian would instead get tempered and harden, making it so that the liquid spirit qi would no longer affect its walls due to its pressure.

But in Lin Mu's case, his dantian was rather flexible, and now this very characteristic was showing its effect. His dantian started to steadily expand under the effect of the pressure exerted by the liquid spirit qi and fine cracks developed in its walls.

### **Chapter 227 - The Expanded Dantian**

These cracks slowly grew bigger, but when they reached a critical value a strong wave of energy would wash over it and mend it. This energy was none other than Lin Mu's vital energy which had been saturated to a great extent within his body.

This process of mending and repair lasted for many hours during which Lin Mu was running a fever and his body had turned red from the heat. Fine wisps of steam could even be seen rising from his body due to the cold temperature.

The expansion of his dantian continued on until when finally, it had reached double its previous size. Lin Mu's dantian was now large enough to contain three thousand wisps of spirit qi within it.

If other cultivators were to see it, they would be extremely shocked as Lin Mu's capacity to store spirit qi was now three times that of an average cultivator. In fact, if he were to refine more spirit qi and fill it entirely with liquid spirit qi, his capacity would even contend against that of mid stage core condensation realm cultivators.

Even in the top three sects, there were barely any disciples whose capacity of dantian in the qi refining realm reached two thousand spirit qi wisps, not to mention three thousand. Even fifteen hundred wisps was considered a rarity in the top ten sects.

While it only seemed like Lin Mu's capacity was only three times that of a similar stage cultivator, it was not so. While it was only three times for now, it would be exponentially more when he reached a higher realm.

Even a hundred spirit qi wisp difference became a huge difference in the long run as it only meant that, that much extra space was present for refinement and compression of spirit qi. The more spirit qi was refined and compressed, the more stable the foundation of a cultivator would be.

Still, the reason why there were not many cultivators with higher capacity was not that they were not talented. But rather because even in the top sects, they would restrain its expansion as it would only take that much longer for that disciple to reach the next realm.

Another major problem was the injuries caused to the dantian could be life threatening and there was a big chance that the cultivator would actually end up crippling themselves permanently if their dantian was shattered due to the expansion.

In a way, Lin Mu only survived it because of his abnormal body tempering realm cultivation due to which he had ample amounts of vital energy seething within his body. Most cultivators would abandon vital energy once they reached the qi refining realm and thought of it as an inferior to spirit qi.

An entire day passed before Lin Mu's fever finally went down. His dantian had stabilized and was no longer expanding. Even the drops of liquid spirit qi which floated in individual droplets on the bottom of Lin Mu's dantian, merged together forming a small pool.

If one were to look at this pool and the wisps of spirit qi floating over it, they would think that it is a scene from an immortal painting.

Inside Lin Mu's abdomen, something else was happening. A complex and obscure pattern appeared on his stomach. This pattern was the same pattern that had appeared when Lin Mu had first bound with the Lost immortals legacy treasure, which was the wooden slip.

The obscure pattern flickered and small runes started appearing from it. These runes were too small to be clearly observed, and it could not be perceived what they meant. All that could be seen was that they had some kind of a complex form.

These runes spread all over the stomach and formed a net. The net had large size gaps and it did not seem proper. The obscure pattern flickered unstably and a few more of those small runes appeared from it. These small runes too joined the net, making it slightly more denser.

The obscure pattern flicked even more, but it could not produce any more of the small runes. The obscure pattern, as if running out of fuel, fizzled one last time before disappearing. The net formed from the small runes shrank and faded into the surface of Lin Mu's stomach.

Just as the obscure pattern disappeared, Lin Mu opened his eyes.

"Huh, what... Ah! Heavens! Not Again!" Lin Mu uttered painfully as the hunger attacked him like a beast.

He quickly withdrew the meat from his ring and started eating it. Over the days he had stored plenty of cooked meat in his ring, but even then it was steadily being depleted. Lin Mu had already known that his hunger was increasing more and more, thus he increased the amount of meat he cooked.

It had come to the point where he had already finished half of all the beast corpses he had accumulated till now. Still, something was feeling strange to him. Usually, when he got the rush of hunger, it would immediately start being satiated once he started eating, but that was not happening right now.

Lin Mu ignored it for a bit and continued eating, as he was more bothered by the pain for now. But after a few minutes, he had reached a point where he had already finished the entire beast and yet there was not even one percent of reduction in his hunger.

"Senior! something's wrong!" Lin Mu shouted out in his mind.

"I know, it seems like there have been a few changes in your body. Quickly check it with your spirit sense your dantian probably expanded even more. And perhaps even the nameless technique of the lost immortal must have had some effect." Xukong suggested.

Lin Mu split his attention with some difficulty and used his spirit sense to observe his body while still continuing to eat. He had already withdrawn the second beast that was cooked beforehand and was already eating it.

Lin Mu first observed his visceral organs and could not find anything different with them. He even looked at his stomach and scanned it closely, yet could not find any change.

'Huh? It's not my organs, so is it my dantian?' Lin Mu thought as he peered deeper.

## **Chapter 228 - Strengthened Foundation**

Lin Mu's spirit sense reached his dantian and it was then that he witnessed it. The sight was strangely beautiful and he even stopped eating for a brief moment. It was as if he was looking at a beautiful painting and he was the person in the painting that was sitting on the side of a pond.

The shimmering pond of liquid spirit qi and faintly glowing wisps of spirit qi looked amazing to him. It was now that he noticed it.

"My dantian... It has... doubled in size? And what's this even the drops of the liquid spirit qi have merged. This looks beautiful..." Lin Mu muttered in his mind.

While Lin Mu was witnessing this scene, Xukong was doing the same through Lin Mu's mind.

'Indeed, it increased as I expected. He even managed to form the qi pool, that's good. His progress should be even more faster now. But this hunger... it is abnormal even when considering the nameless technique. Did his training finally push him over the limit or is it something else?' Xukong thought.

*~Sigh~*

"Only time will tell..." Xukong muttered to himself before looking towards the eternal altar that was in a calm state.

Lin Mu had finally gathered his wits and drew his attention back from his dantian to focus on eating. In the time that he had spent observing his body, he had already finished another beast. But now he could finally feel a reduction in his hunger.

*~Huu~*

*~Huu~*

*~Huu~*

Lin Mu took labored breaths between each bite.

'This is too much. If it increases more, it would take me even more meat to satisfy the hunger. I just hope it doesn't flare up like this again for a while.' Lin Mu thought to himself, feeling helpless.

Lin Mu ended up finishing one more beast for a total of four beasts before he was able to stop.

He could not move anymore and simply laid down on the ground surrounded by a pile of bones and scraps of the meat. He slowly blinked and looked around in the room. The room was now quite messy, to say the least, and it would take him quite a while to clean it again.

*~Sigh~*

"How long is this going to take this time?" Lin Mu spoke to himself as he waited for his strength to return to him.

He closed his eyes and took a brief nap, and when he woke up, he was feeling energized. He felt like a river of energy was coursing through him, and an inexplicable sense of comfort filled him. The vital energy within his body thrummed in harmony and similarly the spirit qi circulated within his meridians automatically.



~Crack~

~Crack~

~Pop~

~Pop~

Lin Mu stood up, and the joints in his body crackled and pop. He could feel the strength that was coiled in his body. It was as if it was packed to the brim, yet there was still a desire for more. Lin Mu clenched his fist to test and immediately felt the difference.

"This increase... it almost double of my previous strength..." Lin Mu said in a shocked tone.

"Seems like your body has finally started to acclimatize with the spirit qi in your body," Xukong spoke.

Lin Mu was confused upon hearing Senior Xukong's words and was wondering what he meant as he had not heard of anything such as this before from him. In fact, in all that he had learned about cultivation, he did not know of anything that was similar to this.

"What do you mean, Senior?" Lin Mu questioned, feeling curious.

"What you are experiencing right now is nothing but your foundation getting deeper. You see, when a person cultivates they accumulate spirit qi in their body, but even if they have large stores of it, they can't utilize it perfectly. This becomes even more apparent when there is a difference between the cultivation realms.

Another great factor in this was your body tempering realm cultivation. You remember when I said that the body cultivation realm was important, right? This was the reason. While one can have spirit qi, they still need a strong vessel to be able to contain and control it. Reaching the eighth stage of the body tempering realm puts you at the very minimum requirement level that is needed to contain the spirit qi.

The higher your cultivation gets, the more difficult it would be for your body to handle it. For cultivators who only cultivate spirit qi and not the vital energy, they need to spend much longer to stabilize their foundations and need an extensive amount of resources as well.

While the time taken to do the same with body tempering realm cultivation is longer at the start, it results in a big difference later. Your body has harmonized with the spirit qi, and now you should be able to use a much larger amount at once without harming yourself.

This was the reason I wanted you to continue with body tempering realm cultivation." Xukong explained.

After hearing Senior Xukong's words, Lin Mu felt quite enlightened and grateful. He was lucky that he had met Senior Xukong or he would have probably gone on the wrong path and end up regretting it later. Or worse, he would have never even found out that he was wrong.

As a great sage once said, "Knowing about a mistake and regretting it is better than never knowing you made a mistake at all."

"I am grateful for your guidance, Senior Xukong." Lin Mu spoke in a content tone.

"Hmm," Xukong hummed in response before continuing, "Once you reach the peak of the body tempering realm though, I have something that would help you go even further, much further than this world has seen."

Lin Mu was curious about it but decided that it would be best for him to wait patiently till Senior Xukong tells him himself. He now knew that Xukong had much more experience than anyone in this world and his guidance was priceless.

## **Chapter 229 - A Nostalgic Encounter**

Lin Mu sat down and tried to observe the status of his body now. He wanted to see what exact difference was there, now that his foundation had been strengthened. He chanted the severing heart sutra so that his perception could be at its peak and then used his spirit sense to observe his body.

While he had seen it before when he was still eating, it was not as thorough as he was distressed by the pain of hunger and thus couldn't focus. But now that he was free from it and was feeling better than ever, he had no such restrictions.

Lin Mu went from the top of his body and went all the way down. He observed his meridians, which seemed to have slightly increased in diameter and had even gotten a bit thicker. He then observed his stomach, which seemed to be looking the same as before, yet he had this innate feeling that something had changed.

He finally came to his dantian and saw the same painting like scene, except this time he wasn't as amazed. The spirit qi wisps were still floating around above the pond of liquid spirit qi but from time to time they would leave the dantian and enter the meridians on their own and circulate in his body before returning.

He also observed that the number of wisps was actually increasing slowly and this speed was much faster than his previous natural rate of recovery, which came as a surprise to him.

'Seems like having a strong foundation has way more hidden benefits than I thought...' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Having thought of this, he decided to return to his routine and left for the kitchen so that he could cook more meat. But when he reached there and was about to light the fire, he realized something.

"Huh? I'm out of wood. Hmm, guess I should go buy some, or I can just ask Hei Ping, I think. He did say that I can request him some things." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He thus left the kitchen and started walking towards the door of the courtyard. He opened the door and looked for Hei Ping but did not see him there.

'Did he go somewhere else?' Lin Mu thought before scanning the area with his spirit sense.

"Not here? Was he called by the Hei corps, perhaps?" Lin Mu thought out loud.

Taking a few more glances around, he reckoned that he would have to get it himself. Thus Lin Mu started walking in the direction of the market. While he still did have some cooked meat present in his ring, Lin Mu did not want to take any more chances with the nameless technique.

He didn't know how much more could his hunger intensify, thus he wanted to be fully prepared. Besides, he had plenty of money with him right now. Lin Mu took a brisk walk and took in the sights of the town. He had been in seclusion for a rather long while, thus it was actually feeling a bit refreshing to him.

'This is kinda nice. Perhaps I should take a long walk, relax myself and clear my mind.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

"That would be a good idea. You should try out your techniques and skills, now that your strength has increased. You should always have a good grasp on your capabilities and limits." Xukong advised.

"Your right, Senior. I'll do as you suggest." Lin Mu replied before reaching the town market.

The market was relatively empty than usual as the winter was still in full effect and it was currently snowing. Lin Mu himself wasn't even wearing any thick robes and was in his simple clothes. Before he could at least feel relatively cold, but now he felt no different from being in his house.

His vital energy which was fully contained within his body was protected from the weather.

Some of the people that were selling their wares were shivering with cold, due to not having adequate clothing. While others were simply weak and had low body tempering realm cultivation. Lin Mu curiously did a scan of the entire market with his spirit sense and found out that out of the tens of people there, barely four reached the fifth stage of the body tempering realm.

Most of the adults that he saw were at the fourth stage of the body tempering realm and below. Only the guards that were standing at the entrance of the streets and square had a cultivation that was at the sixth stage of the body tempering realm.

Lin Mu quickly found a few people that were selling wood and bought it all. In fact, he bought all the stock that was available in the market currently. The people who were around looked at him with strange looks, and some of the sellers were even suspicious if he even had that much money.

But once he showed them the coins, their attitude changed three-sixty degrees and they quickly accepted it. Lin Mu knew that he shouldn't store the wood in his ring here, thus he asked all of it to be delivered to his house, which they gladly accepted.

Lin Mu spent about half a gold coin to buy the entire stock of the wood. This display of wealth also garnered some unsavory looks, but they went unnoticed by Lin Mu.

'Let's take a walk to the forest, I need to test my skills too.' Lin Mu thought before changing his direction to the forest.

But there were a couple of people following behind him. They stayed a fair distance away from him thus Lin Mu did not notice them and currently, his focus was on something else, making him lost in his thoughts.

Lin Mu eventually reached the outskirts of the town and exited from the northern part. Just as he got a sufficient distance away from the town, his ears picked up something, they were footsteps. While he was in the town he had not paid attention to it as there were many people around, but now even outside they were following him.

*~Sigh~*

"This is nostalgic..."

### **Chapter 230 - Insult**

The men that were following Lin Mu, were now in the range of his spirit sense and he could see them. There were a total of five men behind him, though he was surprised as he found two of them to be rather familiar.

"These two? Aren't they the same men who chased me back when I sold the snow veiled hare?" Lin Mu spoke to himself in surprise.

The men having seen that Lin Mu had already noticed them showed sly smiles on their faces with some that were more evil than others. But as they got close, they noticed that Lin Mu had not moved at all and he didn't have a change of expression either.

"Ha ha! Seems like this kid has gone dumb from fear," One of the men spoke.

"Of course he would be. Look at him, he's so scrawny and small we can snap him like a twig." Another man who was carrying a sword and was over six feet tall spoke in a demeaning tone.

The two men who had once chased Lin Mu before finally realized who he was. It took them a little longer to recognize him, as his looks had slightly changed over the past few months. Although they were not widely different, they were still quite different for someone who had only seen him once.

"YOU!" One of those two men yelled.

"Brothers this is that brat which made fools of us back then. He even made big brother look bad." The second man explained.

"Ah, seems like we now have more business to settle than before." The man who seemed to be the leader of the five men spoke as he cracked his knuckles.

"Brat, give us all your money and kowtow on the ground a hundred times, and then maybe we will let you off." The final man who had a mouse like looks spoke in a shrill voice.

Lin Mu did not respond to their taunts and simply stared at them and their ridiculous display.

"I didn't know there were mouse beastmen in this world," Xukong spoke in an amused tone.

Lin Mu immediately realized what Senior Xukong was saying and chuckled in response.

"Yes senior, he does look like a mouse. Perhaps he is indeed a beastman, we don't know." Lin Mu spoke out loud.

A vein popped up on the man with the mouse like face.

"What did you say, brat! You dare insult this daddy! I'll teach you, there won't even be any bones left of you when we're done with you." The man with mouse like face spoke.

*~Hah~*

"Little brother, it seems like this kid's parents didn't teach him any manners."

"What do we know, perhaps his mother was a whore and didn't have time to teach him, being busy with other men." One of the men wearing a grey shirt insulted. He had an axe on his back and had a long scar extending from his left ear to his neck.

"Yes, yes, his father must have been a weak eunuch seeing how scrawny he is." The leader of the men added.

But as soon as these words were said, the environment of the area changed. While it was cold before, now it felt chilling. All of the men felt a chill passing through their bodies.

They could also feel a malevolent aura that had suddenly appeared near them. They looked at its source simultaneously and saw Lin Mu standing there with a malevolent look on his face. His lips seemed to be moving and he was uttering something, but they could not hear anything.

*~Gulp~*

The men could not help but gulp their saliva, as an unknown fear washed over them. They could not tell why, but they knew the person in front of them was dangerous. Although logic told them that Lin Mu looked weak and young, their instincts were telling them something else entirely.

The leader of the men forcefully grasped hold of himself and broke out of that strange spell.

"What are you all doing standing? Get him!" Leader yelled.

*~Crack~*

The rest of the four men finally broke out of their stupor and were just about to move when they heard a sickening crunch.

*~Splatter~*

A wet warm liquid splatted onto their faces and bodies as they turned to see someone standing beside them. The person who was previously in front of them was now just beside them. Lin Mu had his hand on the remnants of the head of the man who had insulted his mother.

One of the men touched his face and looked at the warm liquid that had splattered on it.

"Blood?" The man spoke in a daze.

The remaining four men were now stuck in a strange daze as they could not understand what had just happened. One moment they were standing here all fine, and Lin Mu was far ahead of them. But now he was near them and their companion's head seemed to have been crushed.

Lin Mu stayed in the same posture and turned his head to face the man who had insulted his father; in an almost robotic manner. He had the same malevolent expression on his face, except this time it was dressed with the blood and brains.

"You should not have said that," Lin Mu spoke in a cold tone.

Hearing the voice of Lin Mu made the men feel as if flaming steel was being pressed upon their hearts. They tried to speak and move, but discovered that the fear had rooted them to the ground. No matter how much their mind tried, their body simply did not obey.

With every passing second, Lin Mu's expression was getting more and more malevolent as veins popped up on his face and his eyes turned bloodshot. Vital energy and qi coursed through his body as every inch of his muscles filled with strength.

It seemed as if his body had increased by one size and the loose clothes he was wearing became stretched taut.