

Walker 231

Chapter 231 - Bottom Line

Lin Mu let go of the now dead man and fully turned towards the man who had insulted his father. He clenched his fist and buried it in that man's chest.

~Crack~

~Crack~

~Splatter~

More blood splattered as a hole was smashed through that man's chest. The trees at the back could be seen and the man's ribs now poked out of the new opening. Blood flowed endlessly from the man's chest as he fell to the ground with a loud thud.

The remaining three men had finally been shaken from his daze as they instantly started running.

"De-Demon!" The mouse like man yelled in fear as he ran ahead.

"Monster, this is monster!" Another man uttered in disbelief.

The leader of the men did not have the will to speak anything and was fully focused on running instead. He was at the back of the two men as he was the last person to start running. He had only gone a few meters ahead when he heard a sound.

~Swish~

A short sword flew out his side and impaled itself into the head of the man with the mouse like face. But the short sword did not stop there and continued flying, taking the mouse like man with it until it pierced into the head of the other man as well.

The two men had now been sandwiched together with the short sword as a toothpick and collapsed on the ground.

The leader's eyes went wide as he saw this and was suddenly stopped in place. He then felt a tight grasp on his neck, as if it was the claws of death itself. He found himself being lifted off the ground and his legs kept on flailing in the air.

"Mercy! Mercy! Please let go of me! Oh, great lord I... I made a mistake. It was those two who wanted to rob you and suggested this." The leader pleaded with tears and snot coming out of his mouth.

He couldn't see Lin Mu behind him as he had been grasped from the behind, thus all he could do was plead in the air.

"A mistake? Certainly not. Though you all will be useful. Perhaps, you all would be a good sacrifice for pleasing the souls of my parents. May they find peace in the afterlife." Lin Mu spoke in a hoarse voice, that was almost unrecognizable.

Lin Mu tightened his grip as the man kept flailing and pleading. But soon he couldn't speak as his throat had been crushed. But that was only the start, as Lin Mu kept on exerting force until the man's head was forcefully severed from his body, leaving behind a mangled neck on the body as it fell to the ground.

Lin Mu threw the head to the side forcefully, which made it slam into a rock and burst apart like a watermelon.

Lin Mu looked at his handiwork with a cold look and then raised his hands to take a look at them.

~Sigh~

"Even more mess..." He muttered in a hoarse voice before it started to return to normal.

His clothes that had been stretched taught became loose again, and the power coursing in his body calmed down as well.

"All this because I just wanted to go out for a relaxing walk," Lin Mu said in a frustrated tone.

"Good... Good... The dignity of an immortal must not be challenged, the same way a dragon's reverse scale must not be touched. These men crossed your bottom line and deserved this." Xukong praised in a slightly joyous tone.

The rage that was clouding Lin Mu's mind had finally started dispelling as he felt the implications of his actions. A sense of guilt filled him for a moment before swiftly being banished by Senior Xukong's words. What he was saying was right, these men had insulted his parents and thus perished.

But the next thought that came to Lin Mu made him feel confused.

"The burning heart sutra... it is different. I didn't even use it myself, it automatically came within my mind and before I knew it I was chanting it." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

"I'm afraid such is the power of the demonic path. Your will is not strong enough to fully control it, and thus it will take over when you truly get enraged. It will take you some time to get used to it and let your will get tempered. Still, you shouldn't use it carelessly, the aura of the demonic path is not something that should be revealed easily." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu silently listened to Senior Xukong's words before nodding in agreement. While he was not physically tired the way he was when he first used the burning heart sutra, he still felt the mental exhaustion from it. He could tell that the burden of using the burning heart sutra was quite high in his mind.

"This strength... it was ill-suited for a task like this. It could have been easily accomplished without the power of the burning heart sutra, this was simply a waste of effort. Those men were not even cultivators." Lin Mu spoke in a self-explanatory tone.

Lin Mu's mood had been fouled by this incident, and he no longer wished to continue. He didn't even bother cleaning it up and just decided to leave it to the Hei corps. He thought that now that they were taking care of the law and order situation in the town, this work should be left up to them.

Lin Mu did not notice this clearly, but his personality had gone under a new change. While it had already started changing back when he received the ordainment of the world's will, it had now progressed further.

But Xukong was not one to miss this as he basked in this moment.

"He's finally experiencing the true reality of this universe. This is but the start, I'll have to guide him and make sure that it doesn't become too overwhelming for him." Xukong stated to himself.

Chapter 232 - Clean Up

Lin Mu did not bother staying low key anymore and sprinted all the way to the town center. He now wanted nothing more than to return to his house and cultivate. He regretted that he even chose to go out and wondered if it would have been better if he had simply returned to his house from the very start after he bought the wood.

The people along the way saw him running past them and were shocked, to say the least. Even the guards wanted to try to stop him, but his speed was not something that they could come close to. Before they could even react, Lin Mu had already run past them.

Still, there were some guards who seemed to have recognized Lin Mu.

"The new Town Head's esteemed guest, Lin Mu? What happened to him?" One of the guards who recognized Lin Mu spoke up.

His companions and the residents who were nearby heard his words and were surprised.

"That's senior Lin Mu?" Another guard questioned.

"As expected from the new town head's guest. His cultivation is unparalleled." One of the guards who looked a little fat spoke in a flattering tone.

Still, one of the guards was able to see Lin Mu's troubled and frustrated expression while he was running. This guard was actually a member of the Hei corps and had seen Lin Mu in person before and had also witnessed his might. All the Hei corps members that had been assigned as guards were informed of Lin Mu beforehand and were told to report his actions back to Hei Bao.

The guard seeing this immediately went towards the town center. But he saw that Lin Mu was heading towards there as well.

"He's going to the town center in such a hurry, did something drastic happen?" The guard question as he continued on.

Lin Mu soon reached the town center and swiftly made his way up to the office. The guards at the entrance greeted him with cupped hands as he passed by and let him inside. Lin Mu saw that the door of the office was already opened and Hei Bao was sitting at the desk while someone else was also sitting opposite to him.

Lin Mu recognized him immediately, as he was none other than the supervisor Li Peng.

Hei Bao looked up the moment Lin Mu walked in and noticed his expression. A bad feeling arose in his mind, and he gritted his teeth before letting out a sigh.

~Sigh~

"Supervisor Li Peng, I'll talk with you later. I have... some more important matters to attend to." Hei Bao spoke.

Li Peng heard his words and wanted to ask him why he was cutting his meeting short, but looking at his serious face made him think again. Hei Bao currently had a superior position than him and was also a cultivator. Hei Wan who was the acting town Head had personally appointed him to manage the town while she was gone.

Thus Li Peng did not question it further and directly stood up. He glanced at Lin Mu and was surprised. He also saw his expression and the gloomy aura that was radiating off of him.

'Why is he here? Is it related to the culprits again?' He questioned internally before walking out.

Once Li Peng left the room, Lin Mu extended his spirit sense and did a quick sweep of the area. His spirit sense also passed over Hei Bao, and he could feel it. As soon as it touched him, he felt a chill pass through his body and for a moment there he felt fear.

'His spirit sense, it's... incomparable to before. And what was that feeling... killing intent? What has he done now?' Hei Bao questioned himself.

Once Lin Mu was satisfied that there was no one listening to them, and they had privacy, he narrated the incident from before and asked him to take care of the bodies.

~Gulp~

"As you wish. You can go rest now, I'll send some guards to clean it up." Hei Bao replied.

"Thank you." Lin Mu spoke in a calm tone before leaving the office.

Hei Bao's brows furrowed upon Lin Mu's departure, and he called out.

"Guards!"

In a few seconds, four guards appeared in the room. All of them were members of the Hei Corps and were disguised as guards.

"What is the problem captain?" One of them questioned.

"Call a few men, we are going to go check out something. Oh, and also get some guards to look up these persons." Hei Bao answered and then described to them a few things.

The guard's expressions changed to serious and one of them swiftly left to carry out his task while the others went out along with Hei Bao. Their destination was none other than the place where Lin Mu had killed the five men.

Upon reaching the site of the massacre, the Hei corps were shocked and Hei Bao's expression turned displeased.

"Clean it up, and not a single word of this to anyone else!" Hei Bao ordered.

"Yes, captain." The Men replied before getting to their tasks.

~Sigh~

'I need to report to the leader. Something may be wrong with Lin Mu.' Hei Bao thought.

Back in the town, Lin Mu had long since reached his house. He entered the courtyard and saw the wood that he had bought kept in the yard. There was plenty of wood there for him to last a few months, perhaps. He quickly stored it in his ring before entering his room.

He glanced at the mess that was still there and got to cleaning it. A few minutes later the room was clean, but the faint smell of meat was still lingering in the air.

"At least it does not smell bad and is not a foul smell," Lin Mu said to himself before getting to cook more meat.

Once everything was prepped and ready, he finally sat back down to cultivate.

"Only cultivating will calm me down..."

Chapter 233 - The Complications Of Burning Heart Sutra

A day was passed in cultivation as Lin Mu's mental state finally returned to normal.

He had been chanting the calming heart sutra endlessly during this time, yet found that it was not being as effective as before.

'The demonic path is as domineering as always, it will take him longer to get used to it. Even though he also has the approval of the Buddhist path, he hasn't grasped the essence of it yet. While the demonic path is much easier to grasp, all it needs is rage.' Xukong thought.

Lin Mu opened his eyes and let out a breath. His face was tranquil and no trace of the previous distress was seen on it. He had thoroughly been cleansed of his previous condition.

"Senior, from what I've experienced yesterday, it seems like I need to use the burning heart sutra and gain better control over it." Lin Mu spoke in a calm tone.

"Oh, just as I thought of it. Yes, that is indeed what you should do. Once you get used to it and become familiar with that state, not only will you have better control over it but you may even increase your strength by another fold." Xukong replied.

"Mmmhmm," Lin Mu hummed in response before a determined look appeared on his face.

The words of the demonic figures appeared in his mind as he repeated after them.

"Ignite thy heart as a furnace, let your rage fuel your strength and unleash rampage upon the worlds - Behold, The Burning Heart Sutra."

Lin Mu's expression soon changed to a strained one as veins popped up on his face and his muscles grew taut. His eyes were closed, but underneath his eyelids, they had turned bloodshot as well.

Upon reaching his state, his mind started to wander as he had no target to unleash his rage upon. This made his memories of the past come back to him and the sorrow accompanied it. And along with this sorrow came unprecedented rage.

Lin Mu clenched his fists in rage as he tried to control it. He stayed like that for two minutes before Xukong called out.

"Enough!" He ordered.

Lin Mu snapped out of his thoughts and stopped chanting the burning heart sutra. His face and eyes went back to normal and his body also relaxed.

~Phew~

"This is much harder than when I killed those men," Lin Mu said with a tired voice.

"Indeed, when one does not have a goal in mind, their will starts to waver. Right now you don't have a target on which you can focus this power on thus it ends up targeting yourself," Xukong said with a straight tone before continuing, "Hmm, you should use the burning heart sutra once a day like this. But, you need to reduce the time period. Thirty seconds should be good for now. Two minutes is clearly more straining on you. When you killed those men, you barely spent a minute in that state. This is a taxing technique, better to be reserved with it for now."

Lin Mu carefully pondered over Senior Xukong's words and agreed with them. The stress that the technique put on him was certainly large. He didn't know if it could have harmful effects, thus it would only do him good to be prudent.

"That does seem to be the better choice right now." Lin Mu agreed before standing up.

He took a look outside the window and saw the cloudy sky and the swirling snow.

"The winter should be ending in a month now. Not much time left." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He sat back down to cultivate and returned to his routine, except this time another task had been added to it. The task being the daily usage of the burning heart sutra.

Days upon days passed as another month came to an end.

Xiangwei city was a city that was well known in the Shuang Qian kingdom and was also known in other parts of the Great Zhou Empire. There were two reasons for it, one it was one of the biggest cities of commerce and thousands of trades happened there every hour. The second being that it was home to a lot of big and prominent mercenary companies.

The climate in the Xiangwei city was also completely different from that of Wu Lim city. While it was also cold here, it was not on the same level as that of the Wu Lim city and there was no snow here either. The sky was also clear and the sun shone brightly.

At the south of the city, there existed the mercenary district. This was the place where most of the mercenary companies' bases were located. While the smaller mercenary companies had their head bases here, the bigger ones like the ashen cloak mercenaries had a smaller administrative base here.

The bigger mercenary companies had their main bases located outside the city in special areas that had been allotted to them. This was an honor that was only reserved for the most powerful mercenary companies.

Still, the mercenary district was the central hub of the mercenaries as this was also where the office of the mercenary union was located. The building which housed it was rather large and took up around ten percent of the entire mercenary district.

This was a shocking thing for a single building to occupy such a large area. But it was a given, as the building had many different departments in it that performed different functions.

Some dealt with the requests and commissions that they received, some dealt with the legal aspects of the job, some dealt with the goods that they obtained while some parts functioned as a dorm for the mercenaries.

Thought the most important part of the mercenary union was considered as the grand meeting room. This was where the most important meetings were convened and big decisions were taken.

Currently, in this very room, a meeting was taking place. There were more than a hundred seats in the room and all of them were filled.

Right now, a man was standing in the center of the room and was speaking to everyone. This man was none other than Teng Xiaolian. He was currently informing everyone about the events that had happened in the northern town and forest.

Nobody knew, but this meeting was the start of the upheaval.

Chapter 234 - Mercenary Union

The people in the grand meeting hall were all in an uproar after hearing what Teng Xiaolian had just spoken. When the people had been informed that an important meeting was organized they had not expected for it to be this serious.

Most of the mercenary companies had sent their members out to the mission that was assigned by the mayor of the Wu Lim city, thus they were quite enraged, to say the least.

"This cannot go unanswered, the mayor must give us an explanation!" One of the hundreds of mercenaries yelled.

"Yes, yes! This has never happened before."

"Mayor Wu Xun's audacity is too much. How dare he blame the mercenaries without proof?"

"Who knows, he may even have a part in this. Perhaps he does not want to keep up his side of the bargain." Someone else said.

The higher ups of the mercenary company that were sitting at the front of the room seemed quite agitated by hits too. But they knew that they could not express their displeasure directly like this. It would only be detrimental to them in the long run.

"SILENCE!!" The old man who was sitting at the head of the room shouted as he slammed his fist onto the table.

His voice was thunderous and spread around in the room, making the furniture shake. One could feel the power in the voice and could tell that it was amplified by qi. But to make things shake by mere voice meant only one thing. The old man in question was a Nascent soul realm cultivator.

All the mercenaries that were shouting immediately fell silent after seeing the old man spoke. Evidently the old man had a very high positing and inspired fear in them. After silence descended in the room, the old man gazed at everyone with a hawk like gaze.

The weaker mercenaries could feel chills going down their spine just from the gaze and subconsciously swallowed their saliva.

Only when the old man stopped looking did they relax, but even in this time, their backs had been covered with cold sweat.

The old man then looked at Teng Xiaolian before speaking.

"Teng Xiaolian, do you swear on your life and your honor as a mercenary that all you've said is true?" The old man questioned.

"I swear on my life, my honor and the souls of my fellow mercenaries that all I've said is the entire truth that I've experienced." Teng Xiaolian declared as he slammed his fist upon his chest.

~Sigh~

A sigh escaped the old man's lips as he too went silent for a bit. After thinking for a minute, he looked at the mercenaries gathered and the higher ups of all the mercenary companies that were sitting at the front.

"I've come to a decision. All the events that happened as Teng Xiaolian narrated will be reported to the sects. Since it is a matter of blood sacrifices, there may be unorthodox evil cultivators involved. This may go beyond our capacity to handle.

Still, we don't know the full extent of this. Hence I am ordering a total recall of all the mercenaries currently on missions. They are to report to the union as soon as possible and we will be doing a full scale assessment." The Old man declared.

Surprised expressions appeared on the faces of all the higher ups and then their expressions turned serious. One of them who was wearing a full set of armor stood up and looked at the old man. The old man gestured with his eyes to let him speak.

"Union head, but if we recall all our mercenaries the backlash would be too great. Our reputation may fall greatly, how would we deal with that?" The man spoke.

The old man who was apparently the head of the mercenary union thought contemplated for a second before gesturing for the man to sit down.

"Do not worry about that," The union head spoke before flipping his palm and making a golden scroll appear in his hand, "I'll be using the royal decree for this, no one will dare question us for our actions them." He added.

The people were incredibly shocked after hearing the union head's words and knew how severely he was taking it. The royal decree was no small matter, and it had been bestowed upon the mercenary union by the king of the Shuang Qian kingdom for their services over the years.

The royal decree allowed them to request the king of anything as long as it was within certain limits. A request such as the one they were asking was certainly not a problem for the king, who could silence all the people who had commissioned the missions.

Even the cultivation sects would have to take Royal decree rather seriously, even if they did not come under their rule. Besides, some of the bigger mercenary companies had cultivations sects backing them, anyway. There was no way they would take this loss of their members silently.

"And, if the implications of the event are as they have been told so, then there will be no problem anyway and the royal decree would not be needed." The Union head continued.

The expressions of all of the mercenaries were visibly relaxed after hearing the union head's decision and they all nodded in acknowledgment.

"Now then, except for the higher ups, all of you can leave." The union head commanded.

The mercenaries all stood up immediately and left the meeting hall, leaving the remaining people to discuss further.

While leaving, two of the mercenaries from the crowd did not go to their respective bases, but rather they went to a building that looked like a pleasure pavilion. The two of them took different routes, thus did not meet each other and did not know that they had come to the same place.

One of the mercenaries went up to the receptionist that was sitting at the entrance and whispered something to her, after which another worker took him to a secret room. A similar thing happened with the other mercenary, and he was taken to a secret room as well.

"The Lord needs to know about this as soon as possible." One of the mercenaries muttered under his breath.

"Master needs to know immediately, they mercenaries have found out about us..." The other mercenary inwardly spoke with distress.

Chapter 235 - A Nostalgic Visit

Lin Mu was sitting on his bed and was wearing a clean white robe. His face was currently filled with veins yet looked to be relatively calm. His lips were silently moving, chanting the Burning heart sutra.

He maintained this state for over two minutes before he finally stopped and let out a breath.

~Huu~

Lin Mu opened his eyes that were now filled with tranquility.

"Finally..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

"Good, you've finally gained a good grasp over the burning heart sutra. Now you can at least maintain your state without stressing yourself." Xukong praised.

Lin Mu nodded before standing up and stretching his body. Over the past month, he had been following his new routine and had become more habituated to the burning heart sutra. Unlike before when it ended up harming his mind when he didn't have a target to unleash it upon, Lin Mu could now bear with it with much fewer problems.

This wasn't the only thing in which Lin Mu had progressed in this past month. His skill with the thousand armament blade Scripture had also increased by another stage. By now, Lin Mu had already learned ten percent of the weapons that were included in the thousand armament blade scripture.

His cultivation too had greatly progressed and he now had over five hundred drops of liquid spirit qi, which put him at one third of the way to the next stage of the qi refining realm. Once he reached the cumulative number of fifteen hundred wisps, Lin Mu would be said to have entered the peak stage of the qi refining realm.

In this process, though the basic qi pills had helped him a lot, his rate of refinement had also increased and now he could refine fifteen drops of liquid spirit qi from the previous ten. This had increased his pace even more, though he still used half of them to practice the nameless technique of the lost immortal.

In this past month, Lin Mu did not have a severe reaction as before. While his hunger did increase, it was a steady increase and not an abrupt one as he had experienced before. But this had also resulted in him finishing a quarter of all the beast corpses that he had stored in the ring.

Now he only had the final quarter of meat left and Lin Mu knew that with his current increasing pace, it would barely last two weeks.

~Sigh~

"I need to go hunt. Thankfully, the winter is at its last legs now." Lin Mu spoke as he looked outside the window.

While it was still cold, there was no snow anymore. The people had started to come out more, and even some of the trees and plants had sprouted new leaves. Spring was just around the corner and the worst part of the year was over.

Lin Mu looked at the box of basic qi pills that was kept to his side and saw that there were much fewer pills left in it. He did a rough estimate and figured that only one third of the pills were now left in it.

"Hmm, so I now have a total of a little more than thirteen Hundred basic qi pills left. This should last me at least three more months, even if I consider the increase in my refinement speed." Lin Mu spoke to himself.

He then closed the box and stored it in the ring before quickly finishing up his breakfast and leaving the room. Upon exiting the room, Lin Mu looked up at the clear sky and basked in the sunlight for a few seconds before letting out a breath of relief.

'This feels so much better.' Lin Mu thought to himself before opening the door of the courtyard.

Hei Ping immediately spotted him leaving and hurriedly went to greet him. He had already been informed of the incident from last month and was thus a bit tense. But now that Lin Mu was out of seclusion again, he wanted to check up on him.

Last time he had been at the safe house when Lin Mu went out, thus had missed him. This time he wanted to make up for it.

"Good morning Senior Lin Mu. Seems like your seclusion went well." Hei Ping spoke.

"Hmm, it was decent." Lin Mu acknowledged.

"So you are leaving right now? May I ask where you are heading, I can help you if it's within my capabilities." Hei Ping asked.

"I'm going out to hunt. No need for you to follow me, I want to be alone." Lin Mu answered in a calm tone.

"As you wish, then. Farewell." Hei Ping greeted before letting Lin Mu go.

While Lin Mu was heading towards the forest, Hei Ping was heading towards the town center to inform Hei Bao.

Lin Mu subconsciously headed in the direction of the hunting shack and the apple tree. He reached there after ten minutes and took a look around.

The hunting shack had become more damaged over the winter, and the wood it was made from was now rotting. A few planks from its roof had also been broken from what seemed like wind and had gone to who knows where.

Lin Mu then took a look at the apple tree and found it to be rather bare. It did not have many leaves left and there were no apples on it anymore. Still, fine green sprouts could be seen, which showed that it would soon be rejuvenated.

~Sigh~

A sigh filled with nostalgia escaped Lin Mu's lips as he spoke, "So much has happened, and even more has changed."

He took one last look at the apple tree before leaving to head deeper into the forest.

Now that it was nearing spring, the beasts should start returning. But that wasn't necessarily good for Lin Mu, as what he now required was spirit beasts and not normal beasts. Though, he wouldn't mind if he got some normal beasts either, even if they were a drop in the ocean comrade to his appetite.

But as Lin Mu was walking, he sensed something move. The memory from the last month came rushing back to him as he immediately turned to take a look.

"A beast?"

Chapter 236 - Hunting Again

As Lin Mu turned around, he could see the blurry silhouette of a small beast rushing into a bush. He was actually shocked by this, as the speed of the beast was still too high for Lin Mu to see it. He would have understood this in the past if he was at a lower cultivation stage. But he was relatively strong now and should not have had a problem.

Lin Mu could not even sense that strong of spirit qi waves from the beast and estimated for it to be at the early or mid stage of the qi refining realm.

"How is that beast so fast for its cultivation base?" Lin Mu spoke feeling confused.

He extended his spirit sense and did a scan of the area but couldn't find it anything nearby. Whatever the beast was, it had now run away.

"Senior, do you have any idea of what kind of a beast it could be?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Hmm, it is difficult to say. I do know of a few beasts that have great speed and agility, even at a low cultivation, but I doubt any of them could be found in a world like this. It's quite likely that it is a native beast of this world." Xukong answered.

"I see..." Lin Mu muttered before checking the area that he suspected the beast had come from.

Lin Mu blinked to the top of a tree and tried to look around but could not spot anything.

'Seems like the beast is good at hiding too. But considering its size, it shouldn't be that dangerous.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

From the size of the blurry silhouette that Lin Mu had seen, he could estimate that the beast came up to his knees and was less than a meter long. The beast also had a tail from what Lin Mu spotted at the end of the silhouette.

"You can check the jade slip that you got from Jing Wei. Perhaps you will be able to narrow down the choices." Xukong suggested.

"Ah yes. That would be good." Lin Mu replied before getting down from the tree.

Now that the snow had mostly gone, the beasts had started coming out from the deeper parts of the forest. Lin Mu was able to spot plenty of them with his spirit sense but did not bother killing them as it would not be worth it for him to spend any effort on hunting normal beasts. Though Lin Mu would not mind if they were to come to attack him first.

Lin Mu's main aim was to get spirit beasts, but they had also retreated to the depths of the forest now. Before, when Lin Mu came to the northern forest during winter in an area this deep, he had already encountered around four to five spirit beasts. But now he had not even seen one.

Lin Mu kept on moving through the forest and continued on for another hour. Finally, he found something that would be worth his time.

"A herd of Ash Crowned deers, this is good." Lin Mu muttered, feeling delighted.

Lin Mu had hunted Ash Crowned deers a few times before during his journey to the culprit's cave, thus was familiar with them. But unlike before, when he only encountered one or two of them, there was an entire herd of them here.

Ash Crowned deers were a common spirit beast that were found in the northern forest and had characteristic ash colored horns that extended upwards looking like a crown. They were relatively docile and did not attack humans unless provoked and usually stayed together in a herd that was around the size of fifty to eighty females and one male that was called the Ash Crowned Buck.

Unlike the females, the Ash Crowned buck was much larger in size and had bigger horns as well. It could run at a great speed and would impale anything that threatened it or its herd with its horns. In fact, Lin Mu could see the dried blood present on the horns of the beast, which implied that it had recently fought and perhaps killed another creature.

Lin Mu spread his spirit sense and observed the cultivation of the nearest few deers and found them to be at the early stage of the qi refining realm. But Lin Mu did not attack right away he waited as he wanted to make a plan first.

Now that he had come across so many beasts, he wanted to hunt as many as possible. But if he attacked carelessly, it was likely that all of them would run away and the Ash Crowned buck would attack him. While the Ash Crowned buck wouldn't pose much of a challenge to Lin Mu, he did not want to waste extra time to chase the herd.

Lin Mu circled around the grazing herd and eventually came close to the Ash Crowned buck. He then sensed his cultivation base and found it to be at the peak stage of the qi refining realm.

'It's much stronger than the rest of them. Though I should be able to handle it.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu spent a few minutes thinking before he was able to devise a plan that would probably allow him to hunt at least twenty of them before the herd found out and ran away.

Lin Mu blinked to the top of a tree and looked out for any Ash Crowned deers that were slightly scattered from the herd. After finding one, Lin Mu blinked closer by going over the tree tops. Once the beast was in the range of Blink, Lin Mu teleported next to it with his short sword drawn and stabbed into its neck before quickly storing the beast into the ring.

In the very next second, he blinked back to the tree top. He then immediately looked around and saw that none of the beasts had detected him yet.

"Good, this should work." Lin Mu muttered to himself before finding his next target.

Chapter 237 - Bait And Kill

It didn't take him much longer before he spotted another Ash Crowned deer that had wandered off from the herd and killed it immediately before storing it into the ring. He repeated the same thing over and over again, till he had hunted fifteen Ash Crowned deers.

It took him an hour to do this, and by now the Ash Crowned deers in the head had discovered that their companions were missing. They would have been alerted if they smelled the scent of blood, but because of Lin Mu's strategy, no blood was actually spilled outside.

The herd was now slightly alert but did not seem to be much bothered. Lin Mu waited for a minute before seeing that everything was still normal. He resumed his hunt and killed six more Ash Crowned deers when he was spotted.

The herd made loud grunting noises as they all started running away. The Ash Crowned buck also locked its gaze on to Lin Mu and had lowered his head, pointing his horns towards Lin Mu.

~Sigh~

"Guess this is it... Now, no more plan," Lin Mu muttered before his short sword came floating in front of him.

He then waved his hand in the air, and the short sword shot forward. The speed of the short sword was much faster than that of the Ash Crowned deer's and was able to catch up with them rather easily.

~Slash~ ~Slash~

~Splatter~

Blood spilled on the grass, as eight Ash Crowned deers were killed in one move. But before Lin Mu could attack again, the Ash Crowned buck came charging at him. He immediately sensed it with his spirit sense and dodged it at the last moment by using Blink.

The Ash Crowned buck stooped in its tracks and dragged its hooves across the ground uprooting grass, once it noticed its enemy had disappeared. It turned around and let out a loud grunt before charging at Lin Mu again.

This time Lin Mu blinked again, but only to the side of the Ash Crowned buck before he withdrew a long spear and stabbed it into the Ash Crowned buck.

A pain filled grunt was let out by the Ash Crowned buck as the spear pierced from one side of its body to the other. It crashed on the ground due to the impact and struggled in pain. Lin Mu walked close to it and waved his hand in the air making the short sword return to his hand.

He then swiftly slashed the throat of the Ash Crowned Buck before storing it into the ring.

"Well, that went well." Lin Mu spoke before looking towards the other corpses of the Ash crowned deers that were lying on the other side.

The rest of the herd had long since run away and there was little chance of Lin Mu to catch up with them. But still, he had obtained around thirty beast carcasses, including the Ash crowned buck's.

'This is good enough for one day, I need to test out my skills now.' Lin Mu thought to himself before storing all of the carcasses in the ring.

He then continued onward into the forest until he found a suitable place that was wide and open. But just as he was about to test out his skills, his stomach rumbled with hunger.

"Been a while since I did this. It'll be a fresh change..." Lin Mu spoke to himself before withdrawing one of the Ash Crowned deer carcasses and skinning it swiftly.

Over the months, Lin Mu had already skinned hundreds of beasts and had now become rather good at it and did not need much time for him to prepare them. His rising cultivation base also made it much easier for him to rip the pelt and break the bones.

Once the meat was butchered, he set up a fire to cook the meat.

Soon, a delicious aroma of roast venison spread out in the area. This of course ended up attracting some beasts, but they did not approach close, smelling the blood of the qi refining beast in the area. The blood which had been spilled out while skinning and butchering was acting as both a deterrent and a bait.

'If some spirit beasts do end up coming here, it would be much easier for me. I'll save time and kill two birds with one stone.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

He then sat under a tree and closed his eyes while waiting for the meat to cook. His spirit sense though was fully extended and he was observing everything that was happening in the surroundings.

Lin Mu's impromptu plan seemed to be working as a spirit beast eventually came close and reached the range of his spirit sense.

"There!" Lin Mu muttered as he flicked his hand towards the direction of the spirit beast.

~Shing~

Lin Mu's short sword shot forward and instantly nailed a spirit beast that had gotten close to the tree next to it.

~Gurgle~

Blood spilled from the beast's mouth as the short sword nailed in its throat made it unable to make a noise. Lin Mu opened his eyes and saw that the beast he had just killed was actually a razor maw ox. He was a bit surprised upon seeing it.

Lin Mu had seen a razor maw ox before when he was in the body tempering realm, but that razor maw ox was a normal beast. While this one seemed to have reached the early stage of the qi refining realm. Lin Mu stood up and walked up to the now dead beast and pulled out his short sword.

"Hmm, is this the same one from back then?" Lin Mu wondered as he took a close look.

But even after a minute, Lin Mu could not find anything that could confirm his guess.

"It isn't uncommon for normal beasts to reach the qi refining realm naturally after a sufficient amount of time." Xukong said, "Especially a strong beast like the razor maw ox, which can actually hunt a spirit beast even if it's at the body tempering realm." He added.

Lin Mu hummed in response and stored the carcass in his ring before returning to his position, waiting for more beasts to take the bait.

Chapter 238 - Beast?

Lin Mu didn't have to wait for much longer as a few more beasts turned up and intruded in his range, no longer being able to resist the allure of the meat. Lin Mu did not let go of this opportunity and killed each of them that came close.

Using this method, he ended up killing a total of six spirit beasts before they stopped approaching, probably because of the smell of blood that was spreading around. Beasts would usually be attracted due to the smell of blood, but there was an exception to this rule.

When there were too many different scents of blood mixed in an area, most beasts would then start to avoid it while some of them would become outright afraid to go close. It was an instinctive fear built into their beings, as the scent of blood belonging to multiple beasts meant that a disaster was close by. For beasts, the thick scent of blood meant that many beasts were dead or injured.

By now the meat was cooked and Lin Mu took it off the heat. He still let the fire burn as the climate was still a bit cold. Although Lin Mu wasn't affected by it, that didn't mean that he did not like the comfort of the warmth.

Lin Mu had set up his temporary camp in a rather convenient manner. There was a tree to his back, the fire to his left and the open area to his right. This way he had a view of the entire area while he ate his food. Lin Mu was halfway through eating his food when he sensed something nearby in his peripheral vision.

It was slightly far from his spirit sense, thus he couldn't exactly tell what it was but could still spot the bushes moving slightly. Lin Mu turned his head and curiously took a look while munching on the leg of a roasted Ash crowned deer.

But when he focused on the area where he had seen the movement, it stopped moving. He still kept his gaze there for a bit as he wanted to confirm that whatever was there had gone away. Five minutes later there were still no movements, so he drew his gaze back.

'Probably a beast attracted by the scent of the meat that doesn't dare get close.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

A short while later, Lin Mu had finished the entire roasted beast and was now ready to continue his assimilation of vital energy.

While he was assimilating the vital energy, the bushes slightly rustled once again but Lin Mu did not pay attention to it. Right now, his entire focus was on assimilating all of the wisps of vital energy that were being released from the meat.

The bushes kept on rustling until a small head popped up from it. The head only stayed visible for a second before it retreated back into the bush and disappeared. It was still too far for Lin Mu to sense it with his spirit sense, thus this went unnoticed to him.

A few minutes later another bush a short distance away rustled before the short head popped up again. Once again, the head only stayed there for a second before disappearing. Lin Mu was still focused on assimilating vital energy.

This event happened a few times again, and each time the duration of the appearance increased slightly. As if emboldened by Lin Mu's inaction, the creature that was hidden in the bushes finally appeared. But this time just as it appeared, Lin Mu finished assimilating the vital energy and opened his eyes.

As soon as his eyes met the creatures, the creature froze in place. Lin Mu could finally get a good look at the creature that had been playing hide and seek all this time.

The creature had a small body that came up to Lin Mu's knees and was slightly less than a meter long, along with four legs. It had fluffy brown fur over its body and dark brown patterns that went down its back. The brown pattern came up to its head and formed an 'M' shape on its forehead.

The creature also had two brown ears that had fine fur over them that could independently move. Its tail was fluffy and had alternating bands of light and dark brown color that went all the way to the tip of its tail.

It had two golden grey eyes that had pupils in the shape of vertical slits. Finally, on its mouth were a pair of whiskers and two small fangs that protruded from the edge of its mouth.

"A cat?" Lin Mu muttered upon seeing the beast.

The beast having realized that the person in front of it had seen it suddenly reacted and as if it were a flash, disappeared in a blur.

"What the! How fast is that!" Lin Mu spoke in a shocked tone.

He stood up and went towards the direction the beast had run away. But he could not spot the beast anywhere nearby. Returning back to the temporary camp, he sat down and thought about it.

"Senior, did you see that?" Lin Mu asked.

"I did and I think I know what beast that is," Xukong answered.

"You do?" Lin Mu questioned as his eyes went wide in curiosity.

"Indeed, I do not know if the beast has the same name in this world, but it is called as a Brown Shrubby Forest Cat. It is one of the faster beasts in the qi refining realm, and its speed can even exceed the speed of a core condensation realm beasts. But on the other hand, its overall strength is weak and it's a rather timid beast.

Brown Shrubby Forest Cats are rather docile compared to other beasts, though. Unlike other feline type beasts that are complete carnivores, Brown Shrubby Forest Cats are omnivores who eat whatever they get. Also, because of this they rarely attack humans and will prefer to run if they are attacked." Xukong explained.

Lin Mu intently listened to Senior Xukong's explanation and then pulled out the jade slip to see if it had any more information in it.

Chapter 239 - Brown Shrubby Forest Cat

Lin Mu held the jade slip and let his spirit sense interact with it. Upon touching the jade slip with his spirit sense, Lin Mu felt as if a book had appeared in his mind. He thought of opening it and it automatically opened in front of him.

But upon its opening, he could see nothing on it as the pages were blank.

'Where's the information about beasts?' Lin Mu thought, feeling confused.

And just as he thought about beasts, the pages flipped once again and words started appearing on them. Lin Mu read them and found that they were talking about some beasts and the information was rather organized according to the beast's characteristics.

Lin Mu could guess how the book worked from his previous experiment and thus wanted to see if it would be effective or not. Now that he knew the characteristics of the beast he was able to find the information rather easily by sorting it out properly while searching it in the jade slip.

As long as Lin Mu thought about the appearance of the beast along with its characteristics it would appear in his mind. He searched and eventually, the book opened to a pair of pages that showed the information he needed for now.

"Hmm, so it is called Brown Shrubby Forest Cats here as well. Let's see, high speed, brown fur, early to peak stage qi refining realm cultivation and a timid nature. Alright, this checks out." Lin Mu spoke to himself in his mind.

Returning his focus to the real world, Lin Mu stored the Jade slip away.

"Seems, like you were right Senior Xukong." Lin Mu spoke in an appreciative tone.

"Hmm, I didn't expect there to be a Brown Shrubby Forest Cat here though. Also, another thing I find unusual is their number. The Brown Shrubby Forest Cats usually travel in pairs of two to four and keep each other company while they hunt.

They are able to coordinate with watch other to corner and hunt their prey. And if they are being hunted down, they can use this very technique along with their speed to escape the conflict. By splitting up at the last moment, they divert the attention of the predator and they manage to escape.

The Brown Shrubby Forest Cat that we saw was solitary, so that is certainly unusual." Xukong explained to Lin Mu.

Lin Mu fully listened to his words and made sure that he had the intent to learn properly. Strangely enough, while Lin Mu was interested in the beast, he did not feel like hunting it. In reality, he just felt curious about it and wanted to know more about it.

Also, now that he thought about it, compared to the other beasts he had seen until now, this beast seemed to be the most gentle looking and even looked a bit cute.

Still, a few minutes later Lin Mu was done with his thoughts and was about to get ready to test his skills. But just as he was about to stand up, he felt the bush rustle in the distance. He then saw a small head pop in from the bush and gaze at him for a moment before disappearing.

"Huh? It's back?" Lin Mu muttered to himself but did not move.

'Let's see what it wants actually seeing that it's coming here even after the meat is finished.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Lin Mu had already stored the bones that were remaining from the Ash crowned buck, thus there really wasn't much that would attract a beast here, not to mention the blood scent of multiple kinds of beasts was still lingering in the area, making them avoid it.

Lin Mu kept on sitting in the same position and saw the small head pop in through another bush. The beast repeated the same thing as before and withdrew its head back once it saw that Lin Mu notice it. The beast kept on repeating this procedure, or rather a game of hide and seek multiple times.

Lin Mu would keep his eye on the beast and would focus on the sound it would make as it moved through the bushes and the grass. This was actually working as a certain kind of training for Lin Mu, as he had never seen any beast that was so fast.

It had been more than twenty times before the Brown Shrubby Forest Cat finally stopped its probing and actually developed a bit of courage and walked ahead.

It first put one of its paws out and peeked before putting another one out. Seeing that Lin Mu was not attacking it and was peacefully sitting in his positing, the Brown Shrubby Forest Cat fully showed itself as it left the bush.

Lin Mu could once again get a clear look at the beast, and only one thought appeared in his mind.

'Cute!' He thought.

~Miu~

The Brown Shrubby Forest Cat lightly growled as it tilted its neck while looking at Lin Mu. It then slowly started approaching Lin Mu and finally came close to him. But upon getting in a three meter distance of him, it stopped and changed its focus, looking at something else.

'Huh, what's it looking at?' Lin Mu wondered as he followed the gaze of the beast.

It ended up pointing him to the fire that had now died down and only had some smoldering coals and partially burned sticks left. It was still radiating heat, thus it felt comfortable.

'Hmm, it wants to stay in the warmth it seems.' Lin Mu thought.

But his conclusion soon turned out to be false, as the beast did something he had not expected. The Brown Shrubby Forest Cat walked to the fire and lowered its head, trying to pick up a half burnt stick.

The stick was cooled on the other end and thus was no problem for it to pick up even though the other end was still red and slowly burning. The Brown Shrubby Forest Cat turned around and started running away at a blinding speed.

Before Lin Mu could think of anything, it had disappeared in the distance.

"What... was... that?"

Chapter 240 - Testing The Boulder Collapsing Fist-I

Lin Mu had imagined a lot of possibilities upon seeing the beast approach him, but that beast taking a burning stick was not one of those possibilities. He couldn't even begin to think for reasons behind that as the confusion plaguing him was rather complex.

'Why?'

Was the main question hanging in his brain.

"This is rather peculiar." Xukong chimed in.

"Isn't it Senior? What would a spirit beast need with a burning stick?" Lin Mu questioned.

"I have no idea... Well I do, but they are likely to be false and would be far-fetched." Xukong replied.

"Hmm, it is a mystery. Unless we see that beast again, I don't think we can determine the reason for it." Lin Mu spoke with slight disappointment.

Having spoken his mind, Lin Mu pushed the thoughts to the back of his mind and focused on what needed to be done, the second reason why he had come to the forest. He was here to test out his skills now that his strength had increased and his foundation had become more deep.

Not to mention, Lin Mu had not tested or even used some of his skills for a while. The main one being the Boulder collapsing fist. Lin Mu had not used it ever since he used it to kill the former vice captain Han Xu before. Though it was more because he had not gotten an opportunity to do it after that.

Lin Mu had known very well that the boulder collapsing fist was a rather exhaustive skill and would drain all if not most of his vital energy and spirit qi. Although he could still control the amount of resources used up to a certain extent, it was still difficult to do so in a life threatening moment.

Another thing was the recoil of the boulder collapsing fist. Using it even once would render Lin Mu's hand numb for a while and would make it difficult for him to use it in the best case. In the worst case, he would instead be severely injured.

"Start with the basics, use your vital energy for the boulder collapsing fist," Xukong spoke.

Lin Mu nodded his head before entering the stance for it and initiated the breathing technique that was needed for the technique. He performed its routine and felt the vital energy within his body getting agitated.

At first, all of it was moving and entering his arms, but he then focused and limited the amount that entered them to less than five percent. Unlike before, Lin Mu had no difficulty in doing this, as the vital energy within his body was quite harmonized and listened to his will.

Soon a clockwise spiral of vital energy was formed in his right hand and an anticlockwise one was formed in his left arm. Having completed the routine, Lin Mu focused on the air in front of him and punched out, releasing the energy that had been building in his arm.

"Boulder collapsing fist!"

In that moment, Lin Mu could see an almost physical outline of his arm extending forward in the air. Sensing this new change, Lin Mu immediately focused on it and extended his spirit sense to observe it. But alas, it was far too fast for him to respond.

~Whoosh~

The effect of the technique continued outward and cause a gale to whip up. The gale went straight and shook the leaves of the trees in the distance. Some of the leaves detached and flew away with the wind. It seemed as if other than that, nothing much happened.

But that wasn't exactly the case. This time the distance between Lin Mu and the trees was about twenty meters and yet the wind created by his attack was still strong enough to make the leaves fall. Another big thing was that Lin Mu had used only five percent of his vital energy in that attack, unlike a large amount before.

"This is certainly strong..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

"Indeed, if it can cause such an effect even at a long distance such as this, then the technique is quite strong. Not to mention it's not supposed to be a long distance technique, it's a close combat technique." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu nodded in acknowledgment and decided to try the technique again, but this time with a greater energy output. He entered the stance again and directed his vital energy to form the spirals, but this time he used ten percent.

Once the vital energy spiral was stable, he punched forward, letting the energy fly forth.

~Whoosh~

The fist outline was seen once again, and this time Lin Mu was ready with his spirit sense. He observed it the moment it was formed and sensed the changes in it. He could see that once the fist outline was formed, it stayed in shape for a brief instant before breaking down into a spiral of energy that kept on moving forward.

But that was all Lin Mu could perceive before the spiral dissipated and turned into a gale. The wind this time was strong enough to make the branches of the trees in front of him shake and more leaves to fall.

"Hmm, I'm starting to understand the technique a bit more." Xukong suddenly spoke.

"Oh, you are senior?" Lin Mu questioned with interest.

"Yes. Use it again with more vital energy and see its effect. It should be more clear this time." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu hummed in response before repeating the technique and increasing the output to twenty percent.

"Boulder Collapsing Fist!"

~Whoosh~

Lin Mu's spirit sense followed behind the fist outline and the spiral and could sense them quite clearly this time. The spiral was clear at the start and Lin Mu could see it churning upon itself, before it could no longer stay stable and dissipated.

~Crack~

A small branch from the tree broke and fell while the top of the tree shook and the leaves flew away.

"Hmm, it is a rather straightforward method of using energy." Xukong commented.

"Can you tell me more about it, Senior? We still have to test it out with spirit qi and finally the combination of spirit qi and vital energy." Lin Mu spoke up.

"Of course. But before that, how does your arm feel?" Xukong asked with concern.