

Walker 291

Chapter 291 - The Fourth Skill

Lin Mu opened his eyes and found himself in front of the ethereal altar within the mysterious ring.

The last thing he remembered was the stream of liquid spirit qi filling into his dantian and his total stores reaching about one thousand eight hundred drops of liquid spirit qi. He knew that he had refined a lot of drops of liquid spirit qi but had never expected that it had reached such a large amount.

This was completely incomprehensible to him, and he did not know how he had even done this. When he was looking at the stream of liquid spirit qi before it looked much smaller to him, being only eighty times bigger than a normal drop in size.

But when that very stream had been added to his dantian, it turned out to be three hundred drops in total instead. This had instantly pushed him through the bottleneck between the late stage and peak stage of the qi refining realm.

Lin Mu had expected that the mysterious ring would do something the moment broke through the late stage of the qi refining realm into the peak stage, and now that he was in the mysterious ring his expectations were fully confirmed.

~Huu~

Lin Mu took a deep breath and relaxed his tense body. While he could finally perceive the changes in his body, he knew that it was not the right time to explore them. Right now he needed to see what the mysterious ring had called him here for.

He looked around but could not see Senior Xukong nearby. But he could also see a faintly glowing barrier in the distance that surrounded him and the altar completely.

"So this is the barrier senior Xukong was speaking about before. Looks like it separates the altar from the rest of the ring and has a special function." Lin Mu muttered to himself as he walked to the altar in the very middle.

He reached there in a minute and saw that it was thrumming with waves of energy. He found them to be similar to before and now knew what he was going to receive.

Lin Mu placed his hand on the altar as it was beckoning to him and closed his eyes. A flurry of runes appeared out of the altar, turning into streaks of light entering into Lin Mu's head. Soon information started etching itself in Lin Mu's memories. What Lin Mu was receiving right now was none other than the next skill.

Lin Mu had received the first skill 'Flicker' and the second skill 'Blink' when he first became a qi cultivator. He then obtained the third skill 'Phase' when he broke through the late stage of the qi refining realm.

From the consumption of spirit qi that these skills required, Lin Mu could estimate that every new skill was only granted to him when he satisfied a certain condition. For the first two skills, all he needed was spirit qi wisps, thus they were directly granted to him at the very start when he became a cultivator.

Lin Mu then received the third skill 'phase' when he satisfied the condition which was none other than liquid spirit qi. Once that condition was fulfilled, he obtained the third skill.

But according to this logic, it didn't seem right that he was getting a fourth skill now. If liquid spirit qi was a requirement, he should have received it a long time ago. There was perhaps another condition that was needed.

Lin Mu didn't have to think for long before he realized what it was. It was a very recent thing and he would have easily missed out on obtaining this skill had it not been for what he had done. The hidden condition needed for the fourth skill was none other than the spatial attribute qi that he had absorbed from the tear in the barrier.

Lin Mu sensed that the cloud of spatial attribute qi was nowhere in the ring, thus came to the conclusion that perhaps it was used up by the ring to give him the fourth skill.

After the process was done, he opened his eyes that momentarily shined with a silvery glow.

"So it's like this..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He then started walking towards the barrier of the altar and left its confines. The ethereal altar behind him dimmed down to its previous brightness and settled down.

Upon leaving the barrier, Lin Mu soon noticed a grey orb of light flying towards him with great speed. This orb came to a stop in front of him and was none other than senior Xukong. It was evident that he had been waiting for Lin Mu to finish the process and come out of the barrier.

"Seems like you succeeded," Xukong said in a content tone.

"Indeed Senior, I even exceeded what I had expected of myself." Lin Mu replied.

"Good... Very good. Cultivation is going against the very heavens; if you can't even exceed your own expectations, how can you exceed the will of the heavens." Xukong spoke in a sagely tone.

Lin Mu nodded confidently, as he had fully realized this fact by now. He also knew that as long as he pushed himself, exceeding his limits was nothing. He wanted to even beyond that and keep on going till he reached another limit. Then he would find a method to overcome that limit and keep on going.

"So, what did you receive this time?" Xukong asked.

"I received the fourth skill from the ethereal altar. It is called as 'Fade'." Lin Mu revealed.

"Hmm, 'Fade' that's a rather unique name. Do you know what it does? Or do you still need to test it out?" Xukong questioned.

"I already have a certain idea of what it can do, but to properly confirm it I would still need to test it. Though I can tell that this skill is quite different than the other three skills." Lin Mu answered.

"Oh? Why do you say so?" Xukong asked curiously.

"This skill has more information than all the other three skills combined. I believe that I'll still need to comprehend it a bit... I Umm... have a headache."

Chapter 292 - Strange Effect

Lin Mu soon appeared in the real world after his time was up in the mysteries ring. While there he had discussed something with Senior Xukong and had also figured out a few characteristics of the space inside the ring.

The first thing that he learned was that the time he could stay in the ring after being summoned there was about fifteen minutes now. He had also taken a look around the nearby areas of the ring and found the items that he had stored lying around.

Because of the sheer size of the ring, most of the items were spread around in a rather massive expanse of an area. Another thing he found that was a bit surprising and disgusting was that there was a copious amount of blood spread around in the ring.

This blood was none other than the blood from all the beasts he had killed. Unlike the past when he used to clean and drain the blood, Lin Mu often had to keep the beasts as it is till he got the chance to clean them. This led to the blood getting accumulated there bit by bit, till it had reached a rather large amount.

Also, because the things aged slowly in the ring, the blood was still liquid and had not dried out yet. Lin Mu discovered this unfortunate fact, when he inadvertently ended up stepping on it while taking a walk.

"Ugh, I need to get rid of this all. It should make good fertilizer for the yard." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

Lin Mu looked at his body and found it to be the same as before, but when he sensed the spirit qi in his body, he found it to be extremely active. It was circulating in his meridians and emanated faint waves of spirit qi that bathed the rest of his body.

These waves of spirit qi were then released from his skin at a very slow pace. But it was this very thing that showed his status as a peak stage qi refining realm cultivator. Lin Mu clenched his fists and found his spirit qi to automatically focus on them.

His control over the spirit qi had become almost instinctual now. Lin Mu looked into his dantian and saw the abundance of Liquid spirit qi.

"Ahh, this is rather nice." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He then did a simple routine of some moves he had learned over the months and felt the minute changes in the behaviors of his spirit qi. He practiced the thousand armament blade scripture and found the coordination to have improved greatly.

Lin Mu felt that certain things that were difficult for him and were occluding his progress were suddenly not there.

"Hmm, so the difficulty I was having in progressing was because of spirit qi itself rather than the lack of training." Lin Mu realized.

Lin Mu then controlled the short sword with his spirit sense and found his connection with it had improved by almost twice. He felt as if he could use even more spirit qi with his short sword while he was controlling it with his spirit qi.

Finally came the turn of the new skill that Lin Mu had obtained. The headache that he previously had was now gone after he relaxed by practicing some of his moves. He also felt like the new information was more clear to him now and he could use it with the same ease as that of the previous three skills.

~Huu~

Lin Mu took a deep breath and then triggered the fourth skill 'Fade'. As soon as he used it though, about ten drops of liquid spirit qi was instantly used up. And with that, Lin Mu disappeared from the courtyard.

"Huh? What is this?" Lin Mu said as he looked around.

The place was colored in grey and looked rather bare. There was nothing here, and Lin Mu could only sense faint fluctuations of spirit qi here.

Lin Mu walked around and could not find anything particular there. A minute passed, after which he suddenly felt his vision change again.

"Ouch! Dammit, watch where you walk kid!" A person shouted.

Lin Mu was currently standing at the corner of the road and had bumped into a man who looked like a hunter. The hunter had recoiled and fallen on the ground, while Lin Mu himself was standing unmoved. The impact had no effect on him, and he was rather confused instead.

'What happened, how am I here?' Lin Mu thought.

"Hey! Didn't you hear me, kid? Are you not gonna apologize?" The hunter said as he stood up from the ground.

But even now Lin Mu had not responded to the hunter and was rather engrossed in his own thoughts.

"Look at me kid, don't you know ignoring is extremely rude?" The hunter said as put his hand on Lin Mu's shoulder.

The way Lin Mu and the hunter had collided was at a perpendicular angle. This meant that while the hunter was looking at him, Lin Mu himself was looking in the other direction. Because of this, the hunter had to touch him to turn him.

But as soon as he did that, Lin Mu swatted his hand away in reflex, making the hunter fall back to the ground again.

"Aargh," The hunter groaned in pain.

The hunter was now a bit shocked. It was fine when he fell back before as he reckoned it happened because he was the one who lost balance. But now it was clear that he was knocked back by a light blow of Lin Mu's hand.

He looked up to see Lin Mu staring at him. The shock that was in his mind turned to fear as it leaked into his eyes and was then shown on his face.

"Eek" The hunter flinched back as Lin Mu extended his hand towards him.

"Oh sorry, I didn't see you, I was thinking over something." Lin Mu apologized.

"No-no problem, it's... fine." The hunter said before running away rather fast.

"Strange..."

Chapter 293 - 'Fade'

Lin Mu couldn't tell why the hunter had reacted like this and had run away, but he wasn't worried about that much. What he was the most worried about was the fourth skill 'Fade'. The effect that it had was much different than he had expected and not only that, but he had also somehow left his courtyard and appeared here.

From looking around, Lin Mu could tell that he was about two streets away from his house.

"Looks like the fourth skill 'Fade' is much more powerful than your other skills." Xukong suddenly said.

"Oh? Senior, you have a guess of what it is?" Lin Mu questioned.

"I do, indeed. The space that you saw which was grey in color was the parallel void that exists along with this world. Your fourth skill allows you to enter that space and move around in there. And finally, when the effect of that skill ends, you will reappear in the real world at the location that would match with that of the parallel void." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu thought over Senior Xukong's words and correlated them with his own findings and found them to be correct. Then in the next moment, numerous possibilities popped up in his mind. The Fourth skill was quite powerful, but Lin Mu still did not know what its limitations exactly were.

All of his skills had certain limitations and flaws which Lin Mu knew of. The first skill 'Flicker' was of a very short duration but its advantage was that it could virtually allow him to dodge nearly anything as long as it was during that period.

The second skill 'Blink' allowed him to teleport to any location that was within the range of his spirit sense. The limitation of the skill was that it could only work in a radius of ten meters regardless of if Lin Mu's spirit sense range unless if he used the spatial attribute qi to power the skill.

The third skill 'Phase' allowed him to dissociate his body, which allowed him to pass through objects with ease. The limitation of this was that spirit qi or objects containing spirit qi could restrict him. This meant that he would not be able to pass through formations and barriers.

From his short encounter with that hunter, Lin Mu could tell this much that he had not noticed him appear in front of him. This meant that the fourth skill 'Fade' fully made him disappear from this world. Lin Mu could see the obvious advantages and disadvantages of the skill.

The advantage was that he could get into areas or locations without anyone noticing or could even escape from a location if he was confined. It did not seem like a wall or barrier could restrict it either as Lin Mu was pretty sure he had walked through at least ten walls while coming here. He could guess that it would be the same for the things such as barriers and formations too.

But then came the biggest disadvantage, or rather flaw of the skill. Lin Mu couldn't actually tell where he was going while he was in the parallel void. Everything was the same there, and it was fully bare with not an object in sight.

This meant that Lin Mu had no reference to use and that even if he had his spirit sense, it was rather useless there as there was literally nothing there.

All of this meant that while Lin Mu had this powerful skill, it was a wild card for him, unless of course, he figured out a method of navigation while he was inside there. While the skill could allow him to disappear and escape from a location, it also meant that it could get him into trouble.

He could very easily get lost in the parallels void and end up right in the center of an enemy's stronghold. The fourth skill was now more of a double edged sword for him and unless he could figure out a better way to use it and navigate, he would not be using it as much.

A smaller disadvantage was the amount of spirit qi that it consumed for a single use was rather large, being at ten drops of liquid spirit qi and not even wisps, that too for only a duration of one minute. Though Lin Mu guessed that there might be a way to extend the duration for which he could use the skill oft.

~Sigh~

"So many things to consider, this will take me a while to figure it out." Li Mu muttered to himself as he made his way back to his home.

Lin Mu entered his bedroom and sat down to meditate on the skill. After a few minutes later, he came upon a potential solution to the flaw of the skill.

'I can perhaps use the spatial perception to navigate better in the parallels void. Spatial perception depends on space itself along with the spatial qi, which was also present in the parallel void. If I can learn to use it better, I should have no problem using the skill and its flaw may even become an advantage itself.' Lin Mu analyzed.

While Lin Mu was thinking this, Xukong was also taking a look at his memories and thoughts. Seeing that Lin Mu had actually come close to finding a potential solution only made Xukong feel proud of his disciple. He had a good head on his shoulders and although he was disadvantaged from his peers due to his starting circumstances, Xukong had no doubt the boy was a hidden genius.

His comprehension ability was rather astounding for someone of his age. He didn't know whether to attribute it to his curiosity or his incessant thirst for knowledge, but whatever it was; it had made him smarter and smarter.

Xukong had a bit more idea of how the fourth skill worked, but he had not told Lin Mu and wanted for him to figure it out himself. As he knew that the things that he learned on his own would be better for him than the ones that he taught him.

Chapter 294 - Overcoming The Flaw Of 'Fade'

Xukong knew that Lin Mu wanted to learn how to better use spatial perception and he had just the method for him or rather method was always with Lin Mu and he had even used it a few times before.

"Senior, how would I go about enhancing my spatial perception?" Lin Mu question Xukong at the very right moment.

"It would not be much difficult for you as you already know what it feels like. You even have an advantage in this over any average cultivator, as you can simply use your ring. You can already see those black dots which are the flaws in the fabric of space right, that is also you using spatial perception. Except in that case, it is only seeing the things that are causing the most disturbance and cannot see the more milder spatial fluctuations.

What you need to learn is to how to simply expand that scope of sensation. While you can focus on the very strong points such as those black dots, if you sensitize yourself, you will sense even more things.

Now the method to train this is simple, you just need to keep on observing the flaws in the spatial fabric. You should also focus on sensing the minute fluctuations in space that happen every so often naturally." Xukong answered.

Lin Mu nodded his head and immediately got to it. He willed the ring to show its effects and he opened his eyes to see the black dots, only to realize that there were none of them in his house right now. He then expanded his spirit sense and tried to sense his surroundings, examining them for any small changes.

Lin Mu did this for an hour, after which he stopped it as he realized that he was not having much of a progress. Though he did not falter there and was merely thinking of making better preparations. While he was doing this, he suddenly remembered something.

When he had used the fourth skill 'fade' before and walked around, he had changed his direction multiple times as he had no reference. He also remembered that he could use his spirit sense rather freely in the parallel void as well.

These two factors amalgamated together in Lin Mu's mind, and a new idea formulated itself.

"Hahaha! Why did I not think of this before?!" Lin Mu suddenly exclaimed.

Xukong was surprised out of his trance as he looked at Lin Mu, who had a slightly disturbing smile on his face.

"What is it? What did you think?" Xukong asked curiously.

"Hahaha! Senior if figured out a way to use the fourth skill 'Fade' even without spatial perception. I still don't know if it will work, but that can be confirmed quickly." Lin Mu replied in an excited tone.

"Really? Show me then, try it out." Xukong said.

Lin Mu nodded and took a deep breath before extending his spirit sense. He kept it in a straight line and made sure that it did not bend anywhere. He then checked the direction he was looking at and oriented the spirit sense there.

Then, Lin Mu triggered the fourth skill 'Fade' and ten drops of liquid spirit qi drops were immediately consumed. Lin Mu's body disappeared from the real world, and he appeared in the parallel void. He looked around and found everything to be the same as before, empty and grey.

"Let's see if it works or not..." Lin Mu muttered to himself.

He then started walking in the direction of the spirit sense as it was still in the same position that it was before. As Lin Mu took step after step, his spirit sense would simultaneously shorten. Eventually, he reached the end of the spirit sense and all of it was retracted into his body.

Just a couple of seconds later the skill's duration ended and Lin Mu reappeared in the real world. Except this time he was not in his room, but rather in the street outside his house. Lin Mu looked around and made sure of where he was.

"YES! It worked! It really worked!" Lin Mu exclaimed in joy.

Xukong too realized what Lin Mu had done by observing his actions. Lin Mu had realized that he would be transported in the same position as he was in the real world. This also meant that his spirit sense would stay in the same position, too.

Using this technicality, what Lin Mu did was mark the location he wanted to go by using his spirit sense and then used the skill 'Fade'. This way when he appeared in the parallel void, he was able to go to his intended location by simply following his own spirit sense.

Right now he had only walked in a straight path, but he knew that he could do this in any direction he wanted as long as he kept his spirit sense in the same position. But the benefit that the parallel void had was that there was nothing there. It didn't matter if there was something blocking it, Lin Mu could simply walk there in a straight path.

"Amazing! Excellent thinking Lin Mu." Xukong praised.

Xukong had not expected that such a method would be possible, but Lin Mu had done it. Although the flaws of this method were also apparent in that the maximum distance Lin Mu would be able to travel is the maximum range of his spirit sense, which was about eighty meters.

Another flaw was that he would have to chart the path with his spirit sense beforehand, this meant that if there was something that blocked his spirit sense or if there was someone in the path who could detect it, that could be problematic.

But still, this was better than nothing, and at least Lin Mu would be able to use the skill up to a certain limit.

Though there was a very big advantage that Lin Mu had if he was ever in a wide and open area. He could simply activate the skill and run at the maximum speed he could muster and leave the enemies behind. He would have no need to chart a plot.

Chapter 295 - Marriage Alliance?

Please read the author note at end.

Now that Lin Mu had figured out a method to alleviate some of the flaws of the fourth skill 'Fade' he felt a lot better. He then thought of what to do next, as there were quite a few things on his list.

He had nearly fulfilled the conditions he needed in order to be able to assimilate the bloodline of the great slumber bear, and the only thing left was the nameless technique of the lost immortal. For that technique, the main problem Lin Mu was having was actually seeing his progress.

He couldn't tell if it was good or bad and whether it would be enough for him to counter the effects of the bloodline ability 'Well of slumber'. The consequences of the ability could be fatal, thus Lin Mu wanted to be extremely sure of it before he attempted it.

Lin Mu already knew that he could possibly be asleep for about a year if he assimilated the bloodline. Thus, by taking that time period as a rule of thumb, he estimated that he would have reached the necessary level in the nameless technique if he was able to eat a year's worth of food.

Lin Mu could already eat a week's worth of food in one day which was around two beasts, which meant he needed eight beasts for a month and eighty four beasts for a year. And since he didn't know if his requirements may change, he just decided to increase the number to about one hundred beasts.

The day he was able to eat the meat of about one hundred beasts would be the day he was ready. But even now Lin Mu didn't know his current limit. Even if he felt satiated, he realized that he could still keep on eating more and more.

'I need to check my current limit for eating. But for that I'll need to hunt again I'm about to run out of the meat again.' Lin Mu thought to himself.

Another thing he had on his list was to check what was going on with the visit of the lieutenant Wu Teng. Lin Mu was a bit suspicious about it, thus wanted to know more.

"Hmm... I can do this right now and visit the Hei corps. Hei Bao should be at the town center hopefully, and I'm already out of the house, anyway." Lin Mu decided.

He then changed his path and walked towards the town center. While on his way Lin Mu realized that the number of people had reduced for some reason, it was almost the same as back when winter was here. About a day had passed since he had come from Jing Wei's emporium and had learned about the arrival of the Teng Battalion.

But in just twenty four hours, the look of the town had changed. This was also the reason why Lin Mu was able to practice the fourth skill 'Fade' without much problem. There simply wasn't anyone nearby, and even in the houses in his neighborhood, there was barely anyone.

'Are they out working or something else?' Lin Mu wondered.

He soon reached the town center and was greeted by the guards at the entrance.

"Is Hei Bao here?" Lin Mu inquired.

"No, Senior Lin Mu. Captain Hei Bao has gone out on a task and is currently not in the town, but leader Hei Wen herself is there in the office." The guard who was also a member of the Hei Corps answered.

"Ah, that's even better." Lin Mu replied before entering the building and walking up to the office.

Upon reaching there, he saw that the doors of the office were closed, thus he knocked on it.

"Who is it... oh it is you Lin Mu. Come in," Hei Wen said, changing her question in the middle.

It was evident that she had used her spirit sense to check who was behind the door, and Lin Mu had felt it as well. He opened the door and found Hei Wen standing on the balcony looking over the town. She was in a long blue dress and had her signature veil covering her face.

"Greeting! I haven't seen you for a while," Lin Mu said in a friendly manner.

"Indeed, I've been... occupied with certain matters." Hei Wen replied.

"When did you come back? I heard Hei Bao is out on a mission?" Lin Mu asked curiously.

"I just returned a day back and Hei Bao left that time too. I came to replace him for the time being." Hei Wen answered.

"I see..." Lin Mu spoke before walking to the chair and sitting down on it.

Hei Wen took walked to the table and sat at the opposite side.

"So what are you here for?" Hei Wen questioned.

"I heard the mayor's son, lieutenant Wu Teng, is coming soon." Lin Mu spoke.

"Ahh, so you heard. Yes, he is coming here this week at the very least." Hei Wen answered with a slightly unnerved tone.

Lin Mu sensed the difference in her voice and curiously observed the fluctuations of her vital energy and spirit qi.

'Is she troubled by something?' Lin Mu wondered as he sensed the irregular waves.

He could now tell that her heart was beating in a slightly higher speed and even the waves of qi coming off of her body were sporadic. Lin Mu's progress in cultivation had also enhanced his sensitivity to these characteristics.

"You don't seem to be liking it. Is there more to it than people know?" Lin Mu questioned in a slightly more serious tone.

~Sigh~

"Yes... there is something more to it." Hei Wen answered reluctantly.

"Of course there should be more, or it wouldn't make sense for Wu Teng to bring his entire battalion here. That would be too inefficient and also a waste of resources." Lin Mu added.

"The mayor Wu Xun apparently struck a deal with the disciples of the Tri cauldron peony sect. The exact details of it are unknown, but one of the conditions is a marriage alliance."

Chapter 296 - Representing The Lord?

Lin Mu was not expecting for there to be something like this behind the visit of Wu Teng. This turned out to be a much bigger thing than people knew of. The commoners only knew that lieutenant Wu Teng was coming to meet his father.

"What truly? But isn't it a bit suddenly? Aren't affairs such as these rather high profile... at least in case of High officials like Wu Teng and the Mayor?" Lin Mu questioned further.

~Sigh~

Another sigh escaped Hei Wen's lips as she rubbed her head.

"We were completely in the dark about it and only found out about it because the lord attended the banquet where it was decided. It was rather abrupt too and the people there were all shocked." Hei Wen answered in a tired tone.

"So then... what does this mean for us? Like to me, it doesn't seem important." Lin Mu stated.

Till now Lin Mu was suspicious that something serious was happening, but now that he heard that it was as a relatively simple affair such as this, he didn't care about it much.

"Of course, there isn't anything for you to do. But for us, we have a lot of things that now need to be changed, plans that need to be modified." Hei Wen replied.

~Phew~

Lin Mu took a breath of relief after hearing that he had no need to get involved in it and that it was an internal matter of the Hei Corps.

"I'll take my leave then. That's all I needed to ask pretty much." Lin Mu said and was about to stand up when Hei Wen spoke.

"Wait!" She said.

Lin Mu stopped and sat back down on the chair and waited for her to say what she wanted to say.

"Although you are not involved right now, you may need to in the future." Hei Wen stated.

"Oh? How so?" Lin Mu asked.

Even if Lin Mu was reluctant to get involved in the matter right now, it didn't mean that he would do it if he was asked by Hei Corps. He was still grateful to them and didn't mind helping them out.

"Actually, the lord wanted to invite you to the very banquet that happened a month ago. But the circumstances changed, and then there was no need. Still, I'm sure the lord would probably be inviting you in the future. He also wanted to meet you in person." Hei Wen explained.

Lin Mu was now curious too. He too had been wanting to meet the 'Lord' for a while now, and even Senior Xukong had praised him before. He was one of the few people that Xukong had praised, including Jing Wei.

"Sure, it shouldn't be a problem as long as you inform me beforehand." Lin Mu answered.

"Alright. We should know a bit more of what's going to happen in the upcoming days, thus I will inform you according to that." Hei Wen replied.

Lin Mu nodded his head, and then a thought appeared in his mind.

"Umm, what does the lord want with me exactly? Except for of course meeting me formally?" Lin Mu asked curiously.

"The lord... will want you to fight. Or more accurately demonstrate your strength." Hei Wen answered hesitatingly.

Lin Mu's brows furrowed upon hearing this. While he was not afraid of fighting, he was no fool to rush into a fight randomly. If there was no proper reason for it, he would never accept something like this.

"And why would I need to fight?" Lin Mu questioned in a serious tone.

"When the before the marriage, certain ceremonies are held. One of these involves the demonstration of each attending party's strength. Since the lord is one of the influential persons attending it, he needs someone to represent him.

Although he has us the Hei Corps with him, we cannot fight for him. Most of our members are not strong enough to qualify for a competition of that level, and the ones that are cannot be revealed. The lord cannot recruit a mercenary either as that would lead to a loss of face for him.

This leaves him with one choice, you." Hei Wen answered in detail.

Lin Mu did not speak anything after Hei Wen was done and simply thought it over. Hei Wen too did not interrupt him as she knew that this decision was in his hands and if he really wanted to reject it, there wasn't anything she could do.

The lord and she were already a bit apprehensive about Lin Mu's master and were careful about him. The lord had done an investigation of his own and all of them had come back empty. This only made them more and more scared about the master behind Lin Mu.

As they did not want to offend the master behind Lin Mu, they could not force him to do anything that he did not want to.

Hei Wen was getting nervous as five minutes had passed by and Lin Mu had still not responded.

"Alright, I accept!" Lin Mu answered in a determined tone.

~Phew~

Hei Wen silently let out a breath of relief. Although her lord had not yet asked her to tell Lin Mu this, she had taken the risk to preemptively ask him. She had been apprehensive about being rejected but now that Lin Mu had said yes she was happy with it.

"Though I have some conditions," Lin Mu added at the end.

~Gulp~

Hei Wen calmed down upon hearing his words and did not mind them. She did not think the lord would ask Lin Mu to do this for free either. Having some kind of reward or payment was fine, though the question stood what is it that he wanted.

"Please go ahead and state it." Hei Wen said.

"I need beast meat... lots of it. Enough for a person to last for an entire year and I want it fresh." Lin Mu said in a straight tone.

Hei Wen was completely thrown off by this.

"What...?"

Chapter 297 - Lin Mu's Condition

Hei Wen soon collected her wits and composed herself. She immediately thought of the possibilities that arose from Lin Mu's question. Even if he had asked for beast meat, it still depended on the type that he would ask for.

For example, if Lin Mu asked for just normal beast meat, then it was no problem even if he asked for ten years' worth of it, not to mention just a year. But if it was something like nascent soul realm beast meat, then it would be a problem coming up with even a single beast.

"Umm, what kind of beast meat do you want though?" Hei Wen asked.

"Optimally I would like spirit beast meat, but if it is just normal beasts that would work too. But the quantity would need to be increased. I would need four normal beasts in the equivalent of a single spirit beast's meat." Lin Mu answered.

~Phew~

Hei Wen got relieved after hearing this. They should be able to get plenty of spirit beast meat even if it would not be a year's worth. They could compensate the remaining with the normal beast meat, anyway.

"That is acceptable, I'll inform the lord." Hei Wen replied.

"Though... why do you need so much meat?" Hei Wen curiously asked.

"I'll be going in seclusion for about a year... away from here. So I just want to be prepared." Lin Mu answered.

He had already discussed this with Senior Xukong in his mind, thus knew what to say if he was asked this.

"A year of seclusion? When?" Hei Wen asked, feeling a bit worried.

She was worried about the timing of Lin Mu's seclusion because if it came at the item of the event it would not work out for them.

"Oh, you don't have to worry about it, I'll only do it after the event is done. I need to do quite a bit of a preparation before that, anyway." Lin Mu answered.

"That's all good then. We should be able to procure the meat relatively fast. I'll get the reply from Lord by the end of this week and then inform you. Oh, and the event may be in this month anytime depending on how well their negotiations go." Hei Wen replied.

Lin Mu nodded in response and was about to leave the room when he suddenly realized something. He halted in the doorway while holding onto the door handle and spoke.

"By the way, who is lieutenant Wu Teng getting married to anyway?" Lin Mu questioned.

"Oh, the bride-to-be is the daughter of one of the elders of the Tri cauldron peony sect." Hei Wen answered.

"I see... well, goodbye then." Lin Mu replied before leaving the office.

He quickly left the town center and headed back to the courtyard. Even on the way back, he couldn't see many people and the streets were still relatively empty. To him, it seemed like the people had already headed to the southern town.

Lin Mu guessed that with the increased presence of the mercenaries in the forest, the hunters must be having a bit harder time hunting beasts. This opportunity was probably a godsent to most people, as it was safe and steady pay. Even if it was only for a few months.

After the time period for the jobs was over the people should be able to go back to their normal jobs without much problem. Even the mercenaries should leave by that time most likely, and thus the hunters will have plenty of prey too.

The time for sowing the crops was already close by and people would soon be preparing the Fields in the eastern town. Lin Mu wondered if the peasants there had chosen to go to the southern town or not. If they really did, then the harvest this year may be less which meant that the cost of crops may go up.

Just like this, Lin Mu thought of some trivial things and reached his house. Upon entering, he could smell something burning and could even see smoke coming out from one of the windows.

~Sigh~

"Seems like little shrubby burned something again." Lin Mu muttered as he went to the kitchen.

His guess turned out to be true as the meat that Little shrubby was cooking was fully charred. There was fire lit on the other meat that was kept to the side as well. Evidently Little shrubby had lost control there, and the fire had spread to the other things.

Still, Lin Mu was not worried about it much. Unlike the rest of the buildings in the courtyard, the kitchen was made fully from stone and brick. The kitchen was also separate from the house, and there was enough gap between the buildings so that the fire could not spread there.

A lot of the courtyards in the Town were made with a similar design in mind as this helped prevent fires from burning down homes.

Lin Mu saw little shrubby panicking and not knowing what to do. While the beast was smart enough to know how to light something, it had still not learned how to put it out. Lin Mu had even put buckets of water nearby so that little shrubby could use them, but the beast seemed to have a dislike of water and refused to go near it unless it was thirsty.

Lin Mu picked up the bucket of water and splashed the water onto the fire, dousing it instantly.

~Sizzle~

The sound of embers dying out and the hot stone sizzling due to the water was heard.

"You really need to get over your dislike of water, little Shrubby." Lin Mu chided,

~Mewo~

The beast acted coy and pretend to be innocent. It rubbed against Lin Mu's legs and showed its affection while purring lightly.

~Sigh~

Lin Mu petted its head and began to clean the mess that had been made. While doing this, a thought came to his mind.

"Hmm, what will I do with him, when I'm in seclusion?"

Chapter 298 - Planning Ahead

Lin Mu was sitting cross-legged on his bed while Little shrubby snuggled against his back.

He was currently replenishing the liquid spirit qi he had exhausted while using the fourth skill 'Fade' and was also thinking of what to do next. He had expended twenty drops of spirit qi in two uses of the skill, thus he wanted to regain them as soon as possible so that he could continue his normal cultivation.

Lin Mu popped the basic qi pills into his mouth one after the other as he refined the spirit qi wisps into liquid drops. He then remembered how he had refined a large amount of liquid spirit qi all at once yesterday and was wondering if he should do that.

It seemed to him that it was a more efficient method of refining liquid spirit qi but it was also quite taxing on his mind and took up a lot of his focus. Doing that had also made him aware of the fact that the longer he refined the liquid spirit qi without storing it in the dantian, the higher his speed would rise.

It was obvious that if not for something like that he would certainly not have been able to refine three hundred drops of liquid spirit qi all at once that too in mere thirty six hours. If it were his usual session, he would have only been able to refine a maximum of fifty drops of liquid spirit qi.

The consumption of basic qi pills in addition to his increase in body tempering cultivation had greatly helped him. But that continuous method of liquid spirit qi also came with its flaws. It simply took a lot of his time and he could not be interrupted in between.

If he was disturbed, he could do nothing but end it right there and store the refined liquid spirit qi into the dantian. Lin Mu also could not repeat the same thing again as he had a few things to do every day and thus could not enter seclusion like before.

A few hours passed and Lin Mu had fully replenished the twenty liquid spirit qi drops that he had used up. Lin Mu opened his eyes and let out a sigh.

~Sigh~

"I now need to focus on the nameless technique of the lost immortal and make sure that I reach the required level. Though I still have about four more months till the Great slumber bear would start recovering. Hmm... I think I'll use the majority of the liquid spirit qi that I refine every day to practice the nameless technique of the lost immortal.

I am already at a sufficiently strong cultivation base and need to gain the bloodline first. After that is done, I should have no problem reaching the core condensation realm with all the pills that I have with me now. These should easily last me for more than a year." Lin Mu thought out loud.

Lin Mu then stood up, making little shrubby move to the side as it had no support from his back. The beast did not even react though and simply continued sleeping soundly.

'I need to go hunt some beasts. Even if Hei Wan will be getting me the beast meat, it will still take a week's time before I get the reply from the lord and actually obtaining it will perhaps take even longer. I can't waste this week of time. I'll just hunt beasts and use them for the technique.' Lin Mu thought to himself as he walked out of the room.

An hour later Lin Mu was in the Northern forest tracking down some spirit beasts that he had seen. While in the forest Lin Mu was able to come across some spirit beasts but they were already being targeted by some mercenaries thus he had to give up on them.

The mercenaries however were willing to share it with Lin Mu when they recognized who he was. Lin Mu kiddingly rejected their offer as he knew the beast would not even satisfy him for one meal. He just decided to continue on deeper into the forest.

Another hour passed as he found his fourth spirit beast. He killed that one too and hear the sound of something in the distance. Lin Mu guessed that it was either the mercenaries fighting some beasts or just beasts battling amongst themselves.

Lin Mu headed there and found a few ape beasts that were fighting a lizard beast. The apes were smaller than Lin Mu but were at the mid stage qi refining realm. There were about four of them and the lizard beast they were fighting was alone being at the late stage of the qi refining realm.

Lin Mu scanned the area with his spirit qi and did not even bother to hide. To him, these beasts were rather easy and would not take him much of an effort to kill. The five beasts of course detected him when he approached them and got enraged.

The ape beasts bared their fangs at him while the lizard beast simply hissed at him. Lin Mu looked at their conditions and saw them to be relatively fine.

'Looks like they had just started fighting when I interrupted them.' Lin Mu thought.

Lin Mu used his spirit sense and his short sword came flying out of the scabbard while Lin Mu himself withdrew a spear from the ring. He then commanded the short sword to fly towards the four ape beasts while he himself went to the lizard beast.

The apes were surprised by the flying short sword and jumped around while dodging it. Lin Mu did not mind it, as his main goal was to merely distract the ape beasts and keep them occupied while he killed the lizard beast.

Lin Mu directly blinked to the top of the lizard beast and pierced its skull with the spear. With its brain skewered from the middle, the lizard beast let out a light hiss before dying.

"Now it's your turn..."

Chapter 299 - Methods For Bloodline Refinement

Lin Mu flicked the blood off of his short sword and looked back at his handiwork. The lizard beast and the four ape beasts were lying on the ground, dead. All of them had been killed in one precise blow to the head and had their skulls pierced.

It had not taken Lin Mu even a minute to finish the five beasts off which showed his capabilities. If it were any other cultivator, they would have either been unable to do it alone or would have taken a while to do it. And even if they were able to do it, they definitely would have sustained some injuries.

Lin Mu kneeled and used his spirit sense to check their bodies for their beast cores. He found them rather easily but did not remove them there. He would do so with all the other beasts he had hunted till now, back at this house.

The only reason he checked the beast cores was to see if there was any beast core that had awakened a bloodline ability. Because Lin Mu was soon going to assimilate the bloodline of the great slumber beast, he wanted to get some practice.

This practice was not going to be the actual assimilation of the bloodline, as that would be counterproductive. No, rather Senior Xukong was going to teach him the way to prepare the bloodline for assimilation so that he knew when the time so arose.

The most common method that was used was to refine the beast core of the spirit beast along with a few supplementary materials and turn it into a type of a alchemical pill. There were many other methods, but depending on the bloodline, they greatly varied.

Some methods were suitable for some bloodlines while some were not. Senior Xukong was going to teach Lin Mu about a different method that needed no additional material and could be done as long as the entire corpse of the beast was available.

But senior Xukong had already warned him that the process was going to be quite painful and difficult. Still, Lin Mu did not falter and was fully determined to go through with it.

"Not these either," Lin Mu said, looking at the corpses.

"You will have to look for more. Beasts that have awakened bloodlines are harder to find. Though... there are still some methods to refine an awakened bloodline if you have more of the same type beasts." Xukong replied.

"Same type of beasts, huh? Hmm, how many would I require if they are on the level of these ape beasts?" Lin Mu questioned.

"With their cultivation bases? I would say anywhere around twenty, but even then there will be chances of failure and this is only to refine the awakened bloodline. To make it into the form which can be assimilated will take even more effort." Xukong answered.

~Sigh~

"It is indeed quite complex. Guess, I'll just have to keep looking," Lin Mu stated before looking at the sky.

"Or not... it'll be dark in a couple of hours." Lin Mu muttered.

He then stored the corpses into the ring and headed back. In today's hunt, Lin Mu had been able to hunt about twelve spirit beasts and five normal beasts. From this, he estimated that he would need to hunt for about a week to even get a basic amount needed to test out the progress of the nameless technique of the lost immortal.

Still for Lin Mu, Hei Wen gathering the beast meat would be the fastest option, as it meant that he would not have to spend the time he could use for cultivation in hunting down beasts. The chances of finding spirit beasts was also not absolute.

That time when he had found the herd of the Ash Crowned deers was also rather uncommon and would likely not happen again. The large herds such as those were rather rare, and only a few types of beasts would stay like that. Most of the spirit beasts in the Northern forest were either solitary or lived in smaller groups.

The journey back was much faster for Lin Mu, as all he needed to do was run in a straight line. With his skills, he could ignore most obstacles or jump over them. Lin Mu was back at the town in an hour's time and was now in the courtyard preparing the beast corpses.

As soon as he started digging out the beast cores from the corpses of the spirit beasts, Little Shrubby ran out of the house and came towards him. It had been attracted by the scent of the blood and was probably here to get some.

~Meow~

It lightly growled and looked at the beast core that was in Lin Mu's hand. It nudged Lin Mu with his head and then Lin Mu felt a thought appear in his mind.

"Want." The thought said.

"Oh, you want the beast core?" Lin Mu said as he gestured to the small olive sized beast core.

Little shrubby nodded in an almost human like manner, showing his response.

"Give it to him, you won't be using the beast cores anyway, will you?" Xukong said.

"Will it be fine, though? It won't have any bad effects, will it?" Lin Mu asked in a concerned tone.

"The beast cores are kind of like alchemical pills for the beasts, and they often consume them to grow their cultivation base. In fact, it's one of the primary methods by which they cultivate. Though there are of course certain beast cores that they can't consume depending on the type of the beast.

Still, the beasts innately know what kind of cores are good for them, so whichever beast core it like you can give it to him and it won't be problematic for you." Xukong answered.

"Alright senior." Lin Mu replied before handing the beast core in his hand to Little Shrubby.

The beast core he had just given it was that of the lizard beast and was dark green in color. The color matched to those of its scales and looked a bit like a gem. Little shrubby did not even look at it for a second before swallowing the entire beast's core.

"Well, that was fast."

Chapter 300 - A Wedding Invitation

Little Shrubby looked pleased after eating the beast core, and Lin Mu could feel the faint waves of spirit qi coming off of its body. They had increased in frequency and were now getting stronger.

"Is he gonna breakthrough?" Lin Mu wondered.

"It won't be unusual, you have been feeding him spirit beast meat for the past months. With the amount he has eaten, his progress should be quite fast compared to other beasts who have to spend time hunting themselves. Plus, his aptitude along with intelligence has also been raised because of the Dual Circe Ascension fruits.

This beast core should possibly push him into the late stage of the qi refining realm." Xukong replied.

Lin Mu nodded in response and watched the condition of Little Shrubby. After a few seconds, it seemed to have become sleepy and thus went back inside to sleep on the warm bed. Lin Mu went back to preparing the beast corpses and took about an hour to butcher them all. In all, he had obtained about three late stage qi refining realm spirit beasts, four mid stage qi refining realm spirit beasts and five early stage qi refining realm beasts.

Lin Mu especially stored the beast cores separately so that Little Shrubby could get them to eat whenever he wanted to.

'Oh, almost forgot about all the blood...' Lin Mu remembered.

He then went to the yard and willed for all the spilled blood from the ring to come out. It was as if a dam was broken and a river of blood started flowing.

"Uhh... I may have misjudged the amount," Lin Mu muttered, feeling shocked.

Soon the entire ground of the yard was covered in beast blood. But it didn't take long for it to be fully absorbed into the soil, leaving behind some stains which showed that blood was spilled here. There wasn't much of a bloody scent either, as it was soon dispersed by the blowing wind.

Right now, the only place that was left bare of the blood was the two graves of Lin Mu's parents. Lin Mu shook his head and went back to the bedroom to continue his cultivation.

Lin Mu returned to the routine that he had before. He cultivated and refined the liquid spirit qi and then infused about eighty percent of it into his stomach in order to progress the nameless technique of the lost immortal while storing the remaining twenty percent.

He would then eat as much beast meat as he could and improve the technique further. This also led to an increase in Lin Mu's body tempering cultivation and he was getting even more closer to the Xiantian Physique.

The day after Little Shrubby had eaten the beast core, he broke through to the late stage of the qi refining realm. Lin Mu didn't see much change in him except for it getting a bit stronger. He had not seen any change in its speed either. He could have gotten faster, but because he didn't use its full speed, it was not apparent.

Lin Mu would also go to the forest and hunt down some beasts for him to eat and was able to hunt about sixty five Spirit beasts in total by the end of the week. But even out of all these beasts, not one of them had an awakened bloodline.

Neither was Lin Mu able to find a large number of the same type of beasts so that he could use the alternative method that Senior Xukong had told him of.

Today was the eighth day after he had spoken with Hei Wen and was also the day when he was supposed to receive the answer back from the Lord. It would be good for him if he was able to obtain the beast meat early on, as that would mean he could keep a reserve stock of them when it would be the time to assimilate the bloodline of the great slumber bear.

~Huu~

Lin Mu opened his eyes and let out a breath. He was able to sense that someone was standing outside the gate of his house and knew exactly who it was.

"Looks like Hei Wen got the reply," Lin Mu said before he stood up.

He walked out of the bedroom and walked to unlock the gate. Standing in front of him was none other than Hei Ping, who had been posted near his house and would bring him any messages from the Hei Corps if there were any need for him.

"Senior Lin Mu, the leader has called you. She told me that a letter has come for you." Hei Ping informed.

"Ahh, nice. Right on time." Lin Mu replied before closing the gate on his way out.

Hei Ping nodded and went back to his post while Lin Mu went to the town center. Hei Wen was waiting in her office and an opened letter was lying on the desk in front of her. She noticed Lin Mu walking in and gestured for him to sit down.

"So, what did the Lord say?" Lin Mu asked.

"As per your request, a year's worth of beast meat is being shipped to the town as we speak. It should be here in two to three days of time and will be entirely filled with spirit beast meat." Hei Wen replied.

"Also about the other thing that I spoke to you about..." She added after taking a pause.

"You mean about me representing the lord in a competition of some kind?" Lin Mu asked.

"Yes, that. Well... there is a great chance they will be holding it in the next week, so now you know to be prepared and to keep your schedule clear. It will be lasting for about ten days and you are free to stay in Wu Lim city for the entire time.

You also don't need to pay for anything all the expenses will be taken care of by the Mayor. And... you will also need to attend the wedding so take this as an official invitation to the wedding." Hei Wen answered.