Chapter 310: Magnolia Forest

“Why? There are plenty of people to spar here if you need,” Han Zemei replied.

“That’s not enough. I want to test myself—against all sorts of opponents,” Long Yi slowly replied, as he tried to select the right words to express himself. “I’m sure your fellow disciples excel in many areas, but I doubt any of them have the same brute strength as a Qi beast of the same level. If I’m to leverage my own strength, who better to learn from than Qi beasts themselves?”

Qi beasts were known to be stronger than humans. It was only through skillful techniques, teamwork, and ample preparation that humans have managed to dominate most of the living spaces. Even then, there are still numerous places where human cultivators don’t dare to stay for too long. Powerful Qi beasts lurk in the various danger zones that even the strongest of humanity don’t dare to carelessly confront.

Long Yi was strangely perceptive when it came to matters related to combat. If he rushed into adopting brute strength as one of his core doctrines, he would undoubtedly find himself at a disadvantage when fighting other cultivators. After all, most of them had likely fought against Qi beasts before and had been trained on how to deal with them. If he were to employ similar tactics, he would first have to learn about them in more detail.

To learn about strengths and weaknesses between matchups, the best way is to put yourself in both sides’ shoes. I hate how Li Lang spews this stuff so much during practice that I can recall it instinctively now.

“Well, in that case, there is the Magnolia Forest to the east, but right now isn’t the best time of the year to go. It’s mating season for the Qi beasts that live there.”

“It should be fine as long as I’m careful, right? There aren’t any Violet Core-level monsters lurking about?”

“No, many sects throughout Azure Mist send their disciples there. The stronger Qi beasts there never leave their territory, so as long as you stay on the outer rings, you won’t face anything that could overwhelm you.”

“So that means there are Violet Core-level monsters there, though?”

Han Zemei flashed her towering guest an amused smile as she nodded. She found it quite humorous that the man before her sounded so cowardly, a huge mismatch from his appearance.

“Do you perhaps want me to assemble a party to escort you?” she teased.

“That’s a good idea, but I don’t want to impose. Just point me in the right direction and tell me things I should take note of.”

“I’ll tell you on the way. I’ve been instructed to be your guide, so I’ll tag along.”

“I—don’t mind as long as you don’t interfere.”

“Just don’t give me a reason to,” the young woman grinned.

The two didn’t waste any time and flew out of Qingluan City toward their destination. It was almost impossible to miss, as everything in the distance became white. Upon closer inspection, it was thanks to all the magnolia trees in full bloom.

“We’ll have to land now, since nothing can fly overhead around here without risking provoking the monsters deep within. Just remember to stay in the white or pink area, and we’ll be fine. The white area here is populated by Qi beasts in the Energy Gathering Realm, while the pink is for Foundation Establishment beasts. If you see yellow, you better turn around quickly, as that’s where the Violet Core monsters are.”

“The great sects of your province just allow everyone to come and go around here? The Energy Gathering area is one thing, but aren’t the Violet Core beasts an invaluable resource for your forces?” Long Yi asked, thinking of all the materials that could be found here.

His companions would likely go into a frenzy upon learning of a place where they could safely confront Qi beasts without having to worry about coming across one that was too strong for them to handle.

“Ha, as much as our sect would like to monopolize this area, we don’t dare,” Han Zemei wryly chuckled. “There aren’t just Violet Core Realm monsters here. Further in, there are even great beasts with strength on par with Spirit Divide Realm cultivators. However, as long as we don’t disturb them, it’ll be fine.”

Long Yi gulped upon hearing about the existence of such insurmountable creatures nearby. Nevertheless, he took a deep breath and disembarked into the forest before him, albeit in a daze. It was only when he started spotting lifeforms below that he shook those fears aside. He had to focus.

Within the treeline full of white magnolias, there was a flock of small birds surrounding a strange, fearsome creature. It was a chimera of sorts, with a tiger’s body, but the face of an oversized magnolia flower. It launched dozens of petals from its mouth, causing a portion of the small birds to take erratic evasive maneuvers while the rest pecked at its flank.

The two cultivators were able to spot everything clearly, as it was only a fight between Mortal-grade beasts. They watched as the chimera valiantly fought off the flock before returning to rest under one of the numerous trees in the area.

“Each of these Qi beasts within the Magnolia Forest lives alongside a heavenly resource of some sort. Some of them are quite well hidden,” Han Zemei explained.

“They just live alongside them?”

“That’s right. The beast guards the plant, allowing it to grow. In turn, the plant nurtures its defender, allowing it to grow in strength.”

The Rolling Tide disciple went into further detail about the unique features of the Magnolia Forest, but it all went over Long Yi’s head. Unlike his friends, he had no interest in such things. He simply needed to know how to find the Qi beasts, dangers to look out for, and what valuable resources he could obtain from them.

By the time the lecture was over, the two were well within the pink zone of the forest, where the trees were of the same species but of a different color.

“Okay, I’m going ahead now. You should keep a lookout from a distance,” Long Yi requested in an attempt to get some space for himself.

Hearing no reply, he promptly picked up his pace and moved ahead. He had gotten a good idea of how to find Qi beasts, but it was difficult to actually track them down thanks to all the petals floating around, obscuring vision. It even disrupted his Qi senses, forcing him to rely on his vision alone.

Thankfully, the forest was full of life. Just by stumbling around, going from tree to tree, he inevitably found one of the natives of the forest guarding a yellow stalk that was easily twice the height of Long Yi. At the top of the stalk was a pale green fruit.

A pale, white feline Qi beast growled at him as he approached. It was making it clear that Long Yi wasn’t welcome here.

Here goes nothing. At the very least, Li Lang will be happy to receive these strange heavenly resources, so I should at least make an effort to win.

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Back in the present, Li Lang had successfully extracted his new students and returned to Starpoint Island. He had managed to do so a full three days early, which he couldn’t help but grin about. That was a full three days ahead of schedule, which in theory meant he had three full days to spend on his experiments.

That’s why he eagerly greeted the students he had left behind and quickly delegated the task of settling the new recruits in to them. For now, they didn’t need to do anything until Wei Ping and Long Yi returned with their batch of recruits. It would be more efficient to onboard them all together that way.

Once he had thrown away all his responsibilities, he rushed toward what had been on his mind ever since he left. He went over to one of the rooms in the dormitories to find Xiao Dong guarding the door.

“How is he?” he asked his student as he scanned his body for any wounds.

“Teacher Li, you’re back! I think you should see for yourself.” The young man quickly sidestepped away and opened the door for him.

Shaking his head at the mysterious answer he got, Li Lang didn’t bother to play word games and complied. Walking in, he didn’t find anything amiss in the room. The place was quite spartan, with a lone man lying on the bed in the back corner.

Hearing the sound of someone entering, the man quickly sat himself on the edge of the bed, warily looking at Li Lang. The two locked gazes for a moment before Li Lang broke the silence.

“Seeing as you’re not lunging at me, I assume you’ve been well? Can you talk?”

“Who are you?”

Hearing a reply, Li Lang’s eyes gleamed with excitement. However, from the perspective of the former deviator, a chill coursed through his spine, as if it were a premonition warning him of what he would soon face.