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Volume 9: Chapter 22 – Imperial Firewood House

After the Vice Manager entered him in the registry, he said, “Alright, go and stand on the left side. Someone will take you to the gardening department soon. Next!”

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It was finally my turn. I hastily moved forward and said with a bow, “Lord Vice Manager, you can call me Eighteen. My role is to split logs at the firewood house.”

When the Vice Manager raised his head and looked at my appearance, he furrowed his eyebrows as he said, “What on earth were those brats doing to recruit such an ugly person? But I’ll let it slide and allow you to be as ugly as possible as no one will see you anyway. You’re to behave and be diligent in splitting logs after today.”

I hastily agreed. “Thank you, Vice Manager. I will definitely do my best.”

“En!” The Vice Manager agreed as he motioned for me to stand aside.

Finally, everyone’s names had been recorded by the Vice manager and taken to their respective workplaces. I was led away by a fatty along with two others. He led us to a big building before saying, “This is the kitchen. You’ll be working here in the future. Ugly, you’re to head to the rear courtyard of the kitchen. There’ll be an old fellow there that will assign you your work.”

I immediately agreed and dashed towards the rear courtyard alone.

The courtyard was large and contained many people, some were washing vegetables while others were cooking meat, all contributing to the bustle of the kitchen. There were a pile of logs at the north-east corner of the grounds. This should be the place I am to be stationed. When I walked over, I saw an old man with snow white hair splitting logs.

I respectfully said, “Greetings to you, sir.”

The old man raised his head and looked at me before replying, “What do you want? You need something?” His tone, devoid of any humility, suggested that he was anything but a log splitter.

I replied. “I have been assigned to assist you in splitting the logs.”

The old man sized me up before saying indifferently, “Then go and find some logs to split. Remember, you’re to chop them evenly to avoid having those picky fellows from the kitchen complaining again.”

I nodded as I found a log and sat down. The old man tossed me a firewood axe before pointing to the circular logs at the side.

I placed a circular log in front of me before I gently struck down with the firewood axe. I used my strength to cleanly split the circular log in two. It was a pity that I couldn’t use my magic and battle spirit. I would have to just split it with pure strength.

When the day ended, even though I didn’t split many logs, I was so tired that my waist was sore and back ached.

When it was dinner time, unbeknownst to me, the old man had procured some food and shared half of it with me. “Eat up and rest early. Tomorrow, you’re going to continue splitting logs. Your current pace is incomparable to this old man’s pace. How can that be satisfactory?”

After taking my portion of food from him, I asked, “How long have you been here?”

The old man dazed a little before saying, “I’ve forgotten. It should at least be thirty years.”

“You have split logs for thirty years? Why haven’t you left?” I replied in astonishment.

The old man snorted before saying. “What’s so good about the outside? Even though it’s a little tough here, life is still stable. Splitting logs during the day until I’m worn out and sleep after eating at night. Isn’t that good? Ah! That’s right! Wait a moment before you eat.” Upon saying that, he turned around heading towards the firewood house. After a short moment, he was holding onto a worn out bottle gourd. He looked as though the bottle gourd was something that was dearest to him. He said, “It wasn’t easy to obtain this. Do you want some?”

I asked, “What is that?”

The old man mysteriously grinned and replied, "Premium wine."

I instantly understood that it was alcohol. I shook my head and replied, "I think I will pass. I've split too little in the day. After eating, you can go and rest. I'll continue splitting the logs for a while longer."

The old man looked at me, surprised. "Even though you're ugly, you're quite hardworking. This old man, won't be courteous then. Do you know why they recruited people here? You should have guessed already. I'm getting old and my strength has waned. I will be unable to meet the demands of the kitchen soon. I won't be courteous with you but don't overwork yourself. It's alright to just split a couple more. That's right, what's your name?"

His words had warmed my heart. "I'm called Eighteen. You can just call me that from now on."

The old man nodded. "You can call me Old Firewood. I've long forgotten my name."

I was startled before I replied. "How can I do that? You're so much older than me. How about this? I'll call you Uncle Firewood."

Old Firewood drank a mouthful of wine before replying, "Up to you. You really don't want to drink?"

I smiled as I shook my head.

When it was deep in the night, Old Firewood had already entered the land of dreams. I surveyed my surrounding and found them empty. I circulated my magic power and gently brandished my hand. Countless tiny light blades appeared, instantly splitting a vast amount of logs into small even pieces. When I waved my hand, the logs gathered at a corner. It was a pity that Sukrad's staff had been confiscated after I was caught. The current me shouldn't even be able to fight against Ke Lun Duo.

After stacking the firewood, I returned to the firewood house and looked at Old Firewood. He was already giving off resounding snores. I took out a piece of cloth and tied it around my face, concentrating my magic power on my feet. I gently leapt on the kitchen's roof.

It was silent everywhere. Since the palace was immense, I didn't dare to go far, and just patrolled a 100 metres radius around the kitchen. The security here was relaxed as I only met an occasional team of patrolling soldiers. I had quietly memorised the routes I had taken. After returning to the firewood house, I took out a piece of paper from my spatial pocket, drawing places from my memory.

After 10 days time, I had already gained some information about the palace. The Demon race's palace was divided into inner and outer parts. The outer parts where we stayed as we laboured surrounded the entire outer palace. I had already been in the inner palace once. The security there was extremely tight. Even a small movement by Xiao Rou, it had alerted the the guards. Mu Zi and the Demon Emperor should be in there.

I was filled with thoughts as I split the logs. Uncle Firewood said, "Eighteen, what are you thinking about?"

I snapped out from my thoughts and replied, "Nothing."

Uncle Firewood smiled but didn't continue to question me. Uncle Firewood had always been inscrutable. Even though there wasn't any magical undulations from his body, after what had happened with Ke Lun Duo, I was extremely wary of him. Every night before I went to scout, I had always made sure that Uncle Firewood was fast asleep.

What made me feel glad was that the recovery speed of my magic was extremely fast. Even though the gold dan didn't split into another gold dan, the magic spell composed of light magic was mellow and rich. The only gold dan in my brain was faintly discernible and my body was filled with power. My power was already on par with my past peak state.

It was rather mysterious that, after losing the gold dans, my power would grow so much. It was really something that I had been unable to understand. I also didn't have much time to focus on such things. When I practiced my magic, even if I suppressed it, a faint radiance could be seen coming from my body, so I had chosen day time to train my magic. While I did the repetitive motions of splitting logs, I secretly gathered light elements, which were constantly changing in my body.

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