

## **A Record 191**

### Chapter 191: Servants

With a flick of his wrist, a round, palm-sized golden badge appeared in Fang Zhuan's grasp amid a flash of golden light.

The badge was riddled with runes, and it was made from the exact same material as the metal grids.

He chanted a brief incantation while making a hand seal with his other hand, and all of the spirit patterns on the golden badge instantly lit up, following which it released a beam of golden light straight onto one of the metal grids on the wall.

The layer of spiritual light enshrouding the grid rippled like water momentarily, following which a small metal box flew out of the wall before landing in Fang Zhuan's grasp.

He pressed his golden badge onto the box, and the latter immediately began to glow with bright golden light, forming a spherical light barrier that enveloped the entire box within.

Han Li could see golden runes constantly flashing over the light barrier like a series of miniature golden dragons, giving off an extremely peculiar aura in the process.

Moments later, the spherical light barrier abruptly faded, as did the golden light radiating from the box.

Immediately thereafter, the box slowly flew back into the grid on the wall, where it was sealed once again amid a flash of spiritual light, leaving only the golden badge continuing to hover in mid-air.

The box wasn't opened at all throughout this entire process.

It seemed that even though Fang Zhuan was serving as the attendant elder overseeing this place, even he was unable to open the boxes that contained the scriptures. Instead, it appeared that the most that he could do was replicate the contents of the scriptures.

Fang Zhuan picked up Han Li's elder badge and placed it against his round metal badge, then chanted an incantation.

Both of the badges flashed in unison, then quickly returned to normal.

"Alright, the merit points in the badge have already been deducted, and your blood essence aura has also been recorded by this spirit note badge. You will be the only one who can access the cultivation art recorded inside. Do not attempt to replicate the contents inside under any circumstances, or you'll have to bear the consequences," Fang Zhuan cautioned as he handed both badges to Han Li.

"Thank you, Elder Fang," Han Li replied with a nod as he accepted the pair of badges.

Right at this moment, someone else made his way into the palace as he yelled, "Senior Martial Brother Fang!"

Fang Zhuan was clearly very familiar with this newcomer, and he smiled as he greeted, "Ah, Junior Martial Brother Gu. It's been a while since I last saw you. What can I help you with today?"

Han Li was rather taken aback to see this.

This appeared to have been a normal occurrence, but it was very perplexing in his eyes as the man with the Gu surname was a True Immortal cultivator, so why was it that he was referring to a Grand Ascension cultivator like Fang Zhuan as his senior martial brother?

Fang Zhuan seemed to have noticed the perplexed look in Han Li's eyes, and a hint of dejection flashed across his face.

"It appears you have a guest, so I won't take up any more of your time, Elder Fang," Han Li said as he cupped his fist in a parting salute.

"Farewell, Elder Li. If you need anything else, you can come back at any time," Fang Zhuan replied with a nod.

Han Li was still rather perplexed as he stroked his own chin, then gave the two men a slight nod before departing.

After leaving the Merit Conveyance Palace, he had originally planned to return straight to his cave abode on the Crimson Dawn Peak, but a thought suddenly occurred to him, and he made his way to the nearby teleportation hall instead.

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The Cattail Spirit Valley was situated in the westernmost region of the Bell Toll Mountain Range, and it was a massive horn-shaped valley that was stuck between a pair of side branch mountain ranges that extended toward the south.

There was a type of plant by the name of the Cattail Spirit Herb growing here, which was capable of gathering the world's origin qi in small amounts, hence the name of the valley.

Due to the special properties of the Cattail Spirit Herb, it was often used to weave futons, and for a low-grade cultivator, having access to such a futon would significantly enhance their rate of cultivation.

Of course, all of the Cattail Spirit Herbs in the valley were considered to be the property of the sect, and disciples were strictly prohibited from picking them without permission.

This valley was a rather special place in the Blaze Dragon Dao as the outer sect disciples participating in the decennial inner sect trials would generally gather here, then be taken by an attendant elder to trial areas such as the Snowmelt Forest.

Only a tiny number of people were able to pass each trial to become inner sect disciples, while the rest either perished during the cruel trials, or emerged riddled with injuries to continue serving as ordinary outer sect disciples.

Each outer sect disciple only had one opportunity to participate in the trial in their lifetime, so if they were to fail, then that would mean that the status of inner sect disciple was forever out of reach.

The majority of these outer sect disciples that had come from all parts of the Ancient Cloud Continent actually possessed decent aptitude, considered to be prodigies in their own clans. Otherwise, they wouldn't have even been selected to become outer sect disciples of the Blaze Dragon Dao.

After failing the inner sect trials, these outer sect disciples naturally weren't willing to just give up cultivation altogether, so the vast majority of them would choose to sign contracts in the Cattail Spirit Palace, hoping that they would catch the eye of one of the Blaze Dragon Dao's True Immortals and be fortunate enough to become their servant.

In their eyes, being able to become the servant of a True Immortal was an enormous opportunity that would elevate them to completely new heights.

If they were to be granted some cultivation resources by the True Immortal that they served, then it was entirely possible for exceptions to be made for them to be accepted as inner sect disciples at some point in the future.

However, the vast majority of True Immortals already had their own servants, and most of them liked to choose people from their own clans. Hence, very few of them came to visit the Cattail Spirit Valley. Of course, female cultivators with exceptional looks stood a better chance of being chosen than others.

Even so, whenever it became known that a True Immortal was about to arrive in the valley, countless disciples would still flock to the valley to try their luck.

At this moment, there were already thousands of people gathered in the valley, and there were still more people arriving by the second.

Not long ago, an attendant elder of the Cattail Spirit Palace had just announced that a True Immortal was going to be arriving to pick out some servants soon, and that was the reason why so many outer sect disciples were present.

The valley was lined with thickets of Cattail Spirit Herbs that were situated at least 1,000 feet away from one another. These herbs had thick and strong stems and leaves that resembled swords, and there were dozens or even over 100 gray-robed cultivators standing or sitting on each thicket.

It seemed that each thicket of Cattail Spirit Herbs was a circle of its own that was clearly separated from all others.

The vast majority of these people were at the Foundation Establishment or Core Formation Stage, but of course, there were quite a few Nascent Soul Stage disciples as well. Even as they were awaiting the arrival of the True Immortal, they were still meditating, not willing to waste any time that could be used for cultivation.

At the entrance of the valley, a gray-robed, honest-looking young man who appeared to have been in his twenties with a crescent-shaped jade pendant hanging from his waist made his way into the crowd, accompanied by three companions.

A round-faced fatso among the trio of companions turned to the honest-looking young man as he suggested, "Yungui, we should find a spot where it'll be easier for us to be seen. That way, there's a higher chance that we'll be chosen."

The best locations at the entrance of the valley had already been taken over by groups that were led by Nascent Soul Stage disciples, and there were only some vacant spots available deeper in the valley.

The honest-looking young man nodded in response, then pointed at a nearby thicket that was over 100 feet in size as he said, "It looks like there's some space there."

However, as soon as he stepped onto the thicket, he was met with a forceful shoulder barge that sent him stumbling to the side, and he turned around to discover a burly young man who was built like a brick house.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't Young Master Yungui. Have you come to try and fight over spots with us again?" the burly young man sneered.

The honest-looking young man's hands instantly balled up into tight fists, but he ultimately chose not to retaliate.

The burly young man before him was called Sun Buzheng, and they had come from the same rural nation, namely the Late Age Nation.

The Meng Clan that Meng Yungui belonged to was once the cultivating clan that was controlling the nation from behind the scenes, while Sun Buzheng was a member of the Late Age Nation's imperial family. Back when they were both children, they had been very close friends.

However, the Sun Clan was later overthrown during a revolution, and the Meng Clan was also attacked by a foreign cultivating power at around the same time, falling into decline as a result.

Sun Buzheng's birth name was Sun Hao, and he had always thought that his nation had fallen due to the lack of action taken by the Meng Clan, so he had developed an extremely deep grudge against the Meng Clan. As a result, after he was reunited with Meng Yungui in the Blaze Dragon Dao, he regarded his former friend as a bitter enemy.

In the beginning, Meng Yungui tried to explain what had happened to Sun Buzheng, but the latter refused to listen, so Meng Yungui eventually gave up.

Whenever he was faced with Sun Buzheng's provocation, he would always choose to deescalate the altercation, but this only made Sun Buzheng even more furious.

"Let's go somewhere else," Meng Yungui said to his entourage, then began to make his way toward another nearby thicket.

"Meng Yungui, are you a man or not? You're always cowering like a turtle every single time, and it pisses me off!" Sun Buzheng roared.

He made no effort to keep his voice down, and all of the nearby disciples immediately had their attention drawn to the altercation. Among them was an ordinary-looking young man who was quite tall in stature.

He was standing on a large thicket with some other outer sect disciples seated in small groups nearby, while he was the only one that was on his own.

This person was naturally none other than Han Li, who had just arrived from the Merit Conveyance Palace.

As opposed to going straight to the attendant elder of the Cattail Spirit Palace to pick out some servants from the list of names, he decided to enter the valley and take a look for himself.

Even though selecting servants was only a trivial matter, he still didn't want to run the risk of having others plant spies beside him.

He had suppressed his own aura to the Core Formation Stage, so no one paid any heed to him, merely regarding him as another outer sect disciple who had come to try his luck.

He took a glance at the approaching Meng Yungui, then quickly withdrew his gaze.

Right at this moment, a cold voice rang out up ahead. "Everyone, piss off! I'm taking this spot!"

The voice belonged to a menacing middle-aged man who appeared to have been around 40 years of age, and he was followed by a pair of cultivators, one male and one female, both of whom clearly regarded him as their leader.

The man was a late-Core Formation cultivator, so his cultivation base definitely stood out among the many nearby Core Formation cultivators.

The thicket that Han Li was situated on was occupied mostly by early-Core Formation cultivators, so despite their reluctance to comply, they had no choice but to leave with sour expressions.

It didn't take long before Han Li was the only one left, and Meng Yungui stopped in his tracks as his brows furrowed slightly at the sight of Han Li.

"I don't recall ever seeing you before. You must be a newbie, right?" the middle-aged man asked in a cold voice.

"Indeed, I only joined the sect not too long ago, and I heard that a True Immortal was coming to select some servants soon, so I decided to come here and try my luck," Han Li replied in an indifferent voice.

"Ha! So you're another idiot with an inflated sense of self-worth!"

"He must think of himself as some type of young prodigy!"

A burst of raucous laughter instantly rang out at Han Li's expense.

## Chapter 192: Selecting Servants

"Even a newbie like yourself should still know the rules! Senior Martial Brother Shen told you to piss off just now, so why are you still here? Are you deaf, or are you pretending to be deaf?" the thin man beside the menacing middle-aged man yelled.

"To think that a mere early-Core Formation cultivator like yourself dares to display such insolence! You must have a death wish!" the seductive female cultivator on the other side of the middle-aged man scoffed.

Han Li paid no heed to their insults as he remained seated on the ground with his legs crossed.

Right at this moment, Meng Yungui made his way over to Han Li as he said, "It's not wise to oppose these people just for the sake of pride, Fellow Daoist. Given their terrible personalities, there's no way they'd be chosen by the True Immortal anyway."

In the process, he had wedged himself between Han Li and the middle-aged man, and his three companions also joined him as well.

"Meng Yungui, if I were you, I would stay out of this matter rather than stand up for someone I don't even know. Don't think that I would back down just because you managed to reach the late-Core Formation Stage by a massive stroke of luck," the middle-aged man threatened in a cold voice.

Meng Yungui wasn't backing down in the slightest as he declared, "Shen Biao, you and Lu Heng have always been picking on the members of our Meng Clan, and I've been meaning to confront you about this. There's no time like the present to settle our differences."



Right at this moment, another voice suddenly rang out. "Such majesty and prestige! As expected of Young Master Meng! When did you pick up the habit of sticking your nose into random business that has nothing to do with you?"

Everyone turned to discover a handsome young man with an arm wound around a female cultivator's slender waist. He was accompanied by an entourage of about a dozen people, and his peak late-Core Formation Stage aura was on full display.

The middle-aged man was ecstatic to see the new arrival. "Senior Martial Brother Lu, you're finally here!"

The atmosphere in the nearby area immediately became rather tense, and all of the disciples who didn't want to get involved hurriedly backed away to create some space between themselves and the two opposing groups of cultivators.

Han Li heaved a resigned sigh upon seeing this.

He had merely chosen this spot to sit at random, and he didn't think that it would stir up such a far-reaching conflict.

The cultivators accompanying Lu Heng were all at the Core Formation Stage as well, and with Shen Biao's trio thrown into the mix, this was quite a formidable lineup. In contrast, Meng Yungui only had his three companions to back him up.

Fearful looks had appeared on the faces of the round-faced fatso and the other two disciples, but seeing as Meng Yungui was still standing firm, they remained resolute in their stances as well.

Right as this completely lopsided battle was about to commence, another voice suddenly rang out. "Where's the glory in bullying others with a numbers advantage? Why don't you count me in as well, Senior Martial Brother Lu?"

The person who had spoken was none other than Sun Buzheng, who had provoked Meng Yungui earlier. He immediately arrived at the scene of the altercation as well, and his aura indicated that he was also a late-Core Formation cultivator.

"Sun Buzheng, aren't you and Meng Yungui sworn enemies? Are you going to meddle in this matter as well?" Lu Heng asked in a cold voice.

Sun Buzheng was displaying no fear at all as he smiled and replied, "Meng Yungui and I will settle our differences another time, but in the meantime, I can't just stand by and watch you pick on my fellow brethren of the Late Age Nation!"

Han Li was rather intrigued by this turn of events.

Right at this moment, Meng Yungui's voice rang out beside his ears through voice transmission. "Rest assured, Fellow Daoist, we'll take on Lu Heng and the others on our own. You stay out of this so you don't get injured."

"If you're gonna fight, then hurry up!"

"What's the hold-up?"

"Taking bets now! I'm putting my money on Lu Heng!"

A large crowd had gathered to watch the unfolding altercation, and the scene was becoming quite rowdy.

Lu Heng pushed the beautiful woman beside him away, then raised a hand as he commanded, "Go!"

Shen Biao and the others immediately summoned their respective treasures upon receiving this command, preparing to engage Meng Yungui and his group in battle.

Meng Yungui and his entourage also responded in kind, and the two groups of cultivators were just about to clash when Han Li suddenly appeared between them in a flash, moving at such an incredible speed that it was as if he had teleported there.

Meng Yungui and the others looked on in astonishment as Han Li casually swept a sleeve through the air, and the dozen or so opposing cultivators, including Shen Biao, were all sent flying by a burst of invisible force, then crashed into the distant mountain face before falling unconscious.

The rowdy bystanders instantly fell silent as if they had each taken a punch to the gut, and all of them were rooted to the spot as they looked on with stunned expressions.

Lu Heng's hand was still outstretched as he stared at Han Li with utter bewilderment.

At this moment, he was no longer able to sense Han Li's aura at all, as if it were only a mere mortal standing before him.

Even the Nascent Soul Stage disciples at the entrance of the valley were all looking on in dumbfounded shock.

After a brief silence, a hint of realization abruptly appeared in Meng Yungui's eyes, and he was the first to snap back to his senses as he hurriedly fell to his knees.

"Disciple Meng Yungui pays his respects to the esteemed elder!"

Immediately thereafter, all of the thousands of disciples in the area also sank to their knees one after another.

Lu Heng's forehead was pressed firmly against the ground, and his entire body was already drenched in cold sweat.

Han Li paid no heed to Lu Heng as he swept a sleeve through the air, releasing a gentle breeze that lifted Meng Yungui to his feet. "My surname is Li. From now on, you can remain by my side as my servant."

Meng Yungui faltered slightly upon hearing this, following which an ecstatic look appeared on his face, but that was then quickly replaced by a hesitant expression.

"If you have some qualms, then feel free to express them," Han Li said.

A slightly embarrassed look appeared on Meng Yungui's face as he said, "Elder Li, I have a young sister who's only just reached 18 years of age and recently progressed to the Foundation Establishment Stage. Would you be able to accept her as your servant as well?"

A cold look appeared on Han Li's face as he said, "The pursuit of the Great Dao is a cruel and lonely endeavor. If you do not sever your ties with the mortal world, you won't be able to truly embark on that journey. Do you understand?"

Meng Yungui hurriedly cupped his fist in a salute as he replied, "I do, it's just that my sister is still young, and if I leave her to her own devices here, I'm afraid that she'll... I understand that I'm asking too much. My sincerest apologies, Elder Li, but I won't be able to serve by your side."

Everyone was completely bewildered to hear this. In their eyes, it was nothing short of incredible that someone had passed up the opportunity to become a servant to a True Immortal.

If one could become a servant to a True Immortal, even the slightest bequeathments from the True Immortal would be enough to benefit them immensely on their cultivation journey, and that wasn't even to mention how invaluable the guidance of a True Immortal would be in one's cultivation.

With that in mind, one had to have either been insane or downright stupid to turn down such an opportunity!

However, to everyone's astonishment, Han Li's expression eased slightly upon hearing this, and he said, "The Great Dao has no tolerance for emotional and sentimental ties, but at the end of the day, we are still human. How many people can truly be completely heartless and devoid of emotion? I'll accept both you and your sister as my servants. On top of that, you can pick out eight more people to serve by my side."

Meng Yungui shuddered violently as if he had been struck by lightning upon hearing this, and he was staring at Han Li with incredulity in his eyes.

The surrounding crowd had also erupted into a frenzy and were chattering spiritedly among themselves.

Virtually everyone immediately turned to Meng Yungui with imploring looks in their eyes, as if he were a god that would decide whether they got to live or die.

Meanwhile, Han Li sat down onto the ground with his legs crossed and closed his eyes to meditate, seemingly truly giving Meng Yungui full rein over who he was going to choose.

After taking a moment to collect himself, Meng Yungui pointed to the person standing directly before him as he said, "Meng Xiong."

Meng Xiong was the name of the round-faced fatso that had always been by his side, and he was so excited that tears were already beginning to swim in his eyes.

"Meng Xiong, go and fetch Qianqian for me. Meng Yu, Meng Guang, Fang Yao..."

After instructing the fatso to get his sister, Meng Yungui called out another six names, two of whom were also from the Meng Clan, while the rest were simply on good terms with him.

All of those who had their names called began to weep with joy as they made their way over to Meng Yungui's side.

Only then did Han Li open his eyes and take a quick glance at the people that Meng Yungui had chosen.

Aside from Meng Yungui's sister, who wasn't here yet, the rest of them were all Core Formation cultivators.

Right at this moment, Meng Yungui made his way over to a certain person and gave them the last spot.

"Sun Buzheng..."

Sun Buzheng was completely incredulous at the sound of his own name coming out of Meng Yungui's voice, and he turned to his former good friend with a perplexed expression.

"I will tell you this once again, Sun Hao: I do not get to decide the fate of a nation, and there are many complex circumstances involved. However, I always have and will continue to regard you as my friend," Meng Yungui said as he cupped his fist in a salute.

Tears began to well up in Sun Buzheng's eyes, and to conceal his embarrassment, he put on a displeased look as he corrected, "Don't call me Sun Hao, I changed my name to Sun Buzheng long ago!"

After everyone was selected, Han Li didn't say anything as he led Meng Yungui and the others straight to the Cattail Spirit Palace for registration, and they were followed by several thousand disciples who were clearly still not willing to give up.

Given Han Li's status and cultivation base, he could've easily chosen dozens or even hundreds of servants, but he had no intention of doing that.

Right as they emerged from the Cattail Spirit Hall, a crisp and pleasant voice rang out from within the crowd. "Big Brother!"

A young woman then darted her way through the crowd in an agile manner like a little red sparrow, arriving beside Meng Yungui before latching onto his arm, and she was followed immediately by Meng Xiong.

"Elder Li, this is my sister, Meng Qianqian. Qianqian, pay your respects to Elder Li," Meng Yungui introduced with a slightly bashful expression.

Meng Qianqian hurriedly released her brother's arm upon hearing this, and she extended a deep curtsy toward Han Li with curiosity brimming in her large eyes. "Qianqian pays her respects to Elder Li."

Han Li smiled as he nodded in response, and he noticed that she was wearing a crescent-shaped jade pendant on her waist that seemed to have been identical to Meng Yungui's.

Looking at Meng Qianqian, he couldn't help but think of his little sister, and a barely detectable hint of warmth flashed through his eyes.

This was one of the reasons why he had agreed to accept both of them as his servants.

"Take this fire spirit pendant. It's not exactly an immortal treasure, but it can be worn to enhance the rate of cultivation for someone using fire-attribute cultivation arts." Han Li flipped a hand over to produce a fiery red penannular jade pendant as he spoke, then handed it to Meng Qianqian.

Meng Qianqian was initially quite taken aback, but she then hurriedly accepted the pendant as she expressed her gratitude.

She then strung the jade pendant onto her waist right next to the crescent-shaped pendant, and as she began to walk, the pair of pendants clattered together to produce a crisp and pleasant sound, much to the envy of all of the surrounding onlookers.

## Chapter 193: Mountain Guardian Beast

After registering his servants with the attendant elder at the Cattail Spirit Palace, he took them to the nearby teleportation hall, then returned to the Crimson Dawn Peak.

The Crimson Dawn Peak was a lone mountain that was tens of thousands of feet tall. It was quite secluded in location, so it was quite far away from the nearest teleportation hall.

Even before arriving on the mountain, everyone could see that it was glowing with a red sheen, and not only was there no snow on the mountain, it was covered in lush greenery, presenting a vibrant sight to behold.

This was Han Li's first time seeing the mountain, and he found this to be rather strange, so he immediately released his spiritual sense to inspect the mountain as he said to Meng Yungui and the

others, "The Crimson Dawn Peak has been vacant for a very long time, and the previous restrictions and arrays set up here have already become defunct from lack of maintenance.

"On top of that, there's a natural fire miasma on the mountain that will have a slight negative impact on all of you over time. Take these Clear Forest Pills, and you'll be exempt from those negative effects."

He flipped a hand over to produce a white jade vial as he spoke, then handed it to Meng Yungui.

Meng Yungui carefully accepted the vial with both hands, then distributed the pills inside to everyone.

All of them were exchanging glances with one another while holding the pills, seemingly reluctant to take them.

These Clear Forest Pills were naturally next to worthless in Han Li's eyes, but they were extremely beneficial for Core Formation cultivators attempting breakthroughs to the Nascent Soul Stage, and it felt like a massive waste to be taking them just to ward off the fire miasma on the mountain.

"Do I have to repeat myself?" Han Li asked in an indifferent voice.

"Please forgive us, Senior Li."

Meng Yungui immediately led by example, swallowing his pill first, and everyone else quickly followed suit.

Meng Qianqian was just about to take her pill as well, but she was stopped by Han Li, who told her, "You're only at the Foundation Establishment, so you don't have to take this pill. That fire spirit pendant has the natural ability to ward off the fire miasma for you."

Meng Qianqian nodded in response, then stowed the pill away.



"From now on, perform your rightful duties, and I'll be sure to treat you well. For now, I have some other matters to take care of, so follow Meng Yungui's lead and go clean up the cave abode," Han Li instructed.

"Yes, Senior Li."

Meng Yungui and the others descended onto the Crimson Dawn Peak, while Han Li flew back to the teleportation hall on his own.

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The Beast Rearing Fields were where the tamed demon beasts of the Blaze Dragon Dao were kept, and they took up a massive area. At the center of the fields was the Beast Rearing Palace, which presided over the surrounding area in a radius of hundreds of thousands of kilometers.

The fields were split up into different areas with different environments, such as mountains, rivers, forests, and swamps.

Such a diverse array of environments hadn't come into existence naturally. Instead, most of them had been artificially created by the Blaze Dragon Dao, and each area was enshrouded within restrictions of different sizes. Even during the day, the glowing restrictions of different colors were still clearly visible, and different areas contained different numbers of spirit beasts.

There were specialized beast-taming cultivators overseeing the Beast Rearing Fields, and most of the spirit beasts kept in the sect possessed certain useful abilities, such as the ability to act as steeds, guard cave abodes, track enemies, explore perilous regions, and even assist their owners in battle.

It was exactly because of this that many of the disciples of the sect would choose to rent one of these spirit beasts before carrying out missions, but only direct disciples and inner sect elders were entitled to permanent ownership over these spirit beasts.

There was a teleportation hall near the valley that the Beast Rearing Fields were situated in, and at this moment, there were many people entering and exiting the building, presenting a lively and bustling sight to behold.

Upon emerging from the teleportation hall, Han Li took a quick glance at his surroundings before making his way into the valley.

The first thing that he saw in the valley was a spacious plaza, on one side of which stood several tall buildings. Among them was a large palace, which bore a plaque that read "Beast Rearing Fields".

As soon as Han Li set foot in the valley, he was immediately greeted by a gray-robed young man. "Greetings, senior martial brother. Have you come to rent a spirit beast?"

The man had a round face and large ears, coupled with a pair of bright eyes, giving him a clever appearance.

Han Li flipped a hand over to show the young man his elder badge, and the latter hurriedly extended an apologetic salute.

"My apologies, Elder."

Han Li waved a dismissive hand as he said, "I've only recently joined the sect, and I've come here to select a mountain guardian beast for my cave abode."

"According to the rules of the sect, inner sect elders claiming a spirit beast for the first time can do so free of charge. However, I must first verify your identity. Please pardon my intrusion, Elder," the young man said as he extended an apologetic bow.

Han Li offered no verbal response as he handed his elder badge to the young man, who apologized once again before flipping a hand over to produce an azure jade tablet, which he pressed against Han Li's elder badge while quickly chanting an incantation.

A burst of azure light appeared over the surface of the jade tablet, forming a light barrier roughly the size of a washbasin.

"Thank you for your patience, Elder Li. Please come with me to select a spirit beast from the Beast Rearing Fields."

The young man handed Han Li's badge back to him in a respectful manner, then led the way to the fields.

"Given how massive this place is, it'll take an eternity to see all of the areas one by one. Is there any other way to examine the spirit beasts here?" Han Li asked.

"There is. Please come with me, Elder Li," the young man immediately replied, then led Han Li to a large palace.

At this moment, there were many people in the palace seeking to rent spirit beasts, so it was rather noisy. The young man led Han Li to a quiet room, then pulled out a pair of jade books.

"The Beast Rearing Fields are split up into the outer fields and the inner fields, the former of which houses over 16,300 types of spirit beasts, while the latter houses over 1,800 types. All of them are recorded in these two jade books," the young man explained.

Han Li accepted the jade books from the young man before injecting his spiritual sense into them.

Sure enough, there was a vast selection of spirit beasts available, all of which had their own unique traits, putting the marvels of nature on full display.

Han Li had originally planned to only take a short time selecting a spirit beast, but the more he saw, the more intrigued that he became, and only after browsing through almost the entire catalog of spirit beasts in the Beast Rearing Fields did he finally withdraw his spiritual sense from the pair of jade books.

The round-faced young man had remained patiently by Han Li's side this entire time, and he asked, "Have you picked out any candidates, Elder Li?"

"There are a few spirit beasts that I'm interested in. Let's go to the inner fields," Han Li replied with a nod as he returned the pair of jade books to the round-faced young man.

According to the catalog, the Beast Rearing Fields were home to only around 40 to 50 types of Body Integration Stage spirit beasts. This was no surprise, considering the more powerful a spirit beast was, the more difficult they were to tame.

For him, a Body Integration Stage spirit beast wasn't necessarily all that useful, so he had only come here to broaden his horizons, and because there was no reason to pass up something given to him for free.

There were most likely some areas of the Beast Rearing Fields that he couldn't access given his current status, and perhaps those areas could've even been home to Grand Ascension or True Immortal Stage demon beasts.

It didn't take long before Han Li and the young man appeared before a golden desert with a radius of close to 500 kilometers, and the entire desert was enshrouded under an enormous azure light barrier.

The young man summoned an azure jade badge, which he waved through the air to release a burst of azure light.

A short while later, a clear cry rang out as a tornado that was several thousand feet tall erupted straight into the heavens while quickly approaching Han Li's duo. Immediately thereafter, a giant golden-winged bird that was 700 to 800 feet in size emerged from the tornado, flapping its wings as it circled around in the air, sending fierce gusts of wind sweeping in all directions.

"This Golden-winged Azure Light Falcon is at the mid-Body Integration Stage, and it possesses a hint of the true spirit Golden-winged Great Falcon bloodline, granting it extremely impressive speed," the young man introduced.

Han Li nodded in response, then observed the bird for a moment longer before making his way to a nearby valley.

Inside this area was an enormous rhinoceros-like spirit beast, which had a body that was entirely as white and translucent as jade. It moved around in slow, lumbering steps, and with each step that it took, an extremely heavy thud would reverberate throughout the entire valley.

"This is a Moonview Jade Rhinoceros. It possesses mid-Body Integration Stage power and wields various earth-attribute abilities," the young man introduced.

After observing the rhinoceros for some time, Han Li made his way to a canyon, where another spirit beast was residing.

This was a griffin-like creature that was 200 to 300 feet in length and around 70 to 80 feet tall. Its entire lion-like body was covered in thick fur, yet its legs were tipped with sharp eagle-like talons.

What was most remarkable about the creature was that it had two heads, one of which was purple, while the other was red, and both of them were snarling in a menacing fashion.

"This Two-headed Griffin is only at the early-Body Integration Stage, yet it possesses powers of two different attributes, namely lightning and fire," the young man introduced.

Han Li nodded in response with a contemplative expression, then decided, "I'll take this one."

"Fantastic choice, Elder Li! This Two-headed Griffin isn't all that powerful right now, but it has the most potential out of all of the Body Integration Stage spirit beasts here," the young man said with a smile.

Han Li also smiled in response, offering no reply.

"This is the Two-headed Griffin's bonded badge. You won't need the badge to control this beast, but if you're going to give this to your servants, then it's best to be cautious. This spirit beast has already been tamed, but there's still a chance that it could become violent," the young man said as he flipped a hand over to produce a dark purple jade badge, which he handed to Han Li.

There was a layer of crimson light over the surface of the badge, upon which was the image of a miniature Two-headed Griffin, which was moving occasionally as if it were a living creature.

The Two-headed Griffin let loose a low roar as it stared intently at the dark purple badge.

Right at this moment, a voice suddenly rang out from the entrance of the canyon. "That griffin looks pretty good, Senior Martial Brother Ye."

Immediately thereafter, a group of seven to eight people descended into the area.

Aside from a square-faced outer sect disciple of the Beast Rearing Fields, everyone else in the group appeared to have been inner sect disciples.

They were led by a tall dark-skinned young man who appeared to be rather thin and frail, but had a sharp and piercing gleam in his eyes, and he was the only Grand Ascension cultivator of the group.

The person who had just spoken was a purple-haired man accompanying the dark-skinned young man, and there was a fawning look on his face.

The dark-skinned young man's eyes also lit up at the sight of the Two-headed Griffin, and he nodded as he remarked, "This beast possesses a lightning bloodline, so it suits me very well. I'll take it!"

#### Chapter 194: Re-emergence of the Aura

The square-faced cultivator of the Beast Rearing Fields was just about to say something when he spotted the jade badge in Han Li's hand out of the corner of his eye, and the smile on his face instantly stiffened slightly.

The square-faced man took a hesitant glance at Han Li, then said, "Senior Martial Brother Ye, it looks like this Two-headed Griffin has already been rented by this senior martial brother. Would you like to take a look at some other spirit beasts instead?"

The dark-skinned young man's brows furrowed slightly as he turned to Han Li with a hint of befuddlement in his eyes.

He discovered that even with his spiritual sense, Han Li's aura was completely undetectable to him.

The young man took a glance at the jade badge in Han Li's hand, then directed his gaze toward the purple-haired man beside him.

The latter immediately stepped forward, cupping his fist in a salute as he said, "I don't recall ever seeing you before, Fellow Daoist. May I ask which elder you're a disciple to?"

"Who I am doesn't really concern you. I chose this Two-headed Griffin first, so I suggest you go pick out another spirit beast," Han Li replied in an indifferent voice.

He then turned to the round-faced young man, paying no further heed to the purple-haired man as he said, "I still have other matters to attend to, so undo the restriction here and release the beast."

The round-faced young man took a hesitant glance at the dark-skinned young man and his entourage, but in the end, he still did as he was told, flipping a hand over to produce that azure jade tablet.

The dark-skinned young man's expression immediately darkened slightly upon seeing this, and the purple-haired man instantly flared up with rage.

"How insolent of you! Do you know who Senior Martial Brother Ye Feng is? How dare you speak to him like this? If you know what's good for you, then you'll hand over this Two-headed Griffin right away, and we'll give you twice the rent as compensation. Otherwise..."

"Otherwise what?"

Han Li's expression remained unchanged as he released his aura, instantly causing the purple-haired man to choke on the rest of his words.

He had concealed his own aura this entire time in order to avoid attracting attention. After all, a new True Immortal was bound to catch a lot of attention, but it seemed that aura concealment wasn't always the best policy to avoid trouble.

With that in mind, Han Li took a step forward, and a burst of terrifying spiritual pressure erupted out of his body, causing the surrounding space to tremble as ripples that were visible even to the naked eye surged through the air.

The derisive sneers on the faces of the group of Body Integration cultivators instantly turned to shock and horror, and they were forced back by the burst of tremendous spiritual pressure, unable to find steady footing even after stumbling back for over 100 feet.

Yellow light flashed from the purple-haired man's body as he summoned a yellow jade scepter, which conjured up a yellow light barrier around him, but even so, he was still forced to stumble back quite a distance before finally managing to steady himself.

The only one who was able to remain unmoved by Han Li's aura was the dark-skinned young man. At his moment, arcs of silver lightning were flashing all over his body, giving him the appearance of a deity of lightning, but despite this, his face had still paled slightly.

Han Li had intentionally controlled the burst of spiritual pressure so that it didn't affect anyone aside from the dark-skinned young man and his entourage. However, the Two-headed Griffin was extremely sensitive to auras, and a look of awe and veneration instantly appeared in its eyes as it descended out of the sky before laying itself flat against the ground while trembling in fear.

Right at this moment, a hint of barely detectable elation flashed through Han Li's eyes as he turned his gaze to the dark-skinned young man.

It was very faint, but the man was carrying a hint of Daoist Xie's aura.

Han Li took a deep breath, and his expression instantly returned to normal, while the burst of immense spiritual pressure also faded.

The group of Body Integration cultivators were finally able to steady themselves, but there was more than a hint of lingering fear in their eyes.

The purple-haired man was sweating profusely while kicking himself internally.



In the past, he had always been able to pick on others thanks to his affiliation to Ye Feng, but he had really picked out the wrong target this time.

The silver lightning around the dark-skinned young man's body faded, and he was standing in silence, seemingly at a slight loss for what to do.

He was quite a powerful cultivator in his own right, but he knew his own limits, and he was aware that there was no way he could contend against a True Immortal.

A tense silence instantly descended upon the entire area, but it was soon broken by Han Li, who turned to the round-faced young man as he asked, "Who is he? I've yet to encounter such an arrogant disciple."

"He is Ye Feng, a disciple of Elder Mo Xie of the Immortal Origin Palace. He's already reached the pinnacle of the Grand Ascension Stage, and I've heard that he's planning to attempt an ascension tribulation soon, making him an extremely prominent figure among inner sect disciples," the round-faced young man explained.

"I see, no wonder you're strutting around like you own this place. You want this Two-headed Griffin, right?" Han Li asked with a casual smile.

At this point, Ye Feng had already put on a smile, and he cupped his fist in a salute as he said, "Seeing as you chose it first, it naturally belongs to you, Elder Li. Please forgive me for the rudeness that I displayed earlier."

"You cultivate lightning-attribute abilities, while this Two-headed Griffin possesses quite a powerful lightning bloodline, so it's no wonder that you want it. Even though I'm an elder, I'm not one to pick on those below me. How about this? I'll stand here and take one of your attacks without using any treasures. If you can make me move even a single step from this spot, then I'll concede this Two-headed Griffin to you. What do you say?" Han Li proposed with a smile.

Ye Feng faltered slightly upon hearing this, unsure of why Han Li was suddenly extending this olive branch.

However, he quickly came to the realization that it had to have been because the round-faced young man had just informed Han Li that he was a disciple to Elder Mo Xie.

Elder Mo Xie was extremely renowned among the inner sect disciples, having already reached the late-True Immortal Stage and was overseeing the Immortal Origin Palace. The fact that Han Li was an attendant elder indicated that he was most likely an itinerant immortal who had only just joined the sect, so he had no backers to rely on, and it stood to reason that he didn't dare to cause any offense to Elder Mo Xie.

With that in mind, Ye Feng's confidence was instantly restored, and a warm smile appeared on his face as he cupped his fist in a salute toward Han Li.

"It would be rude of me to turn down such a kind offer, so please pardon me, Elder Li."

He had absolute confidence in his own offensive prowess, even in the face of a True Immortal.

Everyone else immediately backed away upon hearing this exchange, creating a large, open area for the two combatants.

Han Li swept a sleeve through the air to release several dozen streaks of yellow light, which landed in the surrounding area to form a massive semi-transparent yellow light barrier around himself and Ye Feng.

Immediately thereafter, Ye Feng let loose a long roar while making a hand seal, and thick bolts of silver lightning surfaced over his body amid a string of rumbling thunderclaps.

In the next instant, he opened his mouth, and a thumb-sized silver bead flew out of his mouth. Despite its small size, the bead was giving off astonishing spiritual power fluctuations and flashing with silver lightning as it hovered above his head.

He then raised his hands up into the air, and all of the silver lightning flashing over his body converged toward the bead, causing it to revolve rapidly as it conjured up a giant ball of silver lightning that was over 1,000 feet in size.

The ball of lightning resembled a dazzling silver sun and was giving off extremely formidable lightning pressure.

Even through the yellow light barrier, the purple-haired man and the others were still struck by the terrifying pressure emanating from the ball of lightning, causing them to retreat a few steps further with awestruck looks on their faces.

The Two-headed Griffin was separated from Han Li and Ye Feng by two light barriers, but even so, it had begun snarling with unease.

Han Li's expression remained unchanged, but his heart stirred slightly at the sight of the silver ball of lightning.

All of a sudden, countless arcs of silver lightning began flashing over his body as well, and they weren't as bright as the silver lightning released by Ye Feng, but they were extremely fast and agile, resembling countless spirit snakes that were springing in all directions.

Immediately thereafter, countless arcs of purple lightning that were giving off a wild and violent aura also appeared over Han Li's body.

The auras emanating from the silver and purple lightnings were completely different, clearly indicating that they were two different types of lightning, yet they were intertwining with one another in an extremely harmonious fashion. Not only were they not rejecting one another in the slightest, they were displaying signs of fusing into one.

Rings of silver and purple lightning proliferated in all directions from Han Li's body, presenting a formidable sight to behold.

Ye Feng's expression instantly changed slightly upon hearing this. He hadn't anticipated that Han Li would also be adept at wielding the power of lightning, and it seemed that Han Li's lightning manipulation was more masterful than his own.

His heart sank slightly as a dark look appeared on his face, and he let loose a loud roar as another layer of silver lightning appeared over his body before surging into the ball of lightning above his head, causing it to expand even further in size.

Immediately thereafter, Ye Feng swung his arms through the air in a hurling motion, sending the massive ball of silver lightning hurtling directly toward Han Li.

The giant ball of lightning reached Han Li in the blink of an eye, crashing down with devastating force like a meteorite, sending powerful shockwaves surging through the air.

Han Li's expression remained calm and collected as he made a grabbing motion with his left hand.

The silver and purple lightning around his body converged toward his arm, forming a huge lightning sword that was over 1,000 feet in length. Countless tiny silver and purple lightning runes then appeared over the surface of the blade, pulsing and flashing incessantly.

With a swing of his arm, the lightning sword was slashed through the air to clash against the ball of lightning amid an earth-shattering boom.

The two opposing bodies of lightning intertwined to send devastating shockwaves sweeping through the surrounding area, only to be contained by the yellow light barrier.

An impasse immediately ensued, and it seemed that the lightning sword and the ball of lightning were evenly matched.

Ye Feng shuddered in the face of the violent impact, and only after stumbling back a few steps was he able to steady himself.

Meanwhile, Han Li's right hand was still clasped behind his back, and he was looking as relaxed as ever.

Ye Feng's expression darkened even further upon seeing this, and he made a rapid series of hand seals before opening his mouth to release a burst of liquid-like silver light that vanished into the ball of lightning in a flash.

The giant ball of lightning churned violently as it glowed with scintillating radiance, and around a dozen enormous silver lightning runes flew out from within.

Every single one of those lightning runes was roughly the size of a millstone, and they were giving off faint law fluctuations as they hurtled directly toward the giant lightning sword.

With each rune that struck the lightning sword, the latter would shudder violently, and the light radiating from its surface would dim a little.

After being struck by the dozen or so lightning runes in succession, the massive lightning sword had dimmed significantly, but Han Li paid no heed to this. Instead, he was staring at the silver ball of lightning in an absentminded manner.

#### Chapter 195: Discovery of the Fire Vein

Ye Feng gritted his teeth upon seeing this, and he continued to make a rapid string of hand seals before releasing two more mouthfuls of silver light that surged into the ball of lightning.

Arcs of lightning were surging over the surface of the ball of lightning as it expanded even further in size while radiating dazzling silver light, gradually beginning to overwhelm the giant lightning sword.

Thick bolts of silver lightning were shooting out of the ball lightning like a series of massive devilish claws, itching to tear Han Li into pieces.

Right at this moment, Han Li's eyes suddenly lit up, and it seemed that he had only just returned to his senses.

The fingers of his left hand moved in succession, and the giant lightning sword instantly began to radiate dazzling silver and purple lightning while giving off a burst of violent rumbling.

In the blink of an eye, the lightning sword swelled to around twice its original size, and not only was it able to keep the giant ball of lightning at bay, it was able to instantly gain the upper hand.

Ye Feng's expression changed drastically upon seeing this, yet before he had a chance to do anything, the huge lightning sword lit up once again, and the lightning runes on its surface swelled drastically in size.

As a result, the semi-transparent lightning sword instantly took on a far more substantial appearance, and it began to release an incredibly sharp aura as it came crashing down with devastating might.

The silver ball of lightning was sliced into two by the lightning sword with ease, revealing the silver bead inside, which was giving off dazzling radiance.

The lightning sword struck the bead with unerring accuracy, scattering the lightning around it, and the bead was instantly sent flying back, while the spiritual light radiating from its surface dimmed significantly, having clearly had its spiritual nature damaged by the blow.

Ye Feng immediately threw up a small mouthful of blood, while the giant ball of lightning exploded into countless arcs of silver lightning that erupted in all directions, forming a sea of silver lightning that was several hundred feet in radius.

What everyone failed to notice was a wisp of near-transparent silver light rising discreetly up from the ground before vanishing into Ye Feng's body.

The lightning sword didn't pause for even a single moment as it continued to come crashing down toward Ye Feng's head, and an alarmed and horrified look appeared on his face as he tried to resist, but the entire surrounding space had been completely enshrouded under the terrifying pressure released by the giant sword, rendering him immobilized.

However, the lightning sword drew to an abrupt halt around a foot above his head, and it continued to flash with lightning.

Ye Feng was staring intently at the lightning sword as he gulped nervously, not daring to move even a single muscle.

In the next instant, the giant lightning sword disintegrated into countless arcs of silver and purple lightning that flowed back into Han Li's body.

"Looks like you still have a way to go," Han Li remarked in an indifferent voice, then made a hand seal to dispel the surrounding yellow light barrier.

"Your powers are truly astounding, Elder Li. I concede my inferiority," Ye Feng said with a dark expression, then drew the silver bead back to himself before promptly departing.

The purple-haired man and the others hurriedly followed along, and the square-faced cultivator from the Beast Rearing Fields also took his leave.

Meanwhile, Han Li was watching their departing figures with a contemplative look in his eyes.

At this point, the round-faced young man had already opened the restriction around the Two-headed Griffin's enclosure, and the creature made its way over to Han Li before crouching down in an extremely tame and timid manner.

Han Li patted the beast's neck as a faint smile appeared on his face, then released a burst of azure light with a sweep of his sleeve to envelop the giant beast's entire body.

The huge Two-headed Griffin rapidly shrank into a ball of spiritual light, then vanished into a spirit beast pouch hanging from his waist in a flash.

"Please pardon me for offering unsolicited advice, Elder Li, but Ye Feng's master, Elder Mo Xie, is a True Immortal who has attained the power of laws, and it's said that he's even run for the position of deputy dao lord in the past, so do be careful," the round-faced young man cautioned in a quiet voice.

Han Li was silent for a moment, then asked, "What else do you know about this Ye Feng?"

"I only recently joined the Blaze Dragon Dao, so I don't know too much about Senior Martial Brother Ye Feng. However, I've heard that he previously had very ordinary aptitude and was only a normal inner sect disciple who wasn't remarkable in any way. However, in the past three years, he had somehow

managed to attain a set of extremely powerful lightning-attribute abilities, and his cultivation base had progressed rapidly as a result.

"Only then did he catch the eye of Elder Mo Xie, and he's currently one of the prominent figures among all of the inner sect disciples. His rise has been quite meteoric, so its story is known to almost everyone in the Blaze Dragon Dao," the round-faced young man replied.

"I see," Han Li replied with a nod, and it was unclear what he was thinking.

The round-faced young man stood off to the side in silence, not daring to interrupt him.

It didn't take long before Han Li returned to his senses, then summoned a white jade vial that he tossed at the round-faced young man as he said, "You've accompanied me for an entire day, so you can have these pills as thanks for your efforts."

The round-faced young man hurriedly caught the jade vial, then removed the stopper, upon which an ecstatic look immediately surfaced in his eyes.

"Thank you, Elder Li!"

Meanwhile, Han Li had already flown away into the distance as a streak of azure light.

.....

Half a day later.

A streak of azure light shot forth from the distance, landing on the summit of the Crimson Dawn Peak before fading to reveal Han Li.

The mountain summit was quite spacious, with a courtyard that was close to 10 acres in area situated directly next to the mountain face. Inside the courtyard were all types of antiquated-looking buildings



and bridges that were enshrouded in cloud and mist, giving the entire place the appearance of an immortal abode.

On the mountain face directly neighboring the courtyard was a pair of tightly shut stone doors, which appeared to have been used for seclusion purposes.

To the left of the courtyard was a completely empty spirit medicine field. It seemed that following the demise of the elder who had previously lived here, the spirit medicines growing in the field had been harvested by the sect, while the field had been left completely untended to since then.

At this moment, Meng Yungui and the others were in the process of cleaning up the courtyard and the spirit medicine field, and they hurriedly stopped what they were doing at the sight of Han Li's return before gathering around him.

"Elder Li!"

Han Li gave them a slight nod, then handed the dark purple jade badge and the spirit beast pouch on his waist to Meng Yungui. He then instructed them to create a cave halfway up the mountain for the Two-headed Griffin to reside in before departing on his own to take a stroll over the Crimson Dawn Peak.

This was where he was going to live from now on, so he naturally had to make a thorough inspection of the place.

It didn't take long before Han Li arrived at the foot of the Crimson Dawn Peak, and the closer he got to the ground, the denser the surrounding fire miasma became, and the higher the air temperature.

Now that he had reached the ground, he could feel a scorching aura surging up at him from beneath the earth, releasing waves of sweltering heat.

A hint of elation and intrigue appeared in his eyes upon seeing this.

While inspecting the Inkspirit Scenic Scroll, he identified from the terrain of the mountain and the state of the Crimson Dawn Peak that there seemed to have been a strong fire vein here, and that was why he had chosen this particular mountain.

As it turned out, he was correct, and judging from what he could see at this moment, the fire vein here was even more powerful than he had anticipated.

All of a sudden, a hint of surprise appeared in his eyes as he turned to the left, then began to fly in that direction, arriving in front of the waterfall after just a few seconds.

The waterfall resembled a massive sheet of silver fabric that was tumbling down from the heavens amid a loud rumbling sound, sending a watery mist erupting in all directions upon crashing into the pond down below.

A solemn look appeared on Han Li's face as he cast his gaze forward, and he raised a finger to release a bolt of silver lightning as thick as an adult human arm, which hurtled directly toward the waterfall.

As soon as the bolt of silver lightning struck the waterfall, it instantly vanished without a trace.

A vindicated smile appeared on Han Li's face upon seeing this.

This waterfall had been conjured up by an illusory restriction that had the ability to conceal itself from spiritual sense detection.

Prior to this, he had inspected the entire Crimson Dawn Peak with his spiritual sense, but still failed to notice this place. However, the restriction was a little damaged, so the concealment effect had been compromised, and Han Li just so happened to have been nearby. Otherwise, he most likely still wouldn't have been able to discover the secret here.

Blue light flashed within Han Li's eyes as he peered into the waterfall, and a contemplative look appeared on his face.

Moments later, azure light flashed over his body as he flew straight into the waterfall, vanishing in a flash just like that bolt of silver lightning from before.

The space near the waterfall immediately began to ripple, and a string of rumbling booms rang out from within as bursts of light of different colors erupted out of the rippling space before flying away in all directions.

The surrounding space was beginning to ripple more and more violently, while the lights shooting out from within were also becoming brighter and brighter.

Close to an hour later, a resounding boom rang out as the waterfall abruptly shuddered before shattering like a mirror.

Han Li reappeared in mid-air, and his face was slightly pale, clearly indicating that breaking this restriction had not been an easy task, even for him.

After taking a pill, he cast his gaze toward the spot where the waterfall used to be, and he was greeted by the sight of a small valley, in which the ground and the rocks were all of a crimson color.

There was a scorching aura emanating out of the valley, and boundless crimson fire miasma was surging out from within. It seemed that this was the source of the fire miasma that enveloped the entirety of the Crimson Dawn Peak.

Han Li flew into the valley, arriving directly at its deepest part.

The temperature here was even higher, and the surrounding air was warping and shimmering from the scorching heat.

In the deepest part of the valley was a huge fiery red cave that was 70 to 80 feet tall. The walls of the cave were of a reddish-black color, and there were waves of scorching heat surging out from within alongside fire miasma that resembled dense smoke.

Bursts of dull rumbling could also be heard ringing out inside the cave, and Han Li's eyes immediately lit up upon seeing this as he flew straight into the cave.

Inside the cave was a long passageway that extended underground, and gusts of scorching wind were blowing out from within. There were also cracks on the wall, seeping out of which was dense red fire miasma that drifted out of the cave with the wind.

The entire passageway was filled with incredibly sweltering heat, and the average cultivator would've instantly been incinerated into ashes here, but this amount of heat posed no threat to Han Li, and he continued onward.

At the same time, he raised an arm to release a ball of silver flames, which transformed into his Essence Fire Raven.

As soon as the fire raven appeared, it immediately cast its gaze deeper into the cave with excitement in its eyes, then spread its wings and flew on ahead.

A faint smile appeared on Han Li's face as he followed along behind the fire raven in an unhurried manner.

The main reason why he had chosen the Crimson Dawn Peak as the site for his cave abode was for the sake of his Essence Fire Raven.

The fire raven was currently nowhere near the peak of its powers, and it hadn't had a chance to recuperate. During his travels, Han Li wasn't able to aid it in its recovery, and now that he had a relatively stable place to stay, he naturally had to consider ways to help the fire raven recover.

Mo Guang had previously mentioned that Flames of Essence were extremely renowned even in the Immortal Realm, so he was confident that the fire raven would be of great help to him once it made a full recovery.

As soon as he arrived in the Bell Toll Mountain Range, he had already detected that there were several rich underground fire veins here.

The Crimson Dawn Peak was very secluded in location, so the fire vein here was most likely only a branch of the enormous fire veins in the Bell Toll Mountain Range, but as long as he was willing to invest sufficient time, the Essence Fire Raven should've been able to eventually make a full recovery.

## Chapter 196: Setup

As Han Li continued to descend deeper and deeper underground, the air temperature was also rapidly rising, while the passageway was becoming wider and wider. At this stage, its highest point was already over 100 feet tall.

Han Li continued to follow along behind the fire raven while inspecting the walls of the cave on either side of him.

The cave walls were quite even and smooth, and there were many signs of sections having previously been repaired.

Was the previous elder inhabiting this mountain carrying out these repairs? Han Li speculated.

Given how abundant the fire-attribute energy here was, it was most likely the case that the previous elder was using fire-attribute cultivation arts, and by that logic, it was very likely that he was the one who had set up the illusory restriction outside.

After flying for another 15 minutes, the dull rumbling was becoming louder and louder, as if countless thunderclaps were ringing out in succession.

For some reason, the Essence Fire Raven suddenly sped up by about twofold here, and Han Li naturally picked up the pace as well.

Shortly thereafter, a massive fiery red world appeared before his eyes. It was an enormous underground cavern that was tens of thousands of feet in size.

The roof of the cavern was riddled with crimson stalactites that were burning incessantly with a layer of flames.

Down below was a huge lake of magma, hovering above which was a fiery crimson cloud.

The magma in the lake was churning incessantly, and a series of massive air bubbles would appear occasionally before popping amid a sound that resembled a rumbling thunderclap.

Numerous fist-sized balls of red light would then emerge from the bubbles before spreading through the surrounding area.

That's fire essence!

Han Li's eyes immediately lit up upon seeing this.

The entire underground space was filled with this fiery crimson light, and even the very air seemed to have been set alight. The temperature here was incredibly hot, to the point that even Han Li was feeling quite parched in the mouth despite his Profound Immortal physique.

The gusts of scorching wind blowing from the surface of the lake were causing a stinging sensation against Han Li's skin, yet the Essence Fire Raven was ecstatic in this incredibly hostile environment.

The fire raven spread its wings as it flew around the entire space as a silver shadow, eagerly gulping down the balls of fire essence in the process. It would even occasionally dive straight into the lake of magma down below, vanishing in a flash only to re-emerge from another part of the lake an instant later in an elated manner.

The underground fire vein here was far more abundant than Han Li had anticipated, and it was no wonder that the previous elder had set up that restriction to conceal it.

He was confident that the Essence Fire Raven would be able to quickly recover to the former peak of its powers here, but there was still something missing.

With that in mind, Han Li swept a sleeve through the air to release several hundred bursts of red light, each of which contained a fiery red array flag, and they landed in the air above the lake of magma to form a huge array.

He then began to chant an incantation while releasing a series of incantation seals, and the entire array was activated. Each array flag released numerous bursts of red light, which came together form a massive red array.

The Essence Fire Raven instantly realized what Han Li's intentions were, and it immediately stopped playing as it flew onto the center of the array.

In the next instant, all of the power of fire in the entire underground space was drawn toward the array, forming layer upon layer around the Essence Fire Raven, and before long, a huge fiery red cocoon had taken shape.

Han Li rose up into the air, reaching a certain part of the underground cavern's wall in a flash, then flipped a hand over to produce a giant red brush, using which he quickly inscribed countless massive runes onto the wall, forming a flame-shaped design.

Immediately thereafter, he appeared in front of another section of the cavern wall in a flash and did the same thing.

A short while later, eight flame designs had been inscribed onto the cavern wall by Han Li, surrounding the massive cocoon from all directions.

Only then did Han Li stow the giant brush away before beginning to chant an incantation.

The eight flame designs engraved onto the wall began to glow in unison, quickly connecting together to form another massive array that enveloped the giant cocoon.

The two arrays were resonating with one another, and the underground space shuddered slightly as even more power of fire converged from all directions before surging into the fiery cocoon.

At this moment, Han Li could clearly sense the power of the Essence Fire Raven being slowly elevated every single second, and a pleased look appeared in his eyes.

He made a lap around the cavern to ensure that the two arrays were operating with no problems, and only after that did he return the same way that he had come to emerge on the outside again.

After taking a brief glance at his surroundings, he swept a sleeve through the air to release numerous bursts of light that descended into the nearby valley, quickly forming a massive array that encompassed the entire valley again.

Now that the Essence Fire Raven had a place to cultivate, Han Li was in a great mood, and instead of immediately flying back to the summit of the Crimson Dawn Peak, he decided to explore the region around it.

The entire area in a radius of 300,000 feet around the Crimson Dawn Peak was going to be his territory from this day forth, so he naturally had to take a good look around and make some preparations.

It took Han Li close to half a day to explore the entirety of his territory, and he set up some sensory arrays at various points to alert him if anyone tried to sneak onto his land.

As the core of the entire territory, the Crimson Dawn Peak was the place where all of the spirit veins in the area converged, and the world's origin here was more abundant than anywhere else.

However, aside from this mountain, Han Li had also discovered two small spirit areas that were of a decent size for Northern Glacial Immortal Region standards, as well as around a dozen good ore veins.

The ore veins had already been mostly exhausted of ore, while the two spirit areas had been split up into blocks of spirit farmland, but they had clearly been completely abandoned and neglected for a very long time.

Another True Immortal elder in Han Li's shoes would've most likely sent some servants to tend to these ore veins and plots of spirit farmland as a form of long-term spirit stone revenue stream, but Han Li had no interest in doing this.



At the very least, he had no plans of doing this for the moment, and he quickly returned to the summit of the Crimson Dawn Peak.

At this moment, Meng Yungui and the others were all gathered at the entrance of the courtyard, and they extended deep bows toward him in unison.

The entire mountain summit had already been cleaned up, and it was looking pristine and spotless everywhere.

The pavilions and bridges had also been given a new lease on life, and schools of golden fish could be seen swimming through the creeks between the bridges, darting playfully between the vibrant green lotus leaves.

Han Li gave a pleased nod upon seeing this, then assigned the rooms around the cave abode to Yun Mengui and the others before dismissing them to go and rest.

After that, Han Li examined the cave abode, setting up some restrictions before arriving at the spirit medicine field.

This spirit medicine field was situated on the outside, so he naturally wasn't going to be planting any important spirit medicines here. Having said that, leaving it vacant would've aroused suspicions as well.

Hence, after some contemplation, Han Li split the field up into several sections, then planted some ordinary spirit medicine seeds onto it.

He had already done this countless times, so he had become extremely proficient, and it didn't take very long at all before a brand new medicine field took shape.

After that, he flipped a hand over to produce a jade flagon, and an azure spirit liquid flowed out of the flagon at his behest before raining down onto the medicine field.

He then swept a sleeve through the air to release a burst of azure light that enveloped the entire spirit medicine field, and tiny green seedlings quickly sprouted out of the soil.

A faint smile appeared on his face upon seeing this, and he turned before making his way through the courtyard and into the cave abode.

From the outside, the cave abode appeared to have been completely unremarkable, but the inside was a different story. Within the cave abode were around a dozen rooms, including the likes of a pill refinement chamber and tool refinement chamber, thereby saving Han Li a lot of work.

In contrast with the courtyard up front, Han Li naturally preferred the environment in here, and the same had most likely applied to the previous owner of the cave abode as well.

After a brief moment of contemplation, he began to make some personal touches, modifying the most obscure stone chamber in the cave abode into a small medicine garden. He then dug out another stone chamber near the mountain face on the outside, then punched countless tiny holes into the wall so that starlight and moonlight could filter into the room to be absorbed by the Heaven Controlling Vial.

Only after all of these preparations were complete did Han Li emerge from the cave abode once again with the plan to set up a few more restrictions.

However, right as he was about to do this, his expression suddenly stiffened as he directed his gaze toward the spirit medicine field beside the courtyard.

For some reason, most of the seedlings that had just sprouted from the soil had already wilted, and there were only a few that were still alive.

A perplexed look appeared on Han Li's face as he hurried over to the field before pulling out one of the wilted seedlings.

The root of the seedling had completely wilted and turned black in color, as if it had been burned.

He pulled out a few more seedlings to find the exact same thing. However, there were also several types of seedlings that were growing very well and showed no signs of wilting at all.

He immediately released his spiritual sense, and it didn't take long before he discovered the potential cause behind this phenomenon.

Due to the fact that the underground fire veins had remained unchecked for many years, the abundant fire-attribute spiritual power that they contained had gradually seeped up into the earth. As a result, all of the soil on and around the Crimson Dawn Peak had been imbued with a great deal of fire-attribute spiritual power.

This type of environment was perfect for fire-attribute spirit plants, but made it impossible for spirit plants of any other attributes to survive.

Han Li turned his attention to the seedlings that were still standing, and sure enough, they were all of the fire attribute.

His brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this, clearly not anticipating this problem.

It was no wonder no one else had claimed the Crimson Dawn Peak and why both Yu Xiansheng and Qi Liang had displayed rather peculiar reactions when he decided to choose this place.

However, this wasn't too much of a problem for Han Li.

It seemed that this was quite a troublesome situation, but it wasn't one that was completely untenable. All he had to do was set up some separation arrays to prevent the soil from being further affected by the underground spirit veins.

That would negatively impact the spirit herbs' absorption of spiritual qi from the underground veins, but that wasn't much of a concern to him, seeing as he was relying almost solely upon his Heaven Controlling Vial to mature his spirit plants.

As for the spirit medicine field beside the courtyard, that was only going to be used as a red herring anyway, so all he had to do was plant some fire-attribute spirit plants there.

With that in mind, he didn't consider this matter any further and returned to work.

## Chapter 197: Mantra Axis Scripture

Inside a dimly lit hall, there were countless dark azure chains littered all over the ground, giving off a dark azure gleam under the light of the eerie green flames.

Seated on a black chair at the center of the hall, the zombie-like man was leaned forward slightly, and his face just happened to have been obscured by the shadows cast by the green flames, making it impossible to see his expression.

Right at this moment, the thick and heavy stone doors of the hall began to open inward from the outside amid a burst of dull rumbling, and the thunderous sound of churning sand flooded into the hall.

Standing at the entrance of the hall was a tall and imposing figure that was close to 10 feet in height.

The man had a square face with yellow skin, and there was an antiquated copper headguard on his head. He was wearing a dark yellow robe that resembled a cloak, and it was covered in yellow sand that seemed to have come straight from the sandstorm that was raging outside.

As the man made his way into the hall, the heavy stone doors swung shut again, shutting out all of the commotion that was raging outside.

The man strode into the hall with heavy footsteps, causing all of the dark azure chains on the ground to clatter and rustle incessantly.

He arrived before the black chair, then fell to one knee as he declared in a respectful voice, "Master, I've visited the place where Fang Pan met his demise."

"Did you find anything there?" the zombie-like man asked in a raspy voice as he leaned back slightly in his chair.

"I'm afraid not. His killer made sure to clean up the site very thoroughly," the man replied with a dark expression.

"Fang Pan's death most likely has to do with a powerful enemy that he was pursuing 300 years ago. I'll leave it to you to investigate this matter," the zombie-like man said.

"Yes, Master."

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That night.

The courtyard on the summit of the Crimson Dawn Peak was brightly lit, and thanks to the efforts of Meng Yungui and the others, the entire place was inhabitable again.

At this moment, Han Li was in a secret chamber deep in the cave abode. He had already put on his Blaze Dragon Dao inner sect elder robe and was seated on a futon with his legs crossed.

Next to him was a palm-sized round metal plate, which contained the first level of the Formless True Axis Arts.

After some time, Han Li's eyes abruptly sprang open, and he made a grabbing motion to draw the spirit note badge into his grasp before pressing it against his own glabella.

The round metal badge flashed momentarily, and a passage of dense golden text instantly appeared in his mind.

The passage of golden text was split up into roughly two parts, the first of which was an introduction of sorts, while the second part was the actual first level of the Formless True Axis Scripture.

According to the introduction, the Formless True Axis Scripture was split up into a total of three levels, and full mastery of the cultivation art could allow one to attain an ability called the Mantra Treasured Axis.

When facing enemies in battle, this ability would allow one to slow down all attacks that came near the Mantra Treasured Axis, thereby robbing opponents of any speed advantage.

The nature of the ability didn't change from level one to level three of the cultivation art. Instead, it would still grant one the same ability, but to an increasing extent of potency.

Apparently, mastery of the first level of the cultivation art could allow one to unleash a Mantra Treasured Axis that roughly halved the opponent's speed. Mastery of the second level would allow one to reduce an opponent's speed by 90%, and as for mastery of the third level, the effect wasn't outlined, but it presumably would've made the ability even more astonishingly potent.

This was already an extremely stunning revelation to Han Li.

Even just slowing down an opponent's attacks by half was already an incredibly potent ability in battle, let alone slowing down enemy attacks by 90%. If he had already mastered his ability during his battle against Fang Pan, then he wouldn't have struggled anywhere near as much as he did.

He suppressed his excitement as he turned his attention to the second part of the passage, but his brows were soon tightly furrowed with befuddlement.

Having already mastered the golden seal text long ago, he was able to read the passage of text just fine, but when strung together, the words were completely incomprehensible to him.

For some reason, the usage of phrases and method of language formulation employed in the text was massively different from that of those pages of the Golden Jade Tome that Han Li had obtained, thereby making it extremely difficult to understand. [1]

Even after poring over the passage of text for a long time, he had still only read less than 1% of its content, and even then, the meaning of that tiny piece of text was still not entirely clear to him.

He was feeling rather disheartened, but he wasn't willing to give up as he carefully recalled what he had seen in the Golden Jade Tome while comparing it to this passage of text as he continued to read arduously.

The next morning, Han Li removed the spirit note badge from his glabella, feeling utterly mentally drained. He massaged his own glabella as a slightly frustrated look appeared on his face.

The cultivation art was far more profound than he had anticipated, and even after an entire night, he was still yet to even understand all of its content. He felt as if he had grasped onto something, but at the same time, he felt as if he understood nothing.

He shook his head as he flipped a hand over to stow the spirit note badge away, and he was just about to get up when a thought suddenly occurred to him.

As he was leaving the Merit Conveyance Palace the previous day, Elder Fang had told him that he could visit the palace anytime he needed something.

At the time, he felt like Elder Fang had been implying something, and it seemed that his intuition had been correct.

A wry smile appeared on Han Li's face as he stood up and exited his secret chamber, then flew out of his cave abode as a streak of azure light.

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The light of the rising sun was shining down upon the Imperial Dragon Peak, basking the entire mountain and the Merit Conveyance Palace in a warm, golden glow.

Han Li descended out of the heavens onto the white jade plaza in front of the Merit Conveyance Palace in his elder robes, and his entire body was giving off a golden sheen under the radiance of the sun, giving him an ethereal appearance.

After landing on the plaza, he immediately made his way into the palace without pause.

Just like the day before, the palace was quite empty, and Fang Zhuan was still seated behind the table, poring over the same ancient azure-covered text.

The only slight difference was that there was a purple clay teacup, which was filled with green tea that was releasing a faint aroma across the entire palace.

Upon spotting Han Li making his way into the palace, Fang Zhuan set down the book in his hand, then took a small sip of tea as he smiled and said, "Welcome back, Elder Li."

"I presume you already know why I'm back, right, Elder Fang?" Han Li asked as he cupped his fist in a salute toward Fang Zhuan.

"To tell you the truth, everyone who's previously exchanged for the Formless True Axis Scripture has come back to the Merit Conveyance Palace within seven days. You're among one of the fastest to come back," Fang Zhuan replied in a casual voice.

"Why is that?" Han Li asked.

"The content of the Formless True Axis Scripture is extremely difficult to understand. Without the accompanying annotation scripture, it's virtually impossible to even comprehend the scripture, let alone cultivate it. All of the people I mentioned have either come back to switch to other cultivation arts, or have returned for the annotation scripture," Fang Zhuan explained.

Han Li was a little speechless upon hearing this. "Why didn't you inform me of this yesterday, Elder Fang?"

"In the past, I informed everyone of this, but my words mostly fell upon deaf ears, and a lot of people regarded me as just a Grand Ascension cultivator who was speaking out of turn, so I eventually stopped. Once they discover the problem on their own, they'll naturally come back to me, and I'll no longer have to convince them of the validity of my claims," Fang Zhuan explained with a smile.

A wry smile appeared on Han Li's face upon hearing this, and he replied, "I suppose that does make sense. How many merit points are required to exchange for this annotation scripture, and is it actually useful?"



"It costs exactly 10 merit points. The annotation scripture is a collection of all of the insights derived by those who have attempted to cultivate the scripture in the past, so the content varies in quality and consistency. As for exactly how useful it is, that's not known to me," Fang Zhuan replied.

"Alright, I'll take it," Han Li said as he handed his elder badge over to Fang Zhuan.

After securing the copy of the annotation scripture, Han Li chatted with Fang Zhuan for a while longer before returning to the Crimson Dawn Peak.

Upon his return, he wasted no time, entering his secret chamber right away.

He studied the annotation scripture for half a day, and only after seeing the annotations made by many past cultivators of the Formless True Axis Scripture did he finally develop an understanding of what the cultivation art was about.

As it turned out, the original name of the Formless True Axis Scripture was the Mantra Axis Scripture, and the content of the original cultivation art was even more difficult to understand. The barrier to entry was extremely high, and just the hurdle of manifesting the Mantra Treasured Axis was enough to keep out 90% of cultivators.

Among the remaining 10%, even those who were fortunate enough to manifest Mantra Treasured Axes were only able to cultivate this scripture to the second level at the very most, but at that level, it was impossible to master the laws of time through the cultivation art. At the very least, no one from the Blaze Dragon Dao was known to have cultivated the scripture to the third level.

Among the many cultivators who had previously encountered bottlenecks in the cultivation art, some had inadvertently discovered a shortcut that allowed one to avoid the hurdle of having to manifest a Mantra Treasured Axis.

Those people used materials that contained the power of laws to craft a Mantra Treasured Axis, then engraved some special runes that they had derived onto the treasure, thereby allowing them to unleash all types of unforeseen abilities through it.

Due to the vast contrast between this method and the conventional cultivation method, the Mantra Treasured Axes refined had almost no effect when it came to slowing down attacks. However, it was able to unleash other abilities depending on the different law powers contained in the materials used to refine the axis.

For example, if the materials used contained the power of metal laws, then the sharpness of the axis would be significantly enhanced. If the materials used contained the power of speed laws, then the speed of the attacks unleashed by the axis would be greatly elevated.

Following the discovery of this "shortcut", virtually everyone chose to employ this method over the original cultivation method, and it was exactly because of this that the cultivation art's name was altered from Mantra Axis Scripture to Formless True Axis Scripture, denoting the fact that it had no set form and could be molded as the cultivator saw fit.

Han Li fell into deep thought upon hearing this, and only after a long while did he continue to slowly read through the text while consulting the annotations.

## Chapter 198: Extraordinary Luck

Several days passed by in a flash.

There was a secluded snow-covered valley in the eastern part of the Blaze Dragon Dao, and it had always been very rarely frequented due to its close proximity to the Snowmelt Forest.

There were many cedar trees that were over 1,000 feet tall growing in the valley, and whenever there was any snowfall, the trees would be completely covered in snow, giving them the appearance of pristine white snowy pagodas from afar.

At this moment, there were thunderclaps ringing out incessantly within the valley, interspersed by the sound of snapping tree trunks and branches.

Due to the soundwaves, the snow that had been accumulating on the slopes on either side of the valley began tumbling down into the center of the valley, eventually culminating in a violent avalanche.

Due to the sheer volume of accumulated snow, the avalanche only gradually subsided after it had spilled all the way out of the valley, and there were still countless particles of fine, powdery snow drifting through the air.

Right at this moment, a streak of azure light flew down from the heavens, landing at the edge of the valley before fading to reveal Han Li in his inner sect elder robes.

Yet another rumbling thunderclap rang out, and Han Li cast his gaze deep into the snowy valley to find a massive pillar of silver lightning erupting into the sky.

"Looks like I've come to the right place," he murmured to himself, then flipped a hand over to produce a High Zenith Invisibility Talisman.

A burst of purple light appeared around him, and his body gradually became more and more indistinct until it disappeared altogether.

Inside the snowy valley, the avalanche had snapped countless cedar trees, and there were broken trunks and branches littered throughout the snow.

On an elevated stone cliff in the deepest part of the snowy valley was a thin dark-skinned young man. He was looking directly up ahead with a bright gleam in his eyes, and it was none other than Ye Feng, who had engaged in an altercation with Han Li just a few days ago at the Beast Rearing Fields.

At this moment, countless arcs of silver lightning were surging incessantly over his body, and it was clear that he was in the process of cultivating a very powerful lightning secret technique.

Everything in a radius of several thousand feet around him, regardless of whether it be the cedar trees or the exposed stone ground, were all charred black with plumes of white smoke rising up into the air.

Ye Feng couldn't help but burst into elated laughter as he could feel that his lightning powers had become even more formidable.

However, his laughter had only just begun to ring out when he was suddenly completely rooted to the spot, and all of the lightning surging over his body also vanished in a flash.

Immediately thereafter, a burst of space fluctuations emerged ahead of him, and Han Li appeared out of thin air before bringing his index and middle fingers together and pressing them against Ye Feng's glabella.

At the same time, mesmerizing blue light was glowing within Han Li's eyes, and he was using a soul search technique on Ye Feng

Back at the Beast Rearing Fields, he had already planted a soul mark on Ye Feng.

However, he had been busy studying the Formless True Axis Scripture these past few days, while Ye Feng had also remained in his cave abode the entire time. Only on this occasion, where Ye Feng was testing out his lightning powers, did Han Li finally get the opportunity to swoop in.

As the soul search progressed, Han Li's expression was displaying slight changes. Initially, his expression was quite wary, but that was soon followed by a look of a surprise, then transitioned into a wry smile.

Moments later, the blue light in his eyes gradually faded, and he removed his fingertips from Ye Feng's glabella as he remarked, "You've really had some extraordinary luck. Seeing as you played no part in what happened to me 300 years ago, I'll let you be, but it's about time that you returned what's rightfully mine."

He reached out and removed the storage bracelet from Ye Feng's wrist as he spoke, then inspected it momentarily before stowing it away.

After that, he rose up once again as a streak of azure light and vanished into the distance in a flash.

Following Han Li's departure, Ye Feng slowly returned to his senses, and he was finally able to close his mouth. His cheeks were a little sore from having his mouth agape for so long, and there was a disoriented look in his eyes, clearly indicating that he had no recollection of what had just happened.

However, a panicked look then appeared on his face as he noticed his own bare wrist, and he hurriedly scrambled to his feet, frantically rummaging all over his own body before releasing his spiritual sense to scour his surroundings.

A short while later, a heart-wrenching cry of despair rang out within the valley.

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Meanwhile, Han Li returned to his cave abode without pause, then made his way straight into the secret chamber. On the way, Meng Qianqian extended a joyful curtsy to him, but he completely failed to notice, leaving the girl feeling dejected for quite some time.

After taking a seat at the center of the secret chamber, he immediately pulled out the storage bracelet, then refined it briefly before producing an egg-sized golden ball from inside.

At first glance, the golden ball didn't appear to have been remarkable in any way, but through his Brightsight Spirit Eyes, Han Li was able to see that the ball was riddled with extremely faint yet intricate patterns, which were interconnected to form a series of mysterious images.

Furthermore, the ball was giving off an extremely familiar aura.

He held the golden ball on the palm of his hand as blue light flashed within his eyes, and a spiritual sense thread emerged from his glabella before slowly entering the ball.

The golden ball shuddered slightly before all of the patterns on its surface lit up in unison, filling the entire secret chamber with dazzling golden radiance.

Immediately thereafter, several deep crevices split open on the ball as if it were a mechanical, modular unit, and a series of thin metal limbs emerged from those crevices as it transformed into a palm-sized golden crab.

"Fellow Daoist Xie," Han Li hurriedly called out at the sight of the golden crab, yet he received no response.

However, moments later, a familiar voice rang out within his consciousness.

"Fellow Daoist Han... You've finally found me..."

Even through spiritual sense communication, Daoist Xie's voice was still extremely feeble, sounding as if it could falter into silence at any moment.

An indescribable feeling welled up in Han Li's heart upon hearing this.

Han Li suppressed his emotions as he asked, "Do you recall what happened 300 years ago, Fellow Daoist Xie? How have you become like this?"

"Has it already been... 300 years?" Daoist Xie asked in a rather wooden voice.

After taking a moment to rest, its voice became a lot more stable, and it began to give Han Li a recount of everything that happened 300 years ago.

Initially, Han Li remained quite calm and collected, but the more he heard, the darker his expression became, and his hands involuntarily balled up into tight fists, with bulging veins visible on the backs of his hands.

As it turned out, back then, he had already encountered another formidable foe prior to being attacked by Fang Pan's trio.

That person's cultivation base and immortal spiritual power had been far superior to his, and at a very early stage in the battle, they were already able to seal Daoist Xie and Han Li's 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords with ease.

Han Li had sustained severe injuries during the battle, and he was only able to just barely escape with the Gold Devouring Beetle Monarch, Mo Guang, and the others doing everything in their power to hold off the enemy.

Mo Guang and the Gold Devouring Beetle Monarch were able to join forces to temporarily keep the enemy at bay, but Daoist Xie was forced to self-detonate its immortal puppet body to break the seal, leaving only a puppet core behind that fled with the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords.

"... At some point, the spiritual power in my core was exhausted, and I became unable to control the flying swords, so I could only watch as they flew away on their own. After that, I lost consciousness, and I've only just been awakened by you. What happened after I fell unconscious?" Daoist Xie asked.

"After you fell unconscious, your core was picked up by someone and sold at a market near the Blaze Dragon Dao. It was sold to an inner sect disciple with mediocre aptitude as an ordinary tool refinement material, and that disciple managed to discover some obscure spirit patterns engraved on your core by chance using his spiritual sense.

"In doing so, he was able to derive a powerful lightning secret technique, launching him on a meteoric rise to become the star of the inner sect. It was also by chance that I noticed some strange signs in his lightning techniques, and that's how I eventually managed to find you," Han Li explained.

"I see..."

"Initially, I was worried that he would have some ties to the powerful enemy that you spoke of, but after conducting a soul search, I found out that he was merely extremely lucky. Prior to this, I've already slain two of the enemies that tried to hunt me down all those years, and I learned that there's a mastermind behind them.

"I'm assuming that's the person that you were referring to. However, I was unable to uncover that person's identity. Do you recall what they looked like or who they were?" Han Li asked.

After hearing Han Li's question, the golden crab sitting on the palm of his hand suddenly clutched its pincers to its head as it began to tremble in a pained display.

Only after a long silence did Daoist Xie's voice ring out within Han Li's consciousness again.

"Somehow, something seems to have gone wrong with my memory. I only vaguely remember a rough outline of the person, but I can't recall their exact appearance. The only things I can recall are that their immortal spiritual power was far superior to yours, and they seemed to have been wielding an inkstone immortal treasure that was capable of controlling the power of shadows."

"Unfortunately, I'm not surprised. Not only are you unable to recall what that person looks like, Fellow Daoist Mo Guang and I have no recollection of them, either. In fact, we've forgotten everything that's taken place in the past 300 years," Han Li said.

"It sounds like we're in a very bad situation," Daoist Xie said in a concerned voice.

"My guess is that the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords are currently in the Bell Toll Mountain Range as well, but I haven't been able to track them down. Now that I've found you, I'll be sure to find a way to refine a new body for you. However, I'm not sure if it'll be up to the same standard as your previous body," Han Li said with a contemplative look on his face.

"You have my thanks, Fellow Daoist Han. Aside from that, don't forget the agreement that we made back in the Spirit Realm," Daoist Xie reminded.

"Of course not. I'll fulfill the agreement once I attain the power required to do so," Han Li replied with a nod.

Daoist Xie didn't say anything further upon hearing this, and it reverted back into a golden ball amid a flash of golden light before being stowed away by Han Li.

## Chapter 199: Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plate

After stowing the golden ball away, a contemplative look appeared on Han Li's face.

He carefully sorted through all of the information that he had obtained up to this point in his mind, but he still couldn't identify any leads that could've been connected to the mastermind behind all of this.

A long while later, he gently exhaled as he shook his head.



Whoever, the this formidable foe was, the fact that they were able to force him into such dire straits back then was an indication that he was most likely no match for them as he currently was, so the best course of action to take for the time being was to avoid this enemy at all costs.

Seeing as even Fang Pan was able to find him, this even more powerful mastermind who was pulling the strings behind scenes had to have been capable of tracking him down as well. The only potential saving grace for Han Li was that this enemy perhaps wasn't aware that he had returned to the Immortal Realm.

In any case, he had to attain more power as quickly as possible in order to deal with all of the unforeseen circumstances that could arise.

In order to accomplish this objective, there was something that he had to address.

With that in mind, he flipped a hand over to summon his Twin Starshift Plate.

The Blaze Dragon Dao was an immeasurable distance away from the Black Wind Sea, and the connection between the pair of array plates had become extremely tenuous, making it impossible to transfer any further heavy water.

Not only was this affecting the rate at which his Earthly Deity Avatar was deriving heavy water, he was also running out of an important resource required to refine more Heavy Water Veined Lightning.

Both of these things were very important to him, so he had to find a way to get them back on track.

Ever since arriving on the Ancient Cloud Continent, this was a problem that had always been on his mind, and now that he had settled into the Blaze Dragon Dao, he finally had a chance to address it.

Thus, he immediately put on outer garment to conceal his elder robes, then summoned his Transient Guild mask before putting it on.

He had purchased the Twin Starshift Plates from the Transient Guild, so he had to turn to the Transient Guild for a solution to this problem. Back in the Spirit Realm, he wouldn't even have bothered to

consider the idea of transferring treasures over such massive distances, but this didn't seem all that far-fetched of a notion in the Immortal Realm.

The main reason for this had to have been related to the power of laws. Treasures of this nature would inevitably draw upon the power of space laws to a certain extent, or relied on spirit materials that contained the spatial power.

An azure light screen was released from the mask, and countless diagrams and lines of text of different sizes appeared on its surface.

Han Li immediately turned to the item exchange section before conducting a thorough search.

It didn't take long before he spotted what he was looking for, and he pointed at a spot on the light screen, then began to wait in silence.

Only after a full hour had passed did a burst of azure light emerge from the light barrier, then took on the form of a projection of a male figure wearing an azure feathered robe and a tiger mask.

The tiger-masked man looked at Han Li for a moment, then said, "May I ask... Ah, I remember who you are, you once purchased a set of Twin Starshift Plates from me, right? Have they served you well?"

"They've been alright," Han Li replied in an ambiguous manner.

"Could it be that you encountered some type of problem while using the plates?" the tiger-masked man asked.

"The function of the array plates is just as you describe, but you never told me about their distance limitations," Han Li said as a hint of displeasure crept into his voice.

"Ah, my forgetfulness got the better of me and I forgot to tell you that the array plates can only work across a distance of roughly one continent. If you go beyond that, the teleportation function of the array plates will be significantly diminished or even disabled altogether," the tiger-masked man replied in an apologetic voice.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly as he said, "It's fine. I contacted you today to ask if there's a way to increase the effective teleportation distance of the Twin Starshift Plates."

It was clear that the tiger-masked man had intentionally withheld this information, but at the same time, he failed to ask about this matter. Now that the transaction had already been made, there wasn't much that could be done.

"I'm afraid not. A distance of one continent is the limit of the Twin Starshift Plates' teleportation capabilities. However, there are other ways through which you can teleport items over longer distances," the tiger-masked man said.

"Would you care to elaborate?" Han Li asked.

"This pair of array plates was a replica refined by a good friend of mine based on an immortal treasure, and it's only around 1% to 2% as effective as the original. After many attempts since then, he's been able to craft a replica that's one tenth as effective as the original immortal treasure, and he's named them the Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plates. Is that something that interests you, Fellow Daoist?" the tiger-masked man asked.

Han Li nodded in response, then asked, "How much will those plates cost?"

If these new plates really were five to ten times as effective as the Twin Starshift Plates, then they would be sufficient for his current needs.

"I can sell them to you for 6,000 top-grade spirit stones," the tiger-masked man replied.

"What a preposterous price! That's more than 10 times the price of the Twin Starshift Plate!" Han Li said as a cold look appeared on his face.

"You can't compare them like that. The Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plates are indeed rather expensive, but you're definitely getting more value for your spirit stones," the tiger-masked man chuckled.

Han Li was silent for a moment, then said, "I can't scrounge together so many spirit stones at once right now. This is already the second time we've done business together, so can you give me a discount?"

"Well... I don't mean to be cold, but this is truly an extremely precious treasure. If it wasn't for the fact that this friend of mine is in urgent need of spirit stones right now, he wouldn't even be selling them," the tiger-masked man replied with a shake of his head.

After some more rounds of bartering, Han Li was able to negotiate the price down to 5,300 top-grade spirit stones, but after that, the tiger-masked man refused to go even a single spirit stone lower.

In the end, Han Li heaved a faint sigh, then asked, "Can I get back to you in seven days?"

"Sure," the tiger-masked man replied with a smile and a nod, then instantly vanished from the spot.

Han Li removed his mask, and the light screen around him faded as a contemplative look appeared on his face.

Moments later, he injected his spiritual sense into the storage bracelet on his wrist.

Everything inside the storage space had already been split up into roughly a dozen categories, including demon beast materials, spirit plants, ore, spirit stones, pills, treasures, cultivation arts, and scriptures.

Prior to leaving the Black Wind Sea, he had sold virtually everything that he owned for spirit stones, so most of these things had been pillaged from Fang Pan's storage bracelet.

At the moment, he had roughly 3,200 top-grade spirit stones, which was still over 2,000 spirit stones under the asking price, so he naturally had to sell a lot of things to make up the gap.

He didn't dare to sell Fang Pan's belongings carelessly in case they fell into the wrong hands and exposed him to be Fang Pan's killer. However, such qualms weren't necessary if he were to sell these things in the Transient Guild.

Originally, the majority of the items in Fang Pan's storage bracelet had been unfamiliar to him, and he was only able to recognize a small portion of them. Thankfully, he met Sun Ke on the way to the Ancient Cloud Continent.

While on the lightning boat, he had indirectly enquired Sun Ke about all of the things that he didn't recognize, and he was able to figure out what most of them were.

As a mid-True Immortal cultivator who had managed to grasp the laws of speed, Fang Pan had managed to amass a decent fortune, and there was no lack of precious items in his storage bracelet. If Han Li were to sell everything, then he would've most likely been able to acquire sufficient spirit stones for the Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plates and still have some leftover.

Thus, he immediately emptied most of the contents of the storage bracelet with the intention of selling them in batches over the coming few days. Right as he was about to withdraw his spiritual sense out of the storage bracelet, a thought suddenly occurred to him, and he pulled out a pair of boxes, one larger than the other.

The larger one of the two boxes was crafted from jade and contained a huge white egg. Due to the fact that the jade box was able to continuously provide spiritual qi, the egg was still very much alive.

The other smaller box was around 10 feet in length, within which were three arrow-like azure feathers that were glowing faintly with azure light, giving them a rather mysterious appearance.

Both of these things had been carefully stored in Fang Pan's storage bracelet, and it was clear that they were no ordinary objects.

Even Sun Ke failed to identify these two things, so Han Li decided to release an appraisal mission in the Transient Guild to see if anyone could tell him what these things were.

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Seven days later.

Inside his secret chamber, Han Li had donned his Transient Guild mask, and he swept a sleeve through the air to conjure up the azure light screen before immediately contacting the tiger-masked man.

"Have you gathered the required spirit stones, Fellow Daoist?" the tiger-masked man asked with a smile.

Han Li pulled out a storage pouch as he replied, "Here are the 5,300 top-grade spirit stones you asked for. Do you have the array plates with you right now?"

The tiger-masked man's eyes immediately lit up as he nodded in response. "Of course."

The transaction was quickly completed, and Han Li received a pair of new array plates for his 5,300 spirit stones.

The array plates were of a bright blue color and were giving off a watery blue glow. Furthermore, their surfaces were riddled with patterns that were far more complex than the ones on the Twin Starshift Plates.

On each array plate were seven eye-catching white dots that formed the Big Dipper constellation.

Embedded into each array plate were eight Starshift Stones of a significantly darker color than the ones on the Twin Starshift Plates, and the light that they were giving off was also more radiant, indicating that they were Starshift Stones of a higher caliber.

A pleased look appeared on Han Li's face at the sight of the two array plates, but his brows then immediately furrowed slightly.

While he had obtained the new array plates, the fact of the matter was that he was still an immeasurable distance away from the Black Wind Sea, so how was he supposed to send one of these Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plates to his Earthly Deity Avatar?

"Is there something wrong with the array plates, Fellow Daoist?" the tiger-masked man asked with a perplexed expression.

"No, but there's something else I'd like to ask you. Is there really no way to increase the teleportation distance of the Twin Starshift Plates? Even just once?" Han Li asked.

The tiger-masked man took a glance at the pair of array plates in Han Li's hands, and he quickly understood what Han Li's intentions were. "It looks like you want to send one of the array plates elsewhere. There is a way to accomplish your goal."

"What is it?" Han Li immediately asked.

"It's very simple. All you need to do is fit the Twin Starshift Plate in your possession with second-grade Starshift Stones, then forcibly activate the array plate, and you'll be able to temporarily increase its teleportation distance several times over. However, you'll only be able to use the Twin Starshift Plate like that once before it's destroyed," the tiger-masked man explained.

"What are second-grade Starshift Stones?" Han Li asked.

"They're the Starshift Stones on the Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plates. The ones on the Twin Starshift Plates are only first-grade Starshift Stones," the tiger-masked man replied.

Han Li nodded in response. As long as he could teleport one of these Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plates back to the Black Wind Sea, it didn't matter if he had to sacrifice his Twin Starshift Plate.

Thus, he purchased some second-grade Starshift Stones from the tiger-masked man, leaving him with some leftover as backup in addition to the ones required to power the Twin Starshift Plate.

## Chapter 200: Emergence of the Treasured Axis

After parting ways with the tiger-masked man, Han Li released an appraisal mission for the giant egg and the azure feathers in the Transient Guild, then removed his mask.

After stowing his mask away, he immediately pulled out his Twin Starshift Plate and removed the Starshift Stones on it, replacing them with eight second-grade Starshift Stones before activating the array plate.

The Twin Starshift Plate immediately began to glow with dazzling light, but it also began to tremble violently as it gave off an unprecedented type of spatial fluctuations.

Having already been warned by the tiger-masked man, Han Li wasn't surprised by this at all, and after a brief hesitation, he placed one of the Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plates and half of his second-grade Starshift Stones onto the array plate before initiating the teleportation.

The light radiating from the Twin Starshift Plate instantly brightened even further, while the spatial fluctuations emanating from it were becoming extremely unstable, oscillating wildly in power.

A few seconds later, the Twin Starshift Plate finally exploded into pieces, but prior to that, the Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plate had vanished within the light.

Han Li was still feeling a little anxious upon seeing this. After all, this pair of new array plates had exhausted the majority of his assets, and it would've been extremely unfortunate if it had been destroyed by the spatial fluctuations.

With that in mind, he hurriedly chanted an incantation to activate his Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plate.

The profound runes on the surface of the array plate lit up one after another, forming a radiant blue array amid a faint buzzing sound. Countless white specks of light then appeared within the array, much like stars in the night sky.

The space at the center of the array then began to warp slightly, and a large ball of black water appeared.

The teleportation process was extremely smooth and fast.

Han Li was extremely relieved to see this, and he stowed the ball of heavy water away with a sweep of his sleeve.



The Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plate flashed over and over again as one ball of heavy water emerged after another, and it only took less than an hour to transfer all of the heavy water that the Earthly Deity Avatar had derived over these past years.

Han Li patted the True Water Pouch strapped to his waist as he gave a pleased nod.

The heavy water inside was almost enough to fill two small streams at this point, and with this much heavy water, he would be able to do many things.

Even though the array plates had cost a fortune, they had resolved a problem that had stumped him for years, so they were worth the investment.

After stowing the Big Dipper Heavenly Star Plate away, he sat down with his legs crossed to meditate for a day, priming himself into his best mental condition before pulling out the Mantra Axis Scripture and commencing his cultivation.

Three months flew by in the blink of an eye.

Inside his cave abode, Han Li remained seated with his legs crossed like a statue, but his entire body was enveloped in a faint golden glow.

A long while later, he slowly opened his eyes as an elated look appeared on his face.

The Mantra Axis Scripture was extremely complex and difficult to understand, but during the past three months, his cultivation progress had been remarkably smooth. He had managed to bypass all of the potential bottlenecks denoted in the annotation scripture with ease, and they hadn't posed any obstacle to him at all.

The first time this happened, he had thought that he had perhaps just been lucky, but after the second and third time, he couldn't help but wonder if perhaps his constitution just so happened to have been perfectly suited to this cultivation art.

It was no wonder that he would think this. After all, according to the annotation scripture, every single bottleneck laid out would stump the cultivator for at least several years, and even delays of several decades or centuries weren't all that uncommon. As a result, many people chose to give up on the cultivation art.

Unless there was some type of special reason for this, there was no way that progress could've been so smooth for him.

However, throughout his entire cultivation journey, his aptitude had always been inferior to the vast majority of cultivators, and he certainly didn't possess any constitution that granted him exceptional aptitude.

Despite this, he was able to bypass every single bottleneck laid out in the annotation scripture with barely any trouble at all, and he was feeling both perplexed and ecstatic.

In any case, being able to make such smooth progress definitely wasn't a bad thing.

At this rate, he was on track to successfully manifesting a Mantra Treasured Axis in just a few years, whereas countless others had failed in his place even after centuries or millennia of arduous cultivation.

Han Li took a deep breath to rid himself of these thoughts, then continued in his cultivation.

Three years flew by in the blink of an eye.

Countless tendrils of clouds were drifting over the Crimson Dawn Peak as the sun began to slowly rise in the east, basking the entire mountain summit in a warm, golden glow.

Everything remained unchanged on the Crimson Dawn Peak with one exception, which was that the fire miasma that had originally permeated over the entire mountain had receded quite a bit.

Everything from the foot of the mountain to halfway up the mountain was still enveloped in fire miasma, but there was no further fire miasma present above that point.

Meng Yungui and the others arrived on the mountain summit at first light, performing some meditation in the face of the rising sun before carrying out their respective duties in cleaning up the mountain summit.

Everyone's role was very clear-cut, and even though there were only 10 of them, they were able to keep the massive courtyard, the nearby spirit medicine fields, and the cave of the mountain guardian beast halfway up the mountain in a very clean and orderly condition.

The spirit veins of the Crimson Dawn Peak weren't that exceptional in the context of the entire Bell Toll Mountain Range, but the abundance of the world's origin qi here still far exceeded that of other places on the Ancient Cloud Continent, making it an exceptional place of cultivation. On top of that, thanks to the pills that Han Li had bestowed upon them, all of them had progressed in their cultivation bases to different extents.

In particular, Meng Qianqian had made two breakthroughs in rapid succession, taking her to the late- Foundation Establishment Stage, and she was only one step away from the Core Formation Stage.

In contrast with three years ago, much of the childish aspects of her features had faded, and she had become even more beautiful.

"Elder Li has been in seclusion for quite some time, hasn't he?" Meng Qianqian remarked as she took occasional glances at the cave abode while cleaning up the spirit medicine field.

"At Elder Li's level, it's quite common to go into seclusion for centuries or even millennia. Have you run out of spirit stones and pills now that you're on the cusp of the Core Formation Stage?" Meng Yungui asked.

"No, I haven't," Meng Qianqian replied in a slightly grumpy voice.

"Qianqian, you must remember at all times that we are already extremely fortunate to have been chosen to serve Elder Li. Elder Li has always been quite lenient and amicable to us, but as servants, we must never forget our place," Meng Yungui said in a meaningful and heartfelt voice.

"I understand," Meng Qianqian replied as she lowered her head slightly.

Meng Yungui's expression eased slightly upon seeing this, and he patted Meng Qianqian's head as he said, "I still have some spirit stones here, you can take them..."

All of a sudden, a burst of violent rumbling suddenly rang out, and the entire Crimson Dawn Peak began to shudder and quake, causing many of the birds and beasts residing on the mountain to flee in a panic.

Immediately thereafter, large swathes of dark clouds suddenly appeared in the originally bright and clear sky, tumbling and surging incessantly.

The world's origin qi surged violently as it converged toward the mountain summit, forming an enormous vortex, and the center of the vortex was directly above the cave abode on the mountain peak.

Meng Yungui and Meng Qianqian were both quite surprised by this phenomenon, but they weren't overly alarmed, and the same applied to everyone else as well.

They had no idea what types of cultivation arts Han Li was using, but what they did know was that he would regularly trigger this type of astonishing phenomena. In fact, something like this happened virtually once a month, so they were already accustomed to this.

Meng Yungui's brows furrowed slightly as she looked up at the dark clouds in the sky, and he felt like this phenomenon seemed to have been different from previous ones.

However, he then immediately shook his head and returned to work as he self-reprimanded, I was just telling Qianqian to not get overly involved with Elder Li, yet here I am, speculating about his cultivation. I need to focus on performing my duties as a servant and nothing else. Ignorance is the best policy.

Inside his secret chamber, Han Li's entire body was enveloped in dazzling golden light, to the point that his facial features appeared rather blurry and indistinct.

As the world's origin qi continued to converge from all directions, the golden light radiating from his body became brighter and brighter, forming an incandescent sea of golden light that inundated the entire secret chamber.

Enormous spiritual power fluctuations surged through the surrounding area in waves, only to be contained by the restrictions set up in the cave abode.

Only after a full two hours had passed did the rate at which the world's origin qi was gathering begin to slow.

The dark clouds above the Crimson Dawn Peak gradually faded to reveal the clear, blue sky, and it was as if the phenomenon that had just unfolded had never taken place at all.

Inside the secret chamber, the massive sea of light shuddered before surging into Han Li's body and was completely absorbed in just a few seconds.

A speck of golden light that was fluctuating in brightness appeared on Han Li's lower abdomen, glowing as radiant as the sun one moment, then almost completely fading the next.

The golden speck of light was like a tiny mouth, and with each flash, a vast amount of the world's origin qi was devoured.

At the same time, a light golden wheel that was around a foot in size appeared behind him before slowly revolving on the spot.

A series of lustrous golden clouds appeared around the wheel, resonating strongly with the surrounding world's origin qi. At the same time, the sound of heavenly music rang out, as if to praise the emergence of the golden wheel.

The golden clouds revolved rapidly around the wheel, gradually transforming into countless semi-transparent threads of light that converged together to form a pair of semi-transparent runes that engraved themselves onto the wheel.

The runes were extremely lively and were constantly flashing and moving as if they were living creatures while emanating faint law fluctuations.

Han Li slowly opened his eyes before taking a glance at his own body, and his gaze lingered on the speck of golden light as an ecstatic look appeared on his face.

After three years of arduous cultivation, he had finally opened up his first immortal acupoint, thereby taking the first step on his cultivation journey as a True Immortal.

As for the golden wheel behind him, that was none other than the Mantra Treasured Axis.