

## **A Record 261**

### Chapter 261: Change In the Floating Mountains

Han Li's eyes were illuminated a golden color by the light barrier, and he activated his Spirit Refinement Technique before releasing his enormous spiritual sense. His spiritual sense passed through the light barrier, then split up into 72 parts before piercing straight into the golden lightning to control the 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords.

Under his control, the 72 flying swords shuddered in unison, following which all of the light glowing from them faded, and the arcs of golden lightning also slowly fused back into the swords before vanishing entirely.

Han Li then made a hand seal, and the array around the fire pit flashed a few times before all of the pillars of golden light faded, leaving only the flying swords hovering within the flames.

After that, he opened his mouth and inhaled forcefully, upon which all of the nascent flames interspersed within the silver flames instantly swept back into his belly.

With the withdrawal of the nascent flames, the temperature of the fire was slightly lowered, while specks of azure light began to appear on the translucent jade-like Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, slowly restoring them back to their original azure color.

There was also faint golden light gleaming from the edges of the swords, forming a series of lightning-cloud-like golden patterns that were quite dazzling to behold.

Han Li swept his hands through the air, leaving trails of shimmering golden afterimages behind, and all of the flying swords instantly flew out of the silver fire as if they were living creatures before descending in front of him.

Han Li slashed a fingernail across the palm of his hand to draw a drop of golden blood essence, which formed an egg-sized ball of blood that was scattered into 72 drops at his behest, with each drop spilling onto one of the flying swords, and they instantly vanished into the flying swords upon contact.

At the same time, Han Li could feel his connection with his flying swords becoming stronger, and all of the familiarity that had arisen due to the change in the aura of his flying swords had vanished.

With another wave of his hand, the 72 flying swords flashed with azure light once again, then flew back into the fire to continue the refinement process.

A short while later, Han Li approached the fire with his eyes closed and began to engrave the tiny array recorded on the beasthide book onto the flying swords with his spiritual sense.

.....

Close to a year later, the azure array outside the floating mountain receded, and Han Li emerged from his cave abode with a calm and collected expression, but on the inside, he was quite elated.

The refinement of all 72 of his Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords had been completed, and their appearance and the auras that they were giving off had undergone a complete change, while all of the sword essence that was still yet to be fully refined in the past had been completely absorbed, thereby significantly elevating the power of the swords.

What he was most pleased about was that due to the injection of blood essence into the flying swords following the refinement process, his connection with them had become stronger, and as a result, he was able to sense the astonishing spiritual nature that had developed within them.

It felt as if these swords were no longer just treasures, and they were now extensions of his own body instead.

Situated in this secret area, he didn't have time to test out their power, but he was certain that they would've been far more formidable than before.

On the plaza outside the cave abode, Hu Zhen and the other disciples had already been waiting for quite some time. Han Li enquired them about the situation in the secret area, then rewarded them with some spirit stones.

After that, he asked them about what had been happening in the Blaze Dragon Dao, but due to the fact that most of them had been in this secret area this entire time, they weren't able to provide many answers.

There was only a single disciple who had only recently arrived in the secret area, but he had no noteworthy news to share, and that clearly reflected that nothing of importance had happened in the sect, something that Han Li was quite relieved to hear.

Time slowly passed by, and several years later, Han Li finally learned by chance through the Transient Guild that Gu Jie had been forced out of the Blaze Dragon Dao by a high-ranking member of the Transient Guild, and he felt as if a load had been lifted from his shoulders.

Not long after that, all of the arrays around the floating mountain that he was situated on were activated once again.

.....

200 years flew by in the blink of an eye.

Within the secret area of floating mountains, there were seven or eight young men in Blaze Dragon Dao disciple robes waiting anxiously outside a floating mountain that was enveloped in a layer of azure light.

A young man with a round face turned to the dark-skinned young man by the name of Hu Zhen as he asked, "What do we do, Senior Martial Brother Hu? The mist in the canyon is behaving very strangely. In the past, it would only take a month at most for it to recede, but it's already been over three months, and it's still showing no signs of receding. In fact, it's only risen up higher the past few days."

"Prior to going into seclusion, Elder Li told us that this is an extremely important seclusion for him, so we're not to disturb him unless an urgent situation arises. If we contact him over something like this and disrupt his cultivation, only for it to be a false alarm, then who's going to bear the consequences?" Hu Zhen asked.

"But Elder Li has already been in seclusion for close to a century, and no one knows when he's going to come out. What if what's happening in the canyon right now affects the spirit medicine harvest? If that

happens, we'll be in deep trouble regardless," the round-faced young man countered with an urgent expression.

Everyone else nodded in agreement with the round-faced young man's statement.

Hu Zhen's brows were tightly furrowed, and after extensive consideration, he decided, "Alerting Elder Li right away is definitely not the right course of action to take. We have to figure out exactly what's happening in the canyon before we make a decision.

"For now, keep an eye on the mist and look out for large-scale white ghost invasions. I'll think of a way to find out what's happening down there, and if it's a problem that we can't resolve on our own, then we'll have to disturb Elder Li."

The round-faced young man nodded in response.

However, his expression then suddenly changed slightly as he turned toward the floating mountain enveloped within the azure light.

Ferocious gusts of wind had suddenly begun to sweep through the sky, and clouds were converging from all directions, quickly forming a massive gray cloud that encompassed a vast area.

Streaks of five-colored light that resembled shooting stars were flashing incessantly through the cloud, and the light was gradually becoming brighter and more stable.

"Is Elder Li about to make a breakthrough?" the round-faced young man exclaimed.

"It appears so," Hu Zhen replied.

As soon as his voice trailed off, the gray cloud in the sky began to revolve in a frenzy, and a beam of five-colored light that was formed by the world's origin qi cascaded down from the heavens, encompassing the entire mountain.

Everyone felt the air tighten around them, as if some type of invisible restriction had suddenly appeared, striking them with a sense of discomfort.

Right at this moment, a loud and insistent buzzing sound began to ring out from the canyon down below.

Hu Zhen's expression instantly changed slightly upon hearing this sound, and he hurriedly yelled, "Something's happening down there! We have to go!"

Immediately thereafter, he swooped toward the canyon down below, and everyone else also followed suit without any hesitation.

The group of disciples passed by hundreds of floating mountains during their descent, and they were joined by more and more Blaze Dragon Dao disciples, gradually forming an army of over 1,000 cultivators.

Aside from the handful of leaders of the disciples, who were at the pinnacle of the Spatial Tempering Stage, the majority of the rest of the disciples were at the early-Spatial Tempering Stage, and most of them had already been stationed in this secret area for several centuries.

Everyone knew that this buzzing sound indicated that the mist had already risen up to the previous highest point recorded in history, which meant that around a dozen additional mountains were going to be swallowed up by the mist, and the precious spirit medicines growing on them would be devoured by the white ghosts.

After flying downward for several hundred kilometers, the disciples finally caught sight of the mist, which was as dense as a dark cloud.

Mountains that had never been swallowed up by the mist before currently being quickly inundated, and countless shadowy figures could be seen rushing through the mist while letting loose feral roars.

"How is this happening?" the round-faced young man exclaimed with an incredulous expression.

"Junior Martial Brother, you have the secret talisman that Elder Li gave to us. Go and wait outside his mountain, and if we're unable to keep the white ghosts at bay, use the talisman to contact Elder Li right away!" Hu Zhen said in an urgent voice, and the round-faced young man immediately nodded in response.

"Elder Li is currently in the middle of a breakthrough, so you absolutely must not use the talisman unless we're being overwhelmed by the enemy," Hu Zhen cautioned.

"Yes, Senior Martial Brother Hu," the round-faced young man replied with a solemn nod, then immediately turned around and began flying directly upward.

There was a concerned look on Hu Zhen's face as he turned to everyone else and yelled, "Set up the Azure Light Flight Restriction Array!"

All of the disciples immediately gave a collective affirmative response, while the peak-Spatial Tempering Stage disciples around Hu Zhen split up in all directions, with each of them leading several hundred disciples to different parts of the secret area.

All of the disciples then each summoned a large azure flag in an orderly fashion before tossing it forward and making a string of hand seals while chanting an incantation. The entire process appeared to have been extremely well-rehearsed.

As the incantation rang out, all of the runes on the azure flags lit up in unison, releasing bursts of azure light that interconnected with one another to form an enormous azure light barrier above the rising mist.

Inside the canyon, the dense mist was churning in a frenzy like a pot of boiling water, and it began to rise up at a rate that was several times faster than before, reaching the azure light barrier in mere moments.

The sound of howling wind rang out from deep within the canyon, and the churning mist struck the azure light barrier, causing it to ripple and sway violently.

All of the Blaze Dragon Dao disciples above the light barrier were gripping tightly onto the shafts of their flags with both hands while spiritual light radiated from their bodies as they struggled to stabilize the array with all their might. Some of the disciples among them with lesser cultivation bases were already swaying incessantly like small rafts in a turbulent sea.

Right at this moment, countless humanoid figures suddenly began to shoot up rapidly from the dense mist down below, crashing violently into the azure light barrier amid a string of dull thuds.

The Blaze Dragon Dao disciples looked down to find countless hideous white ghosts springing up out of the mist before crashing into the light barrier as if they had gone insane.

This was extremely strange and inexplicable behavior from the white ghost, and it looked as if they had no regard for their own lives.

In fact, some of them were crashing into the light barrier with such violent force that their heads were split open, sending intracranial fluids splashing down into the mist below.

Hu Zhen's expression became even more concerned upon seeing this.

## Chapter 262: Coming Out of Seclusion

At this point, the massive gray cloud in the sky had already turned into a five-colored cloud, and a huge hole appeared at its center, through which a ray of dazzling golden light was shining down directly upon the floating mountain below.

The entire mountain was basked in a bright golden glow, giving it the appearance of an incandescent mountain of gold.

Inside the secret chamber of his cave abode, Han Li's eyes were tightly shut, and he was seated with his legs crossed with golden light radiating from his body, giving him the appearance of a golden deity.

Meanwhile, 11 specks of golden light were flashing incessantly on his chest and abdomen, and not far away from, a fist-sized golden vortex was slowly taking shape.

Right at this moment, a loud rumbling sound akin to a thunderclap rang out in the sky, and the entire five-colored cloud began to churn in a frenzy.

The placid-looking pillar of golden light also shuddered before beginning to rapidly revolve, quickly transforming into a giant golden tornado that stood like a pillar between heaven and earth.

A resounding boom rang out as the azure light barrier around the mountain was shattered by the giant pillar of golden light, which then shone straight down into the cave abode on the mountain.

The entire floating mountain shuddered as it descended slightly, and a burst of violent shockwaves swept through the air in all directions.

The round-faced young man had only just begun to approach the mountain from below when he was struck by the shockwaves, and the protective spiritual light around his body was instantly dispelled while he was sent flying back through the air like a rucksack.

Only after crashing into a nearby mountain did he come to a rest, and an unnatural flush appeared on his face as he threw up a mouthful of blood.

He wiped the blood from the corner of his lips as he carefully stood in mid-air, glancing down at the canyon below before turning his gaze back to the mountain up above while holding tightly onto the silver talisman in his hand.

Upon entering the mountain, the pillar of golden light disintegrated into countless specks of golden light that descended like rain.

Inside the secret chamber of the cave abode, Han Li's eyes abruptly sprang open, and the golden vortex on his body began to rapidly revolve while releasing a burst of tremendous suction force.

The sound of howling wind rang out as the countless specks of golden light swept up the surrounding world's origin qi before surging toward the vortex on Han Li's body like a turbulent river, and his twelfth immortal acupoint was beginning to take shape!



Looking up the river of golden light descending down onto the mountain, the round-faced young man was astonished beyond words. He had witnessed breakthroughs from other immortals in the past, but never had he witnessed one quite so spectacular.

Right as he was looking up in shock and awe, a deafening boom suddenly rang out, followed by a chorus of alarmed and agonized screams coming from the canyon down below.

It seemed that the situation was taking a turn for the worse, but as the round-faced young man looked down, he found his vision being obstructed by all of the mountains in the way, so he couldn't see anything, and he was unsure of whether the other disciples were still able to hold on.

A conflicted look appeared on his face, and his grip tightened even further around the talisman. The palm of his hand was sweating profusely, and in the end, he gritted his teeth and injected a wisp of magic power into it.

A streak of azure light instantly flew out of the talisman before hurtling toward Han Li's cave abode with a sharp screeching sound.

After that, the round-faced young man turned and rushed straight toward the canyon down below.

At this point, the situation had already erupted into complete pandemonium.

The azure light barrier conjured up by the Blaze Dragon Dao had already been broken, and there only some parts of it were still intact, but it didn't appear as if they were going to be able to last much longer.

Mist was already surging up through the broken parts of the light barrier, en route to swallowing up even more floating mountains.

The round-faced young man arrived just in time to see Hu Zhen leading the Blaze Dragon Dao disciples upward in a retreat with a grim look on his face.

As soon as he caught sight of the round-faced young man, he immediately approached him before asking, "Luo Tang, have you informed Elder Li of the situation?"

"I have, but he's still currently in the middle of his breakthrough, and I don't know when he'll come out of seclusion," Luo Tang replied.

"This is something that's never happened before, and Elder Li is the only True Immortal Stage elder currently in this secret area. If he doesn't come out of seclusion soon..." Hu Zhen's voice trailed off here, but what he was implying was very obvious.

All of a sudden, a thunderous roar rang out from down below, and countless white ghosts came surging out of the canyon, springing toward the floating mountains up above regardless of whether they were encompassed within the mist or not.

All of the Blaze Dragon Dao disciples unleashed their treasures to intercept the white ghosts, and a fierce battle instantly ensued with countless white ghosts being slain on the spot.

Even the white ghosts that weren't successfully intercepted weren't able to survive for long out of the mist. All of them began clutching at their own throats as if they could breathe while their skin turned black, and they began plummeting down toward the canyon in agony.

Even so, these white ghosts were still springing up without any regard for their own lives, and it was as if they had truly gone insane.

"What is going on?" Luo Tang murmured to himself with a stunned expression.

"I feel like... they're running for their lives from something..." Hu Zhen said as a hint of fear flashed through his eyes.

Right at this moment, another feral roar rang out, and this time, it sounded as if it were coming from somewhere very close.

A giant black shadow suddenly sprang out of the dense mist, opening its cavernous mouth to swallow up around a dozen white ghosts at once before rapidly falling back.

Immediately thereafter, two more black shadows darted out of another part of the mist to devour several dozen more white ghosts.

Whatever the creature was, it was concealed within the mist and moving so quickly that Luo Tang was unable to catch a clear glimpse of it at all.

"What is that thing?" he exclaimed in a horrified voice, to which Hu Zhen shook his head silently in response.

"What do we do? If we keep retreating, the entire annual harvest of spirit medicines will be gone, and the sect will be sure to punish us severely," Luo Tang said with a grim expression.

Hu Zhen's brows were tightly furrowed as he took a glance upward, and he couldn't help but feel a little discontent toward Han Li.

"We can't keep retreating. Ignore those white ghosts and focus on dealing with that creature in the mist. All disciples, heed my call! Assemble right away and prepare to face the enemy!" Hu Zhen yelled.

At this point, many of the Blaze Dragon Dao disciples were already beginning to panic, but they still heeded Hu Zhen's call and began to converge toward him.

"Assemble the All-encompassing Sword Array!" Hu Zhen yelled.

Everyone immediately sprang into action without any hesitation, rising up into the air atop their flying swords, while those who didn't have any flying swords raised their hands to inject their magic power into the sword array.

The All-encompassing Sword Array was a type of basic sword array that didn't require any complex setup. Instead, it was capable of unleashing enormous power as long as there was a sufficient number of flying swords assembled.

Thousands of flying swords rose up into the air between the floating mountains, and an enormous sword array quickly took shape.

Hu Zhen's eyes immediately lit up upon seeing this, clearly not expecting the sword array to be so formidable, and he was beginning to believe that perhaps they really would be able to slay the beast within the mist.

"Attack!" Hu Zhen yelled, and everyone instantly heeded his call as the thousands of flying swords gathered together before plunging down toward the dense mist below like a waterfall of swords.

Countless white ghosts that were rushing out of the mist were instantly slain by the swords, and all of a sudden, an earth-shattering roar rang out, following which the mist within the canyon began to rise up 10 times quicker than before, instantly swallowing up all of the oncoming flying swords.

A string of loud clangs rang out incessantly from within the mist as hundreds of flying swords were struck by a burst of tremendous force, sending them spiraling out of control and flying back out of the mist.

Some were even shattered outright, causing their wielders to throw up mouthfuls of blood from the resulting backlash.

Nine mountainous black serpentine heads emerged from the mist. Each head had a pair of golden eyes that were watching all of the disciples with cold disdain.

The heads were swaying slightly from side to side while flicking out their forked tongues repeatedly to produce a hissing sound.

All it took was a single glance from the serpentine beast for Hu Zhen to feel as if his entire body had been plunged into a glacial pit, and he couldn't muster up any courage to resist such a formidable creature.

The giant serpent was clearly below them, but he felt as if it were somehow looking down on them, and his heart was entirely filled with despair.

He wasn't the only one who felt this way. All of the other disciples were also in such a state of despair and horror that they had even forgotten to run away.

Moments later, the nine giant serpentine heads shrank back in unison, preparing to spring up at the Blaze Dragon Dao disciples above.

"Get back, foul beast!"

Right at this moment, an extremely authoritative voice suddenly rang out up above.

Before everyone even had a chance to look up, they saw a streak of azure light flash before their eyes, following which a humanoid figure appeared among them.

It was a tall and imposing azure-robed figure with a layer of azure light around his body, giving him the appearance of a true deity.

"Elder Li!" Hu Zhen exclaimed, and his cries were quickly echoed by everyone else.

They were like drowning swimmers who had suddenly been saved right on the verge of death, and the elation and relief that washed over their bodies was so immense that they felt as if they could cry.

Meanwhile, the nine serpentine heads had already opened their cavernous mouths while springing up from down below.

Han Li swept a sleeve through the air to release a gentle breeze that carried all of the surrounding disciples to a safe distance away.

After that, he thrust a palm downward, releasing a burst of azure light, within which nine azure flying swords were circling around incessantly. The nine azure swords were releasing countless streaks of azure sword light that formed an azure light barrier, which encompassed virtually the entire canyon.

These azure flying swords were none other than the Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, and in their current form, they were able to act independently as 72 swords, or combined to form nine swords, or just a single sword.

## Chapter 263: Testing Out the Mantra Treasured Axis

A resounding boom rang out as the nine serpentine heads struck the azure light barrier in unison before being repelled, while the light barrier remained completely unmoved.

Han Li made a hand seal, and all of the streak of azure swordlight instantly turned their tips downward in a uniform manner, and a menacing aura of killing intent began to spread through the air.

Looking at the vast sword array that Han Li had conjured up, Hu Zhen and other disciples felt as if their All-encompassing Sword Array had been nothing more than a ragtag bunch of bandits compared with a formidable regular army.

All of the streaks of swordlight plummeted out of the heavens at Han Li's behest with glowing azure tails behind them, making it appear as if a spectacular storm of shooting stars were descending from above.

The nine serpentine heads had already retreated back into the dense mist, sensing the danger that was afoot.

However, the streaks of swordlight continued to pursue them, flying into the mist as well.

A string of earth-shattering booms rang out as several floating mountains were destroyed by the storm of swordlight, and there were naturally countless white ghosts that fell to the formidable barrage as well.

Moments later, a string of seven or eight agonized roars rang out from deep within the mist, and a cold smile appeared on Han Li's face as he descended toward the mist himself.

He had only just descended into the mist when his brows furrowed ever so slightly. As it turned out, this mist was capable of keeping out spiritual sense.

Up above, all of the disciples were feeling extremely reassured at the sight of Han Li descending gracefully into the mist, and Luo Tang couldn't help but praise, "Elder Li truly is a formidable sword immortal..."

For some reason, Hu Zhen was suddenly reminded of a rumor that had been spreading in the sect for many years.

Apparently, there had always been a mighty sword immortal who referred to himself as the "the number one sword cultivator of Heavenly South" hiding in the Blaze Dragon Dao.

However, this thought only flashed through his mind for a moment. After all, it was a completely unsubstantiated rumor, and most of the people in the sect regarded it as a tall tale as none of the immortals in the sect even had any idea of where this Heavenly South was.

Inside the dense mist, Han Li's eyes were flashing with blue light as he sped downward, quickly descending several hundred kilometers. There were countless massive chunks of rocks hovering in the air around him, all of which were mountains that had been destroyed by the storm of swordlight he had just unleashed.

The canyon was far deeper than he anticipated, and even after descending for another several hundred kilometers, he still wasn't able to see the bottom.

The surrounding area was extremely dim, and the mist was incredibly dense, severely limiting his spiritual sense so that he was only able to detect things in a radius of around 10,000 feet.

If it weren't for his Brightsight Spirit Eyes, he wouldn't have been able to see anything.

Looking at all of the massive blurry shadows around him, he realized that there were massive mountains floating in the mist as well. In fact, there seemed to have been even more mountains in the misty canyon than above it.

Even though the nearby mountains were completely enshrouded in mist, he could still see countless shadows scurrying over them, but he wasn't sure if those shadowy figures were the remaining white ghosts.

He continued to plunge downward, getting closer and closer to his flying swords, and finally, after passing by yet another huge mountain, he spotted a glimmer of azure light deep within the mist.

The nine azure flying swords were enshrouded within a massive azure sword projection, which had been plunged into a massive black mountain.

Before Han Li had a chance to get close, a low roar suddenly rang out, and Han Li took a closer look to find that rippling black light was being reflected from all of the azure flying swords.

Thanks to the azure light radiating from the swords, he was able to see that an enormous serpentine body had wound itself around the entire mountain, and the nine giant serpentine heads were all pressed against the ground in a submissive fashion with a flying sword protruding out of each of them.

Only then did Han Li discover that what he had been hunting was a nine-headed serpent, rather than nine individual serpents.

At this moment, all of the heads of the giant serpent had already been pierced by swords, and the light in all of its eyes had already faded with the exception of one pair of eyes, which were still giving off a faint golden glow, but it didn't appear as if it was going to last much longer, either.

Han Li made a beckoning motion with one hand, and the nine flying sword plunged into the serpentine heads instantly flew back, then combined into a single azure longsword in mid-air before returning to his side.

He grabbed onto the hilt of the sword as he descended in front of the serpentine head that still held some signs of life, and he peered into its eyes.

All of a sudden, Han Li's brows furrowed slightly as he used the serpentine head as a launchpad to send himself flying back in retreat.



In the next instant, the serpentine head exploded violently, and a black shadow sprang out from within, closing in on Han Li at an incredible speed.

Han Li focused his gaze on the approaching assailant to find that it was a young man clad in a suit of black scale armor.

The young man had a pale face and a pair of extremely thin and long eyes that almost extended into the hair on his temples. He had a pair of pronounced cheekbones and only four sharp fangs in his mouth, nestled between which was a bright red forked tongue. Furthermore, there were four fist-sized fleshy lumps on each of his shoulders, giving it the appearance of a hideous demon beast that hadn't fully manifested a human form yet.

The creature was hurtling through the mist at an incredible speed, holding a white bone spike that it was driving directly toward Han Li's chest.

Han Li lashed out with his longsword at the white bone spike, and right as the two weapons were about to clash, the serpentine man suddenly sprang to the side, following which its neck elongated to over 10 times its original length, and it opened its mouth with the intention of sinking its fangs into Han Li's neck.

A crisp clang rang out as the white bone spike was shattered by Han Li's sword, but at the same time, the serpentine demon's fangs had also reached Han Li's throat.

Right as the creature was about to sink its fangs into Han Li's neck, Han Li's Mantra Treasured Axis suddenly appeared behind him amid a flash of golden light.

There were 24 semi-transparent Time Dao Runes glowing on the axis, and it was releasing a burst of extremely pronounced law fluctuations that instantly encompassed the entire surrounding area in a radius of 100 feet.

All of a sudden, everything in the surrounding area seemed to have fallen completely still, and even the dense mist seemed to have congealed.

A horrified look appeared in the serpentine demon's eyes. It didn't feel as if it were being bound in any way, but somehow, its movements had become extremely slow, and its fangs were inching toward Han Li's neck at an agonizingly slow rate. It could only watch helplessly as Han Li casually moved back to avoid the attack.

"Not bad," Han Li remarked to himself with a pleased smile, then closed a hand around the serpentine demon's neck while raising his other hand to deal the killing blow.

He had intentionally allowed the serpentine demon to get close to him as he wanted to test out the power of his Mantra Treasured Axis. Otherwise, if he had gone all-out from the beginning, the serpentine demon would've already been long dead.

A sound akin to a watermelon being smashed open rang out, and it was also significantly elongated.

Han Li pulled a black nascent soul that was still yet to be fully formed out of the serpentine demon's broken head, then crushed it in between his hands.

After that, the Mantra Treasured Axis behind him slowly fused back into his body amid a flash of golden light.

Only then did everything in the surrounding area return to normal. The dense mist began to flow at the same speed as before, and the serpentine demon's body also began to fall, but it was prevented from doing so as Han Li's hand was still locked around its neck.

"Looks like the 24 Time Dao Runes haven't affected the axis's effective range, but its slowing effect has become far more potent. I'd say it's currently able to slow things down to less than a tenth of their original speed," Han Li murmured to himself.

It had taken him a great deal of effort to open the twelfth acupoint, and it had taken as much time to open this single acupoint as it had taken him to open the 11 previous ones combined, and that that was only after he had taken a copious amount of precious pills to enhance his cultivation. Otherwise, it would've definitely taken at least 100 times the amount of time to achieve the same outcome.

Now that he had reached the mid-True Immortal Stage and mastered the first level of the Mantra Axis Scripture, he could finally begin trying to master the laws of time.

While these thoughts were running through his mind, Han Li made a beckoning motion to draw the serpentine demon's body to his side, then pulled a slightly rank and odorous dark golden bead out of its chest before stowing it away.

After that, he casually tossed the serpentine demon's body into the canyon, and it didn't take long before the sound of a fight began to ring out.

It seemed that there were even more living creatures lurking deeper in the canyon, and they were fighting over the serpentine demon's body.

Han Li peered into the depths of the canyon for a short while before withdrawing his gaze and making his way to the mountain that the nine-headed serpent was still coiled around. The carcass of the nine-headed serpent had already become dry and shriveled, transforming into a massive nine-headed slough.

By Han Li's estimates, the serpentine demon was already close to the early-True Immortal Stage, but for some reason, it had only recently begun to shed its skin and adopt a human form. In order to accomplish this, it had to devour a massive number of white ghosts for sustenance, and it had even come out of the canyon to hunt for Blaze Dragon Dao disciples.

After being wounded by Han Li's Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, it had no choice but to forcibly adopt a human form, following which it was slain.

With a sweep of Han Li's sleeve, the slough was drawn into his storage bracelet. The slough was extremely sturdy and had some medicinal properties, so it was going to be very useful for pill refinement or to be used as a material for a suit of armor.

With the slough removed, the floating mountain down below was revealed, and patches of blue light appeared on its surface.

Han Li flew in for a closer look, and he discovered that there were several dozen crystalline blue plants growing on the mountain. They were very similar in appearance to orchids, except their leaves and petals were glittering and translucent.

However, they weren't giving off any pronounced spiritual power fluctuations, and it seemed that they were only ordinary plants.

Right at this moment, the leaves of these glowing blue plants began to vibrate in unison, producing an extremely faint buzzing sound that was quickly growing louder and louder.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this, and he suddenly recalled that each time the mist rose up from the canyon, it would always be accompanied by this strange sound.

After a brief moment of contemplation, he collected all of the blue spirit plants from the mountain, and after checking through the canyon briefly to ensure that there were no other spirit plants of the same type around, he turned and began flying back up through the mist.

However, right as he was about to fly out of the mist, he suddenly stopped in his tracks, then began flying toward the floating mountains that had been destroyed.

These mountains were originally outside of the mist with many spirit medicines growing on them, and now that they had been swallowed up by the mist, the spirit medicines on them would've gone to waste if he didn't collect them.

## Chapter 264: Resolve

An hour later, Han Li returned to the mountain where his cave abode was situated.

At this moment, he was standing with his hands clasped behind his back on the stone steps in front of his cave abode.

The plaza in front of him was packed with Blaze Dragon Dao disciples, and upon his arrival, all of them turned to him in unison with different looks on their faces, including elation, unease, and admiration.

Even though new True Immortal Stage elders would be sent to oversee the secret area periodically, it was extremely rare that anything ever happened here, so the True Immortal Stage elders remained in seclusion the vast majority of their time here.

Hence, this was an extremely rare opportunity for the disciples to witness a True Immortal in action with their own eyes, and it instilled them with a great deal of motivation when it came to their own cultivation.

"All of you have done extremely well in the face of this unexpected disaster, severely mitigating losses despite the trying circumstances. I'll be sure to report this to the sect and request a reward for all of you," Han Li declared.

"Thank you, Elder Li!"

Everyone had thought that he would be unhappy about having his seclusion disturbed, so they were ecstatic to hear what he had to say.

"The mist in the canyon has already receded, and there's still some cleanup work that needs to be done. Tally all of the damage and report it to me so I can report to the sect. You can all go now," Han Li instructed.

"Yes, Elder Li!" everyone answered in unison before departing.

Han Li instructed Hu Zhen and the others to stay behind, and after rewarding them with some pills, he returned to his cave abode.

Inside his secret chamber, Han Li summoned his Mantra Treasured Axis amid a flash of golden light and the 24 Time Dao Runes on the axis were giving off bursts of law fluctuations.

For the average cultivator, even if they were to cultivate the Mantra Axis Scripture to the third level, there was still no guarantee that they would be able to manifest even 18 Time Dao Runes, yet Han Li had managed to manifest 24 Time Dao Runes at just the mid-True Immortal Stage, and he was extremely pleased with the power that it had displayed in the canyon.

With this Mantra Treasured Axis and his set of new Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, he was confident that he would be able to take on even the likes of Gu Jie's avatar on his own.

Of course, if Gu Jie himself were to come after him, then he would still have to run for his life.

According to the Mantra Axis Scripture, now that he had mastered the first level of the cultivation art, he could begin attempting to master the laws of time.

The time law powers imbued within the Mantra Treasured Axis was quite abundant at this point, but it was very scattered, and Han Li couldn't even manifest any law threads, so he was still severely lacking compared with those who had truly mastered the power of laws.

Otherwise, as one of the three paramount laws, the laws of time should've been capable of more than just slowing down enemy attacks.

With that in mind, he began to think back to how Gu Jie's avatar had used its power of wood laws in different ways, and a sense of envy and anticipation welled up in his heart.

If he could master the laws of time someday, then its power would definitely trump Gu Jie's laws of wood.

With that in mind, Han Li took a deep breath, then flipped a hand over to produce an Immortal Origin Stone. The Mantra Treasured Axis behind him then began to slowly revolve at his behest, and the Time Dao Runes on its surface flashed, releasing golden ripples that spread through the surrounding area in a radius of 100 feet.

After that, he closed his eyes to carefully sense the changes in the law powers around him.

The Mantra Axis Scripture hadn't laid out any specific method to observe the laws of time, so he would have to figure it out for himself.

Three to four months passed by in the blink of an eye, and Han Li remained seated with his legs crossed the entire time, as still as a statue.

All of a sudden, a flash of golden light appeared around him, and his eyes sprang open, while his brows furrowed slightly.

Even after several months, he was no closer at all to mastering the laws of time, and he felt as if he made no progress at all.

However, this wasn't a very surprising outcome.

If law powers were this easy to master, then True Immortals who had mastered the power of laws wouldn't have been so rare. On top of that, he was trying to master one of the three paramount laws, so the difficulty was only going to be heightened.

In order to master the power of laws, he had made extensive preparations.

All of a sudden, the eye of that one-eyed giant appeared on his hand amid a flash of gray light.

This was one of the things that he had prepared.

He cupped the eye in both hands, then drew upon the time law powers around him before slowly injecting it into the eye.

The eye began to emit a faint white glow, as well as a burst of peculiar time law fluctuations.

Han Li immediately closed his eyes to sense the laws of time within the eye, comparing it to his own time law powers in the hope of making some type of breakthrough.

Several more months passed by in a flash, and Han Li slowly opened his eyes with a dark expression, once again, having made no progress at all.

After a brief moment of contemplation, he stowed the eye away before summoning his Heaven Controlling Vial, and there was a drop of green liquid rolling around inside.

Han Li was silent for a moment as he observed the vial, then grabbed onto the vial before injecting his immortal spiritual power into it.

All of the world's origin qi near his cave abode was instantly stirred up into a frenzy, forming an enormous vortex of spiritual power.

All of the Blaze Dragon Dao disciples were momentarily startled by this before paying no further heed to the phenomenon.

During the past two hundred years, similar phenomena had arisen countless times, so they were already accustomed to this.

Several days later.

Inside his cave abode, Han Li's face was slightly pale, and he was holding a crystal in his hand.

Having progressed to the mid-True Immortal Stage, his immortal spiritual power reserves had increased significantly, so manifesting these crystals no longer completely sucked him dry like it used to.

After consuming a recovery pill, his complexion quickly began to recover.

He then grabbed onto the crystal before injecting his spiritual sense into it, and the translucent golden thread within the crystal instantly lit up, as did the Mantra Treasured Axis behind him.

It seemed that the Time Dao Runes on the Mantra Treasured Axis were resonating with the crystal, and Han Li was ecstatic to see this, hurriedly closing his eyes once again.

A month passed by in the blink of an eye, and the translucent golden thread in the crystal disappeared, while the crystal itself also shattered.



Han Li opened his eyes, and a hint of excitement appeared on his face.

He still hadn't mastered the laws of time, but unlike his previous few attempts, he had made some progress, finally getting ever so slightly closer to his target.

It was as if a glimmer of hope had appeared within a boundless void of darkness.

He flipped a hand over to produce his Heaven Controlling Vial, and a smile appeared on his face as he discovered that another drop of green liquid had already emerged within it.

The Heavenly Controlling Vial was a major contributing factor behind how he had been able to cultivate the Mantra Axis Scripture so smoothly, and it seemed that he would have to keep relying on the vial if he wanted to master the laws of time.

However...

A contemplative look appeared in his eyes.

Regardless of how he tried to observe the laws of time within the crystal, he was only able to sense the law powers encapsulated within, but unable to glean any deeper insights.

If he wanted those deeper insights, he had to take things a step further.

With that in mind, a determined look of resolve appeared on his face.

He flipped a hand over to produce a jade container the size of a washbasin, then filled it with spirit liquid before finally dripping the drop of green liquid in the Heaven Controlling Vial into the container.

The colorless spirit liquid inside instantly turned a light green color as a result.

After that, Han Li flipped a hand over to produce another bowl before making a beckoning motion, and a ball of green spirit liquid rose up from the container before dropping into the bowl, almost completely filling it.

His plan was to drink this green liquid so that he could intimately feel the time law powers imbued within.

Han Li set the jade bowl aside, then swept a sleeve through the air to release his 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, and even though he hadn't injected any immortal spiritual power into them, they were already releasing formidable sword qi that was causing the nearby space to buzz incessantly.

He released a series of incantation seals, and the 72 Azure Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords fused as one into a single small azure sword.

Han Li then flipped a hand over to produce a silver talisman, which he adhered to the sword.

The sword qi emanating from the small azure sword instantly vanished, making it appear as if it were just an ordinary sword.

He set the Heaven Controlling vial down beside the small azure sword, then released the Essence Fire Raven amid a flash of silver light.

The Essence Fire Raven instantly transformed into a tiny fiery figure that danced around Han Li while crying out joyfully.

A faint smile appeared on Han Li's face as he played with the fiery silver figure for a while, then raised it up on the palm of his hand.

"Do you recall this person?" A burst of azure light appeared over his other hand, and an image of Nangong Wan emerged within the azure light.

The fiery silver figure took a glance at the image of Nangong Wan, then nodded in response.

Back in the Spirit Realm, the Essence Fire Raven hadn't attained intelligence as it had now, but it had developed a sufficient level of sentience to recall Nangong Wan.

"I'm leaving these two things to you for now. If something happens to me, take these two things and go search for this person. Make sure to find her and give her these two things no matter how long it takes," Han Li instructed.

The Essence Fire Raven looked at Han Li for a while, and it couldn't understand why Han Li was doing this, but it still did as it was told, nodding in response.

Han Li patted the tiny silver figure on the head, then set it aside as a serious look appeared on his face.

He could still clearly recall the pair of wild rabbits that had had their bodies imploded back when he first found the Heaven Controlling Vial.

After that, in the Scattered Star Sea, he had used the spirit liquid produced by the vial to trap the Nascent Soul Stage Windbreaker Beast, Feng Xi, almost killing it in the process.

Of course, his current cultivation base was orders of magnitude above Feng Xi's, and he had attained a Profound Immortal body, but he could sense that the special energy contained within the spirit liquid produced by the vial had also become countless times more powerful than back then.

Even in his current state, directly ingesting this spirit liquid was an extremely risky move, and it was not impossible for him to die from this.

However, he was willing to accept this level of risk, and if he couldn't withstand the spirit liquid's power, he would do everything he could to force it out of his body. He had even prepared himself to expel his nascent soul out of his own body if required.

At this point, he had come to understand that if he wanted to master the laws of time, he had to take some risk for any chance at success.

Chapter 265: Testing the Limits

Han Li cast a calm gaze toward the light green spirit liquid in the jade bowl, then took a deep breath, and all of the tension in his body instantly seeped away.

He then took a glance at the fiery silver figure, which was looking up at him with a hint of concern on its face, and he finally made up his mind, lifting up the bowl of spirit liquid before downing half of its contents in one go.

Upon entering his mouth, the spirit liquid was quite cool and a little bitter. After being swallowed, it transformed into a burst of heat that entered his dantian, and that burst of heat quickly swelled in temperature as if it had been set alight, surging through his meridians like scorching fire.

In this instant, Han Li could feel all of the meridians in his entire body expanding as bursts of indescribable power surged through his body. Even with his incredibly powerful physical body, he was in excruciating pain, and he felt as if he were about to explode.

However, a cool and refreshing sensation then welled up in his mind, restoring a sense of clarity and tranquility.

Han Li hurriedly composed himself, then conjured up a protective layer of azure light over his own body. At the same time, bursts of invisible power surged out of all parts of his body, and a string of cracks and pops rang out as he abruptly became noticeably taller. Furthermore, his limbs and torsos had also become thicker than before.

Shortly thereafter, his brows began to furrow slightly.

Some of the smaller meridians in his body had already been torn open, only for a rapid healing process to commence thanks to a vast injection of vitality.

This process of tearing and healing was unfolding in countless tiny parts all over his body, taking place thousands of times with each passing moment.

Even with Han Li's unfathomably powerful physical body and outstanding mental fortitude, the indescribable agony was beginning to take its toll.

To compound his woes even further, his mind was more conscious than ever, so the agony was even further exacerbated.

However, at the same time, he was also beginning to clearly sense the mysterious power imbued within the bursts of heat that were flowing throughout his entire body.

This mysterious power was causing his physical body to undergo some type of indescribable change, and the innate resistance of his body was currently fiercely clashing against this mysterious power.

This process wore on for two hours without displaying any signs of abating, but Han Li was feeling rather relieved as he had already grown accustomed to this feeling.

The spirit liquid was causing severe damage to his body, but it seemed that he wasn't in any life-threatening danger. In fact, he felt like he could even drink more.

With that in mind, Han Li immediately picked up the jade bowl, then gulped down the remaining half a bowl of spirit liquid.

An even more enormous burst of scorching heat surged into his body before spreading through his meridians, and he couldn't help but give a muffled groan as he shuddered involuntarily, and the azure light around him also flickered slightly.

Only after close to two more hours had passed by did the pain on Han Li's face fade slightly, and the azure light around him also returned to a stable state.

Just as he anticipated, he was able to withstand this additional influx of spirit liquid thanks to his powerful physical body and willpower. The agony he was experiencing was several times more severe than before, but this was exactly what he was looking for.

Only by pushing his own body to the limits could he better observe the laws of time.

With that in mind, he paid no further heed to his own internal condition as he began to focus solely on that burst of mysterious power flowing throughout his body.

At this moment, he could clearly hear the beating of his own heart, and every single one of his heartbeats was resonating in some way with the burst of mysterious power flowing through his meridians.

This was a sensation that was both alien and familiar to him.

It was the fluctuation of the power of time, the pulsing of the origin of life...

He felt as if there were something within his grasp, but he couldn't grab ahold of it no matter how hard he tried.

He felt as if he were gradually getting closer to grasping the laws of time, but it was an intangible entity. One moment, he would feel as if he had it tightly locked in his grasp, but in the next instant, it would be gone without a trace.

All of a sudden, a thought occurred to him, and he summoned an Immortal Origin Stone that he held in his hand. At the same time, his Mantra Treasured Axis appeared behind him amid a flash of golden light, and the Time Dao Runes on the axis released bursts of powerful fluctuations that enveloped his entire body. After that, he activated his Spirit Refinement Technique and tried to focus and immerse himself into this process as much as possible.

Thanks to the effects of the Mantra Treasured Axis, the burst of mysterious power flowing through his meridians seemed to have slowed down slightly, but it still remained as intangible and elusive as ever.

Time slowly passed by, and the heat formed by the spirit liquid was constantly being expended. After a few more hours, the heat finally completely disappeared along with the excruciating pain that came with it.

Han Li opened his eyes, and there was a combination of excitement and befuddlement on his face as he withdrew his Mantra Treasured Axis back into his body.

Even though he hadn't managed to grasp the laws of time, he had clearly sensed the fluctuations of the power of time.

All of a sudden, his entire body shuddered, and blood began to trick down from the corner of his lips.

Even though he had forcibly withstood the effects of ingesting the spirit liquid, his entire body was currently riddled with injuries, and his meridians and bones were littered with countless tiny wounds.

Even the average True Immortal would've already had their body completely explode had they been in Han Li's place.

Thankfully, the regenerative ability of Han Li's Profound Immortal body coupled with his True Extreme Membrane had allowed him to survive this process.

Judging from this outcome, it seemed that he could ingest a bit more of the spirit liquid.

He felt as if he had been on the cusp of gleaning the secrets of the power of time just now. Perhaps he would only have a chance of succeeding in this endeavor by constantly pushing his own limits.

After taking a deep breath, he consumed a restorative pill, then closed his eyes and began to meditate.

Several days later.

Han Li slowly opened his eyes as he exhaled, and at this point, he had already recovered from all of his injuries.

He turned his gaze to the jade container beside him, then swept a sleeve toward it without any hesitation, and another stream of spirit liquid rose up out of the container before flying straight into his mouth.

Han Li gave a muffled groan as his complexion transitioned back and forth between green and white.

This time, he had ingested even more spirit liquid than last time, but with the experience of that previous experiment under his belt, he was no longer feeling as uneasy as before.

He slowly closed his eyes, paying no heed to his body's internal condition as he focused his attention on observing the power of laws contained within the spirit liquid.

Cracks and pops rang out incessantly from within his body, and this time, even the skin on some parts of his arms and shoulders had split open, but no blood flowed out of the gashes.

Han Li continued to remain completely still, and over an hour passed by in the blink of an eye.

All of a sudden, his eyes sprang open, and he threw up a mouthful of blood. His face was looking rather pale, but his eyes were glowing with excitement.

Once again, he felt as if he had gotten a little closer to grasping the laws of time, but he was still not quite there yet.

He quickly consumed another pill, and a layer of green light appeared over his body.

Several days later, he was fully recovered from his injuries, and this time, he ingested all of the remaining spirit liquid in the jade container all at once.

He then summoned a pair of Immortal Origin Stones, holding one in each hand, before also summoning his Mantra Treasured Axis and closing his eyes.

Upon reopening his eyes, the excitement on his face had been replaced by a hint of befuddlement.

Why is it that each time, I feel as if I've gotten a little closer to grasping the power of time, but I always fall just a little short? In any case, this is the route that seems to have the highest likelihood of leading to success, so perhaps I just need to stick at it a little longer.



With that in mind, he flipped his hand over to produce another pill, which he swallowed before closing his eyes.

Close to a month later, another drop of green liquid had been manifested in the Heaven Controlling Vial.

Han Li picked up the vial, and after a brief moment of contemplation, he decided to directly ingest the drop of spirit liquid inside without diluting it at all.

A few seconds later, a string of cracks and pops began to ring out within Han Li's body, and a series of tiny gashes rapidly appeared over his skin. This time, even his True Extreme Membrane was unable to prevent blood from flowing out of the gashes, and it only took a moment for his entire body to be completely covered in blood.

Han Li's entire body was trembling, and it seemed that even the slightest lapse in concentration would lead to his body completely exploding.

This time, it took close to four hours before his condition gradually returned to normal, and the agonized look on his face also faded. He continued to pay no heed to his own internal condition, and the Mantra Treasured Axis behind him was revolving rapidly at his behest, while the Time Dao Runes on the axis were also glowing brightly.

Half a day later, Han Li opened his eyes as he threw up a mouthful of blood, and his face had turned extremely pale.

Having ingested two drops of spirit liquid in succession, he had developed a better grasp on the power of time, but once again, it remained just out of reach.

Perhaps one more drop will do the trick.

However, before that, he had to recover from his injuries, and with that in mind, he took another pill before closing his eyes to meditate.

A layer of azure light appeared over his body, and his complexion gradually began to improve, while the gashes on his body quickly healed.

A month later, Han Li picked up the Heaven Controlling Vial to find another drop of spirit liquid rolling around inside.

He took a deep breath as a solemn look appeared on his face, and just like last time, he drank the undiluted drop of spirit liquid in one go.

More cracks and pops rang out from within his body, and he adopted the same setup as last time, summoning his Mantra Treasured Axis while holding a pair of Immortal Origin Stones to replenish his immortal spiritual power.

As time passed by, bursts of time law powers began to surge out of the axis, and it was also beginning to revolve faster and faster while the golden light radiating from it grew steadily brighter.

Han Li's eyes were tightly shut, and he was making a constant string of hand seals.

The golden light radiating from his body was surging incessantly, and if one were to look closely, they would discover that the golden light was formed by countless tiny golden runes that resembled scorching flames.

The 24 Time Dao Runes were trembling while the golden flames were growing brighter and brighter, looking as if they were about to come together, but right at this moment, the golden light radiating from the Mantra Treasured Axis suddenly began to flash, and it slowed down in its rotation.

At the same time, cracks were beginning to appear on its surface, and the Time Dao Runes also settled down again.

Chapter 266: 5,000 Reward

With one final flash of golden light, the Mantra Treasured Axis vanished into Han Li's body, and Han Li gave a muffled groan as he threw up a mouthful of black blood.

He opened his eyes, and the protective azure light around him was trembling violently, looking as if it could shatter any moment.

All of his joints and meridians were also shuddering, and he hurriedly made a string of hand seals to stabilize the layer of protective azure light.

After that, he took another restorative pill as a contemplative look appeared on his face.

Just now, he felt as if he had gotten closer to grasping the power of time than ever before, and it had been so tantalizingly close that he could almost reach out and grab it, but in the end, he had failed once again.

He was infinitely approaching his target, but there was always this barrier that stood in his way, and it seemed impossible to bypass.

According to the Mantra Axis Scripture, those who had mastered the first level of the cultivation art could begin attempting to master the laws of time. Of course, whether the endeavor would be successful or not was a different matter entirely.

However, with the spirit liquid produced by the Heaven Controlling Vial to assist him, he should've been able to succeed more easily than others.

A month later, the Heaven Controlling Vial produced another drop of spirit liquid, and this time, Han Li immediately devoured the drop of spirit liquid without any hesitation.

In the next instant, his Mantra Treasured Axis appeared behind him amid a flash of golden light, releasing dazzling golden radiance alongside powerful time law fluctuations.

Yet again, he was holding an Immortal Origin Stone in each hand, and the golden light radiating from his body was becoming brighter and brighter as the laws of time began to converge around him.

Right at this moment, the golden light on the Mantra Treasured Axis suddenly began to flash, and a series of cracks appeared on its surface.

All of the time law powers that had gathered around Han Li instantly faded, as did the Mantra Treasured Axis.

Han Li opened his eyes with a frustrated look on his face.

Perhaps the first time could be attributed to a chance occurrence, but this had happened twice in a row now, and the only explanation that he could think of for this was that he simply wasn't ready to master the laws of time yet.

Thus, he would have to turn his attention to securing the second level of the Mantra Axis Scripture.

With that in mind, he flipped a hand over to produce another pill before promptly swallowing it.

Several months later.

A prolonged snowstorm had fallen upon the eastern region of the Bell Toll Mountain Range, covering that entire area in a thick layer of snow. With the fire miasma gone, the Crimson Dawn Peak was also covered in snow.

At this moment, Meng Yungui was wearing a silver robe, and he was crouched down in front of a plot of spirit farmland in which several dozen spirit plants were growing, examining the nurturing array around the plot of land.

This type of spirit plant was one that grew naturally on the Crimson Dawn Peak, and it could only survive in warm conditions. Hence, without the natural protection of the fire miasma, a nurturing array was required to shield it from the elements.

Meng Qianqian was wearing a long green dress, and she was standing beside Meng Yungui with a rather absentminded look in her eyes as she asked, "When do you think Elder is going to come back, Brother?"

Meng Yungui feigned an angry expression as he turned to her and grumbled, "Are you really my sister? You didn't miss me anywhere near this much back when I was out searching for spirit seeds for Elder Li!"

Meng Qianqian giggled in amusement, then replied, "Of course I'm your sister, I'm just really eager to tell Elder Li that I've already progressed to the Deity Transformation Stage. You have to work hard as well, Brother."

Meng Yungui could only shake his head with a resigned expression. Ever since Meng Qianqian successfully manifested a nascent soul, her cultivation base had been rapidly progressing, and not only had she caught up to her brother, she had recently outstripped him, reaching the Deity Transformation Stage not long ago.

Of course, Meng Yungui was genuinely happy for his sister, but he didn't want to give her excessive praise in case she became too full of herself.

After all, even though she had already been cultivating for hundreds of years, she still had a very simple and naive personality, and he was worried that excessive praise would negatively affect her mindset when it came to cultivation.

Not far away from the plot of spirit farmland was Han Li's massive mountain guardian beast. It raised its two heads as it yawned in a lazy manner, then rested its heads back onto the ground with a bored expression.

However, just a few moments later, it suddenly raised its heads up high again to look up at the sky.

A streak of azure light was hurtling rapidly toward the Crimson Dawn Peak from the distant horizon, and the array that encompassed the entire mountain quickly faded away, following which the azure figure descended onto the Crimson Dawn Peak.

Meng Yungui and Meng Qianqian exchanged a glance, and each of them could see their own elation mirrored in one another's eyes as they hurriedly rushed toward the Crimson Dawn Peak.

By the time they arrived in Han Li's cave abode, Sun Buzheng had already summoned everyone else as well, and all of the servants were gathered in the main hall, awaiting instructions from Han Li.

In the end, he only briefly enquired about the situation on the Crimson Dawn Peak, then bestowed upon everyone some pills and treasures before quickly departing once again, and much to Meng Qianqian's dismay, she didn't even get a chance to tell Han Li about her latest breakthrough.

After leaving the Crimson Dawn Peak, Han Li flew to the nearby teleportation hall and went straight to the Cloud Piercing Peak.

In a side hall of the High Profound Palace, there was a portly elderly seated behind the table, and he accepted the elder badge that Han Li was offering to him with a smile on his face as he said, "Thank you for your hard work, Elder Li. The two elders sent to the floating mountain secret area to replace you have already reported back, and the situation is identical to what was described in your earlier report.

"The sect has deemed that you've made a significant contribution in protecting the spirit plants on the floating mountains during the crisis, and as a result, you'll be rewarded 500 additional merit points on top of your standard reward."

After that, Han Li exchanged some small talk with the portly elder before his elder badge was returned to him, and he departed from the hall.

After leaving the side hall, a contemplative look appeared on Han Li's face. He had already accumulated a sizable number of merit points from the missions that he had completed, and so far, he had saved up a total of over 4,000 merit points.

This appeared to have been quite a significant number, but it was still very far away from the 9,000 merit points required to exchange for the second level of the Mantra Treasured Axis.

Han Li was slowly making his way toward the main hall of the High Profound Palace while contemplating how he was going to earn 5,000 more merit points.

All of a sudden, a thought occurred to him.

On the golden stone wall in the High Profound Palace was a mission that granted a reward of exactly 5,000 merit points for cultivating the Mantra Axis Scripture to the second level.

With that in mind, Han Li immediately sped up in his footsteps, arriving in the main hall of the High Profound Palace before making his way over to the golden stone wall.

The main hall was still as lively and bustling as usual, and even the golden stone wall had around a dozen inner sect elders gathered in front of it, all of whom were looking up at the missions on the wall.

Han Li ignored the other missions as he cast his gaze directly toward the missions on the top of the wall that were inscribed in red. Sure enough, the mission that he was looking for was still there, and it was extremely concise, but Han Li stood and stared at it for close to an hour.

His concern was that if others were to see him accepting this mission, then the progress that he had made in the Mantra Axis Scripture would be exposed.

After all, even though there were many people who had attempted to use this cultivation art, barely anyone had ever succeeded, and the progress that he had made was nothing short of outrageous. The average True Immortal could've easily spent hundreds of thousands of years toiling away without making even a tenth of the progress that he had made.

Hence, if it were to be revealed that he had mastered the first level of the cultivation art, then that would be sure to create a massive stir in the Blaze Dragon Dao, and he would most definitely become the center of attention of the entire sect.

The thought of these complications was giving Han Li a real headache. Even if he were somehow able to accept this mission and earn the 5,000 merit point reward without alerting anyone else, he would inevitably be exposed anyway once he went to the Merit Conveyance Palace to exchange for the second level of the Mantra Axis Arts.

That would be no different from telling everyone that he had mastered the first level of the Mantra Axis Scripture. After all, who would spend 9,000 merit points on the second part of the cultivation art if they hadn't mastered the first part?

Will I have to steal it?

As soon as this idea sprang into his mind, Han Li immediately shook his head to rid himself of the thought.

The Blaze Dragon Dao wasn't the Cold Flame Sect of the Spirit Domain Realm. Not only was it home to a whole host of formidable Golden Immortals, the Merit Conveyance Palace was clearly no ordinary place, so there had to have been powerful restrictions set up there, and attempting to steal the sect's most prized cultivation art from there would've been no different from committing suicide.

However, he couldn't just give up on the cultivation art, either. After all, the main reason he had joined the Blaze Dragon Dao was for the sake of this Mantra Axis Scripture.

After contemplating the matter for a long while, Han Li turned and began to make his way out of the palace.

Half a day later, a man dressed in a scholarly robe made his way into the High Profound Palace.

He casually strode over to the golden stone wall, and the other inner sect elders nearby turned to look at him in unison before quickly directing their attention back to the stone wall.

The scholarly-robed man stood on the spot for a long while, and after making sure that no one was paying any attention to him, he flipped a hand over to summon his elder badge before pointing it at a certain spot on the golden stone wall.

A burst of light immediately flew out of the wall before landing on his elder badge.

The scholarly-robed man was none other than Han Li, who had disguised himself using his Transient Guild mask.

After extensive consideration, he decided that he was going to claim the reward for this mission. The reward was a hefty 5,000 merit points, and there was no reason for him not to claim it.

He could sense that the number of merit points in his elder badge had increased to 9,132.



The top section of missions inscribed in red on the stone wall were ones that didn't garner much attention anyway, and at this moment, the elders gathered in front of the wall were either conversing with one another or searching for missions that were suitable for themselves, so no one had noticed exactly which mission Han Li had claimed.

Furthermore, given his current disguise, no one would be able to identify him anyway.

With that in mind, Han Li casually stowed his elder badge away, then heaved an internal sigh of relief as he turned to depart from the High Profound Palace.

However, right as he did so, his entire body suddenly stiffened. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed that the line of red text on the stone wall had changed...

Chapter 267: White Finch Valley

Han Li stopped in his tracks before hurriedly turning around to find that a line of golden seal text had appeared after the red text.

"Show your axis in the White Finch Valley."

The line of golden seal text seemed to have been shrouded in layer of murky golden light, making it impossible to see it clearly.

After looking at the golden text for just a moment, Han Li immediately felt a dry and sore sensation in his eyes, and he hurriedly rubbed his eyes before casting his gaze toward the same spot on the stone wall, only to find that there was no longer anything there.

He hurriedly turned to look around him, and he discovered that everyone else was either still staring at the stone wall or conversing with one another, and it was clear that no one had seen what had happened just now.

White Finch Valley? Where's that?

Han Li couldn't recall such a place in the Blaze Dragon Dao.

After a brief moment of contemplation, he turned back to the stone wall, trying to see if anything had changed in the line of red text, but nothing was different about it.

It was as if that line of golden text had been nothing more than a figment of his imagination.

However, he knew that even though he had only seen it for an instant, there was no way that it was just his mind playing tricks on him.

In any case, he had to find this so-called White Finch Valley and pay it a visit. Otherwise, it would continue to weigh on his mind.

But where exactly was this place?

Han Li stood on the spot for a while longer, then made his way over to a corner of the hall before flipping a hand over to produce the map of the Bell Toll Mountain Range that he had obtained upon first entering the sect. After that, he injected his spiritual sense into the map and began to carefully search through it.'

He ended up standing in that corner of the hall for over two hours before opening his eyes and stowing the map away, but the befuddlement on his face had only become even more pronounced.

He had scoured the entire map with his spiritual sense several times over to ensure that he hadn't missed anything, but he still wasn't able to find any place by the name of White Finch Valley.

Could it be a certain secret area in the sect? Han Li thought to himself.

With that in mind, he made his way over to the stone wall and stared at it for a while longer before turning and departing from the High Profound Palace.

After that, he rose up into the air above the High Profound Palace with his hands clasped behind his back and a contemplative look on his face. A few moments later, he sped away toward a certain direction as a streak of azure light.

.....

That night, in the secret chamber in the cave abode on the Crimson Dawn Peak.

On a square eight immortals table sat an antiquated azure lamp, and it was unclear what type of fuel was being burned in the lamp, but it wasn't releasing any smoke and was giving off a pleasant fragrance.

The flame on the wick was abnormally stable, not flicking even in the slightest, and it was only a tiny flame, but it was able to illuminate the entire room so that it was as bright as day.

On one corner of the table were several thick antiquated books, beside which sat three or jade slips. There was also a yellow scroll that was around seven feet in length draped over the edge of the table, with half of it still rolled up, while the other half was spread out on the floor.

A series of extremely life-like mountains had been painted onto the scroll with the names of the mountains marked out in annotations next to them in small text. As it turned out, the scroll contained an intricate map.

At this moment, Han Li was seated behind the table, holding an ancient scripture that he was reading with a look of concentration in his eyes.

These jade slips and books all contained historical records of the Bell Toll Mountain Range, and he had borrowed them from the inner tome library on the Imperial Dragon Peak.

Aside from those jade slips, those books and that scroll were all original copies. He could've purchased replicas of them, but in order to access the oldest map records available, he had decided to borrow these ancient scriptures, even though doing so had cost more merit points than it would've taken for him to purchase replicas.

Han Li carefully inspected all of the content in these historical records and maps, making sure to examine even the finest of details, but up to this point, he still hadn't found any place by the name of White Finch Valley.

There were several places that had similar names, but most of them clearly weren't important locations in the sect.

The main focal point of his attention was those black areas that he had seen on the Inkspirit Scenic Scroll. The majority of those places were restricted areas in the sect, and there were no annotations of them on most maps, but they were mentioned in some of the historical records.

Even after some extensive cross comparison, Han Li was disappointed to find that there were still no mentions of the White Finch Valley.

The Ancient Cloud Records that he was currently holding was already the final book out of the ones that he had borrowed.

Strictly speaking, this book didn't contain official historical records. Instead, it was a travel journal that detailed the layout of the Ancient Cloud Continent, and it had been written by a cultivator who had been struggling in his cultivation and had decided to go on a journey of self-discovery.

However, this book had been written in an extremely early time period, and it was perhaps even as old as the Blaze Dragon Dao itself. There was a restriction placed on the book, and if that restriction were to be removed, then the book would instantly disintegrate into dust.

Han Li gently flipped over to the next page before reading through its contents, and all of a sudden, he raised an eyebrow as he pulled the book slightly closer to himself to carefully examine one particular passage of text on the page.

"There is a valley in the western mountain where white finches flock in large numbers. Upon entering the valley, one won't see the valley. Instead, they'll be greeted by the sight of palaces and pavilions enshrouded in dense mist, feeling as if they had inadvertently stepped into another world..."

Han Li continued to read through this passage of text to find that the second half of the story was about a shepherd boy who had stumbled into the valley, where he was beaten with a whip by a deity clad in golden armor. All of a sudden, he had returned to his senses and found himself still standing in the valley, and it was as if everything that had just happened to him had been nothing more than a dream.

There were many strange places that harbored illusions and mirages detailed in the travel journal, and most of those places were glossed over without much description, but this valley where white finches flocked in large numbers was a place that the author seemed to have taken a particular interest in.

During his earlier readings, Han Li had come across birds like white orioles and snow pheasants, but this was the first time that he had seen mention of white finches.

After carefully reading through the entire travel journal, he was able to confirm that this was the only passage in the story where white finches had been explicitly mentioned.

Where is this west mountain supposed to be?

Han Li fell into deep thought as he absentmindedly drummed his fingers against the table.

Moments later, he suddenly dragged all of the books sitting on the corner of the table to himself, then flipped each one open to certain pages before laying them out on the table.

With his gaze focused on one of the pages, Han Li murmured to himself, "West Unitary Mountain, a long and narrow mountain that stretches from south to north, standing at a height of 72,570 feet... West Spring Mountain, standing at a height of 89,310 feet... West Luster Mountain..."

.....

Before long, Han Li had already been reading well into the night, and he stood up from behind the table as he stretched lazily, then gently closed the books laid out before him one by one.

After that, he placed them back on the same corner of the table in an orderly fashion, and the only thing that was still spread open on the table was the scroll that contained the map.

However, only around a foot of the scroll was unfurled, and on that section of the scroll was a mountain by the name of West Forest Mountain.

This mountain was situated in the western region of the Bell Toll Mountain Range, and it was just an ordinary mountain with no remarkable traits, which was why it hadn't ever been inhabited by any elders or disciples.

The western part of the mountain was close to the Cattail Spirit Valley, while its eastern part was situated directly across from a side branch of the Bell Toll Mountain Range, with an extremely wide crescent-shaped valley standing between them.

After much deliberation, Han Li had determined this to be the west mountain described in the travel journal, and he believed the crescent-shaped valley known as Half Moon Valley was very likely to be the White Finch Valley that he was searching for.

With a sweep of his sleeve, the lamp sitting on the eight immortals table was snuffed out, and wisps of white smoke began to rise up from the wick of the lamp, releasing a pleasant fragrance that lingered in the air.

Han Li strode out of the room before closing the door and making his way toward the front yard, but he hadn't even made it out of the hall when he spotted Meng Qianqian rushing toward him.

As soon as she spotted Han Li, she immediately began to yell, "Elder Li, it's coming out!"

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly with befuddlement upon hearing this, but he then quickly realized what she had to have been referring to, and an elated look appeared on his face.

"Let's go take a look."

He made his way over to Meng Qianqian as he spoke, then gently grabbed onto her arm, and the two of them instantly vanished from the spot as a streak of azure light.

Moments later, Han Li and Meng Qianqian appeared in a stone chamber of the cave abode, at the center of the giant white egg.

The egg was situated atop the same spirit gathering array as before, constantly absorbing the world's origin qi while swaying slightly from side to side.

However, even after 15 minutes had passed by, the egg still showed no signs of hatching.

"It was shaking really violently just now, and I could hear tapping coming from inside the egg, so I thought it was about to hatch, and that's why I went to you in such a hurry..." Meng Qianqian said as an apologetic look appeared on her face.

Han Li took a closer look at the egg, and he noticed that a circle of extremely small cracks had appeared on the underside of the egg, and they would've been impossible to spot without careful examination.

"It's already hatched, but it must've been scared with no mother bird present, so it's gone back into the egg for shelter," Han Li speculated.

After that, he flipped a hand over to produce a shimmering azure feather, which he offered to Meng Qianqian.

Meng Qianqian didn't know why she was being given this feather, but she still accepted it as she turned to Han Li with a perplexed expression.

"You should be able to get it to come out now," Han Li said with a smile.

Meng Qianqian was feeling rather skeptical, but she still approached the egg before gently knocking on it with her hand.

There was no reaction from the egg at all.

After waiting for a moment, Meng Qianqian gently stroked the surface of the egg with the feather in her hand.

This time, the egg seemed to have sensed something, and it stopped moving entirely for a moment before beginning to sway from side to side once again, but still far less vigorously than before.

Meng Qianqian's eyes lit up slightly upon seeing this, and she continued to stroke the surface of the egg with the feather while simultaneously stroking the egg with her other hand.

All of a sudden, the egg stopped swaying and fell completely still.

Chapter 268: Featheryearn

"Elder Li..."

Meng Qianqian turned back to Han Li with a resigned expression, but all of a sudden, a faint crack rang out, and the circle of cracks on the underside of the egg began to bulge outward, following which a piece of eggshell the size of a human head fell out to create a hole in the egg.

Meng Qianqian hurriedly turned around upon hearing this, focusing her gaze on the hole in the egg with a hint of anticipation and anxiety in her eyes, and she was greeted by a sound much like the chirping of a chicken hatchling.

Immediately thereafter, a furry head that was roughly the same size as the hole in the egg poked out from within.

The eyes of the head were only half open, and the head itself was covered in a layer of shimmering azure feathers. It bore somewhat of a resemblance to a hen, with a short and straight beak, above which was a pair of nostrils, and its cheeks were rather bloated, giving it an adorably dopey appearance.

Only after turning its head side to side a few times did it completely open its eyes, and it took a glance at Han Li before turning its gaze to Meng Qianqian with its head cocked to the side.

After that, it emerged fully from the egg before stumbling unsteadily toward Meng Qianqian.



It had a long and thin neck connected to a rather frail and wiry body that was completely out of proportion with its large head. It was as if all of its nutrients had gone to growing its head, giving it a very unbalanced body.

Han Li wasn't exactly disappointed by the bird, he merely felt like it was a little... ugly.

He couldn't help but wonder where and for what purpose Fang Pan had obtained this egg.

In contrast with Han Li's reaction, Meng Qianqian's eyes were glowing as she watched the delicate hatchling stumbling toward her. At the same time, she couldn't help but feel a little concerned, fearing that its thin and frail neck wouldn't be able to support the weight of its large head.

She looked straight into the hatchling's eyes, and she didn't find it to be ugly at all. Instead, she felt like it was very adorable in a clumsy way.

At times when she had previously encountered cultivation bottlenecks or had something weighing on her mind that she didn't want to tell even her brother, she would come to this egg, treating it like a close friend that she could speak to in her time of need.

Before she knew it, the egg had become a close companion of hers on her cultivation journey, having been with her since she was at the Nascent Soul Stage.

It could even be said that without the companionship provided by this egg, perhaps she wouldn't have been able to reach the Deity Transformation Stage so quickly, so now that the egg had finally hatched, she was overcome by a sense of mixed emotions.

She slowly crouched down and picked up the hatchling, which had finally stumbled its way to her side, and gently stroked its soft feathers with her hand.

Meanwhile, the hatchling rested its head on the feather that she was holding, gently rubbing its head against it while chirping quietly to itself.

"Can you give it a name, Elder Li?" Meng Qianqian asked as she turned to Han Li with the hatchling cradled in her arms.

"That feather you're holding most likely belonged to its mother, so let's call it Featheryearn," Han Li said after a moment of contemplation.

"Featheryearn... That's a really nice name! I'll call it Featheryearn from now on," Meng Qianqian replied with a joyful smile.

Meng Qianqian raised the hatchling to her eye level, then said to it with a serious expression, "From now on, your name is Featheryearn!"

Only then did Han Li notice that there was a small fleshy growth concealed beneath the hatchling's feathers on the underside of its head.

His brows furrowed slightly as he approached Meng Qianqian and took the hatchling from her, and after carefully observing it for a while, he lifted the wings and the tail of the hatchling one by one. In doing so, he discovered a faintly shimmering feather under each of those places, and a contemplative look appeared on his face.

"Is there something wrong, Elder Li?" Meng Qianqian asked with a concerned expression.

"No, it's just that I've been trying to figure out what this egg is this entire time, but to no avail, and now that the egg has hatched, I've finally gotten an idea of what it could be," Han Li replied with a smile.

Meng Qianqian was rather intrigued to hear this, and she hurriedly asked, "Is Featheryearn supposed to be something special?"

"I can't say for sure right now, but what I can be certain of is that it's a wind-attribute spirit bird, and one with extremely high evolutionary potential, at that. Perhaps its body holds some type of true spirit bloodline," Han Li replied.

Meng Qianqian's eyes lit up even further upon hearing this, and she turned to the hatchling as she praised, "It sounds like you're destined for great things, Featheryearn!"

The hatchling naturally had no idea what was being said about it, and it was continuing to chirp incessantly, seemingly full of longing and curiosity toward the world around it.

Han Li flipped a hand over to produce an azure pill, following which a burst of azure light emerged over the palms of his hand to envelop the entire pill.

It didn't take long before the pill began to melt away within the azure light, transforming into a burst of azure qi that was imbued with rich spiritual power.

Han Li then guided the burst of azure qi into the hatchling's beak, and it slid down Featheryearn's long and thin neck, then flashed a few times in its belly before fading away.

Featheryearn immediately stopped chirping before burping in a very humanized fashion, much to Meng Qianqian's amusement, and she began to giggle with delight.

Right after it let loose that hearty burp, Featheryearn's eyelids instantly began to droop, and its head rolled to the side as it fell asleep.

"The wind-attribute spirit pill that I just fed it is still too much for it to process for now, even though I already used my magic power to make it easier to digest, but this is a good thing. Now that it's asleep, it'll be able to better digest the pill," Han Li explained with a smile.

Meng Qianqian nodded in response.

"Keep that feather for now. You were the one who looked after Featheryearn's egg all this time, so you can keep looking after it now that it's hatched," Han Li said as he passed the sleeping hatchling back to Meng Qianqian.

"Yes, Elder Li," Meng Qianqian replied as she eagerly took Featheryearn from him.

"I recall that there are quite a few wind-attribute spirit plants in the spirit fields on the mountain. You can use those to feed it, but make sure to only feed it 10-year-old plants in the beginning and only feed it older spirit plants when it's ready. Also, make sure you don't feed it any spirit plants or pills of any other attribute," Han Li cautioned.

"Yes, Elder Li," Meng Qianqian replied with a nod.

"Alright, you can go now," Han Li said with a dismissive wave of his hand.

Meng Qianqian did as she was told, turning to depart with Featheryearn in her arms, but right as she was about to step out of the stone chamber, Han Li called out to her again.

"What is it, Elder Li?" Meng Qianqian asked as she turned around with a puzzled expression.

"If I'm not mistaken, you've already reached the Deity Transformation Stage, right?" Han Li asked with a smile.

"Ah, I was meaning to tell you about that, but I never got a chance to do so, and I ended up forgetting after getting distracted by Featheryearn's egg," Meng Qianqian replied with a slightly embarrassed smile.

"You possess superior aptitude to your brother and the others, so it's no surprise that you've been able to make faster progress in your cultivation. Here are some Deity Transformation Stage pills as a congratulatory gift for your breakthrough," Han Li said with a smile as he tossed a white porcelain vial at Meng Qianqian, who hurriedly caught the vial and thanked Han Li earnestly before departing in an elated fashion.

Not long after she left, Han Li flew out of his cave abode as a streak of azure light and departed from the Crimson Dawn Peak.

The next day.

It was a bright and sunny day.

The western region of the Bell Toll Mountain Range was still covered in a layer of snow, with only certain areas, such as the palaces and the plazas, where the snow had been swept away.

Aside from that, there were also places with underground fire veins or hot springs that had managed to keep the snow at bay, and there was even some greenery present around those areas.

A streak of azure light flew through the air before descending toward the Half Moon Valley beside the West Forest Mountain.

After departing from the Crimson Dawn Peak, the previous night, Han Li had returned the Essence Fire Raven to the cave that contained the underground fire vein, then set off for what he speculated to have been the White Finch Valley.

The Essence Fire Raven had been very pleased to be back, and it circled around Han Li a few times before eagerly flying back into the cave.

After that, Han Li had traveled to the western region of the Bell Toll Mountain Range through a teleportation hall.

If he had chosen to teleport straight to the Cattail Spirit Valley before traveling to the West Forest Peak from there, he would've been able to save a lot of time, and that would've allowed him to reach the Half Moon Valley before first light.

However, the arrival of a True Immortal in the Cattail Spirit Valley would've created a massive stir, even if he had no intention of picking out any servants, and he didn't want to attract any attention.

Hence, he had chosen to take a slightly longer route, and that was why it had taken him so long to get to his destination.

The Half Moon Valley was just as unremarkable as the West Forest Mountain beside it, so neither of those places were held in very high regard by the sect. As such, the Half Moon Valley was still a completely untouched place.

Han Li descended upon the entrance of the valley, then made his way inside to discover a thick layer of snow stretching as far as the eyes could, interspersed only by some dark red rocks, presenting a rather barren sight to behold.

After making his way several thousand feet into the valley, the terrain was becoming wider and more open, but it was also noticeably lower than at the entrance of the valley, and Han Li could tell that he had been walking downhill this entire time.

After walking for around an hour, the valley up ahead suddenly became filled with mist, making it difficult for him to see his surroundings clearly.

Han Li skirted around a massive rock in the valley, and he discovered a large crescent-shaped lake behind it. There were plumes of steam rising up from the lake, clearly indicating that it was a geothermal hot spring.

The temperature around the hot spring was slightly higher than elsewhere in the valley, and an exposed dark red lake bank could be seen.

Han Li made his way over to the edge of the lake before stopping in his tracks and peering into the water with his Brightsight Spirit Eyes.

The surface of the lake was rippling slightly, and the water was very clear, allowing Han Li to see that the lakebed was riddled with countless rocks of different sizes, but he couldn't see any fish or living creatures inside.

Moments later, Han Li withdrew his gaze, then carefully released his spiritual sense to encompass the entire valley, but after some examination, he wasn't able to find anything of note, and it was as if this really was just a normal valley.

The mission was for him to show his Mantra Treasured Axis in the White Finch Valley, and with that in mind, Han Li sat down with his legs crossed.

Chapter 269: The Eye of Truth

If this really is the so-called White Finch Valley, then perhaps something will happen if I summon my Mantra Treasured Axis here.

With that in mind, Han Li made a hand seal and activated his Mantra Axis Scripture cultivation art.

His Mantra Treasured Axis then appeared behind him amid a flash of golden light, and it began to revolve slowly in mid-air.

.

The 24 semi-transparent Time Dao Runes on the axis were flashing incessantly while giving off bursts of powerful law fluctuations, causing everything in a radius of 100 feet to slow down to such a degree that it was as if everything had fallen still.

The wind had stagnated, and even the flow of air had become extremely slow. Similarly, the ripples on the surface of the lake also appeared to have been frozen solid.

The mist rising up from the surface of the lake resembled pillars of white smoke that were moving extremely slowly, and compared with the mist in the distance, which was moving at a normal speed, the mist affected by the Mantra Treasured Axis may as well have not been moving at all.

Han Li slowly spun around as he inspected his surroundings, trying to find abnormal change in the environment, but even after a lengthy period of observation, he wasn't able to spot anything.

Right as he was beginning to think that he was in the wrong place, something out of the ordinary finally happened.

A burst of white light suddenly appeared in front of him, and a palm sized white finch appeared out of thin air, flapping its wings as it flew toward the lake.

It was encompassed within the 100-foot effective radius of the Mantra Treasured Axis, but it seemed to have been completely unaffected as it descended gently onto the surface of the lake, sending ripples spreading in all directions around it.

Han Li was staring at the white finch, unsure of what to do next.

Right at this moment, the white finch suddenly turned back to take a glance at him, then gently pecked down onto the surface of the lake with its gray beak.

Han Li felt as if he could hear the chime of a bell ring out, immediately following which circles of ripples appeared on the surface of the lake before spreading outward in all directions.

The further outward the ripples spread, the larger the waves that they swept up were, and upon reaching the stone banks on either side of the lake, the waves had become so large that they were sending large volumes of water splashing in all directions.

A black hole around the same thickness as an adult human's torso had appeared at the center of the waves, and a glowing black octagonal array emerged above it, giving off powerful spatial fluctuations.

"There's a secret area here!" Han Li exclaimed as his brows furrowed slightly.

The white finch that had triggered all of this seemed to have been rather displeased by his hesitation, and it spread its wings and circled around in the air for a while before flying into the black hole, vanishing amid a flash of light.

Han Li didn't hesitate any longer as he withdrew his Mantra Treasured Axis, then leaped up into the air before also falling into the black hole.

However, as soon as his feet landed upon the opening of the black hole, he appeared to have been kept out by an invisible barrier, unable to pass through the array.

Blue light flashed within his eyes as he attempted to find a way to bypass the array.

Some time later, his brows furrowed slightly as he raised his fist before punching down on the invisible barrier beneath him, he felt as if his fist had struck a wall of cotton, and most of its power was instantly nullified.



After that, Han Li attempted several more methods to try and break through the restriction, but all to no avail. The restriction was extremely profound and seemingly had no weaknesses at all.

A contemplative look appeared on Han Li's face as he pondered what to do next.

Judging from what had just happened, it seemed that he had guessed right, and that this was indeed the so-called White Finch Valley.

However, the white finch had already flown into the secret area, and it seemed to have been guiding him into it as well, so why was he unable to enter.

Could it be...

A thought suddenly occurred to him as he flipped a hand over to produce his elder badge, then pointed it at the octagonal array above the black hole.

A burst of black light flew out of the array and onto the badge, upon which 9,000 merit points were instantly deducted, leaving him with a measly 132 merit points.

Han Li faltered slightly upon seeing this, following which an elated look appeared on his face.

Before he had a chance to think about anything else, light flashed from the array above the black hole, then swept up to envelop his entire body before dragging him straight into the hole.

After that, the black hole abruptly vanished.

The ripples surging across the surface of the lake still hadn't subsided, but the mist that was rising up from it had already returned to normal.

Han Li felt a brief rush of dizziness before finding himself standing on a white stone plaza.

He inspected his surroundings to find a cluster of mountains behind him, while there was a massive deity statue that was over 1,000 feet tall situated to both his left and to his right. Each of the deity statues was wielding a giant weapon that was resting on the ground, and both statues were glowering directly at Han Li.

Han Li only took a brief glance at the statues before directing his gaze directly up ahead.

At the end of the plaza was a golden palace with no end in sight, and above it was a layer of lustrous clouds that were glowing bright.

There was a pavilion with no walls in front of the palace, and a pair of sage-like figures were seated across from one another in the pavilion, playing a game of go. Behind each of them was a pair of celestial maidens in palatial dresses, holding incense burners and cups of tea, and none of them were looking in Han Li's direction.

At the gates of the palace were two teams of warriors clad in suits of golden armor, and as soon as they spotted Han Li, they immediately began rushing toward him with fierce killing intent.

Han Li gave a cold harrumph upon seeing this, and instead of stepping forward to meet the approaching assailants, he sat down with his legs crossed instead.

A burst of blue light then flashed within his eyes as he made a hand seal, then released his enormous spiritual sense in all directions without any restraint.

The sound of splashing waves rang out, and a formidable aura erupted in all directions with Han Li at the center.

Countless rifts were instantly torn into the white stone plaza beneath him, and the entire earth was peeled back before crumbling away. The two deity statues on either side of him collapsed violently before disintegrating into dust, while the cluster of mountains behind him also vanished without a trace.

Before the golden-armored warriors had a chance to reach him, they were also torn to shreds by this wave of destruction, and it didn't take long before the golden palace up ahead also crumbled away, along with the pavilion in front of it and the people situated in the pavilion.

The entire illusion around Han Li had been destroyed, while he remained seated on the ground.

However, the white stone plaza beneath him had turned into mossy dirt, and he was surrounded by lush mountains. It appeared that he was situated in a vast area, but he could clearly sense the presence of spatial barriers around him.

It seemed that this secret area was far smaller than he had imagined.

With that in mind, he slowly rose to his feet, then habitually dusted off his robes before casting his gaze directly forward.

There, he spotted a giant stone monument that was over 100 feet wide.

A strange beast that resembled both a dragon and a serpent was engraved on either side of the stone monument, but the monument was extremely severely damaged, and it was clearly missing a large chunk on top, so it was impossible to tell exactly what it was.

The fractured part of the stone monument was covered in moss, giving it a dilapidated appearance, but thankfully, the bottom half had been preserved very well, and it was riddled with golden seal text.

Han Li quickly made his way over to the base of the stone monument, and after just a single glance, he was immediately rooted to the spot.

This is the Mantra Axis Scripture!

The text recorded on the broken monument had clearly been split up into two parts, between which was a blank area.

The part of the monument near the ground was covered by some short weeds, and the recorded text was very familiar to Han Li. It was none other than the first level of the Mantra Axis Scripture, while the second level was recorded near the top of the monument.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly as he fell into deep thought.

If the Mantra Axis Scripture was in the sect's Merit Conveyance Palace, then why had this strange stone monument been erected here? And why was it so difficult to access? Could it be that the second level of the Mantra Axis Scripture in the Merit Conveyance Palace also had to be obtained from this place?

After all, it had cost him the same price of 9,000 merit points to enter this place, and this was something that he could perhaps indirectly enquire about the next time he went to the Merit Conveyance Palace.

At the same time, he couldn't help but wonder if it was a coincidence that he had noticed the fleeting line of text on the stone wall in the High Profound Palace that had led him to this place.

Right at this moment, a burst of white light suddenly appeared above him, and the white finch that had guided him into this place reappeared before descending onto the broken monument to nibble at the moss on its fractured surface.

Han Li cast his gaze toward the white finch to find that it had a slightly illusory appearance, making it impossible to see it clearly.

Right as he was observing the white finch, it suddenly stopped what it was doing, then turned to him and opened its beak to speak: "Why are you looking at me? You only have half a day here, so hurry up and memorize the cultivation!"

Han Li was caught completely off guard by the fact that the white finch was able to speak. Its way of speech was slightly awkward, so it had clearly been granted the ability to speak by some type of restriction, but Han Li still found this to be quite surprising.

Thus, he couldn't help but look at the white finch for a moment longer.

"Stop looking at me!" the white finch protested.

Han Li hurriedly withdrew his gaze with a sheepish expression before focusing his attention on the stone monument.

Just like the first level of the Mantra Axis Scripture, the second level was also written in golden seal text, and an ancient method of language formulation was used, making it very difficult to understand.

Thankfully, given the foundation that he had established from the first level of the cultivation art, Han Li wasn't at a complete loss, but he was still only able to read through the text very slowly.

As he read through the text engraved on the stone monument, he was forcibly committing it to his memory using his formidable spiritual sense.

After about four hours, a faint sheen of sweat had already appeared on his forehead, and he exhaled deeply, having finally completely memorized the second level of the cultivation art.

Attached to the second level of the Mantra Axis Scripture was a secret technique known as the Eye of Truth, which apparently granted anyone that mastered it the ability to see through all illusions.

However, in order to cultivate this secret technique, one had to have already attained at least 12 Time Dao Runes on their Mantra Treasured Axis.

## Chapter 270: Space-time Restoration

With that in mind, a peculiar look flashed through Han Li's eyes.

Even though he had only mastered the first level of the cultivation art, he had already manifested 24 Time Dao Runes on his Mantra Treasured Axis, so he was naturally able to cultivate the Eye of Truth secret technique.

He made a hand seal as he began to chant an incantation, and his Mantra Treasured Axis instantly appeared behind him amid a flash of golden light.

The white finch standing on the stone monument was still nibbling at the moss, but it immediately raised its head and turned to Han Li upon sensing the law fluctuations emanating from the Mantra Treasured Axis, and its movements weren't slowed down at all.

Han Li took another glance at the cultivation art recorded on the stone monument, and a determined look appeared in his eyes as he began to chant the mantra for the second level of the cultivation art.

Shortly thereafter, he suddenly switched to a different hand seal, and his chanting also grew faster.

Meanwhile, the Mantra Treasured Axis began to revolve at a higher speed behind him while radiating dazzling golden light.

Initially, only six of the Time Dao Runes on the axis had been glowing, but the rest of them were lighting up one after another.

With each Time Dao Rune that lit up, the flow of time within a radius of 100 feet around Han Li would slow down a bit further, while the rotation of the Mantra Treasured Axis became faster.

Before long, the axis was revolving so quickly that it had turned into a blur, and faint golden threads could be seen surging out of the axis before converging toward the hole at the center of the axis.

Han Li could feel the immortal spiritual power in his body being rapidly expended at twice the rate of expenditure that he experienced during pill refinement.

He immediately flipped a hand over to summon an Immortal Origin Stone, using it to replenish his immortal spiritual power.

Shortly thereafter, the 12th Time Dao Rune lit up, and the entire Mantra Treasured Axis began to emit a loud buzzing sound as it abruptly ceased in its rotation.

All of the golden threads that had converged in the hole at the center of the axis had intertwined to form a fist-sized golden ball, which was shimmering with golden radiance.

Han Li's chanting also ceased upon seeing this, and all of a sudden, the light radiating from the ball of golden threads became as bright and dazzling as the sun.

The light was too bright for Han Li to stare into, so he involuntarily closed his eyes.

Several seconds later, the dazzling golden light finally began to gradually dim.

Han Li massaged his own eyes for a moment, then turned to look at the Mantra Treasured Axis behind him.

The axis had originally only been around a foot in size, but it seemed to have swelled slightly in size, and there was a large vertical eye that was tightly shut situated in the hole at its center.

So this is the Eye of Truth...

Han Li made a hand seal according to the description in the secret technique to activate the Eye of Truth, and this time, there was no massive outflow of immortal spiritual power like before.

12 of the Time Dao Runes on the Mantra Treasured Axis lit up in unison while releasing a burst of peculiar fluctuations, and the vertical golden eye shuddered, following which its golden eyelids parted down the center to the left and the right, revealing a golden eyeball.

The eyeball was completely golden in color, but its coloration wasn't even throughout. The golden hue at the center of the eye's pupil was clearly more vibrant, resembling a ball of molten gold.

The golden light radiating from the edge of the pupil was slightly less vibrant, and there was a concentrated circle of strange runes around it. Outside the circle of runes, the golden coloration was even fainter, and it wasn't even as pronounced as the golden color of the eyelids.

As soon as the Eye of Truth sprang open, the circle of runes around the pupils instantly began to rapidly revolve, while a burst of faint golden light was projected out of the pupil.

Han Li's heart stirred slightly upon seeing this, and he began to inspect his surroundings through the Eye of Truth instead of his physical eyes.

The surrounding mountains instantly fell away to reveal a series of semi-transparent spatial barriers, outside of which was a vast expanse of murky gray space, as if the entire area were enshrouded within a cloud of gray mist.

That's it?

If this were the extent of the power of the Eye of Truth, then it really wasn't much different from his Brightsight Spirit Eyes. It appeared that the Eye of Truth only allowed him to see some concealed things with a little more clarity, and that fell far short of his expectations.

He began to slowly turn around, and the Mantra Treasured Axis mirrored his movement, while the Eye of Truth also began to turn.

As Han Li turned to face the stone monument, the Eye of Truth did the same, and a layer of faint white light suddenly appeared over the monument.

The layer of light resembled a veil of thin smoke that obstructed his gaze, rendering him unable to clearly make out the text on the stone monument, and the white finch standing on the monument had also transformed into a ball of energy similar to the world's origin qi.

Han Li was very surprised to see this, and he began to activate his Mantra Treasured Axis to its full capacity.

Bright golden light emanated from the axis as the semi-transparent Time Dao Runes lit up one after another, and before long, all of them had been illuminated.

After all 24 Time Dao Runes had been activated, the golden light radiating from the Eye of Truth suddenly grew brighter, immediately following which a beam of golden light shot out of the eye's pupil, striking the layer of white light on the stone monument before instantly passing through.



The beam of white light was like a sharp blade that had sliced through the white light barrier and was beginning to tear it apart.

Right at this moment, the stone monument abruptly shuddered, startling the white finch and causing it to fly up into the air.

A burst of golden light appeared, and strange fluctuations began to surge out from within the stone monument. All of a sudden, Han Li was able to sense some rather faint yet familiar powers of time.

This stone monument is a treasure that contains the power of time!

Han Li was very much taken aback by this revelation, yet there were still more surprises to come.

A vast expanse of golden light began to surge out of the stone monument's fractured surface, and the broken section of the monument was rapidly being restored by the golden light.

Before long, the entire monument had been restored to its original state, looking as if it had been completely reconstructed, and even the damaged heads of the pair of beasts engraved on either side of the monument had been restored.

Could it be that this Eye of Truth is also able to repair objects and reconstruct treasures?

After a brief moment of contemplation, Han Li sprang up into the air, landing on top of the stone monument before reaching down to stroke the surface restored section of the monument.

However, as soon as his hand came into contact with the surface of the monument, it instantly passed right through.

So this is nothing more than a projection reflected by the Eye of Truth.

Han Li wasn't very surprised by this outcome, and he flew back down onto the ground before directing his gaze toward the restored section of the monument.

As soon as he did so, he was rooted to the spot once again.

As it turned out, another passage of golden seal text had appeared above the second passage, and the two of them were separated by another blank area.

This third passage of text was none other than the third level of the Mantra Axis Scripture!

Han Li was both astonished and ecstatic upon seeing this, and he knew that this was an immensely fortunate opportunity.

Right at this moment, a rather mechanical voice rang out from beside him. "You still have two hours left."

The voice belonged to none other than that white finch. Even with the assistance of the Eye of Truth, Han Li was unable to identify exactly what this white finch was.

He hurriedly focused his attention on the third passage of text upon hearing this, memorizing the third level of the Mantra Axis Scripture as quickly as he could.

With all 24 Time Dao Runes and the Eye of Truth activated at once, Han Li was rapidly burning through his immortal spiritual power reserves. Even though he was using an Immortal Origin Stone to replenish his energy, it still only took a few minutes for all of his immortal spiritual power to be depleted, rendering him unable to use the Eye of Truth any longer.

As the Eye of Truth faded away, the restored section of the stone monument also disintegrated into specks of golden light, while the Mantra Treasured Axis behind Han Li was withdrawn into his body.

Han Li gently exhaled as he flipped both hands over to summon a pair of Immortal Origin Stones, holding one in each hand to replenish his immortal spiritual power

There was a faint smile on his face, and the excitement in his heart refused to die down. He had only come to this place to try his luck, and he certainly wasn't expecting to have reaped such significant rewards from this trip.

Not only had he secured the second level of the Mantra Axis Scripture, he had managed to acquire the third level of the cultivation art as well, so he was naturally ecstatic.

"Time's up," the white finch declared as it flew back onto the stone monument.

"Thank you... Er... Senior," Han Li replied, deciding to refer to the white finch as senior after a moment of deliberation.

"I'm no senior, I'm nothing more than a manifestation of the restrictions in this secret area," the white finch replied.

Han Li still wanted to ask more questions, but the white finch didn't give him a chance to do so, spreading its wings and flying directly toward him. It appeared to have been moving very slowly, but it reached him in the blink of an eye.

Han Li was still holding the Immortal Origin Stones in his hands when he felt the entire space moving toward him along with the white finch, and he was swallowed up before he had a chance to do anything.

In the next instant, the surface of the lake in the Half Moon Valley began to churn violently as if the water had been brought to a boil, and Han Li slowly emerged from the water onto the surface.

He looked down to find that the surface of the lake was already gradually returning to a tranquil state, with only faint ripples spreading through the water, and he could see a reflection of himself looking back at him.

The light in the valley was rather dim, and the snow was reflecting the light of the setting sun. It was already close to night time.