

A Record 311

Chapter 311: Implanting a Bean Into a Puppet

"The construction of this immortal puppet is more complex than I anticipated. I thought that I would be able to forcibly alter its internal makeup with the assistance of the lightning array, but it didn't quite work out that way," Daoist Xie sighed.

"Don't worry about it, it was just an idea, and there's no need to try and force the issue. If the opportunity arises, I'll be sure to find you a suitable puppet in the future," Han Li replied with a shake of his head.

"I suppose we have no choice but to accept this outcome. Having said that, this was not an entirely fruitless endeavor. Even though I wasn't able to modify the puppet, I've examined every single part of it in meticulous detail during the past 200 years.

"If you so wish, you can spend 1,000 years or so cultivating a suitable earth-attribute cultivation art, and I'm confident that I can make it so that you can use 60% of the puppet's power. It won't be its full mid-Golden Immortal Stage power, but it'll definitely be more formidable than the average early-Golden Immortal cultivator," Daoist Xie said.

"You were a complete immortal puppet in the past, so I naturally trust your expertise in the art of puppetry, but let's discuss this matter another time," Han Li replied in an ambiguous manner.

While it was true that being able to control an early-Golden Immortal Stage puppet would've been a great asset, he didn't have time to consider this matter for the time being.

Even though he was in the Blaze Dragon Dao, his safety wasn't guaranteed, so he couldn't just go into seclusion for thousands of years at a time like other immortals. On top of that, the Mantra Axis Scripture and the Great Universe Origin Arts were more suitable cultivation arts for him to pursue, so he naturally had to prioritize them.

"Also, during this process, I discovered a hint of origin lightning power in the clam bead, so I attempted to refine it, and it replenished quite a bit of the energy in my core," Daoist Xie continued.

"That's fine, that thing wasn't very useful to me anyway. In that case, there's no longer any need for this array to continue to function, right?" Han Li asked as he cast his gaze toward the lightning array on the ground.

Daoist Xie shook his head in response, and Han Li swept a sleeve through the air to release a burst of azure light that disassembled the entire array.

Meanwhile, Daoist Xie raised its pair of pincers before crossing them in front of itself, and a bolt of purple lightning instantly shot forth to strike the yellow-robed puppet.

A crisp crack rang out from the puppet, and it reverted back into a yellow ball amid a flash of dazzling yellow light. Immediately thereafter, Daoist Xie also reverted back into a golden ball, and both balls were promptly stowed away by Han Li.

.....

Around two hours later.

A streak of azure light descended onto a white stone plaza on a mountain near the High Profound Palace, then faded to reveal none other than Han Li.

He made his way to the end of the plaza, and a large expanse of courtyards appeared before him. On the plaque that hung above the large red gate at the center were inscribed the words "Hundred Wine Cottage" in free-flowing characters, and he couldn't help but be amused whenever he saw the wobbly characters on the plaque.

No matter how he looked at them, they always resembled a bunch of drunkards leaning on one another for support.

Before he reached the entrance of the cottage, the gate was opened from the inside, and a pair of azure-robed servants emerged, carrying a large black urn between them.

The two of them were familiar with Han Li, and they immediately set down the large urn before extending a collective respectful salute to him.

Han Li could smell a faint sour odor coming from the black urn, and he asked, "What is it that you're carrying?"

"These are some distillers grains that have gone bad, and Elder Hu Yan instructed us to tip them into a creek in the mountains," one of the azure-robed servants replied.

Han Li nodded in response, then stepped around the pair of servants and made his way into the cottage.

He had only just passed through the corridor in the front yard and made his way into the main hall when he spotted Elder Hu Yan emerging from the inner courtyard.

To his surprise, Elder Hu Yan's hair was impeccably groomed, and his clothes were also in pristine condition. Even his stride lengths had increased slightly compared with before, and he couldn't help but wonder what could've happened in the past 200 years that had brought on these changes.

"You must have the nose of a dog! I only just finished brewing several jars of Hundred Flower Wine, and you've already sniffed it out! You came at just the right," Daoist Hu Yan declared with a wide smile.

"Are you celebrating something, Senior?" Han Li asked.

Daoist Hu Yan faltered slightly upon hearing this, then scoffed, "Why do you think that? Are you thinking to yourself that there's no way someone as stingy as me would offer you wine unless there's something I'm celebrating?"

Han Li merely smiled and offered no response.

Daoist Hu Yan also smiled as he gestured for Han Li to come in. "Take a seat."

After both of them had sat down, Daoist Hu Yan swept a hand through the air, and a white jade flagon and a pair of peony cups appeared on the table.

He picked up the flagon and tipped it slightly to the side, and a stream of light azure wine instantly came flowing out of the spout and into the cup, while an intoxicating floral aroma began to waft through the air.

Han Li's eyes immediately lit up upon catching a whiff of this aroma, and Daoist Hu Yan was very pleased to see this reaction.

"Give it a taste."

Han Li did as he was told, picking up his cup before taking a small sip, and his mouth was instantly filled with a sweet and aromatic flavor that wasn't harsh on the mouth in the slightest.

"This is exceptional wine!" Han Li praised after swallowing the wine in his mouth, and a proud smile appeared on Daoist Hu Yan's face upon hearing this.

"This is indeed a fine wine, but its flavor is lacking compared with the Red Mulberry Wine and the Fire Drop Wine, so it's rather unlike the wines that you normally enjoy," Han Li remarked.

"This wine was brewed for someone else, not for me to drink," Daoist Hu Yan explained with a smile.

"Oh? Is it for Dao Lord Yun?" Han Li asked in a seemingly casual voice.

Daoist Hu Yan's smile stiffened slightly upon hearing this, and he put on an angry façade as he stowed the flagon away. "Just keep your mouth shut and drink your wine!"

Han Li smiled and offered no response.

All of a sudden, Daoist Hu Yan's expression changed ever so slightly, and he remarked, "I didn't notice it earlier, but your aura has become a lot more powerful than before. It seems like you've been working hard!"

"I just so happened to encounter some strokes of fortune, and I went into seclusion for a while as well. I came to visit you as soon as I came out of seclusion," Han Li replied with a smile.

"It must've been quite a significant stroke of fortune for you to have made such significant progress in just a few centuries! Also, why have you come to visit me? You're not the type to do things that won't work to your benefit, so you must have something to ask of me, right?" Daoist Hu Yan asked.

"You know me very well, Senior. I came to you because for some reason, the primary bean that I planted produced two primary bean flowers, which is at odds with what's stated in the book that you gave me, so I decided to come and consult you about it," Han Li replied with a serious expression.

"Two primary bean flowers?" Daoist Hu Yan exclaimed with an incredulous expression.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly at the sight of his reaction, and he hurriedly asked, "Is there something wrong?"

"Wrong? Things couldn't be less wrong! Generally speaking, a Dao Warrior Tree will only have a 50% chance of sprouting a primary bean flower, but not only has yours sprouted a primary bean flower, it's sprouted two! It's not that this has never happened before, but it's extremely unlikely. How are you so lucky? I'm beginning to get a little envious of you," Daoist Hu Yan said as he picked up the red wine gourd strapped to his waist before taking a swig of its contents.

Han Li was quite relieved to hear this. He had already guessed that this was most likely a positive development, and he was completely reassured after receiving confirmation from Daoist Hu Yan.

He knew that this was most likely a result of the spirit liquid that had been used to water the primary bean rather than just a matter of dumb luck, but he naturally wasn't going to reveal that to Daoist Hu Yan.

All of a sudden, a thought occurred to him, and he asked, "If a Dao Warrior Tree doesn't sprout a primary bean flower, doesn't that mean it won't be able to produce another Dao Warrior Tree?"

"That's right. Do you think primary beans are that easy to obtain? In the field of Dao Warrior planting, the continuation of primary beans has always been a major problem. Forget it, you wouldn't understand even if I explained this to you," Daoist Hu Yan harrumphed.

"In that case, it looks like I'm in luck," Han Li chuckled.

Daoist Hu Yan rolled his eyes at Han Li before taking another swig of wine.

Han Li paid no heed to Daoist Hu Yan as he mused in an excited voice, "If I plant both primary beans, after a couple of centuries, I'll be able to develop twice the number of Dao Warriors!"

"If I were you, I definitely wouldn't waste those primary beans by simply planting them," Daoist Hu Yan interjected.

Han Li faltered slightly upon hearing this, then asked, "Why would that be a waste, Senior?"

"If you can maintain this streak of luck, then just a single primary bean would be enough for you to nurture more Dao Warriors. As for the other one, you may as well keep it, and if you ever come across a high-grade puppet, you can implant it into that puppet," Daoist Hu Yan explained in a meaningful voice.

"Primary beans can be implanted into puppets?" Han Li asked with a surprised expression.

"Some Dao Warriors are puppets to begin with. As long as the attributes are matching, a primary bean can be integrated into a puppet, and after that, the puppet will gain many characteristics of Dao Warriors, such as the ability to regenerate severed limbs.

"As long as the core remains intact, the puppet will be virtually indestructible, and due to the fact that these puppets will have runes inscribed upon them from the primary bean integration process, even if it they fall into the hands of others, no one else will be able to use them," Daoist Hu Yan explained.

Han Li immediately thought of the yellow-robed immortal puppet upon hearing this, and he said, "That sounds incredible! Would you be able to impart the integration method upon me, Senior?"

"Why? Could it be that you already have an immortal puppet in your possession?" Daoist Hu Yan asked as he raised an eyebrow.

Han Li's expression remained unchanged as he replied, "Of course not, but it can't hurt to be prepared. What if I am fortunate enough to come into possession of an immortal puppet in the future?"

"You sure do like to cover all of your bases. The integration method isn't exactly a secret, so I can bestow it upon you, but... I can't just let you have it for free," Daoist Hu Yan said as a sly gleam flashed through his eyes.

Chapter 312: Lightning Bean

"Of course. I just so happened to have obtained a certain item recently, let me know if it catches your interest, Senior."

Han Li flipped a hand over as he spoke to produce a thin golden page.

"A pill recipe, eh? Don't try to placate me with just any pill recipe. At the very least, it has to be an earthly pill recipe," Daoist Hu Yan chuckled.

He made a beckoning motion with one hand as he spoke, and the golden page rose up from Han Li's hand before landing in his grasp.

"Growth Bearing Pill? This is indeed an earthly pill, and one that's fit for consumption for mid-True Immortal cultivators, at that. I suppose this will suffice," Daoist Hu Yan mused, then stowed the golden page away before flipping his hand over to produce a white stone shard that he handed to Han Li.

Han Li accepted the stone shard before pressing it against his own forehead to inspect its contents.

"The array diagram and the materials required to set it up have already been clearly annotated, and it shouldn't be too difficult to set up, but you must make sure to prepare a sufficient number of spirit stones to support its operation. Otherwise, if it runs out of spirit power for even a single moment, then the entire process will fail. The puppet won't be harmed as a result, but the primary bean will be destroyed," Daoist Hu Yan cautioned.

"Thank you, Senior," Han Li replied with a nod as he removed the stone shard from his forehead.

"Alright, if that's all, then you can go. I still have other guests to attend to later," Daoist Hu Yan said in a direct and straightforward manner.

"In that case, I won't take up any more of your time, Senior."

Han Li rose to his feet and extended a parting salute, then flew out of the Hundred Wine Cottage as a streak of light.

He had only just flown to the edge of the mountain when he spotted another streak of light descending toward the Hundred Wine Cottage, and it was none other than Bai Suyuan's mistress, Yun Ni.

Back on the plaza in the Holy Puppet Sect, Bai Suyuan had referred to Qilin 3 as mistress, and Han Li was already aware of Bai Suyuan's identity, so he was naturally tipped off to the fact that Qilin 3 and Yun Ni were one and the same.

Even though he hadn't been present during the final stage of the battle at the Holy Puppet Sect, he had learned through some other avenues that the person who had saved the Holy Puppet Sect in the end was none other than Daoist Hu Yan, and that he was also one of the Blaze Dragon Dao's 13 dao lords.

Given what he already knew about Bai Fengyi, he had guessed that there were some ties between Daoist Hu Yan and Yun Ni, but seeing as Daoist Hu Yan hadn't mentioned this topic, he naturally pretended to have been oblivious.

Of course, he had gone out of his way to unearth all of this information not just to satisfy his own curiosity. Instead, he was trying to find out whether the Holy Puppet Sect had launched a search for its

lost immortal puppet. However, it seemed that not long after the attack, the Holy Puppet Sect moved away from those islands and seemingly disappeared.

With these thoughts flashing through his mind, Han Li returned to the Crimson Dawn Peak.

After entering the secret chamber of his cave abode, he flipped a hand over to produce the stone shard given to him by Daoist Hu Yan, and an excited look appeared on his face as he closed his eyes and injected his spiritual sense into the stone shard.

The stone shard contained an array that was very similar to the one that Daoist Xie had requested, indicating that there were many fundamental similarities between them, but there were some differences in the finer details and in the materials required to set up the array.

After inspecting the array diagram for a moment, Han Li directed his attention to the materials and method required to set up the array. In doing so, he discovered five different sets of materials depending on the attribute of the primary bean.

Among them, he placed his focus on the earth-attribute materials. After all, the immortal puppet was an earth-attribute one, and his primary bean came from the Golden Dao Warrior, so there was a very good chance that it was also an earth-attribute one.

Some time later, Han Li opened his eyes as he murmured to himself, "Infinity Sand..."

He then flipped a hand over to produce a pair of azure masks, one cow and one tiger.

Han Li's gaze roamed back and forth over the two masks for a moment before he ultimately decided to put on the tiger mask.

At this point, Wyrms 15 had already become a little too renowned for comfort, so it was best for him to switch identities.

This was the first time that he was using the mask since obtaining it, and it gave him the identity of Raccoon 11.

After that, he released an Infinity Sand procurement mission, and after some contemplation, he decided to release the same procurement missions for the dao pill ingredients that he had already released using the cow mask.

Only after doing all of that did he stow the mask away before sitting down with his legs crossed to cultivate.

.....

Over 10 years passed by in a flash.

On this day, Han Li was cultivating in his secret chamber when he suddenly heard a string of loud booms ringing out from within his cave abode.

His eyes immediately sprang open as he flew out of his secret chamber and traveled straight to his spirit medicine garden.

As soon as he entered the garden, the loud booms became even clearer.

A hint of elation appeared on Han Li's face as he quickly approached the Dao Warrior Tree to find that it had already completely wilted, and the bean pods hanging from it had also turned yellow and were exploding one after another, sending dark yellow beans raining down onto the ground.

Han Li caught one of the beans that had just erupted out of its pod, and he inspected it closely to find that its surface was riddled with golden lightning veins that would've been impossible to see had he not been looking at it so closely.

He then injected a burst of immortal spiritual power into the bean through his fingers, and the golden lightning veins on the bean instantly lit up before releasing a vast expanse of golden lightning.

Han Li's eyes immediately lit up upon seeing this. As it turned out, the mutation that these Dao Warriors had undergone had granted them the lightning attribute.

Right at this moment, an explosion that was clearly louder than all of the previous ones rang out, and Han Li looked up to discover that the two large bean pods at the top of the Dao Warrior Tree had erupted open at once, sending a pair of pea-sized primary beans flying through the air.

He hurriedly reached out to catch the pair of primary beans before inspecting them closely as well.

Aside from their size, these primary beans were almost identical to the other beans, except the lightning veins on their surface were darker, and the lightning power that was imbued within them was slightly more pure.

At this point, all of the beans had already been ejected out of their pods, and the Dao Warrior Tree completely wilted away, rapidly turning from yellow to gray before disintegrating into dust, all in the span of just a few seconds.

Han Li flipped a hand over to produce a yellow gourd, then patted the underside of the gourd, and a burst of yellow light immediately appeared at its opening, releasing a burst of tremendous suction force that sucked in all of the beans that had spilled onto the ground.

Of course, not just any object could be used to store Dao Warriors, and this gourd was something that Han Li had refined according to the instructions enclosed in Daoist Hu Yan's book.

This gourd functioned very similarly to a storage pouch, but it was actually closer in nature to a spirit beast pouch, and while stored inside it, the Dao Warriors could continue to absorb the world's origin qi.

In fact, if he wanted to keep nurturing the Dao Warriors to elevate them to a higher caliber, he could even pour some premade spirit liquid into the gourd, and that was exactly what Daoist Hu Yan was doing with his Dao Warriors.

After collecting all of the beans, Han Li returned to his secret chamber in an excited manner.

Two days later.

A ring-shaped array that was around 10 feet in radius had been engraved onto the ground in Han Li's secret chamber.

There were numerous indentations distributed throughout the array, within which were placed various types of spirit materials and several Immortal Origin Stones.

At the center of the array was a golden platform of a moderate size that resembled a city, with four walls on top to create a cavity, where the hundreds of Dao Warrior beans were being stored.

This array was known as the Lightning Origin Locking Array, and it was a lightning-attribute array recorded in Daoist Hu Yan's book that could be used to refine Dao Warrior beans.

The golden platform at the center of the array was a small altar that Han Li had constructed using Lightning Restraining Wood, and it was the core of the entire array.

The refinement array for Dao Warrior beans had to be chosen based on the attribute displayed by the beans after they reached maturity, and Han Li had thought that these beans would most likely have taken after the golden giant and developed the earth attribute, but due to the mutation, these beans did still contain earth-attribute spiritual power, but it was far outmatched by the lightning-attribute spiritual power within them.

Hence, when choosing a refinement array, Han Li had decided on the Lightning Origin Locking Array.

After everything was set up in the secret chamber, he sat down with his legs crossed in front of the array, then flipped a hand over to produce a pill, which he promptly consumed.

Daoist Hu Yan had warned him that setting up this array was going to be very taxing on his immortal spiritual power, so he had to prime himself into the best possible condition before commencing the refinement process.

With that in mind, he sat down to meditate for a long time before opening his eyes and activating the array.

He made a hand seal with both hands, then pointed a finger at the golden platform at the center of the array, and an arc of golden lightning immediately shot out of his fingertip before springing into the platform like a spirit snake.

The sound of flowing electricity rang out as the entire golden platform instantly began to glow brightly, and countless arcs of lightning sprang forth in all directions, forming a spherical golden light barrier that encompassed the entire array.

At the same time, all of the top-grade spirit stones that had been embedded into the indentations on the ground also began to glow brightly before releasing bursts of pure spiritual power into the array patterns on the ground.

At the same time, the golden platform began to tremble violently, and the beans inside also began to bounce up and down as a result.

Han Li activated his Brightsight Spirit Eyes upon seeing this, then thrust both palms upward at once, and all of the beans were immediately raised upward by an invisible hand, emerging from the platform to hover in the air within the spherical light barrier.

The two primary beans were hanging at the center like a pair of full moons, while the other beans were distributed around them like glowing stars.

Chapter 313: Exploring an Alternative Path

All of a sudden, Han Li switched to a different hand seal, and the golden patterns on the golden platform instantly lit up as a pillar of golden lightning erupted directly upward, striking the light barrier up above before splitting up into countless arcs of golden lightning.

The two primary beans were situated at the very center of the pillar of lightning, while hundreds of arcs of lightning erupted in all directions to form a golden net that encompassed all of the surrounding beans.

Within the net of lightning, all of the beans were interconnected by strands of lightning that resembled thin branches, while the pillar of golden lightning beneath the primary beans resembled the main trunk, giving the entire setup the appearance of a small golden lightning tree.

The wisps of spiritual power released by the spirit stones on the ground flowed through the lightning tree's trunk and branches and into the beans, causing all of the lightning veins on their surfaces to glow with dazzling radiance.

Han L felt as if he were looking at a golden tree that was laden with fruit, and a pleased look appeared on his face.

He took a deep breath before switching to yet another hand seal, and the entire array instantly shuddered as specks of black light began to appear on many of the nodes in the array, then connected together to form an extremely peculiar bestial design.

The beast resembled a cow, but it had the horns of a dragon. It appeared to have been quite massive in stature, and its round belly was riddled with antiquated runes that were giving off formidable lightning power fluctuations.

What was even more peculiar was that the beast only had a single leg, making it resemble a giant black hammer, and trailing behind it was a whip-like tail.

This was a Lightning Kui that was an extremely renowned spirit beast in the Immortal Realm, and it was born with the ability to control Nine Heavens True Lightning. It would often pound its belly with its own tail to produce rumbling thunderclaps that warded off all evil and malicious entities.

As soon as the bestial design took shape, Han Li took a deep breath, and he knew that the most important moment in the Dao Warrior refinement process was about to arrive.

He joined his palms in a new hand seal, then began to chant an incantation, and as he did so, the Lightning Kui diagram on the ground began to glow with black light before rising up into the air, passing through all of the beans to reach the light barrier up above.

The blue light in Han Li's eyes grew even brighter, and translucent threads formed by his spiritual sense began to fly out of his glabella before hurtling into the golden lightning tree, and at the same time, he was also sweeping his hand incessantly through the air.

As he did this, all of the beans hanging from the golden lightning tree began to tremble slightly, and specks of black light began to appear around the lightning veins on the beans, indicating that the rune inscription process had officially begun.

Outside the array, Han Li's hands were moving in a rapid blur, yet the black veins that were appearing on the beans inside the array were doing so at an extremely slow rate.

Inscribing runes was an extremely painstaking process that was very taxing on one's spiritual sense, and the average True Immortal would've most likely divided the beans up into batches for rune inscription to lessen the strain on their spiritual sense.

While this was a feasible option, the downside was that due to the fact that the beans were refined in batches, only the batch of beans that had refined with the primary bean would have a strong connection to the primary bean, while the same couldn't be said for all of the other beans.

Under most circumstances, this wouldn't have had much of a negative impact, and the Dao Warriors would've still been able to function as normal, but if the Dao Warriors were required to set up arrays, just as the Golden Dao Warriors had done, then their reactions would've been slightly slower.

Thanks to Han Li's enormous spiritual sense, he was able to refine all of the beans in a single batch.

Time slowly passed by, and a month flew by in the blink of an eye.

Han Li was still completely engrossed in his work, oblivious to the passage of time.

He brought his palms together in front of his chest, and the final inscriptions were made on all of the beans in the array, following which the inscribed runes began to radiate dazzling black light.

The blue light in Han Li's eyes faded upon seeing this, and there was a slightly weary look on his face, but he was elated to have finally completed this process.

The light glowing from the array in the secret chamber also gradually dimmed as all of the arcs of golden lightning began to converge toward the pair of primary beans, while the lightning light barrier vanished.

Shortly thereafter, the golden lightning also vanished, and all of the beans fell back into the golden platform.

Han Li pulled out the yellow gourd, then patted its underside, and a burst of yellow light immediately appeared at its opening, releasing a burst of suction force that sucked in all of the beans.

However, instead of allowing the pair of primary beans to be sucked into the gourd, he stowed them away into his chest pocket instead.

After that he exhaled deeply as he produced an azure pill, which he consumed before closing his eyes to meditate.

The next day.

In a certain snowy valley within the territory of the Crimson Dawn Peak, a streak of azure light descended out of the sky, then faded to reveal Han Li.

He swept his gaze across the valley, then flew over to a relatively flat and open area.

There, he removed the yellow gourd from his waist, then chanted an incantation, and the the opening of the gourd immediately lit up with yellow radiance, following which a string of yellow beans flew out in rapid succession before landing on the ground.

As soon as the beans landed in the surrounding area, each of them instantly transformed into an armored Dao Warrior that stood at around 10 feet in height.

They were rather similar to Golden Dao Warriors in appearance, but they were wearing suits of armor with lightning veins inscribed upon them, and all several hundred of them had arranged themselves into a uniform array, presenting a formidable sight to behold.

Han Li flicked a finger through the air, and a streak of azure sword qi swept through the air before striking one of the Dao Warriors on the chest.

The Dao Warrior was instantly sent flying with a resounding boom before landing heavily on the ground to create a huge indentation.

In the next instant, the Dao Warrior sprang out of the crater, and its armor had already pierced through, while a gash had also been sliced into its chest, but the gash wasn't very deep and didn't appear to have been affecting its movements at all.

Han Li gave a slight nod upon seeing this.

He had only used around one percent of his power to unleash that streak of sword qi, but it still would've been too much for the average Grand Ascension cultivator to withstand, and the fact that it was only able to slightly wound this Dao Warrior indicated that its defenses were even more formidable than he anticipated.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Han Li decided to pit the Dao Warriors against each other. Arcs of golden lightning flashed over their suits of armor, and they rushed into the valley at his behest, displaying far superior speed to the Golden Dao Warriors that Han Li had faced in the past.

Upon entering the valley, the Dao Warriors immediately split up into groups of two to engage in battle, and bursts of loud rumbling akin to formidable thunderclaps instantly rang out.

The entire valley began to tremble violently, triggering avalanches on all of the nearby mountains.

After some observation, Han Li discovered that these Dao Warriors were very similar to the Golden Dao Warriors in their style of battle in that they were just as reckless and uncaring for their own safety.

However, these Dao Warriors were clearly displaying superior regenerative abilities, able to quickly recover from all injuries as long as they weren't completely destroyed, and that was a very encouraging sight for Han Li.

After that, Han Li controlled the Dao Warriors to set up a few arrays, but the results weren't that great. However, he knew that this was due to a lack of practice, so he didn't pay it much heed.

He was already very pleased with the power being displayed by the Dao Warriors, and he stowed them away before returning to his cave abode.

After entering his secret chamber, he flipped a hand over to produce a golden metal ball, then called out, "Brother Xie..."

Moments later, several rifts appeared on the golden ball, out of which a series of thin metallic limbs emerged, and the ball transformed into a palm-sized golden crab amid a string of metallic clicking.

"Why have you called upon me, Fellow Daoist Han?" Daoist Xie asked as it looked up at Han Li from the palm of his hand.

"I recently came across an array that can integrate a Dao Warrior primary bean with a puppet, and I wanted to discuss it with you," Han Li replied.

"Are you considering fusing a primary bean with that immortal puppet, Fellow Daoist Han? I'm afraid that's not going to work on an immortal puppet that's missing its core," Daoist Xie said.

Han Li remained unfazed, and he smiled as he urged, "Don't be in such a hurry to shut down the idea, Brother Xie. Why don't you take a look at this primary bean first?"

He then flipped his other hand over to produce one of the primary beans, which had a series of golden lightning veins over its surface, as well as an image of the Lightning Kui beast.

Han Li set the primary bean down beside Daoist Xie, and the latter was immediately intrigued.

It made a lap around the primary bean, inspecting it carefully, then looked up at Han Li as it mused, "This primary bean possesses both earth and lightning attributes. Are you thinking..."

"That's right," Han Li interjected. "You were unable to fuse with the puppet due to mismatching attributes, but with this primary bean acting as an intermediary, perhaps it'll work."

Daoist Xie was silent for a moment, then said, "That is indeed a potentially feasible method... Can you show me the integration array?"

Han Li offered the stone shard to Daoist Xie, who grabbed onto it with one of its pincers.

A short while later, it released the stone shard, then turned to Han Li as it said in a solemn voice, "The lightning array that I asked you to set up earlier is one that works in a slow and subtle fashion, yet this array is far more aggressive. If the process fails, this priceless primary bean will for sure be destroyed, and that immortal puppet and I will most likely be harmed as well. Are you sure you're willing to take this risk?"

Chapter 314: Fusion

Han Li faltered slightly upon hearing this, then said, "You'll be harmed as well if the process fails? That's something that I failed to consider. Having said that, risk and reward always come hand in hand. If you manage successfully fuse with that immortal puppet, you'll immediately attain Golden Immortal Stage power, so I think it's still worth a try. Are you willing to take a gamble, Brother Xie?"

After slaying Zhong Luan, Han Li had been able to spend the past 200 years in relative peace, but he had never been able to shake off this prevailing sense of apprehension. Hence, after accumulating sufficient resources, he had constantly been cultivating arduously in the hope that he would be able to manifest a time law thread after reaching the late-True Immortal Stage so that he would be better equipped to take on Golden Immortal cultivators, but that endeavor had proven to be unsuccessful up to this point.

Now that he had been presented with the opportunity to potentially gain a Golden Immortal Stage ally, he naturally didn't want to pass it up.

Daoist Xie fell into a hesitant silence.

"I won't force you to make any decision on this matter, Brother Xie. Also, there's one thing that I must make clear ahead of time: if the fusion is successful, you will be fused as one with the puppet and the primary bean, thereby strengthening your connection to me, and due to the involvement of the primary bean, you'll be more firmly under my control. This is unavoidable, and it's something for you to consider," Han Li said in a candid fashion.

Daoist Xie remained silent for a while longer, then looked up at Han Li as it said, "Alright, I'm willing to give it a try as long as you don't forget the promise you made to me back in the Spirit Realm."

"Alright. In that case, I'll begin setting up the array right away," Han Li replied with a nod.

A month passed by in a flash.

During that time, Han Li had opened up a larger secret chamber in his cave abode, within which was a complex array with eight lengths of Lightning Restraining Wood with runes inscribed all over them distributed throughout.

Various types of materials, including Infinity Sand, had been placed into the nodes of the array, and there were also Immortal Origin Stones embedded into several indentations around the array.

The yellow-robed immortal puppet was seated at the center of the array with its legs crossed, and Han Li was standing outside the array as he flipped a hand over to produce a golden metal ball.

A string of mechanical clicking rang out, and the golden ball quickly transformed into a golden crab.

"Everything is ready, Brother Xie. You can begin," Han Li said as he turned to the golden crab.

Daoist Xie offered no response, enveloping itself in a ball of golden lightning before flying toward the yellow-robed puppet's chest and vanishing into it in a flash.

Han Li immediately sat down with his legs crossed upon seeing this, then made a hand seal as he began to chant an incantation.

A burst of yellow light emerged within the secret chamber amid a burst of buzzing, and gusts of yellow wind began to sweep over the array, forming a yellow vortex that enveloped the immortal puppet while also sweeping up all of the materials laid out across the array.

Immediately thereafter, a series of antiquated runes flew out of the immortal puppet's robes before flying into the vortex.

As soon as the spirit materials in the vortex came into contact with these runes, they immediately disintegrated into powder before surging toward the immortal puppet.

At the same time, Han Li flipped a hand over to produce one of his two primary beans, then tossed it forward, and the primary bean fell into the array in a flash.

Upon entering the array, the primary bean hovered above the immortal puppet's head, and several runes immediately adhered themselves to it as well, but it didn't disintegrate. Instead, it abruptly lit up and produced a Dao Warrior Tree projection.

The projection was around 10 feet tall, and it was rooted to the array with the yellow-robed puppet enveloped within its trunk.

Han Li made a hand seal before leaning forward and laying a palm against the ground, and as soon as he did this, all of the Immortal Origin Stones in the array lit up in unison, releasing a stream of immortal spiritual power into the trunk of the Dao Warrior Tree projection through its roots.

The tree projection began to glow brightly, and all of the broken down spirit materials vanished into the immortal puppet's body, while the yellow vortex faded away.

The sound of flowing electricity rang out as the runes on the eight lengths of Lightning Restraining Wood situated around the array lit up, and arcs of golden electricity shot out like a nest of lightning snakes before converging toward the immortal puppet.

At the same time, a burst of purplish-golden lightning erupted from the puppet's chest, and it was as if it had been draped into a large cloak of lightning.

This was a clear sign that Daoist Xie had already begun attempting to fuse itself with the puppet, and Han Li immediately switched to a different hand seal upon seeing this.

Right at this moment, a rumbling thunderclap suddenly rang out, and a giant golden crab projection appeared behind the immortal puppet with lightning flashing all over its body.

Han Li's attention was focused fully on the array in front of him as he thrust his palms forward, and the immortal spiritual power in his body surged forth like a mighty river.

Bursts of rumbling rang out incessantly within the secret chamber, and the walls also began to tremble violently.

Fortunately, Han Li had already anticipated this, and he had set up stabilization and isolation arrays in advance. Otherwise, these tremors would've caused quite a disturbance over the entire Crimson Dawn Peak.

As the tremors grew more violent, the yellow and purplish-golden light in the secret chamber also began to flash more erratically.

Han Li continued to cycle through a string of hand seals to maintain the outflow of immortal spiritual power, and he had also released spiritual sense threads to connect the primary bean, the immortal puppet, and Daoist Xie in order to forcibly integrate them.

Inside the secret chamber, the golden crab projection and the Dao Warrior Tree projection shrank down in unison from around 10 feet tall to only six to seven feet, then to two to three feet, and the yellow light and lightning enveloping them also began to converge toward the center.

Only after a long while did all of the light completely condense into a fist-sized ball of golden light that was hovering in front of the immortal puppet's chest, and a tiny tree projection and a golden crab could be seen within the ball of light.

At this point, almost all of Han Li's immortal spiritual power had flowed into the array, and his spiritual sense had been severely depleted as well, resulting in a slightly pale complexion.

"Fuse!" he roared, and in the next instant, all that remained of the immortal spiritual power in his body surged toward the immortal puppet without any reservation.

A faint crack rang out from the ground, and the Immortal Origin Stones embedded into the array also released all of their immortal spiritual power before shattering into pieces.

A vortex of light abruptly appeared at the immortal puppet's chest to devour the ball of golden light, and a thick bolt of lightning erupted out of the puppet's body amid a rumbling thunderclap.

It resembled a pillar of purplish-golden lightning that erupted into the heavens, blasting straight through the ceiling of the secret chamber and causing the entire Crimson Dawn Peak to shudder violently.

Thankfully, the pillar of lightning faded after only a few seconds.

Inside the secret chamber, Han Li's immortal spiritual power had been completely exhausted, so he could only withstand the blast of lightning with his Profound Immortal body alone, and he was sent crashing heavily into the wall behind him before throwing up a mouthful of blood.

After steadying himself, he took a glance at the immortal puppet, which remained completely still. He sat down with his legs crossed once again, then swallowed a yellow pill before summoning an Immortal Origin Stone that he held in his hand before closing his eyes to meditate.

Only after around 15 minutes had passed did he reopen his eyes before spitting out the remaining mixture of blood and saliva in his mouth.

All of a sudden, the immortal puppet's eyelids fluttered, and it opened its eyes to reveal a pair of golden pupils.

Han Li's expression remained unchanged, but internally, he was extremely excited as he said, "Congratulations on attaining a new body, Brother Xie. I was concerned that something would go wrong with the fusion process, but it appears my concerns were unnecessary."

The aura emanating from the immortal puppet's body indicated that it already possessed early-Golden Immortal Stage power.

Perhaps it was due to the involvement of the primary bean, but a spiritual restriction had already been planted deep in the puppet, ensuring that it wouldn't be able to turn on Han Li.

"It's all thanks to your help, Fellow Daoist Han. However, even though the fusion process was successful, due to the integration of the primary bean, the power in my body is a little chaotic, so I'll have to go into seclusion for a while for everything to settle down," Daoist Xie continued.

"That's not a problem. If you require any spirit stones or resources, feel free to tell me," Han Li replied with a nod.

Daoist Xie nodded expressionlessly in response, then closed its eyes to meditate.

Only now did Han Li allow a hint of elation to creep into his eyes, and he didn't linger in the secret chamber any longer, getting up to depart.

With this matter settled, he had to turn his attention to something else that he had to do.

.....

A streak of azure light descended from the heavens, landing in front of the golden palace on the Gourd Peak to reveal Han Li.

He took a glance up at the plaque above the palace's entrance, then made his way inside.

The Immortal Medicine Pavilion was filled with medicine cabinets and was quite lively and bustling. At the moment, Ye Nanfeng was attending to an elderly man in front of a cabinet near the entrance.

As soon as he spotted Han Li, Ye Nanfeng gave him a smile and a wave.

Han Li nodded in response, then began to browse through the medicine cabinets on his own.

Before long, the elderly man seemed to have found what he was looking for, and he promptly departed after paying for his purchase.

Ye Nanfeng then quickly approached Han Li with a smile as he greeted, "Long time no see, Elder Li."

"It seems like your Immortal Medicine Pavilion has added a great deal of medicinal ingredients to its catalog since my last visit, Elder Ye," Han Li remarked as he withdrew his gaze from one of the medicine cabinets.

"You have a keen eye, Elder Li. It's all thanks to Dao Lord Mu that we've gotten all of this new inventory," Ye Nanfeng replied with a smile.

Han Li faltered slightly upon hearing this, then asked, "Dao Lord Mu of the Flying Feather Peak?"

"Is there another Dao Lord Mu in our sect?" Ye Nanfeng asked.

"That's not what I meant. It's just that I heard that Dao Lord Mu has already been in seclusion for close to 100,000 years, could it be that he recently came out of seclusion?" Han Li asked.

Chapter 315: Number One Dao Lord

"You must've been in seclusion for quite some time, Elder Li. No wonder your aura has become significantly more powerful. Around a century ago, Dao Lord Mu suddenly came out of seclusion, then took several of his direct disciples on a trip to the Upper Arr Continent, and a lot of the new spirit medicines we acquired came from that trip," Ye Nanhua explained with a smile.

Han Li nodded in response with a contemplative expression. "I see. Speaking of spirit medicines, I came here to purchase some today. Please take a look for me, Elder Ye."

"Every time you come here, you always bring me a lot of business, Elder Li. I don't mean to brag, but even on the entire Ancient Cloud Continent, our Immortal Medicine Pavilion is near unmatched when it comes to the spirit medicine variety that we offer..."

Ye Nanfeng's voice suddenly trailed off, and his smile also faded as he inspected the list of spirit medicines in the jade slip.

Han Li wasn't all that surprised to see this change in Ye Nanfeng's expression.

After a brief silence, Ye Nanfeng shook his head as he said, "As far as I'm aware, we don't have even a single one of the ingredients on your list."

"It's fine, these spirit medicines are indeed quite difficult to find. Having said that, I'm sure you have many sources and connections, so if you can supply me with any information regarding any of these ingredients, I'd be happy to pay for it," Han Li said.

A slightly awkward look appeared on Ye Nanfeng's face, but he still replied in a polite manner, "I'm afraid I won't be able to help you, Elder Li. All of the spirit medicines on your list are extremely rare, and there are some that I only vaguely recall reading about in some ancient scriptures. Of course, I'll be sure to keep an eye out for any information and inform you if I do come across some leads."

"You have my thanks, Elder Ye."

Han Li didn't waste any more time here as he cupped his fist in a parting salute.

He had been searching extensively for the final few ingredients on the dao pill recipe, exhausting virtually all of the avenues available to him, but to no avail.

All of a sudden, a thought occurred to Ye Nanfeng, and he said, "Don't be disheartened, Elder Li. Under normal circumstances, it would be next to impossible to find these ingredients, but there may be some better chances for you at the moment."

"Oh? What do you mean by that, Elder Ye?" Han Li hurriedly asked.

Ye Nanfeng drew a little closer to Han Li, then said in a quiet voice, "This hasn't yet been made public knowledge in the sect, but I've heard that in a few more years, Dao Lord Baili will be coming out of seclusion."

Han Li was rather taken aback to hear this.

Dao Lord Baili Yan was the number one dao lord of the Blaze Dragon Dao, and it was said that he had already reached the pinnacle of the Golden Immortal Stage, so he was only one step away from becoming a High Zenith Stage Jade Immortal.

However, he was always in seclusion, and very few people in the sect had ever seen him.

"You only joined the sect in the past 1,000 years, so it makes sense that you aren't aware of this. After all, the last time Dao Lord Baili came out of seclusion was tens of thousands of years ago. Traditionally, whenever he comes out of seclusion, Dao Lord Baili would always hold a preaching ceremony.

"When that time comes, not only will all of the sect's elders be in attendance, many fellow daoists from all over the Northern Glacial Immortal Region will travel from far and wide to attend as well. With such a massive influx of outsiders, there will generally always be some auctions and exchange events taking place in the leadup to the preaching ceremony, so perhaps you'll be able to find some of the spirit medicines that you're looking for there," Ye Nanfeng explained.

Han Li's eyes immediately lit up upon hearing this. "I see. I was indeed unaware of all of this. Thank you for enlightening me, Elder Ye."

"There's no need to thank me, Elder Li. I'm sure news of this would spread throughout the sect soon anyway," Ye Nanfeng replied with a smile.

Han Li didn't dwell on this subject any longer as he flipped a hand over to produce a jade slip, then said, "Elder Ye, I have another list of ingredients here that I'm also trying to procure."

The jade slip contained the ingredients required to refine a pill called the Myriad Axis Pill.

The Myriad Axis Pill was suitable for late-True Immortal cultivators to consume, and he had obtained the recipe from Ping Yaozi.

Now that he had progressed to the late-True Immortal Stage, the pills that he had refined in the past were no longer effective, so he had to search for new pills.

All of the ingredients required to refine the Myriad Axis Pill were quite rare and exotic, indicating that it was no ordinary late-True Immortal Stage pill.

He had sent out Meng Yungui and the others several hundred years ago to search for the ingredients enclosed in the recipe, but they had only managed to find three or four of the supplementary ingredients, while the three main ingredients required to refine the pill remained elusive.

After inspecting the contents of the jade slip with his spiritual sense, a wry smile appeared on Ye Nanfeng's face as he said, "These ingredients are also quite rare, Elder Li. I'm assuming they were requested by that Earthly Pill Master friend of yours, right?"

"In particular, the Myriad Axis Fruit, the Herofall Flower and the Blood Crystal Lotus Root are very uncommon. I can supply you with all of the supplementary ingredients, but out of the three main ingredients, we only have the Herofall Flower."

He had always taken pride in the comprehensive nature of the Immortal Medicine Pavilion's inventory, but this was already the second time that he had failed to fulfill an order.

"That's right. That friend of mine acquired an ancient pill recipe recently, but he's been unable to secure all of the required ingredients, and that's why he asked me for help. I'll take whatever you have here and find the rest elsewhere," Han Li replied.

.....

Close to an hour later, Han Li emerged from the Immortal Medicine Pavilion with a slightly pained look on his face.

The ingredients for the Myriad Axis Pill were extremely expensive, and it had cost him a great deal of Immortal Origin Stones, even though he had only bought a few batches. Among them, the Herofall Flower was the most expensive, with a single 1,000-year-old specimen costing 15 Immortal Origin Stones.

Thankfully, he could mature and breed the flower with the spirit liquid from the Heaven Controlling Vial, so this wasn't a big problem.

After leaving the Immortal Medicine Pavilion, Han Li returned straight to the Crimson Dawn Peak.

According to Ye Nanfeng, there were still several years left until Dao Lord Baili was going to come out of seclusion, and it was very likely that he would be able to find more of the ingredients that he needed around that time, but it was most likely going to be very expensive.

He had already exhausted a great deal of funds in his prior pill refinement, and even though he still had a decent supply of Immortal Origin Stones, it was best that he earned more as a safety precaution.

After sitting down in his secret chamber, Han Li injected his spiritual sense into his storage pouch, then swept a sleeve through the air, and a bunch of objects emerged, including spirit treasures, cultivation arts, and materials.

These were all spoils that Han Li had reaped from the three True Immortal cultivators that he had slain at the Holy Puppet Sect, and he had already sold some of their belongings, but there was still quite a bit left. Given the circumstances, he didn't have time to complete any missions, so the only way to secure Immortal Origin Stones in a short time would be to sell everything here.

Han Li flipped a hand over to put on his tiger mask, then summoned the array plate and listed everything laid out before him in the exchange column, making sure to list everything at a slightly discounted price in order to sell them off quickly.

After that, he made his way to his medicine garden before pulling out a jade box, within which were several purplish-black spirit flowers that were giving off a peculiar aroma.

These were the Herofall Flowers that he had purchased. In order to secure more seeds, he had to wait for the flowers to bear fruit, and that was only going to happen once they reached 30,000 years of age, but that was naturally not a problem for him.

He cleared out a new area in his medicine garden, then carefully planted the Herofall Flowers.

After that, he returned to the entrance of the medicine garden, and a series of emotions welled up in his heart as he looked at all of the precious and exotic spirit plants thriving in the garden.

He had expended an enormous amount of time and effort to build up this medicine garden to its current state, and it was all thanks to this garden full of spirit plants that he was able to progress so quickly in his cultivation.

After lingering in the medicine garden for a moment longer, he returned to his secret chamber before sitting down with his legs crossed.

Without the support of pills, his rate of cultivation progression was going to be very slow, so instead of cultivating, he decided to continue appraising the eight-and-a-half-sentence mantra to see if he could reap any additional rewards.

Just as Ye Nanfeng anticipated, it didn't take long for news of Dao Lord Baili's imminent emergence from seclusion to begin spreading in the sect, and it was officially announced that the preaching ceremony would be held in seven years.

The entire Blaze Dragon Dao erupted into a frenzy with the emergence of this news.

According to sect records, Dao Lord Baili had held eight preaching ceremonies up to this point, and every single one of them had been an extremely prestigious event even in the context of the entire Northern Glacial Immortal Region.

What was special about this ceremony was that there were no restrictions on the people who could attend. In other words, even the outer sect disciples of the Blaze Dragon Dao were able to attend. As for how much they would be able to get out of it, that was up to them.

Apparently, this was a rule established by Dao Lord Baili himself, and it had always been upheld.

Some of the inner sect elders and direct disciples that were stuck at cultivation bottlenecks were extremely excited by this opportunity.

There was always a chance that some words of wisdom from Dao Lord Baili could address their cultivation problems and help them break through their bottlenecks. It was said that attending past preaching ceremonies was a major factor that contributed to many members of the sect ascending to the True Immortal Stage.

Some disciples who hadn't yet reached the Grand Ascension Stage were just as excited nonetheless. After all, Dao Lord Baili already had half a foot in the High Zenith Stage, and being able to hear him preach was an extraordinary opportunity.

Seven years flew by in the blink of an eye.

This was not a short time for a mortal, but for cultivators, perhaps it wasn't even as long as the duration of a session of meditation.

The gates of the cave abode on the Crimson Dawn Peak were opened, and Han Li emerged from within.

Even though he had been in seclusion these past few years, he had made sure to keep up to date on the sect's affairs.

Dao Lord Baili's preaching ceremony was going to take place in seven days, and he had originally intended to come out of seclusion earlier than this, but while appraising the eight-and-a-half-sentence mantra during his seclusion, he had inadvertently gained some insight into the aura concealment secret technique enclosed in the Origin Separation Yin Devil Arts.

Only on this day did he finally achieve initial mastery of the secret technique, and he began to chant an incantation as azure light surged over his body.

Several chain projections appeared within the azure light before abruptly vanishing into his body, and his aura was instantly completely concealed, yet it wasn't forced in the slightest, and there were no signs to indicate the aura concealment that had taken place.

Upon reaching the True Immortal Stage, unless one were to completely release their aura while in battle, it would generally be impossible for others to determine one's cultivation base and exactly how many immortal acupoints one had opened.

However, someone with sufficiently formidable spiritual sense would still be able to glean the cultivation bases of others, but with this secret technique up his sleeve, even the average Golden Immortal wouldn't have been able to detect his aura.

A pleased smile appeared on Han Li's face, and he flew away into the distance as a streak of azure light.

Chapter 316: Invitation from Qi Liang

Somewhere in the central region of the Bell Toll Mountain Range, all of the snow and ice within a radius of hundreds of thousands of kilometers had melted away, revealing the lush greenery underneath.

The sky was as clear and bright as a blue crystal, and white clouds were hanging between the mountains, while resplendent five-colored light shone through the heavens. Countless cranes were flying through the clouds while letting loose clear cries, and the entire place resembled an immortal paradise.

At the center of the area was a pristine white mountain that was very smooth and uniform, resembling an enormous white jade pillar.

The mountain severed halfway up with an extremely smooth cross-section, looking as if it had been sliced into two by a giant blade, creating an enormous plateau that served as a plaza.

Even though only half the mountain remained, the white plaza was still situated far above the clouds.

At the center of the plaza was a huge white jade platform that was close to 10,000 feet tall with countless runes engraved onto its surface.

A staircase led from the platform all the way down the plaza, and there were thousands of round cushions placed on the steps of the staircase.

The ground surrounding the plaza was also riddled with countless cushions that stretched all the way to the edges of the plaza, and this platform on the White Jade Peak was where the preaching ceremony was set to take place.

Prior to the commencement of the ceremony, the plaza was completely deserted.

No more than several hundred kilometers away from the White Jade Peak was a city that stretched for thousands of kilometers, complete with countless lavish pagodas and pavilions that were concealed within the cloud and mist.

In contrast with the deserted White Jade Peak, this city was extremely lively and bustling, and there were countless streaks of light flying through the air above the city.

Occasionally, people would fly out of the city in different directions, while others converged toward the city from afar.

Right at this moment, a streak of azure light arrived from the distance, then faded to reveal Han Li.

He cast his gaze toward the White Jade Peak in the distance, then quickly withdrew his gaze before descending toward the city down below.

The entire city was enshrouded within a huge azure light barrier with Blaze Dragon Dao disciples stationed all around it.

Upon his arrival, Han Li was immediately welcomed by a young Blaze Dragon Dao disciple, who extended a deep bow toward Han Li upon seeing his inner sect elder robes, then said, "Welcome, esteemed elder.

Apologies for the delay, but according to the rules of the sect, anyone who enters White Jade City must first have their identity verified."

"That's fine," Han Li replied as he pulled out his elder badge.

The young disciple pulled out a white jade talisman that he waved at Han Li's badge, and a layer of white light emerged from the talisman to form a small screen of white light that displayed Han Li's image and information.

The disciple took a glance at the information on the light screen, then flipped a hand over to produce an azure badge as he said, "Thank you for your cooperation, Elder Li. I'll open the restriction for you right away."

With a wave of the badge, a streak of azure light shot out from within before vanishing into the light barrier that encompassed the city.

The light barrier then shuddered before an opening that was large enough to fit a person appeared on its surface, and Han Li stowed away his elder badge before flying into the city through the opening.

He made his way along a street, traveling deeper into the city while inspecting his surroundings, and a hint of surprise soon appeared in his eyes.

Only after entering through the light barrier did he discover just how beautiful and lavish the buildings in the city were. The wide streets extended throughout the city like a system of cobwebs, and they were lined with opulent shops, presenting a stunning sight that didn't lose to any of the large cities that he had seen before.

Outside of his cultivation, he had made frequent forays throughout the Bell Toll Mountain Range during the past years, but he had never visited this place before.

The shops that lined the streets were selling all types of wares, including materials, pills, and treasures, all of which were of quite a high caliber. The wares being sold weren't inferior in the slightest to those sold in the markets in the Blaze Dragon Dao, and there were some things that were very rarely seen even in those markets.

Many of the shop owners clearly weren't Blaze Dragon Dao disciples. Instead, they were most likely from subsidiary powers to the Blaze Dragon Dao, and they were aiming to sell some specialty local products during the leadup to the preaching ceremony.

After walking along the street for a while, Han Li stopped in front of a materials shop.

From the entrance, he could see dozens of shelves inside, all of which were laden with precious materials.

At this moment, the shop was filled with customers, and business appeared to have been booming.

After a brief pause, Han Li stepped into the shop, and he was immediately greeted by a young red-robed attendant.

"What materials are you looking for, Senior? We have a comprehensive inventory of all types of spirit materials at competitive prices..."

Before the young attendant had a chance to finish what he was saying, an elderly man who appeared to have been the shopkeeper hurriedly approached Han Li as he said, "Go see if the other customers need any help, I'll attend to this customer myself."

The young attendant faltered slightly upon hearing this, then promptly departed.

"Welcome, esteemed elder. What materials are you looking for today? I am from the Yi Clan in the west, and our clan has been selling spirit materials for generations. We are a reputable business, and I'm sure you won't be disappointed by our wares," the elderly man said in a respectful manner.

Han Li didn't waste any time with words as he flipped a hand over to produce a jade slip, which contained a list of the remaining ingredients listed in the dao pill recipe, as well as the other two primary ingredients for refining the Myriad Axis Pill.

The elderly man accepted the jade slip from Han Li, but after inspecting its contents, an apologetic look appeared on his face as he said, "These are all extremely precious items, and I'm afraid our shop does not have what you're looking for."

"Do you know where I'll be able to buy these things?" Han Li asked.

"I've only ever seen these materials in scriptures, and I've never heard of any being sold," the elderly man replied with a shake of his head.

Han Li nodded calmly in response, then took back his jade slip before turning to leave, and the elderly man hurriedly accompanied him out of the shop.

After emerging from the shop, Han Li continued to walk along the street, and a short while later, he made his way into another large materials shop.

A short while later, he emerged from the shop, once again without any luck, but he remained unfazed as he continued onward.

.....

Close to a day later, Han Li emerged from a huge materials shop in the central area of the city, and his expression didn't betray much emotion, but internally, he was starting to feel quite frustrated.

Thus far, he had visited most of the materials shops in the city, yet not only had he not been able to find what he was looking for, he wasn't even able to gather any leads on where he could find the ingredients on his list.

There were still some shops left for him to visit, but seeing as the largest shops didn't have what he was looking for, the chances that he would find success in the remaining shops were quite slim.

With that in mind, he heaved a faint sigh and was just about to continue onward when a voice rang out from behind him.

"Brother Li!"

Han Li turned around to discover a white-robed man approaching him with a smile, and it was none other than Qi Liang.

"Long time no see, Brother Qi," Han Li greeted with a smile.

He had spent the majority of his time in seclusion, while the rest of his time was spent on completing various missions, so it had already been close to 300 years since he had last met Qi Liang.

Qi Liang was just about to say something when his eyes abruptly widened, and he was silent for a long while before finally finding his voice again. "Brother Li, your aura... Could it be that you've already reached the mid-True Immortal Stage?"

"Indeed. I encountered some strokes of fortune during the past few centuries, and I recently managed to make a breakthrough," Han Li replied in an ambiguous manner.

Qi Liang could tell that Han Li didn't want to speak much on this matter, so he refrained from prying any further. "I am truly envious, Brother Li."

"When did you get here, Brother Qi?" Han Li asked, promptly changing the subject.

"I got here a few days ago, and I've been exploring the city ever since, but I didn't see you before this. Could it be that you only just arrived? Why didn't you come a little earlier? This place has already been thriving for quite some time," Qi Liang said with a smile.

"Sounds like you've been busy, Brother Qi. My original intention was to come here a bit earlier, but I was delayed by some matters," Han Li explained with a smile.

"I suppose you haven't really missed much. Generally speaking, the most precious treasures will only appear much closer to the preaching ceremony. By the way, I just so happen to be on my way to an exchange event for True Immortal Stage fellow daoists. Would you be interested in tagging along?" Qi Liang asked.

Han Li's eyes lit up slightly upon hearing this, and he immediately nodded in response. "Of course!"

"I knew you wouldn't pass up such a great opportunity. The event venue is just up ahead, and it should be starting soon," Qi Liang said with a smile as he led the way forward.

"I didn't know there was such a lavish city in the sect. Why is it that I've never heard anyone speak of it before?" Han Li asked.

"White Jade City and the White Jade Peak are very important locations in our sect, and under normal circumstances, this city is closed to the outside. Entry is only granted during important occasions like the preaching ceremony," Qi Liang explained.

"I see," Han Li replied with a nod.

The two of them continued to chat, and after making their way down the street for a while, they turned onto another street, this one lined with buildings that were even more lavish and opulent, and many of them were enshrouded within light barriers of different colors.

Han Li noticed that whenever the cultivators walking down the street cast their eyes toward these buildings, they would always do so with awe and veneration on their faces.

"This is the place," Qi Liang declared as he stopped in front of a three-story pavilion.

This building was also enshrouded within a white light barrier that made it impossible to see into the building, giving it quite an aura of mystique.

Chapter 317: Heavenly Scorpion Badge

Qi Liang strode forward, then flipped a hand over to produce a white badge that was giving off a faint white glow with a scorpion design engraved onto its surface.

With a wave of the badge, a streak of white light was released, and it vanished into the white light barrier in a flash.

An opening immediately appeared in the light barrier, and it instantly closed after Han Li and Qi Liang had passed through.

Only then was Han Li able to see the pavilion enshrouded within the light barrier in its full glory. It was an intricately constructed three-story pavilion that was entirely a pristine white color and appeared to have been constructed from some type of special jade.

Hanging above the entrance of the pavilion was a white plaque that bore the words "Heavenly Scorpion Pavilion" in large characters, and some scorpion designs were engraved around the edge of the plaque, much like the badge that Qi Liang had pulled out earlier.

"This exchange event is being hosted by the Heavenly Scorpion Sect, which is a subsidiary sect to our Blaze Dragon Dao. The Heavenly Scorpion Sect isn't a particularly powerful sect, but it has a great deal of expertise in all types of restrictions and the refinement of Dao Warriors," Qi Liang informed in a low voice.

Han Li nodded in response with a contemplative expression.

Qi Liang stowed his badge away before entering the pavilion.

The furnishings inside the pavilion were quite lavish, with a lush red carpet on the ground and dragons and phoenixes engraved on the pristine white walls. The room was also surrounded by screens and immaculately pruned potted plants, resembling the interior of a wealthy family's estate.

Several maidservants dressed in red were situated around the room, and they immediately extended respectful curtseys toward Han Li and Qi Liang.

They appeared to have been no different from normal people, but in reality, they were merely Dao warriors, and all of them were giving off auras comparable to that of a Body Integration cultivator.

Han Li took a closer look at these maidservants to find that their movements were very natural, and their eyes were also just as bright and full of life as a normal person.

Having already refined a batch of Dao Warriors of his own, he had naturally gained a far better understanding of Dao Warriors, but even so, he was still unable to tell how the Heavenly Scorpion Sect had managed to refine these Dao Warrior maidservants.

His Dao Warriors were most likely far more formidable in battle than these Dao Warriors, but they were far lacking when it came to how life-like they were.

Right at this moment a young woman emerged from deeper in the building, and she extended a respectful curtsy to Han Li and Qi Liang.

"Take us to the exchange hall," Qi Liang instructed.

"Yes, please come with me, seniors," the young woman hurriedly replied, then led the two of them up a staircase to a hall on the third floor.

The hall was quite large, but it was completely empty with the exception of some furniture.

At the center of the room was a giant screen that bore an extremely life-like scenic painting, making one feel as if they were situated in the depicted scenic location.

Han Li inspected his surroundings momentarily, following which his brows furrowed slightly as he turned his gaze back to the screen.

Right at this moment, the young woman chanted an incantation before releasing a streak of white light into the screen, and a layer of translucent white light instantly appeared on its surface.

The scenery depicted on it instantly sprang to life in a flurry of movement, and it was also releasing black light that fused with the white light to form a black door.

A hint of intrigue flashed through Han Li's eyes upon seeing this.

The young woman continued to chant her incantation while making hand seals, and the black door began to glow brighter and brighter with black light while also rapidly expanding.

A dull thump rang out as the black door flew out of the screen, hovering in front of it before opening to reveal a long passageway.

"Go ahead, seniors, the hall is just up ahead," the young woman informed.

Qi Liang nodded in response, then waved a dismissive hand, and the young woman quickly departed after extending a parting curtsy.

"Let's go," Qi Liang said as he led the way into the passageway.

Han Li strode through the passageway while inspecting it closely, and he could tell that the passageway had been created using an extremely advanced spatial restriction that resulted in a very stable space.

Qi Liang could see that Han Li had taken an interest in the passageway that they were walking through, and he explained, "The Heavenly Scorpion Sect is very adept in spatial restrictions, particularly ones that create independent areas. I've heard that many of the secret areas in our sect were created with the help of the Heavenly Scorpion Sect."

Han Li nodded in response, but his brows then furrowed slightly as he asked, "This is just an exchange event, not some shady, under-the-table deal, so why have they gone out of their way to hold the event in this separate space? Could it be that there are going to be so many people in attendance that they can't all fit in the hall outside?"

"There won't be many people in attendance, but the Heavenly Scorpion Sect has always had a habit of doing this, both to provide a private area for all of the event attendees, as well as to show off their expertise in spatial restrictions," Qi Liang explained with a smile.

"I see," Han Li replied with a nod.

"By the way, the exchange event here will be held once per day in the leadup to the preaching ceremony. If you're interested, I can get them to assign you a Heavenly Scorpion Badge as well so you can come to the next few exchange events as well," Qi Liang said.

"I hope that's not too much trouble," Han Li replied with a smile.

"Of course not! With your formidable cultivation base, the Heavenly Scorpion Sect would be scrambling to befriend you!" Qi Liang chuckled.

As they were chatting with one another, they reached the end of the passageway, where they arrived in a side hall and were greeted by an azure-robed elderly man with a warm smile on his face.

"Welcome, Fellow Daoist Qi. May I ask who this fellow daoist is?"

"This is Elder Li, a good friend of mine who's also from the Blaze Dragon Dao. He's always in seclusion, so very few people know of him. Brother Li, this is Fellow Daoist Changhe of the Heavenly Scorpion Sect, he'll be the one hosting the exchange event."

It seemed that Qi Liang and the elderly man were very familiar with one another.

"It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Fellow Daoist Changhe," Han Li said as he cupped his fist in a salute.

The elderly man responded in kind. "The pleasure is all mine, Fellow Daoist Li."

"Brother Li only just got here today, so he doesn't yet have a Heavenly Scorpion Badge. You wouldn't turn him away on that basis, would you, Fellow Daoist Changhe?" Qi Liang asked in a joking manner.

"Of course not, Fellow Daoist Qi. Fellow Daoist Li is more than welcome to attend our exchange events. Here's a Heavenly Scorpion Badge for you, Fellow Daoist Li. We'll be holding exchange events every day for the next few days, so feel free to come as you please," Daoist Changhe said as he offered a white badge to Han Li.

"You have my thanks," Han Li said as he accepted the badge.

"You're very much welcome, Fellow Daoist Li. Please follow me, the exchange event will be starting very soon."

With that, Daoist Changhe led Han Li's duo out of the side hall, and they passed through a corridor before arriving in a circular main hall.

The furnishings in this main hall were extremely lavish, and the ground was entirely paved with a type of premium material known as Green Pine Jade. There were also many bright gems embedded into the walls to fill the entire hall with dazzling radiance.

An antiquated little cauldron was placed in each of the hall's four corners, and there was a stick of burning yellow incense in each cauldron, giving off a refined and elegant aroma.

At the center of the hall was a large round table, around which were placed around two dozen chairs.

The table and the chairs were all crafted from some type of blue jade material that was giving off a cool and refreshing energy, clearly indicating that this was some type of precious material.

At this point, there were already around a dozen True Immortal cultivators seated around the table, and everyone immediately turned to look at Han Li's trio as they came in.

Some of them appeared to have been familiar with Qi Liang, and they only took a few glances at Han Li before averting their eyes.

Han Li made no eye contact with anyone, and only after taking seat did he begin to inspect the people around him.

Close to half of the people present were Blaze Dragon Dao elders, but Han Li only recalled two or three of them. As for those from outside of the Blaze Dragon Dao, he naturally didn't know any of them.

Qi Liang had a large social circle and began to chat with many of the other people present, and the atmosphere in the hall gradually began to liven up a little.

Han Li took no part in the conversations, merely sitting in silence as he casually swept his gaze around the table.

With this tremendous spiritual sense, he was able to instantly determine that most of the cultivators present were at the early-True Immortal Stage, while only two were at the mid-True Immortal Stage.

One of those two was a portly middle-aged man dressed in Blaze Dragon Dao elder robes. He had a thin mustache and a pair of eyes that were constantly darting around, making him resemble a fat yet shrewd rat.

The other mid-True Immortal cultivator was a white-robed elderly man from outside of the Blaze Dragon Dao, and he was seated with his eyes closed, paying no heed to the people around him.

The portly Blaze Dragon Dao elder seemed to have detected Han Li's gaze, and he looked back at Han Li before flashing him a smile, causing his mustache to wiggle a little in a rather comical sight.

Han Li was rather amused by this, but he naturally wasn't going to display his amusement. He gave the portly elder a slight nod, yet right as he was about to avert his gaze, a layer of black light suddenly appeared within the portly elder's eyes before quickly transforming into a pair of tiny vortexes.

A burst of peculiar power erupted out of the vortexes to ensnare Han Li's gaze, and all of a sudden, Han Li found himself situated in a world that was filled with white mist.

Several young women emerged from the mist, and their thin veil clothing didn't leave much to the imagination as they made all types of seductive gestures toward Han Li with their alluring bodies.

Han Li was able to instantly tell that this was an illusion, and he paid no heed to the women around him as he gently blew out a breath.

All of the women around him instantly faded, and countless cracks abruptly appeared in the surrounding world of white mist without any warning, following which it shattered to reveal the hall that Han Li was situated in once again.

The portly elder shuddered slightly, and the black light in his eyes was thrown into a state of disarray before fading away, revealing the stunned look in his eyes.

Han Li cast a cold gaze toward the portly elder, in response to which the elder offered up an apologetic smile.

This was only a very discreet clash between the two, but all of the other cultivators present were at the True Immortal Stage, so this naturally didn't escape their notice, and all of them were rather taken aback by this turn of events.

Chapter 318: Exchange Event

"That man is quite a renowned mid-True Immortal Stage elder of our sect. His name is Shu Tiansheng, and illusions are his forte. He's not a bad person, but he's very mischievous and often uses his illusions to play pranks on others. Rest assured, he has no ill intentions," Qi Liang explained to Han Li through voice transmission.

It was indeed true that the illusion just now hadn't tried to harm him in any way, so Han Li decided not to pursue the matter, merely withdrawing his gaze and paying no further heed to Shu Tiansheng.

Shu Tiansheng was quite relieved to see this, but he was still occasionally darting curious glances at Han Li.

An hour passed by, and during this time, two more True Immortals arrived.

Another 15 minutes passed without any further new arrivals, and the white-robed elderly man opened his eyes as he said in a cold voice, "It's about time we began, is it not, Fellow Daoist Changhe? I still have matters to attend to after this."

A hesitant look appeared on Daoist Changhe's face upon hearing this. There was still some time left until the scheduled start, but it didn't appear as if anyone else was going to show up.

"Alright, let's begin. There are 19 fellow daoists attending this exchange event. On behalf of our Heavenly Scorpion Sect, I would like to thank you for your patronage."

Daoist Changhe rose to his feet and cupped his fist in a salute to everyone present as he spoke.

"Let's skip all the formalities and begin, Fellow Daoist Changhe," a square-faced Blaze Dragon Dao elder said.

Despite being repeatedly rebuked, Daoist Changhe wasn't irked in the slightest as he declared, "It seems like everyone's in quite a hurry. The rules of this exchange event are the same as before. Everyone takes turns displaying the treasures that they prepared, then provide a short description of the treasure, as well as what you're looking for in exchange.

"If both sides agree to the deal, then it'll be finalized. On top of that, our Heavenly Scorpion Sect is only providing this venue, and we're doing so free of charge, so if any disputes arise after an exchange is made, we accept no responsibility. With that, let's begin."

As soon as his voice trailed off, a bald man seated next to him immediately rose to his feet.

The man patted the storage pouch strapped to his waist, and a blue jade box appeared in his hand.

The jade box was surrounded by a small cloud of blue mist, and it was giving off a bone-chilling aura.

It was clear that the box held something quite remarkable, and everyone's attention was immediately drawn to it.

A pleased look appeared on the bald man's face at the sight of everyone's reactions, and he opened the box in a slow and deliberate fashion to reveal a fist-sized blue crystal with liquid-like blue light flowing around it.

The crystal was giving off a glacial aura coupled with faint law power fluctuations, and as soon as it was revealed, the air temperature in the hall plummeted, causing all of the moisture in the air to freeze into ice crystals, presenting a beautiful spectacle to behold.

"This is a piece of Blue-veined Glacial Crystal. It's near-indestructible and contains extremely formidable glacial qi, making it an ideal material for refining frost-attribute immortal treasures," the bold man declared with a proud expression.

Many of the people present were clearly interested in the crystal, but Han Li only took a glance at it before withdrawing his gaze.

To the average True Immortal, materials that contained law powers were very precious, but he possessed many such items, so this one wasn't of particular interest to him.

"That's a very precious material, Fellow Daoist Xin. Have you considered what you would like in exchange for it?" Daoist Changhe asked.

"I would like a metal-attribute spirit material or demon beast core of the same caliber," the bald man replied.

Everyone remained silent, and the people that were interested in the crystal could only shake their heads with wry smiles.

The Blue-veined Glacial Crystal was indeed a precious material, but what he was asking for was just as precious and rare.

The bald man's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this.

"I don't have either of the two things that you stated, but I'm willing to purchase that crystal from you using Immortal Origin Stones," an elderly man wearing a round hat declared.

"I'm not short on Immortal Origin Stones at the moment. If no one can offer me what I asked for, then I'll be keeping this crystal for now," the bald man replied as he closed the jade box and sat back down.

The elderly man wearing the round hat could only heave a forlorn sigh in response.

After the bald man sat down, the young woman seated next to him rose to her feet, then swept a hand through the air to release four or five azure bones, all of which were giving off a faint azure glow. "These are some True Immortal demon beast bones, and in exchange, I would like some pills to assist me in my cultivation."

Demon beast materials generally weren't that precious, so the bones on display didn't attract much interest.

However, these were still the remains of True Immortal Stage demon beasts, so they were ultimately taken by a Blaze Dragon Dao in exchange for two vials of pills.

After the young woman came Shu Tiansheng.

"Fellow daoists, I've brought with me a set of 49 Lost Soul Flags, every single one of which is a spirit treasure in their own right, while the three primary flags are top-grade spirit treasures. When unleashed all at once, the 49 Lost Soul Flags are just as powerful as the average immortal treasure.

"In exchange for them, I would like one piece each of Profound Devilish Metal Essence and Heavenly Softwater Crystal," Shu Tiansheng declared as he swept a sleeve through the air, and 49 palm-sized black flags appeared in front of him one after another, with three of them clearly larger than the rest.

Shu Tiansheng made a hand seal, and a dark cloud that was as black as ink erupted out of the flags to instantly fill the entire hall. A burst of horrific howling also rang out from within the black cloud, causing the surrounding space to shudder.

Everyone was quite amazed to see this, and Han Li took an extra glance at the flags as well. Up to this point, these flags were the most precious item that had been presented, but he still wasn't interested.

However, many of the other cultivators present were very keen to get their hands on this set of flags, and after a fierce round of bidding, they were ultimately exchanged for a piece of Profound Devilish Metal Essence and 2,000 top-grade spirit stones, as well as several other treasures.

The items presented by the next few people after Shu Tiansheng were also quite remarkable, and the atmosphere in the exchange event was gradually beginning to heat up.

Up to this point, the most precious items presented had been three purple flowers called Purple Devil's Trumpets, and each one contained enough poison to kill a True Immortal. At the same time, they were an extremely precious type of spirit material for refining poison-attribute immortal treasures.

In exchange, the owner of the flowers was asking for the core of a True Immortal Stage demon beast known as the Crimson Crown Fire Crane, but no one had such a demon core in their possession.

As time passed, the atmosphere in the exchange event gradually peaked to a climax.

Qi Liang had his turn right before Han Li, and he was quite fortunate, exchanging a pair of spirit treasures for a 100,000-year-old spirit plant.

Finally, it was Han Li's turn, and he swept a sleeve over the table to produce two items, namely a black ball and a crimson crystal the size of a human head.

The black ball was the demon core of Zhong Luan's black crane steed, while the crimson crystal was the material that contained fire law powers that he had obtained from the thin elderly man.

Through some investigation, Han Li had discovered that this was a type of material known as Blush Cloud Fire Crystal, and while it did contain fire-attribute law powers, its natural limitations meant that it couldn't hold a large amount of fire-attribute spiritual power, thereby making it unfit for use as a tool refinement material.

However, it had an alternative use, which was to tame fire-attribute spiritual power.

Fire-attribute spiritual power was generally extremely violent, yet any fire-attribute spiritual power that was passed through a piece of Blush Cloud Fire Crystal would instantly become extremely mellow and mild.

It was exactly because of this that this crystal was one of the best materials for refining pill cauldrons or tool refinement cauldrons. Even if only a small amount of this crystal were added to a cauldron, its stability would be significantly enhanced. This chunk of Blush Cloud Fire Crystal was definitely large enough to refine an exceptional cauldron, so it would've definitely been able to fetch an astronomical price in a sect that was proficient in pill or tool refinement.

Compared with the Blush Cloud Fire Crystal, the black demon core was also very precious, but far less so.

Daoist Changhe initially faltered slightly at the sight of the Blush Cloud Fire Crystal, following which an intense look appeared in his eyes as he stared at the crystal with an unblinking gaze, and he was so excited that his cheeks had become slightly flushed.

Most of the people present weren't able to identify this crystal, but they could tell from Daoist Changhe's expression that it was an extremely precious item, and they began asking one another about it through voice transmission.

"I have here a True Immortal Stage demon beast core and a piece of Blush Cloud Fire Crystal. I'm looking to exchange the demon beast core for a Myriad Axis Fruit and a Blood Crystal Lotus Root, both of which must be over 50,000 years of age, and I'll accept anyone of a list of nine materials for the Blush Cloud Fire Crystal," Han Li declared, then rattled off the list of nine materials that he was searching for.

The excitement in everyone's eyes gradually faded upon hearing what Han Li had to say, and a long period of silence ensued.

Right at this moment, the white-robed elderly man broke the silence, and he was looking at the black demon beast core as he said, "I have a Myriad Axis Fruit, but no Blood Crystal Lotus Root. Would you accept something else as a substitute?"

"Let me take a look at your Myriad Axis Fruit first," Han Li said.

The white-robed elderly man pulled out an azure wooden box, but instead of immediately tossing it to Han Li, he asked, "Would I be able to take a closer look at that demon core as well, Fellow Daoist?"

"Of course," Han Li replied with a smile, then swept a hand through the air to release a burst of azure light that carried the demon core to the elderly man.

In return, the white-robed elderly man tossed his wooden box to Han Li as well.

There was a talisman adhered to the wooden box, and with a sweep of Han Li's hand, the talisman was removed amid a flash of azure light, while the lid flew off on its own

A golden fist-sized spirit fruit was laying inside the box, and there was a series of ring-shaped patterns on its surface. The fruit wasn't releasing any special aroma, but it was giving off an immense aura of vitality.

Han Li gently picked up the fruit for a closer inspection, then nodded with a pleased expression.

This was indeed a Myriad Axis Fruit, and it was at least 60,000 to 70,000 years old, so it was old enough for his pill refinement needs. Furthermore, the core of the fruit was also completely undamaged, so he would be able to plant it.

After inspecting the black demon core for a while, the white-robed elderly man was clearly also quite pleased with what he saw, and he swept a sleeve through the air to release four or five more jade boxes of different colors.

"Like I said, I don't have a Blood Crystal Lotus Root, but these items should be comparable in value."

The elderly man swept his sleeve through the air once again as he spoke, and all of the lids of the boxes were removed to reveal their contents.

Han Li took a glance at the items in the boxes, then said, "These are indeed all comparable in value to the Blood Crystal Lotus Root, but I'm afraid none of them fit my needs, so I'll take some Immortal Origin Stones instead."

After their exchange was complete, Daoist Changhe said, "Fellow Daoist Li, the nine materials that you're looking for are extremely rare, and it seems like no one has what you're looking for. May I ask if you're willing to exchange that Blush Cloud Fire Crystal for spirit stones as well?"

Chapter 319: News

As Daoist Changhe was speaking, Han Li noticed another pair of eyes being trained on him, and it was none other than Shu Tiansheng.

With Han Li looking his way, Shu Tiansheng immediately put on a fawning smile.

Han Li withdrew his gaze, then shook his head with a decisive expression. "My apologies, but I'm only going to exchange this Blush Cloud Fire Crystal for one of the nine aforementioned materials."

Daoist Changhe was quite disappointed to hear this, but he was still unwilling to give up. "Is there no room for negotiation at all, Fellow Daoist Li?"

After a brief moment of contemplation, Han Li said, "I won't exchange this piece of Blush Cloud Fire Crystal for anything else, but I do have some smaller pieces of the same material that I'm willing to exchange for any leads on where I can obtain one or more of the nine materials I mentioned earlier."

He swept a sleeve over the table once again as he spoke, and a pair of fist-sized Blush Cloud Fire Crystals appeared.

Daoist Changhe took a longing glance at the two pieces of Blush Cloud Fire Crystal, but ultimately sat back down with a defeated expression.

Shu Tiansheng also sat down in his chair with a sullen expression, while Han Li heaved an internal sigh before stowing the three Blush Cloud Fire Crystals on the table away again.

The exchange event continued, but in contrast with the Blush Cloud Fire Crystals, everything else that was presented was made to look completely mediocre, and the atmosphere gradually died down.

An hour later, the exchange event concluded, and Han Li immediately stood up to leave with Qi Liang.

Once again, Daoist Changhe asked Han Li whether he was willing to exchange one of the two smaller Blush Cloud Fire Crystals for something else, and he brought out an array of rare and exotic items for Han Li's consideration.

However, none of those items caught Han Li's interest, and much to Daoist Changhe's disappointment, he was turned down once again.

However, Han Li did leave a communication array plate to Daoist Changhe so that he could contact Han Li if he ever did come across one of the nine materials or news on any one of them.

A glimmer of hope was sparked in Daoist Changhe's heart, and he promised that he would do his best, while also imploring Han Li to save one or two of the Blush Cloud Fire Crystals for him.

Han Li was rather surprised by how urgent Daoist Changhe was in his pursuit for a Blush Cloud Fire Crystal, and he agreed to his request before departing with Qi Liang.

"Where are you going next, Brother Li?" Qi Liang asked.

"I'm going to go to some other places to search for some materials. It's not every day that I get this opportunity, so I have to make the most of it," Han Li replied.

Qi Liang nodded in response. "I have some matters to take care of as well, so I won't accompany you any further, Brother Li. Take Care."

"Alright, then I'll see you at the preaching ceremony," Han Li said with a smile, then promptly departed.

Qi Liang looked at Han Li's departing figure for a while, then heaved a faint sigh before departing in another direction.

Han Li made his way down the street for a while before suddenly stopping in his tracks, then turned around with a cold expression. "You've been following me for quite some time now. What business do you have with me?"

Standing not far away behind Han Li was none other than Shu Tiansheng.

"I am Shu Tiansheng of the Heavenly Sage Peak. Please accept my apologies for my rude actions during the exchange event, Fellow Daoist Li," Shu Tiansheng said in an earnest manner as he cupped his fist in an apologetic salute.

Han Li's expression eased slightly upon hearing this, and he said, "Don't worry about it, it's not a big deal. My question is why are you following me around?"

"Thank you for your understanding, Fellow Daoist Li. I came here to ask you if you were planning to continue searching for the materials that you mentioned during the exchange event just now," Shu Tiansheng explained.

"I don't like to talk in circles, so if you have something to say, then be more straightforward," Han Li said.

"Truth be told, I have information on where you can secure one of those materials, but I didn't want to say it in front of everyone back there," Shu Tiansheng replied as a serious look appeared on his face.

Han Li's eyes immediately lit up slightly upon hearing this. "Which material do you have information on?"

Shu Tiansheng opened his mouth to reply, but then decided against it.

Han Li could see that Shu Tiansheng had some reservations, so he said, "Rest assured, the offer that I made earlier still stands. If you can provide me with information on one of the materials, then you can have one of my Blush Cloud Fire Crystals."

"Well... I do have information one of the materials, but instead of one of the nine, it's the Blood Crystal Lotus Root," Shu Tiansheng said.

Han Li faltered slightly upon hearing this, then nodded in response. "That's fine, that's also one of the things that I'm looking for. What would you like in exchange for this information?"

"I can see that you're a very straightforward man, so I'll cut straight to the chase. I want to exchange the information I have for a Blush Cloud Fire Crystal," Shu Tiansheng said with a smile.

Han Li offered no response to this.

Shu Tiansheng took a deep breath, then continued, "I know that the Blood Crystal Lotus Root is lesser in value than the other nine materials that you mentioned, so I'm willing to throw in some Immortal Origin Stones as well in exchange for a small piece of Blush Cloud Fire Crystal."

"There's no need for that. The Blood Crystal Lotus Root is one of the things that I'm looking for as well, so I won't ask for any extra Immortal Origin Stones," Han Li said with a shake of his head.

His expression remained unchanged, but he was actually quite excited. Compared with the nine ingredients required for dao pill refinement, he would actually rather acquire the Blood Crystal Lotus Root as that was the final ingredient he was missing for refining Myriad Axis Pills.

"Thank you for your generosity, Fellow Daoist Li. At the moment, there are many cultivators gathered in White Jade City, and there's no lack of True Immortals among them, so there are many more auctions and exchange events to come. There's a secret high-end auction that's going to take place in three days, and only those who are at or above the mid-True Immortal Stage can attend.

"I only learned about this auction by chance, and I've heard that the Blood Crystal Lotus Root will be one of the auction items," Shu Tiansheng informed through voice transmission.

An intrigued look appeared in Han Li's eyes upon hearing this.

The fact that only those at or above the mid-True Immortal Stage could attend the auction meant that most of the Blaze Dragon Dao's elders would not have been granted entry, so this was quite a prestigious event.

"Seeing as you were able to dispel my illusion so easily, I'm sure the cultivation base restriction won't be a problem for you," Shu Tiansheng said, having adopted his usual cheeky grin again.

Han Li paid no heed to this blatant attempt at probing out his cultivation base as he nodded in response. "Alright, I'll be sure to attend this auction, and I'll give you a Blush Cloud Fire Crystal if a Blood Crystal Lotus Root really does appear."

A hint of elation flashed through Shu Tiansheng's eyes upon hearing this, and he nodded as he said, "Great! I'll meet you back here at noon in three days."

After that, he promptly bade farewell to Han Li, and the two went their separate ways.

The day quickly flew by, and at night, a series of massive crescent-shaped gemstones appeared throughout White Jade City, releasing bright white radiance that made the city just as bright as it was during the day.

All of the buildings in the city also lit up, and with the night sky acting as a backdrop, the entire city appeared even more alluring and resplendent than it was in the day.

Right at this moment, Han Li emerged from one of the shops in the city.

He had visited all of the remaining materials shops in the city out of hope more than conviction, and sure enough, he hadn't found any of the materials that he was looking for.

He was already prepared for this outcome, but he still couldn't help but feel a little disappointment, and he had no choice but to place his hopes in the private auctions and exchange events.

However, his exploration of the city hadn't been entirely fruitless.

For example, he had learned from the owner of one of the shops that another exchange event was going to take place the next day.

This exchange event was likely going to be even smaller than the one held in the Heavenly Scorpion Pavilion, but Han Li wasn't going to miss it.

A short while later, Han Li arrived on a rather quiet street that was lined with inns.

Having explored the city for an entire day, he may not have exactly been tired, but it was still time to get some rest.

After looking around for a while, he chose one of the smaller inns and requested a peaceful room, upon which he was led by an inn employee to a room on the third floor.

"Have a good night, and if you need anything, just call for me," the employee said.

Han Li took a glance around the room to find that it was to his liking, and he gave the employee a spirit stone as a tip before waving a dismissive hand, indicating for him to leave.

The employee was ecstatic and extended a grateful bow before quickly departing.

Han Li was just about to close the door when the sound of footsteps rang out nearby, and a woman in red passed by in front of his room.

The woman's face was obscured by a veil, but she seemed to have been quite young and possessed an exceptional figure.

White Jade City was quite a large city, but due to the excessive number of cultivators in the city, most of the inns were most likely quite full.

The woman in red took a glance at Han Li, then quickly made her way past him and disappeared down the corridor.

A hint of befuddlement emerged in Han Li's eyes as he looked on at her departing figure.

The woman had concealed her own aura, but with Han Li's immense spiritual sense, he was able to instantly detect that she was a True Immortal cultivator.

At the moment, True Immortals were a dime a dozen in White Jade City, but this woman struck Han Li with a sense of familiarity, as if he had seen her before somewhere.

However, he couldn't recall exactly where he had seen her before, so he could only set the train of thought aside.

After closing the door, Han Li set up a layer of restrictions in the room, then sat down with his legs crossed on the bed.

.....

Three days passed by in a flash, and Han Li arrived at the rendezvous location at noon.

Shu Tiansheng was already waiting there, and he immediately greeted Han Li with a wide smile.
"Welcome, Fellow Daoist Li."

Han Li merely nodded in response.

"The auction venue is quite obscure, so please come with me, Fellow Daoist Li," Shu Tiansheng communicated through voice transmission, then led the way ahead.

The two of them walked along the streets in silence, and only after walking for close to an hour did they arrive at a secluded little shop.

The shop didn't have any customers, and there was only an elderly shopkeeper resting on a reclining chair behind the counter, looking as if he were about to nod off at any moment.

Chapter 320: Underground Auction

Shu Tiansheng flashed Han Li a smile, then tapped the counter a few times as he yelled, "Rise and shine, Shopkeeper Gu."

The elderly man behind the counter opened his eyes and took a lazy glance at Shu Tiansheng and Han Li, then slowly sat up as he yawned and asked in a raspy voice, "What would you like to buy?"

"The best that your shop has to offer, of course," Shu Tiansheng was sliding his finger over the counter, and Han Li noticed that he was tracing out a strange pattern with his finger.

An alert look immediately appeared in the elderly man's eyes upon seeing this, and he nodded in response before rising to his feet and making his way deeper into the shop, followed closely by Han Li's duo.

Before long, the three of them arrived in a dilapidated wooden shack in the backyard of the shop.

The elderly man tapped one of the walls of the shack a couple of times, and a string of cracks rang out as a layer of azure light appeared over the wall, then transformed into a shimmering azure door, beyond which was a dark pathway that appeared to have been leading underground.

"The auction venue is down there," the elderly man said as he pulled out a pair of white masks for Han Li's duo.

Some star and moon designs were engraved onto the masks, and they were giving off rippling waves of blue and white light, giving the masks quite a profound appearance.

Shu Tiansheng accepted the masks, then handed one to Han Li before leading the way into the passageway.

Han Li took a glance at the mask in his hand, then gave the elderly shopkeeper a nod before stepping into the passageway as well.

The stone gated behind him swung shut amid a burst of dull rumbling, and the interior of the passageway was plunged into complete darkness.

However, this degree of darkness naturally wasn't going to trouble Han Li.

The blue and light on Shu Tiansheng's mask swelled to form a light barrier that enveloped his entire body.

Han Li was rather intrigued to see this. The blue and white light barrier was able to keep out even his spiritual sense, and it also concealed the majority of Shu Tiansheng's aura.

If it weren't for the fact that the two of them had been standing together this entire time, Han Li would've been unsure of whether this person actually was Shu Tiansheng.

The aura concealment effect of these masks was very similar to that of the masks of the Transient Guild, but they were far lacking compared to the Transient Guild masks when it came to their ability to alter auras.

Han Li also put on his mask before injecting some immortal spiritual power into it, but to his surprise, it displayed no reaction at all.

Han Li faltered slightly upon seeing this, then increased his immortal spiritual power output.

However, the mask was like a bottomless pit, and its surface had lit up slightly, but it was nowhere to the same extent as Shu Tiansheng's mask.

Han Li continued to increase his immortal spiritual power output until he was drawing upon most of the immortal spiritual power in his body, and only then did he manage to achieve the same effect as Shu Tiansheng's mask.

Only then did Han Li realize that this mask was a device that verified one's cultivation base, and that those below the mid-True Immortal Stage would've been unable to use it.

The two of them made their way down the dark passageway for a while before turning a corner and arriving in a stone chamber, at the end of which was a white door of light that was giving off a gentle glow in the darkness.

"The auction venue is just inside."

Shu Tiansheng seemed to have been quite familiar with this place, and he strode through the door of light.

The blue and white light barrier around him resonated momentarily with the door of light, and he abruptly vanished.

Han Li also stepped through the door of light, following which he found himself situated in a hall with Shu Tiansheng standing not far away.

Han Li cast his gaze into the hall to find that it was ovular in shape and around 3,000 to 4,000 feet in size.

The furnishings in the hall were quite luxurious, and the ground was paved with beautiful dark red bricks, while several massive and intricately crafted palace lanterns were hanging from the ceiling.

There were also many gemstones embedded into the walls, but even with the palace lanterns and gemstones acting as light sources, the area was still rather dim.

There were several dozen large chairs crafted from precious wooden materials in the hall, and many of them were already occupied, but all of the people seated on the chairs were also enshrouded in blue and white light barriers, making it impossible to glean their true appearance.

In front of these chairs was a short stone platform, upon which was placed a rectangular table, and behind the table were three empty chairs.

The arrival of Han Li's duo didn't draw much attention, attracting only a few fleeting glances.

"Looks like the auction isn't starting quiet yet. Let's find some seats first," Shu Tiansheng said in a low voice.

Han Li nodded in response, and he and Shu Tiansheng sat down on a pair of neighboring chairs near the back of the hall.

From there, Han Li looked around the hall, and a peculiar look flashed through his eyes.

There was a faint yellow light barrier over all of the walls of the hall, and it didn't appear to have been all that remarkable, but Han Li could sense that the restriction was extremely thick and dense.

The restriction was clearly an earth-attribute one, and it seemed to have been drawing power from the vast earth, which meant that attacking the restriction would've been equivalent to attacking the entire earth itself.

Such an advanced restriction was extremely uncommon, and by Han Li's estimates, even if he were to go all-out, he most likely wouldn't have been able to break the restriction.

The fact that there was such a formidable restriction in the auction venue indicated that this was truly a very prestigious event.

Everyone in the hall was seated with their eyes closed, and the entire hall was completely silent and filled with a tense and heavy atmosphere.

Two hours passed by in a flash, and during this time, two more cultivators arrived in the hall, both of which also sat down in silence.

Right at this moment, a wooden door swung open on the side of the hall, and three figures, two tall and one short, emerged from within.

These three figures were also completely enshrouded in blue and white light barriers that concealed their appearance, and they made their way over to the long table on the stone platform before sitting down behind it, with the shorter figure situated at the center.

"Sorry to keep you all waiting, fellow daoists. Before we begin the auction, allow me to lay out what's going to happen today," the short figure declared.

His voice was extremely clear and penetrative, and everyone below the platform immediately sat up straighter to listen.

"This auction will be split up into two parts. During the first half, the three of us will conduct the auction as normal, and after the auction, all of you will be welcome to come up to the stage to display any valuable items that you're looking to sell or exchange, and you can negotiate your own terms without any intervention from the three of us. Alright, without further ado, let's begin."

As soon as his voice trailed off, the tall figure to his left swept a hand through the air to produce a rectangular wooden box with several talismans adhered to it.

The short figure accepted the wooden box, then removed the talismans before opening it.

Inside the box was an antiquated-looking blue longsword that was giving off dazzling blue light that was flowing over the blade of the sword like water while producing a faint splashing sound.

Tiny blue runes could be seen drifting throughout the blue light, and the entire sword was giving off power law power fluctuations.

"That's an immortal treasure!" someone exclaimed before the short figure even had a chance to say anything.

Han Li's eyes lit up slightly upon seeing this. The fact that the first auction item was an immortal treasure of a decent caliber certainly boded well for things to come.

"Indeed, Fellow Daoist. Our first auction item is this Sea Splitting Immortal Slaying Sword, and it's a bona fide immortal treasure that contains immense water law powers, far more so than the average immortal treasure..."

The short figure began to give a description of the sword, and he was an extremely eloquent speaker, sparing no praise in his description of the sword and making it out to be an unmatched weapon that would grant the wielder invincibility.

Many of the auction-goers were tempted by what they were hearing, and they were eager for the bidding to begin.

"The starting price for the Sea Splitting Immortal Slaying Sword will be 60 Immortal Origin Stones, and each bid must go up by an increment of at least two Immortal Origin Stones," the short figure declared.

"60!"

"65!"

"70!"

As soon as the short figure's voice trailed off, a string of bids immediately began flooding in, quickly elevating the bidding price to 130 Immortal Origin Stones.

At this point, there were only a handful of people left participating in the bidding, and ultimately, the sword was purchased for 160 Immortal Origin Stones.

Han Li chose not to place any bids.

While it was true that the Sea Splitting Immortal Slaying Sword contained immense law powers, he could sense that the law powers within it were a little chaotic, indicating that something had gone wrong during the refinement process, so this was above its deserved selling price.

The atmosphere had already livened up quite a bit, and the short figure was clearly very pleased to see this as he declared, "Our second auction item is a 100,000-year-old Soulbirth Flower. I'm sure I don't need to tell you all how valuable such a spirit plant is. It's the ideal supplementary material for refining avatars..."

The tall figure next to him pulled out a jade box, then opened it to reveal a golden spirit flower.

Many of the auction-goers erupted into chatter upon seeing this. The flower wasn't comparable in value to an immortal treasure, but it was certainly far rarer.

After praising the Soulbirth Flower for a while, the short figure declared, "The starting price will be 30 Immortal Origin Stones, and each bid must go up by an increment of at least one Immortal Origin Stone."

A hint of surprise flashed through Han Li's eyes, and he clearly wasn't expecting to see a Soulbirth Flower of such an advanced age here.

He still had some Soulbirth Flower seeds, so he naturally had no intention of bidding for the flower, but it seemed that Shu Tiansheng was very eager to obtain the flower, and he was participating in the bidding war.

However, after a few rounds of bidding, the price was quickly raised to over 80 Immortal Origin Stones, and Shu Tiansheng could only drop out of the bidding war. In the end, the flower was sold for 95 Immortal Origin Stones, much to Han Li's intrigue.

He wasn't expecting Soulbirth Flowers to be able to fetch such a high price even on the Ancient Cloud Continent. With the Heaven Controlling Vial in his possession, he could mature some Soulbirth Flowers at anytime, but all spirit plants watered with the Heaven Controlling Vial's spirit liquid were imbued with traces of time law powers, which made selling such spirit plants quite risky and only something that he could turn to as a last resort.

With that in mind, Han Li could only heave an internal sigh.

The auction continued, and around 20 to 30 items were auctioned off in a flash.

All of the auction items had been extremely precious, with not a single one of them selling for below 50 Immortal Origin Stones, but the Blood Crystal Lotus Root still hadn't appeared.

Han Li was starting to grow a little concerned, and Shu Tiansheng was also getting slightly agitated.

"Are you sure your sources are correct, Fellow Daoist Shu?" Han Li asked through voice transmission.

"I'm certain. I have some ties with the powers behind this auction, and there's no way they would lie to me," Shu Tiansheng hurriedly replied.