

The Quest for Immortality

Chapter 1086: Chapter 675 Support_3

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Since this is the case, I must keep my small sapling self hidden quietly in the forest, avoiding the limelight to prevent getting destroyed by strong winds.

Taixu Gate is that forest.

The fellow disciples around me are all trees.

The better and stronger they are, the better I can hide.

Then I will rely on a large forest and the dense trees to cover myself, absorb nutrients in silence, grow quietly, and eventually, unexpectedly become a towering tree!

Mo Hua's eyes gleamed slightly as he felt admiration in his heart.

Master is truly impressive!

Such a distant matter has been strategized by Master.

"Support in combat!"

Mo Hua set his goal, and his thoughts also gradually became clear:

With my abilities, support in combat, enhance the strength of Cheng Mo and others.

Then, with the help of Cheng Mo and others, track down human traffickers, hunt Divine Remains, and devour Divine Marrow.

I should hide in the shadows, trying my best not to stand out.

Also, think of ways to keep my trump cards hidden even deeper.

After that, rely on the ability of "support" to just get by within the Sect!

Mo Hua silently nodded to himself.

However, such a matter still has many details to consider.

Especially hunting the Evil God, which is very dangerous, calling on Cheng Mo and others now might be a bit too soon.

But the matter of support in combat can be prioritized.

How exactly to support in combat?

What methods and limitations are there, how to apply them in a Magic Battle?

These need some time to study.

...

In the following days, Mo Hua kept thinking about the matter of “support.”

Thinking over and over, it still came back to the categories of “Formation” and “Spell”, especially the application of “Formation” was crucial.

But the application of a Formation...

For Mo Hua, using it by himself is quite simple, controlling ink with Divine Sense, directly able to draw on the ground.

But applying a Formation to “support” others, involves Formation design, Formation media refinement, and matching issues such as fellow disciple’s Spiritual Root, Cultivation Technique, Taoist Skill, and combat habits.

Mo Hua needed to think through these things clearly before he could start working on them.

In the next few days, whenever Mo Hua had a break or rest from classes, he pondered over this issue.

One midday, while Mo Hua was eating at the Disciple’s Residence, nibbling on a chicken leg and pondering a Formation.

Cheng Mo suddenly sat next to Mo Hua, pretending to sigh heavily.

But he sighed for quite some time, and Mo Hua didn’t pay him any attention.

Cheng Mo quietly “offered” a chicken leg to Mo Hua, then looked up at him expectantly.

Mo Hua took the chicken leg and nodded, “What’s the matter, tell me.”

Cheng Mo then joyfully expressed, “Mo Hua, it’s so hard to earn Merit Points.”

"Uh-huh." Mo Hua bit into the chicken leg.

"I've only earned fifty Merit Points this whole month."

"Oh." Mo Hua's cheeks were puffed.

"Doing ordinary tasks, you can't earn many Merit Points

"I'm pretty good at Drawing Formation Mo Hua said.

Cheng Mo had a complex expression, feeling both envious and a bit jealous.

Although Mo Hua didn't have many Spirit Stones, when it came to Merit Points, he was a veritable "little tycoon," much richer than them.

"I'm running out of Merit Points Cheng Mo said reluctantly.

"Oh Mo Hua kept eating his chicken leg, indifferent. Then suddenly, he became alert and eyed Cheng Mo,

"You're not trying to borrow Merit Points from me, are you? I'm not going to lend them to you

He needed many Merit Points for learning various Formations.

"No said Cheng Mo awkwardly.

"So what do you want to do?" Mo Hua was puzzled.

Cheng Mo quietly said, "Mo Hua, do you have any quick ways to earn Merit Points?"

"Formation

"Excluding Formation."

Cheng Mo stated firmly.

Let this Formation Dummy earn Merit Points by Drawing Formation? It's like asking a butcher to do embroidery, purely tormenting...

Cheng Mo looked at Mo Hua somewhat plaintively.

Mo Hua sighed, "Then there's nothing I can do

Cheng Mo shook his head, firmly saying: "You definitely have a way."

Mo Hua puzzled, "Why are you so sure?"

Cheng Mo whispered, "You're so smart, having Elder Master Xun backing you up, with a Court Official as an uncle, and your skill in 'punishing the evil and promoting the good' is so adept, you definitely know some special way."

Mo Hua corrected, "Elder Master Xun is not my backer."

Cheng Mo looked unconvinced.

Mo Hua somewhat helplessly asked, "What kind of way are you looking for?"

Cheng Mo hesitated for a moment, then whispered like a thief:

"Are there still human traffickers to catch

Mo Hua was a bit surprised, but still shook his head, "Human traffickers aren't like mice, you can't just catch them whenever you want

"One catch per month is also okay, three hundred Merit Points!" Cheng Mo said with a pained expression.

Right now, he only makes fifty a month.

Mo Hua ate his chicken leg without commenting.

"Other Sin Cultivators are fine too Cheng Mo sighed upon seeing this, "Now there are too many disciples doing tasks, the good tasks are snatched up early, and most of those we can get earn fewer Merit Points."

"Some tasks with rich Merit Points value are beyond us, people with shallow rewards experience and insufficient task history won't let us take them

We'?" Mo Hua raised his eyebrows slightly. "Who else is there

"Who else but Situ Jian and the others

Cheng Mo sighed again, "At this rate, it would take an eternity for me to accumulate enough Merit Points to exchange for Spiritual Objects to temper my body

Cheng Mo started to lament in front of Mo Hua.

Mo Hua listened and looked contemplative.

He had not planned to take Cheng Mo and the others out so soon.

Directly targeting the Evil God was indeed risky.

And for Cheng Mo and the others, it was still too early.

However, now they can't earn Merit Points...

Mo Hua's thoughts shifted slightly.

Maybe take Cheng Mo and the others out for some practice?

Start simple, catch some Sin Cultivators for some basic training, then work up from easy to challenging, and then meddle with the Evil God's minions, the black-clad human traffickers?

Seeing Mo Hua blinking, not sure what he was thinking, but visibly seeing a turning point appeared, Cheng Mo's eyes lit up, he quickly handed over another chicken leg, solemnly saying:

"Junior Brother, it depends on you

Mo Hua took the chicken leg, thought for a moment, sighed, and pretended to be in a dilemma:

"Let me think about it first, if there's a clue, I'll tell you all about it."

Cheng Mo was overjoyed and hurriedly thanked him:

"Thanks Junior Brother! From now on, you are my real brother!"

Mo Hua had been considered Cheng Mo's "real brother" many times before, and it wasn't that special anymore.

But taking Cheng Mo and the others to earn some Merit Points didn't seem like a bad idea.

Assisting in eradication wasn't as simple as it sounded.

How exactly to do it could also involve using them as "guinea pigs" to test the waters.

Mo Hua nodded slightly, gradually made up his mind.

...

During the break, Mo Hua went to the Gu Family again.

He wanted to ask Uncle Gu if he could use some connections to have Taoist Court issue tasks through Uncle Gu, then take on those tasks himself, catch Sin Cultivators, and earn Merit Points.

If Uncle Gu agreed, he would then have a complete “industrial chain” linking Taoist Court and Taixu Gate to earn Merit Points.

Once the “industrial chain” was established, he could then independently seek, issue, and perform tasks to efficiently earn Merit Points.

Although he wasn't lacking Merit Points now, that was only for now.

There will be more uses for Merit Points in the future, and you can never have too many.

Of course, this depended on whether Uncle Gu agreed.

Mo Hua wasn't confident before, but after the Fire Buddha incident, given his current friendship with Uncle Gu, Mo Hua felt that it was possible for Uncle Gu to agree.

Even if he didn't agree, it was still worth a try.

But upon arriving at the Gu Family, just as he entered the main gate, Mo Hua unexpectedly bumped into a cultivator.

He was burly, with a majestic appearance, resolute eyes, slightly dark skin, muscles as solid as iron blocks, condensed Blood Qi, and deep cultivation.

This person was none other than the Third Grade Golden Core Realm Artifact Refiner, Master Gu from Solitary Mountain Artifact Refining City.

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"Master Gu?" Mo Hua was somewhat surprised.

Master Gu showed a kind smile to Mo Hua and bowed:

"Young Master Mo."

"Aren't you in Solitary Mountain City?" Mo Hua asked.

"I had some urgent business to attend to, needing to visit Qingzhou City," Master Gu replied kindly.

"Oh."

Mo Hua nodded.

Master Gu hesitated slightly, then said with a smile:

"Last time in Solitary Mountain City, I was not a good host. Meeting again now is fate, and I would like to invite Young Master Mo for a light drink, if you are free

Although Master Gu was very friendly, it still felt inappropriate for him, a Golden Core Cultivator, to offer a forced smile to Mo Hua, a Foundation Building Cultivator.

Moreover, it was evident that this sort of obliged pleasantries was not Master Gu's forte.

Mo Hua shook his head, "I don't drink alcohol."

Especially strong alcohol, it's too harsh.

Fruit wine is okay, but cultivators generally don't consider fruit wine as real alcohol.

Master Gu looked somewhat disappointed.

Mo Hua said, "I can join for a meal."

Master Gu was momentarily stunned, then relieved, his firm face breaking into a slight smile: "Good."

It was good that he agreed.

It was still early in the day, and Master Gu guessed Mo Hua had other matters to attend to, so he did not further disturb him, only making arrangements:

"In Qingzhou City, there is a Crane Pavilion, where the Spiritual Fish is delicious. At noon, I will prepare a banquet there, waiting for Young Master Mo."

"Just call me Mo Hua, no need for 'Young Master'," said Mo Hua.

Master Gu nodded, "Alright, Young Master Mo."

Mo Hua didn't know what else to say.

After parting with Master Gu, Mo Hua went to greet Aunt Wan.

Wenren Wan was playing with Yu Er.

Yu Er's complexion was better with each passing day, becoming livelier too. Previously a frail child that brought heartache, now she was bouncing around, turning slightly mischievous.

Hence, Wenren Wan was deeply grateful to Mo Hua, feeling more than ever that sending Yu Er to the Taixu Gate, to be by Mo Hua's side, was an absolutely right decision.

"If you encounter trouble within the Sect that you can't resolve, go find Elder Murong, I and Elder Murong are like sisters

"For matters outside the Sect, go find Changhuai."

Wenren Wan pointed to Gu Changhuai sitting to the side, drinking tea.

"He is a Supervisor, and though being just a Third-grade Golden Core, he still holds some prestige in the Taoist Court."

"If you face any trouble and Changhuai doesn't look after you, just come back and tell me

After finishing, Wenren Wan glanced at Mo Hua, feeling inexplicably heartbroken, sighing:

"In this whole Qianxue State Boundary, with so many Sects and disciples, no one is like you, a young child learning alone here, with no parents or relatives by your side, no one to rely on or to cherish you

"I'm afraid you might be bullied in the Sect and too scared to speak out

Wenren Wan still appeared worried.

Gu Changhuai just silently sat to the side, expressionless, not wanting to speak.

Who would bully him?

Fire Buddha, that fierce Demon Cultivator, hunted Mo Hua without success, and ended up with his chest blown open.

No need to mention others.

In this Qianxue State Boundary, except for those Sect Elders, ancestors...

And within the Four Great Sects, those true Great Family lineage, born with Heavenly Spirit Roots, the pride of the pride, who could bully him?

Moreover, these dignitaries, real Heavenly Pride, are upper echelons of society, completely in another world, possibly never intersecting with Mo Hua for a lifetime.

Why bother to specifically bully a mere Taixu Sect Disciple.

Gu Changhuai sighed.

He had already subtly mentioned to Wenren Wan before that Mo Hua, this child, seemed innocent but was actually cunning, dark and calculating, and there was no need to worry for him.

The Sin Cultivators and Evil Cultivators that fell into his hands, who knows how many there were.

Yet, Wenren Wan rebuked him, saying he was narrow-minded, speaking ill of a child behind his back, shameless.

People only choose to believe what they want to believe.

Unable to persuade, Gu Changhuai subsequently knew better and refrained from bringing up the matter.

Every time Wenren Wan expressed concern for Mo Hua, worried about him being bullied, he pretended not to hear.

Mo Hua also felt a bit embarrassed and said:

"Aunt Wan, the Sect Elders, senior brothers and sisters, and fellow disciples are all very kind to me, you don't need to worry."

Wenren Wan then smiled gratefully.

Afterwards, the two chatted briefly, talking about the gossip within the Sect and Yu Er's cultivation in the Taixu Gate.

Wenren Wan was about to leave.

She stayed in Qingzhou City, never idle, taking care of Yu Er and managing some properties of the Shangguan Family, Wenren Family, and Gu Family in about a dozen nearby large and small Immortal Cities.

But just before parting, Wenren Wan's gaze dimmed, still instructing Mo Hua:

"That Master Gu... if you have any requests, you may ask him. If he has any ulterior motives, you don't need to pay him any heed."

Mo Hua was startled.

Wenren Wan tactfully said, "Recently, he had some people inquire into your identity through the Gu Family."

Mo Hua realized, then smiled:

"Thank you, Aunt Wan, I understand."

Seeing that Mo Hua understood, Wenren Wan gently smiled and stood up to leave.

The living room was then left with only Mo Hua and Gu Changhuai.

Gu Changhuai sat in a corner, sipping tea with an indifferent face.

Mo Hua quietly approached and whispered:

"Uncle Gu, what brings you free time today?"

Gu Changhuai did not even lift his eyelids, using the lid to skim the froth in his bowl, "Cultivators from the Taoist Court are not donkeys grinding a millstone, we naturally have some days off."

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Gu Changhuai took a sip of tea and set the cup down. "Alright, speak. What do you need from me?"

Mo Hua looked puzzled. "How do you know I came to ask for something?"

Gu Changhuai glanced at Mo Hua. "Take a guess."

Mo Hua was momentarily stunned. "Uncle Gu, why are you mimicking me?"

Gu Changhuai froze for a second, then couldn't help but say,

"Are you going to spit it out or not? If not, I'm going to leave."

"Okay, okay," Mo Hua nodded repeatedly. Without beating around the bush, he got straight to the point and said,

"Uncle Gu, if I have leads on a Sin Cultivator, can you issue a reward through the Taoist Court directly?"

"Then I'll accept the reward, complete the task, earn merit points, and the Taoist Court catches the Sin Cultivator. It's a win-win!"

Gu Changhuai's expression froze. He couldn't help but glance at Mo Hua. "You've really thought this through, haven't you?"

Mo Hua replied humbly, "It's not bad

Gu Changhuai shook his head and refused, "That's against regulations."

Mo Hua pouted, looking unconvinced.

He had compared it carefully. His plan obviously aligned with the Taoist Court's procedures from start to finish.

The Taoist Court obtaining leads from elsewhere and issuing rewards versus obtaining leads from him and issuing tasks—there really wasn't much difference.

There wasn't any bribery involved in the process either.

Besides, he didn't even have the Spirit Stones to bribe Uncle Gu.

It was purely because Uncle Gu didn't want to help.

So, Mo Hua began to haggle. "Uncle Gu, if you don't help me, I won't help you in the future either."

Gu Changhuai snorted. "Why would I need your help?"

As soon as he said this, he froze internally, realizing he had messed up.

Mo Hua flashed a sly grin, raised his fingers, and began ticking off points one by one:

"Like leads on Sin Cultivators, array investigations, restoring Transmission Tokens, deciphering Sealing Patterns and Secret Patterns

"And right now, I'm only at the Foundation Establishment Early Stage. My skills in Formations will only get better and better."

"If you don't help me now, and you need a favor from me in the future, don't blame me for not honoring our relationship!"

Mo Hua's small face was stern.

Gu Changhuai felt the previously smooth tea in his mouth turn slightly bitter.

He was being blackmailed!

A dignified Dao Court Canon of the Taoist Court, blackmailed by a kid barely past ten years old...

This was outrageous.

Gu Changhuai sat in silence for a long time, his mind turning over the situation. After much deliberation, he still couldn't think of a way out.

Moreover, Mo Hua wasn't entirely wrong. With his current level of mastery in Formations, it was entirely possible that the Taoist Court might need his help with complex cases in the future...

Gu Changhuai sighed. "Even if I issue the reward, it's not guaranteed that you'd be able to accept it

"Rewards are issued to entire sects, not to individuals. Even if you qualify, others can accept it too. I might issue the reward, but the task wouldn't necessarily land in your hands

Mo Hua asked, puzzled, "Doesn't it require your approval first?"

Gu Changhuai explained, "There are requirements for rewards. If someone else meets the criteria, it's not easy for us to refuse."

"Then set stricter requirements?" Mo Hua suggested.

Gu Changhuai raised an eyebrow. "Such as?"

Mo Hua thought for a moment. "For example: Foundation Establishment Early Stage, proficient in Concealment Technique, adept at Second-grade Arrays, and skilled in Water Prison Technique... Things like that?"

Gu Changhuai's face was expressionless. "Why don't I just explicitly mark it: 'This reward is exclusively for a Foundation Establishment Early Stage disciple from Taixu Gate named 'Mo Hua'?"

Mo Hua scratched his head sheepishly. "Isn't... isn't that a bit too obvious?"

Gu Changhuai retorted irritably, "You're aware it's obvious?"

Mo Hua muttered softly, "It's not like there's anything wrong with that

Gu Changhuai sighed helplessly. After pondering for a moment, he said,

"I'll think of a way. I'll get back to you in a while."

Mo Hua was overjoyed. "Thank you, Uncle Gu!"

Gu Changhuai gave a small nod.

He considered it carefully...

While there was a hint of favoritism in such an approach, it wasn't entirely "against regulations." Exchanging merit points for accomplishments was fundamentally the Taoist Court's guiding principle.

Besides, Mo Hua's grasp of Formations was... formidable, to put it mildly.

In the future, the Taoist Court might very well require his help with some thorny, intricate Formation-related cases.

This wasn't blackmail; it was merely the Taoist Court nurturing and collaborating with "special Formation talents" for mutual benefit.

Thinking along these lines, Gu Changhuai felt much more at ease.

He picked up his tea, took a sip, and nodded slightly, finding the flavor not so bitter anymore.

With his goal achieved and the hour approaching noon, Mo Hua prepared to bid farewell to Gu Changhuai.

"Master Gu is treating me to lunch. I'll be off now."

Gu Changhuai blinked. "Master Gu?"

"Yep," Mo Hua nodded.

"Which Master Gu?"

Gu Changhuai frowned, recalling a mention of "Master Gu" from earlier by Wenren Wan. He asked again, "The Gu Family's Artifact Refining Master?"

Mo Hua nodded and said, "The Third Grade Artifact Refiner of the Gu Family's Solitary Mountain Refinery Shop, the Golden Core Realm Master Gu!"

Gu Changhuai stared at Mo Hua, momentarily at a loss for words.

Solitary Mountain City, a remote branch family, a Third Grade Refinery Shop, and a Master Gu—a cultivator at Golden Core Realm...

"And he's treating you to lunch?"

Gu Changhuai's expression grew even more perplexed.

Mo Hua sighed. "Ah, what can I do? Master Gu insisted; I couldn't refuse."

Gu Changhuai was momentarily speechless.

He couldn't wrap his head around it.

Within the Gu Family, Cousin Wan'er treated Mo Hua as if he were a nephew;

Their aunt, Elder Hong, often praised Mo Hua as clever, well-mannered, and handsome, even saying that once he grew up a bit, she'd personally find him a match;

Gu An and Gu Quan also frequently mentioned "Young Master Mo" in their conversations.

Now even a seemingly distant, remote family member—a Third Grade Artifact Refiner of Solitary Mountain Refinery Shop—was going out of their way to invite Mo Hua to lunch...

Gu Changhuai took a sharp breath.

This kid had been here barely over a year and had already established himself to this extent...

Chapter 1089: Chapter 676: The Past_3

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In another decade or so, might the Gu Family simply switch to the surname "Mo"?

Seeing Gu Changhuai with a look of melancholy on his face, Mo Hua thought it might be because he had been invited to dinner while Gu Changhuai had not, leading to a sense of loss. So, Mo Hua quietly said:

"Uncle Gu, why don't you... come along too?"

"I hear we're going to Crane Pavilion to eat Spiritual Fish, the taste is absolutely delightful

Gu Changhuai's expression immediately darkened.

Mo Hua promptly got the hint and stopped talking, only muttering under his breath, "Fine, don't go. Can't recognize when someone's trying to be nice

Gu Changhuai heard this comment.

Seeing Gu Changhuai's face grow even darker, Mo Hua immediately got up and said, "I mustn't keep Master Gu waiting, I'll be off then!" and dashed away like a wisp of smoke.

The living room lay empty, leaving Gu Changhuai alone seated in his original spot, sighing helplessly once more.

...

Qingzhou City, Crane Pavilion.

In an elegant room on the third floor.

The table was set with an array of four dishes and one soup, all full of color, aroma, and taste.

The dishes consisted of various types of Spiritual Fish, and the soup was a crystal-clear and delectable fish broth.

As Mo Hua savored the tender fish and sipped the flavorful soup, his eyes squinted with sheer happiness.

Seeing Mo Hua enjoy his meal, Master Gu breathed a sigh of relief.

The two chatted about trivial pleasantries while eating, and then Mo Hua broached a serious topic:

"Master Gu, there's something I'd like to ask for your help with."

Not only did Master Gu not find the request bothersome, he was actually delighted and generously responded:

"Young Master Mo, just say the word. If it's within my power, I will spare no effort to assist you."

Mo Hua smiled and asked, "Master Gu, could you help me craft some Formation media?"

"Formation media

Master Gu was neither surprised nor did he ask further, but promptly replied:

"No problem!"

Then he inquired, "May I ask, what kind of Formation media would you like, Young Master?"

Mo Hua was well-prepared and pulled several blueprints from his Storage Bag, handing them to Master Gu.

On the blueprints were designs for various Formation media that he had crafted during his spare time, based on Formation structures and his own requirements.

The types of Formation media were quite basic, primarily Array Plates and Formation Flags.

Master Gu took a quick glance and could tell they were somewhat rough, clearly the work of a novice, but he didn't say a word.

Although they were crude and would waste some Refining Materials, they were functionally complete and structurally sound, so they would work without issue.

"Young Master, how many do you need?" Master Gu asked.

Mo Hua wasn't wealthy, nor did he like pretending to be lavish and 'play the tycoon', so he honestly inquired:

"How many Spirit Stones per item?"

Master Gu was somewhat surprised; he rarely encountered "young masters" with such unpretentious ways like Mo Hua.

"If you only need a few dozen, consider them a gift from me."

"If you need more, several hundred to a thousand, I will only charge you the cost

Master Gu took another look at the blueprints and roughly estimated the cost:

"Since they are all Second Grade Formation media and don't use precious materials, the cost won't be much. An Array Plate would be about fifty Spirit Stones each, and the Formation Flags, given their special materials, would cost sixty-five Spirit Stones each

Mo Hua nodded slightly.

The price was even lower than he had expected.

But he was also a bit conflicted.

He had only planned to craft a dozen or so Formation media for fun, but it seemed almost disrespectful to ask a Third Grade Artifact Refiner like Master Gu to refine such a small amount.

Crafting them in large quantities would be a waste of Spirit Stones, and he was not a noble family's son to squander so many Spirit Stones.

Master Gu seemed to sense Mo Hua's hesitation and after a moment of thought, he proposed:

"How about this: I'll first craft twenty of each item, and when they're done, I'll deliver them to Young Master so you can review their quality and share any thoughts on the Formation media

Mo Hua didn't really have any expertise in Formation media.

His few blueprints for Formation media were copied from an Artifact Refining book and modified blindly.

The only Formation media he had any experience with was the "earth" on the ground.

But he knew this was Master Gu's way of offering a good turn.

"Isn't this going to be troublesome for you?" Mo Hua quietly asked.

Master Gu waved his hand dismissively, "What trouble? It's just a few Second Grade Formation media pieces. I have some free time anyway, so consider it a warm-up for my skills

Mo Hua opted not to decline further, "Then I must thank Master Gu."

Master Gu clasped his hands together, "It's nothing, Young Master. You are too kind."

Subsequently, a waiter brought in two more dishes, one a steamed bighead carp and the other a deep-fried goldfish, both of which Mo Hua had never tasted before.

"Please try this, young master." Master Gu called out.

Mo Hua tasted it and nodded in approval, "Delicious."

Master Gu smiled in response.

Afterward, the two chatted for a while more. It was all Mo Hua asking and Master Gu answering.

If Mo Hua did not ask, Master Gu would just serve him more dishes, but he never initiated any question nor volunteered any information on his own.

Mo Hua had thought that Master Gu inviting him for a meal must have been for a reason.

But now, it seemed he simply invited him as a guest without any hidden agenda.

After eating his fill, Mo Hua remembered another question and took the opportunity to ask:

"Master Gu, Solitary Mountain City is within the Third-Grade State Boundary, right? So why does it look

Mo Hua paused, but then decided to tell the truth, so poor?"

Master Gu was taken aback, his face revealing a bitter smile.

"Should we not speak of it?" Mo Hua asked.

Master Gu shook his head, "There's nothing that can't be said. Since Young Master Mo asks, speaking openly is no harm

Master Gu sighed and slowly said:

"The matter is actually simple

"Centuries ago, Solitary Mountain City was a mining town with continuous mines, rich in mineral resources, actually quite prosperous."

"And back then, the mined ore was highly compatible with spiritual power, making it very suitable for refining into 'Formation media'."

"There's an old saying that goes, 'One takes advantage of what's available locally.' Backed by the mines, the cultivators in the city mostly made a living from artifact refining, particularly the refining of 'Formation media.'"

"Though they didn't become incredibly rich, life was quite good."

"What happened later?" Mo Hua sipped some fish soup and asked curiously.

"Later

Master Gu sighed again, "Later, some of the Great Families from Qian State took a fancy to the extensive mines of Solitary Mountain City and aimed to buy them to refine some luxurious spiritual artifacts."

Mo Hua frowned, "Luxurious spiritual artifacts?"

Master Gu explained: "These are items like colorful glazed roof tiles, multicolored lamps, splendidly bright bricks and stones, gold and silver adorned carriages, and the like

"These things, while costly to make, have an even more expensive selling price."

Mo Hua was puzzled, "Apart from looking good, do these things serve any other purpose?"

Master Gu sighed, "These are symbols to flaunt one's status. To some people, this is more useful than anything else."

"Did the cultivators of Solitary Mountain City agree?"

Master Gu furrowed his brow, "Some agreed, some didn't, but those who didn't were eventually forced into agreement."

"Faced with the overwhelming power of the Great Families, the cultivators of Solitary Mountain City, including the loose cultivators and some smaller families, didn't stand a chance to resist."

Master Gu's expression was filled with bitterness.

"Doesn't the Taoist Court do anything?"

Master Gu did not dare to speak outright but instead asked rhetorically, "Where do you think the cultivators holding office in the Taoist Court come from?"

Mo Hua's gaze darkened.

Master Gu sighed again, "Moreover, on the surface, all procedures were legal and above board."

"The Great Families indeed 'bought' or 'leased' these mines from the hands of the cultivators of Solitary Mountain City."

"The Spirit Pacts were clearly marked with spiritual power signatures."

"The Great Families 'acted by the book,' and the Taoist Court 'followed the law,' leaving the cultivators of Solitary Mountain City without any recourse."

"Thereafter, various Great Families set up Refinery Shops within Solitary Mountain City, mining the ores day and night without cease."

"At first, the cultivators of Solitary Mountain City protested and caused disturbances, leading to some turmoil."

"Latterly, the Great Families decided to only hire local cultivators for the mining and paid a not insignificant amount."

"With the income of Spirit Stones, the local cultivators gradually quelled their dissatisfaction and settled down."

"But then

Master Gu shook his head, "The noble families, with the help of large spiritual machines and formations, mined too aggressively."

"In just under a century, all the ore veins were exhausted."

"After the Great Families left, they only left behind a scoured wasteland of mines."

"The very foundation the cultivators of Solitary Mountain City relied upon for their livelihood was destroyed overnight, and thereafter the city gradually fell into decline."

"Some smaller families went bankrupt, struggled together, became unable to afford even a bowl of rice, had to fend for themselves, split apart, and returned to being loose cultivators."

"As for the loose cultivators, they were even more on their own."

"Those who could leave, did; those who were unable, without any means of livelihood outside, could only stay in Solitary Mountain City, picking up scrap ores from the abandoned mines to exchange at the decaying Refinery Shops for one or two Spirit Stones, barely scraping by to survive

...

Mo Hua's expression became solemn and pensive.

He was clearly in Qian State, but it felt as if he had returned to Li State, to those low-grade, impoverished small state boundaries.

The principle of humanity, to take from the insufficient to give to those who have more than enough...

Chapter 1090: Chapter 677: Noble

Chapter 1090 -677: Noble

At the Qian Learning State Boundary, noble families thrived, living a life of decadence amidst prosperity, but on the fringes, places like Little Immortal City still eked out a precarious existence.

Families like the Qian Family, small in stature, could lord over others in Tongxian City, but near the boundary of the Qianxue State, they faced oppression, no different from ordinary Loose Cultivators.

Mo Hua suddenly remembered the words he overheard from the elderly ancestor of the Qian Family while he was capturing him back in Big Black Mountain, hidden in the cave where Evil Pills were refined. The old ancestor of the Qian Family had said to the now-deceased Qian Hong, the family head:

In this world, the strong feed on the weak, big fish devour small fish, and small fish feast on shrimp."

"The Tao Cultivation World is no different, with Loose Cultivators being exploited by small families, the small families oppressed by medium families, and the medium families suppressed by upper-class noble families."

"In other words, Loose Cultivators sustain small families, small families sustain medium families, and medium families uphold noble families

"At its core, it's all about extracting the blood of those at the bottom

...

The old ancestor of the Qian Family was a wicked man; he built the Black Mountain Evil Stronghold, nurtured Evil Cultivators, killed to refine Pills, committed countless murders, all to seek his own immortality.

But some of his words seemed to be undeniable truths...

Mo Hua felt a complex mix of emotions, his expression becoming somewhat melancholic.

Master Gu, observing closely, noticed Mo Hua's youthfulness and his eyes filled with compassion. He couldn't help but constrict his pupils and personally poured Mo Hua another cup of fruit wine.

Mo Hua then pondered another question:

"Master Gu, noble families chase profit... Logically speaking, Loose Cultivators from Solitary Mountain City originally made a living by crafting 'Formation media' and could live quite comfortably."

"This implies that crafting Formation media is also profitable."

"Why then do they intentionally deplete the mines to refine those luxurious Spiritual Artifacts? Why not craft more Formation media? If they did, it would not only earn Spirit Stones but also help to popularize formations, wouldn't it be beneficial?"

"Is it because luxurious Spiritual Artifacts can earn them much more?"

Master Gu nodded and sighed, "That's natural

"Ordinary Formation media are used by the impoverished lower-class Cultivators, while luxurious Spiritual Artifacts are used by the luxurious and opulent upper-class Cultivators."

"Even if both are in the Qi-refining Realm, a thousand lower-class Cultivators could not spend as much as a single noble family's son might."

"Our Gu Family, although we have industries, has relatively little profit, and amongst noble families, our family's wealth is considered minor. Our ancestors have always imposed strict restrictions on our family's children, prohibiting extravagance and waste."

"But other families, especially those Great Families owning 'Spiritual mines' with countless industries and extremely deep pockets, are a different story

"The value of a single prestigious Taoist Robe on the body of a direct lineage child of those families is probably enough to cover a year's expenses of a thousand Qi Cultivation Loose Practitioners

At this point, Master Gu's expression carried a hint of sorrow.

Mo Hua frowned, "Are luxurious Spiritual Artifacts difficult to refine?"

Master Gu shook his head, "To be honest, these luxurious Spiritual Artifacts are actually quite ordinary in terms of the skill involved. Their offensive and defensive capabilities are weak, and sometimes, functionality is sacrificed for the sake of aesthetics."

Mo Hua was puzzled, "Then what makes them so valuable?"

Master Gu sighed: "Their value lies in two words: 'status'."

"Status?"

Master Gu explained: "A Spiritual Artifact, whether its materials are precious or rare, who the Artifact Refiner is, how many years of skill it carries, whether it is limited edition... These are all considerations."

"Without these 'considerations', even if you crafted the same luxurious Spiritual Artifact with equivalent Artifact Refining skill, it would be deemed a 'forgery', a low-quality counterfeit."

"Therefore, such luxurious Spiritual Artifacts are not something ordinary Artifact Refiners can craft."

"Furthermore, noble families actually don't need to promote Formation media, to popularize formations

Mo Hua was taken aback, somewhat surprised.

Master Gu said: "What noble families need to do is monopolize, monopolize the inheritance of formations, monopolize Artifact Refining resources."

"If formations were popularized, a Formation Flag with Sixteen Patterns could only be sold for three hundred Spirit Stones;"

"But by monopolizing formations, a Formation Flag with just eleven patterns could be sold for three hundred."

"Lower Artifact Refining costs, higher Spirit Stone profits."

"As long as they monopolize formations, they can set any price they want."

"They earn Spirit Stones effortlessly, without needing to spend effort on researching the application of Formation media, optimization of formations, and developing Formation Study

"These tasks take time and effort, and don't bring profit to noble families, hence the situation we see now

"Formations are treasured by noble families, either held as Ultimate Techniques, placed on high shelves, or left to gather dust in a corner."

"Ordinary Cultivators, lacking knowledge of formations, can only rely on noble families, helpless; ordinary Formation Masters, without formation inheritance, can only attach themselves to noble families

Master Gu spoke with a solemn tone, his expression filled with sighs.

Mo Hua frowned in silence, deep in thought.

Master Gu glanced at Mo Hua's expression, then suddenly smiled and apologized:

"Let's not talk about these matters. My intention was to host the young master, and I didn't mean to broach such displeasing topics. Please forgive me."

Master Gu poured Mo Hua another drink.

Mo Hua drank silently, not saying anything more until the banquet ended.

When parting, Master Gu only said:

"Next time during the break, I'll send over the refined Formation media to Gu Family's main house in Qingzhou City. The young master can come by to collect them when convenient."

Mo Hua bowed and said, "Thank you, Master Gu."

"You're too courteous, young master."

Master Gu waved his hand, watching from the entrance of Crane Pavilion as Mo Hua left. He sighed softly, then turned to leave.

After departing, Master Gu bought some materials to craft Formation media in Qingzhou City, and then took a carriage back to Solitary Mountain City.

On the carriage, his disciple Da Chuan was also present.

Da Chuan was a Cultivator born and raised in Solitary Mountain City, having studied Artifact Refining from an early age, and seldom leaving the city. Having come to Qingzhou City this time and seen the wonders of the Fifth-grade Immortal City, he felt his eyes had been truly opened.