

## Immortality 1291

Chapter 1291: Sword Control Genius (2)

Mo Hua asked curiously again.

Situ Jian said: "The usual process of Sword Control is to first accumulate Sword Qi, then infuse the Sword Qi into the Spirit Sword, and finally control the sword through Divine Sense."

"Once the Divine Sense, Spirit Sword, and Sword Qi are united into one, achieving a complete state of 'Sword Control,' the Divine Sense can then be used to lock onto enemies, control the sword to pierce through the air, and kill enemies from a distance..."

"Sword Control is based on Object Manipulation. The stronger the Object Manipulation skill, the better the foundation for Sword Control."

"However, Sword Control is much harder than ordinary Object Manipulation, consuming more Divine Sense and making enemy targeting more challenging..."

Mo Hua carefully memorized every word.

However, he directly ignored the earlier part about "accumulating Sword Qi and infusing it into the Spirit Sword."

Because his Sword Qi was too weak, infusing it into the Spirit Sword would be of no use.

He planned to directly replace it with a "Sword Array."

By omitting these parts, he could skip the lengthy "preparations" and go straight to using Divine Sense to lock onto enemies, control the sword to pierce through the air, and kill enemies from a distance, in a straightforward and simple manner.

Everything else could be left to the "Formation."

"As for the specific way to control a sword with Divine Sense for long-distance kills, it is actually a special method of using Divine Sense and requires learning specialized Sword Control Skills..."

At this point, Situ Jian's expression carried a hint of apology as he said to Mo Hua, "Our Situ Family does have a 'Divine Sense Sword Control' method. Before I joined the sect, my father asked me to carry it with me and keep it for future study..."

"But this is family heritage, and it cannot be shared outside the family. I can't tell you..."

Situ Jian was utterly candid.

"Mm, it's okay." Mo Hua nodded.

He understood Situ Jian's intentions.

However, he actually had his own Sword Control Method.

He had obtained it from Boss Jiang, in that Sever Gold Jade Slip. A portion of its contents included the 'Sword Control' technique.

Mo Hua had already secretly studied it last night.

But some of the Sword Dao terminology was rather obscure, and Mo Hua hadn't fully comprehended it.

Now that Situ Jian had explained Sword Control methods more comprehensively from the foundation of Sword Dao, Mo Hua gradually gained some clarity.

Mo Hua sighed lightly.

In the end, his foundation in Sword Dao was still too weak.

Without someone like Situ Jian to explain things, he would have been blindly fumbling and unable to figure things out.

"Then there's the matter of Divine Sense..."

Situ Jian continued, "For Divine Sense Sword Control, if one's Divine Sense is not strong enough, they naturally won't be able to control the sword properly, so Divine Sense is key to Sword Control..."

"It's widely known that the external projection of Divine Sense has a limited range."

"Starting at Foundation Establishment, one pattern of Divine Sense roughly corresponds to a distance of ten zhang. Generally, for an Initial Stage Foundation Establishment Cultivator, their Divine Sense is around eleven patterns, allowing them to project it over a hundred zhang..."

"Upon reaching the Peak of Foundation Establishment, with Divine Sense at nineteen patterns, the range of its external projection is generally over one hundred and several dozen zhang, closely approaching two hundred zhang, but never quite reaching it..."

"If one breaks through to Golden Core, the range directly jumps to four hundred zhang..."

Mo Hua nodded slightly, "So for a typical Late-stage Foundation Establishment Cultivator, the range of Divine Sense Sword Control is about one hundred and ninety zhang?"

Situ Jian shook his head, "Not quite that far."

Mo Hua was somewhat puzzled, but after thinking for a moment, he understood:

"Does it experience attenuation?"

"Naturally," Situ Jian nodded, "When Divine Sense is projected freely without restraint, its range is at its maximum, but once it's used for Object Manipulation, the distance diminishes."

"For the more complex task of Sword Control, the attenuation is even more severe."

"Generally speaking, for Foundation Establishment Sword Cultivators, the range of Divine Sense Sword Control can even be reduced by more than half."

Mo Hua froze briefly, "So, even at the Late Stage of Foundation Establishment, the distance for typical Divine Sense Sword Control is only around a hundred zhang?"

Situ Jian nodded slightly, "Excluding those extraordinary Sword Dao geniuses, for most Sword Cultivators, that's pretty much the case."

"Extraordinary Sword Dao geniuses? Do we have any in Taixu Gate?"

Mo Hua asked, then silently looked at Situ Jian, whose name contained the word "Sword."

Situ Jian, being stared at like this, felt a little embarrassed and sighed:

"Junior Brother, don't look at me... My talent might rank among the top within the Situ Family, or even among several adjacent state boundaries near the Situ Family..."

"But within the Qian Learning State Boundary, I can only be considered average."

"As for Taixu Gate, while there are individuals with better Sword Dao talent than mine, they're not significantly better."

Situ Jian paused, glancing at Mo Hua with a trace of helplessness as he said:

"This might sound a bit harsh, but it's the truth..."

"For true Sword Dao geniuses of unparalleled talent, they would typically join the Four Great Sects — more specifically, the Heavenly Sword Sect, known for being number one in Sword Dao. Otherwise, they might opt for one of the other three major sects."

"Such Sword Dao geniuses, frankly speaking, would not join Taixu Gate. After all, our Taixu Gate's Sword Dao heritage is rather unimpressive..."

"Not necessarily unimpressive, more like mediocre: neither outstanding nor terrible."

Mo Hua's gaze sharpened slightly, and he quietly asked:

"Situ, have you ever heard of 'Divine Thought into Sword'?"

Situ Jian froze, "Divine Thought into Sword? What kind of Sword Technique is that?"

Seeing that Situ Jian hadn't heard of it, Mo Hua replied, "It's nothing; I heard it from a storyteller, and I don't know if it's true."

Situ Jian's heart sank somewhat helplessly.

Can the words of a storyteller even be trusted...

Junior Brother is very serious when he's dependable.

But occasionally, he can be playful and whimsical, with a touch of childlike innocence and impulsiveness.

Mo Hua then said, "I've learned a bit of the basics of Sword Control. Can you take a look for me to see if my technique is correct?"

"Alright." Situ Jian nodded, but as he did, he suddenly stopped midway, a confused expression crossing his face:

"Junior Brother, where did you learn 'Sword Control'?"

"Also, aren't you just at the Middle Stage of Foundation Establishment?"

"And, you're not a Sword Cultivator; you don't cultivate Sword Qi, and Spirit Sword and Sword Qi can't merge. How are you able to control a sword?"

Mo Hua gave a "hush" gesture and whispered to Situ Jian, "I learned it secretly; don't tell anyone."

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Speaking of "stealing lessons," his demeanor was nonetheless righteous and unashamed.

Situ Jian saw Mo Hua's "frankness" and dumbly nodded his head.

"I don't cultivate Sword Qi; I simply use Divine Sense for sword control. Just testing its effects, playing around..."

As he spoke, Mo Hua pulled out a "shabby sword."

Calling it a shabby sword wasn't entirely inaccurate—it was filthy, rusty, and looked like it had been buried in a corner for who knows how long.

Situ Jian was witnessing, for the first time, someone using a "shabby sword" to practice sword control...

As expected, Little Senior Brother's way of thinking and acting was far from ordinary.

"Alright then." Situ Jian sighed, "Let's start by testing the range of your sword control."

He looked around, then pointed toward a nearby mountain slope on the other side, "Little Senior Brother, stand here and control the sword to fly toward that slope."

"Sure!" Mo Hua nodded with enthusiasm.

He then recalled the principles taught in the Sword Control Chapter of the Sever Gold Sword Control Jue, began channeling his Divine Sense, and manipulated the shabby Spirit Sword.

The Sword Control Method was essentially a specialized Object Manipulation technique.

Divine Sense Ink Manipulation was also considered Object Manipulation.

However, Ink Manipulation emphasized the intricacy and flexibility of Divine Sense control.

Sword Control, on the other hand, focused on instantaneous force and extreme speed.

But for Mo Hua, any Divine Sense technique was far from challenging.

The mere Divine Sense Sword Control, no matter its difficulty, could hardly compare to the Heavenly Secret Calculation and the Tricky Calculation within the Divine Sense system, which explores the depths of Formation principles.

Mo Hua began his sword control.

He focused intensely, held his breath, and unleashed his Divine Sense, firmly "grasping" the shabby Spirit Sword before him, achieving complete "manipulation."

Then he glanced at the distant mountain slope, and suddenly amplified his Divine Sense, channeling it rapidly to imbue the Spirit Sword with great momentum.

Golden light flared in an instant.

All Situ Jian heard was a sharp "whoosh." Before him, the sword's golden glow flashed, tracing a line of light that vanished in an instant—then the Spirit Sword was gone.

He hadn't even reacted to what just happened.

Too fast...

Situ Jian turned his gaze toward the distant slope with a dazed expression.

"Where's the sword?"

Though it was supposed to fly toward the mountain slope, the sword seemed to have disappeared.

Situ Jian narrowed his focus and looked even farther away. Suddenly, his expression shifted slightly.

There was a forest behind the slope.

That sword...

It seemed to have flown past the slope and embedded itself into the forest ahead.

"There's no way..."

Suppressing his shock, Situ Jian employed his swift movement techniques, flashing over to the forest in moments. Activating his Divine Sense for a search, he quickly located the rusted Spirit Sword embedded in a tree.

The sword was indeed shabby, still bearing its rusty appearance—Little Senior Brother's unique possession.

Situ Jian turned back toward Mo Hua's location, estimating the distance, his mind suddenly awash with disbelief.

Judging by estimation, it must have been...

One hundred seventy to one hundred eighty zhang?!

Situ Jian felt a chill down his spine, utterly incredulous.

Was his Little Senior Brother some kind of monster?

Sword control while at the mid-stage of Foundation Establishment, spanning one hundred seventy to one hundred eighty zhang? Where was the logic in that?

Situ Jian sighed, picked up the shabby sword, returned to Mo Hua's side, and couldn't help but ask:

"Little Senior Brother, just how powerful is your Divine Sense?"

Mo Hua replied ambiguously, "Just the average Divine Sense for someone at mid-stage Foundation Establishment... maybe a tiny bit stronger. After all, I'm a Formation Master; I paint formations every day."

Situ Jian felt conflicted.



That "tiny bit stronger" was obviously far too much.

The two of them shared the same sect and even lived in the same Disciple's Residence. Sharing their days together, Situ Jian had long known Mo Hua's Divine Sense was formidable but had never imagined it could be this formidable.

No wonder Little Senior Brother excelled in formation techniques.

And it was no surprise Elder Master Xun personally chose him to serve as "Little Senior Brother" in formation expertise.

Situ Jian didn't delve deeper into the matter.

Everyone's cultivation talents differed. Little Senior Brother's blood qi and spiritual power were weak, yet he had managed to join the Taixu Gate. It was evident his strengths lay elsewhere.

Just as some people were born with rich blood qi, others were gifted with exceptional spiritual roots or unparalleled talent in Sword Dao.

Little Senior Brother was likely born with an extraordinary Divine Sense.

Situ Jian, unfamiliar with formation techniques or divine thought cultivation, wasn't sensitive to Divine Sense realms and didn't fully grasp its implications.

What shocked him more was something else:

"Little Senior Brother, is there no decay in your sword control's range?"

Mo Hua paused to think for a moment, then slowly nodded:

"It seems so..."

At his current Divine Sense level—seventeen-patterns peak, just shy of eighteen-patterns—his sword control range appeared to align perfectly with his Divine Sense's limit.

The maximum range of his outward Divine Sense coincided exactly with his sword control's distance.

No decay whatsoever.

Mo Hua contemplated briefly before understanding.

Divine Sense transformation!

Due to Divine Sense's transformation, his divine thought gained exceptional tenacity, allowing it to bear significant loads. Thus, his sword control's range exhibited zero decay.

Mo Hua's eyes lit up.

This indicated his sword control's attack range might be nearly double that of ordinary Sword Cultivators.

And that's compared to those at equivalent Divine Sense realms.

Against Sword Cultivators of the same cultivation level, the disparity could be even greater.

Situ Jian stared blankly for a moment before exclaiming in awe: "Little Senior Brother, you could definitely be considered a genius in Sword Dao..."

He then hesitated, correcting himself:

"Maybe more accurately, a 'Sword Control' genius."

After all, Little Senior Brother excelled solely in sword control.

Beyond that, his accomplishments in Sword Dao, especially in Sword Qi, were negligible...

Situ Jian sighed deeply, lamenting: "What a pity. Little Senior Brother, your sword control is both fast and far-reaching—a natural 'Sword Control' genius. Yet you refuse to cultivate Sword Qi. Your sword packs zero power..."

Once more, Situ Jian sighed.

Able to control the sword, but without Sword Qi.

It was akin to a master gunslinger with unrivaled shooting skills but no "bullets in the chamber"—unable to inflict harm.

An utter waste of talent.

Situ Jian wore an expression of regret and disappointment.

Mo Hua smiled brightly, saying: "It's fine. I'm not even a Sword Cultivator; I'm just playing around..."

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Just practicing for fun...

"Alright."

Situ Jian looked at Mo Hua's bright, sparkling eyes and sighed with a hint of resignation.

Afterward, Mo Hua began practicing sword manipulation, with Situ Jian providing guidance from the side, also taking on the role of sword retriever for Mo Hua.

Although Situ Jian had not yet learned Sword Control, as someone from a Sword Dao family, he had been immersed in it since childhood. Even if he hadn't formally studied many Sword Dao Skill methods, he had seen most of them and knew far more than Mo Hua.

With him monitoring and offering pointed corrections, Mo Hua wouldn't stray too far off course while learning.

Under Situ Jian's instructions, Mo Hua's Sword Control progress improved rapidly.

This was because he skipped crucial stages: accumulating Sword Qi and merging Sword Qi with Sword Weapon. He was simply attempting "Divine Sense Sword Control," which wasn't particularly difficult.

For Mo Hua, who had proven the Dao with Divine Sense, it was relatively simple.

The more Situ Jian observed, the more astonished—yet also regretful—he became.

"Junior Brother's Divine Sense Sword Control is undoubtedly fast, and its range is impressive. But the power... it's downright pitiful."

Well, it wasn't entirely devoid of power.

There was a bit.

But the impact he achieved came purely from the "force" of Divine Sense manipulation, much like throwing a projectile by hand with no added sharpness or destructiveness—practically useless in combat.

To top it off, he was using a "broken sword."

The sword itself was neither sharp nor intact, with rust covering its surface.

Situ Jian shook his head.

Even so, he dutifully helped Mo Hua practice Sword Control for the entire day until Mo Hua had become thoroughly adept. Only then did the two return to the sect.

Upon arriving back at the Sect, Mo Hua invited Situ Jian out for a lavish meal as thanks for his guidance in Sword Dao.

In such camaraderie, being treated to a meal by Junior Brother carried a lot of face value.

Situ Jian thoroughly enjoyed the meal.

After the feast, the two parted ways and returned to their respective Disciple's Residences.

Back at the residence, Mo Hua spent some time sketching Formation arrays to help digest the meal, then began pondering his next moves.

First, the Divine Sense Sword Controlling Method—he had already learned it.

Though he only studied it for one day, he had grasped its key concepts.

From here, it would simply be a matter of practice to enhance his proficiency in Sword Control.

There might exist more profound methods for Divine Sense Sword Control, but those were far off and currently unnecessary.

For now, the Sever Gold Sect's "Sword Controlling Technique" was decent enough to use.

Next, the most important task was sword forging.

As Situ pointed out, his Divine Sense Sword Control—while fast and far-reaching—lacked Sword Qi for offense, rendering it wasteful.

But Mo Hua was acutely aware that he would likely never achieve any breakthrough in Sword Qi for the rest of his life.

Thus, he could only focus on his strengths and compensate for his weaknesses—utilizing "Sword Arrays" to substitute for "Sword Qi."

...

When the monthly break came around, Mo Hua didn't go to Refining Demon Mountain. Instead, he arranged to meet Master Gu in the Gu Family's elegantly furnished tea room.

The tea room exuded sophistication and refinement and was also equipped with a Sound Isolation Formation.

This was one of those unspoken rules among clans—guest reception rooms were always equipped with sound isolation to protect visitors' secrecy and prevent eavesdropping.

Mo Hua chatted with Master Gu in the tea room.

He succinctly and clearly conveyed his intentions to Master Gu.

Master Gu was momentarily stunned. "You want to forge Spirit Swords?!"

"Yes." Mo Hua nodded. "I'm thinking of forging some Spirit Swords first, Golden Series ones particularly—cheaper materials."

Due to the special nature of his Sword Control, which relied on the explosive force of Sword Arrays for killing power, each sword was practically disposable. Using expensive materials would bankrupt his family's wealth in no time.

"...Keep the design simple, and like Five Elements Origin Armor, they must be open source. No embedded Formation arrays, and external connection points must remain accessible..."

Mo Hua supplemented his requirements one by one.

Master Gu furrowed his brows tightly and shook his head, remarking:

"To be honest, young master, the Gu Family is not a Sword Dao family. Our Gushan Refining Workshop has never crafted proper Spirit Swords. The occasional commissions we take on are for mass-produced, mundane Sword Weapons that are not of a high standard..."

"These so-called Sword Weapons may look like swords but are indistinguishable from knives, spears, and staffs in essence, lacking the core qualities of a true Spirit Sword."

"And most importantly, they lack intrinsic Sword Arrays..."

"About the Sword Arrays..." Mo Hua began but suddenly felt his heart sink, instantly recognizing the gravity of an issue.

The Gold-Cutting Sword Formation could not be disclosed to Master Gu.

This formation came from the Sever Gold Sect.

No sect would ever permit the leakage of its core formation arrays—especially one as petty and possessive as the Sever Gold Sect.

While Mo Hua might privately study it without much concern, since Formation knowledge was obscure and even if explained aloud was often incomprehensible or unbelievable, involving Master Gu in any forging would lead to significant troubles.

Should the Sever Gold Sect ever learn of this, Master Gu, a Third Grade Artifact Refiner, along with the entire Gushan Refining Workshop, would likely face severe repercussions.

Thus, the sword forging must exclude Master Gu and his workshop.

Quickly calculating the risks and weighing his options, Mo Hua responded:

"...Sword Arrays are indeed tricky. The sect hasn't taught me, and I don't have access to genuine Sword Array legacies..."

"For the time being, let's set Sword Arrays aside, Master Gu. Please forge some simple Spirit Swords for me—craft them as 'formation media,' using the form of a sword but treating them as a vessel."

Not suspecting anything amiss, Master Gu thoughtfully nodded and replied:

"Alright, as the young master wishes. I'll return and give it a try."

"Okay," Mo Hua acknowledged.

Master Gu returned to his workshop and spent approximately two weeks crafting preliminary Spirit Swords based on Mo Hua's instructions.

These were merely standard Spirit Swords.

As Master Gu had described, they looked like "swords," but their essence was no different from other weapons such as rods or staves.

Internally, their structure was modified to feature open arrays, making them effectively ordinary formation media.

Regardless, they were sufficient to experiment with the effectiveness of "Sword Control."

Chapter 1294: Test Sword

Mo Hua took some time to inscribe the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation inside the Spirit Sword.

Unlike the sword formations used by the Sever Gold Sect for forging swords, the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation that Mo Hua inscribed within the sword was a self-sustaining complex formation system with a spiritual power cycle.

Ordinary Gold-Cutting Sword Formations rely on a cultivator to supply spiritual power to amplify sword qi.

But Mo Hua's modified Gold-Cutting Sword Formation altered the formation's structure and added a Spirit Gathering Array as the formation's eye.

The Spirit Gathering Array would pre-charge spiritual power for the Spirit Sword, and the spiritual power would undergo transformation through the formation, converting into sharp Gold-Cutting Sword Qi.

Using Spirit Stones to supply spiritual power instead would eliminate the dependence on personal spiritual power.



Mo Hua's spiritual power was weak, and he couldn't afford to use powerful sword techniques.

After completing the formation, Mo Hua sealed the Spirit Sword.

During his ten-day break, he visited Refining Demon Mountain.

Mo Hua found a secluded spot, expanded his Divine Sense, confirmed there were no people or monster beasts nearby, and began practicing his sword techniques.

He first drew a turtle on a large stone.

This turtle was the target.

Then Mo Hua stepped back, retreating to a distance of 170 zhang, sat cross-legged on the spot, and placed the Spirit Sword before him.

Mo Hua held his breath, focused his thoughts, and silently operated the Sword Controlling Method within the Gold-Cutting Sword Control Jue, using his Divine Sense to manipulate the Spirit Sword. He then locked onto the turtle on the faraway stone.

With a single thought, the Spirit Sword flashed.

A streak of golden light instantly shot out.

Soon after, a booming sound reverberated from the distance, the rock shattered into pieces, and stone debris flew everywhere.

Mo Hua's eyes brightened, and he quickly got up and ran forward.

The Spirit Sword had struck the turtle with precision.

The moment it hit, the formation was activated. The accumulated spiritual power in the Spirit Gathering Array was triggered, activating the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation and converting into sharp sword qi that tore through the stone.

The large stone was covered in spider-web-like cracks.

The turtle had also been pulverized into dust.

However, the Spirit Sword bore the brunt of the sword qi unleashed by the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation, becoming riddled with cracks and rendered useless.

Mo Hua frowned slightly.

The power wasn't too weak, but it wasn't as strong as he'd hoped.

First, the transformation of the formation's power was still somewhat rudimentary.

After all, his use of the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation differed greatly from its original purpose, if not entirely contradictory.

Transforming an amplification-based formation into a killing-focused formation wasn't something that could be achieved overnight.

Second, the formation wasn't well-suited to the Spirit Sword.

The Spirit Sword couldn't fully bear the flow of the formation, nor could the formation fully channel the Spirit Sword's killing intent.

Finally, the Spirit Sword itself was of poor quality.

After all, it was a cheap Spirit Sword, so its power couldn't be expected to be too high.

Mo Hua sighed softly.

The killing power was there, but it was far from enough—certainly below his expectations.

The formation issue was something he could resolve.

Following formation principles, he could gradually optimize the formation pivot, refine the formation patterns, and amplify the formation's power.

But forging swords wasn't so simple.

Improving the Spirit Sword's quality and its compatibility with the formation couldn't be achieved by a regular Artifact Refiner—it required a Sword-Casting Master skilled in crafting sword weapons.

Master Gu wasn't suitable.

Though Master Gu was a third-grade Artifact Refiner, he lacked backing in the Gu Family, which meant certain confidential matters couldn't be discussed with him, lest it implicate him.

Besides, Master Gu was responsible for supporting the massive Gushan Refining Workshop to make a living.

Mo Hua couldn't harm him.

The ideal candidate would be someone with family connections.

Preferably in the same sect as him for easier communication and collaboration on sword crafting.

Someone he could trust.

And someone with exceptional sword-casting skills.

This was crucial for the potency of his "Divine Sense Sword Control"!

Moreover, Divine Sense Sword Control was the foundation for comprehending Sword Intent.

Thus, this also concerned whether he could grasp Sword Intent and eventually delve into the Divine Thought into Sword True Jue...

After returning to the sect, Mo Hua began looking for candidates.

However, after thoroughly scanning the disciples, he couldn't find anyone suitable among the Taixu Sect disciples to act as his "Sword-Casting Master."

The Taixu Sect wasn't particularly focused on Sword Dao.

The inheritance of sword-casting techniques within the sect was scarce.

While there were disciples skilled in artifact refining, few specialized in sword forging.

Even those who could forge swords weren't particularly proficient.

This matter couldn't be rushed.

Mo Hua had no choice but to ask Master Gu to forge some ordinary "Spirit Swords" as a temporary solution.

Mo Hua used these Spirit Swords to practice sword-controlling techniques continually.

Simultaneously, he made incremental adjustments to the sword formation, enhancing the intensity of spiritual power transformation and increasing the power of the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation.

But after practicing for a while, Mo Hua discovered a very serious problem.

Practicing sword techniques was a major financial drain!

Every time he practiced sword control, activated the sword formation, and unleashed sword qi, the Spirit Sword would end up destroyed.

Though these ordinary Spirit Swords were not expensive, they were still Spirit Swords.

The cost of each Spirit Sword was at least several hundred Spirit Stones.

As a loose cultivator without family support, even though he was currently financially stable, continuing this practice would eventually exhaust his resources and bankrupt him.

Even if he didn't go bankrupt,

Master Gu would face financial ruin since he crafted swords for Mo Hua without asking for Spirit Stones.

No matter who went bankrupt, it wouldn't be good.

"No way!"

This didn't align with Mo Hua's principles of conduct.

With a serious expression, Mo Hua thought, "I need to find a way to practice sword control and regain some funds at the same time..."

Here in Refining Demon Mountain, the only way to practice sword control and regain funds was through monster hunting.

Mo Hua roamed the mountain but helplessly discovered that his sword techniques didn't seem very useful.

Given his current sword control's lack of power, ambushing monster beasts was far inferior to relying on formations.

Using it to finish off monsters felt redundant.

Chapter 1295: Test Sword

Using spells to compensate is compensating, using fists to compensate is also compensating—there's no need to be redundant by sacrificing a Spirit Sword just to compensate for damage using Sword Control.

Mo Hua pondered for a long time but couldn't come up with a good solution.

Suddenly, a sharp cry came from the sky. Mo Hua froze for a moment, lifted his head, and saw a magnificent demon bird flying across the horizon.

Mo Hua was slightly startled, then had a sudden realization.

If it's useless for hunting ground beasts, then use it to kill what flies in the sky!

The beasts on the ground typically have thick hides and robust Blood Qi.

But the flying monster beasts, by nature, have the advantage of wings to roam the skies, and compared to the ground beasts, they are not only smaller in size but their Blood Qi is also considerably weaker.

Perfect for practicing Sword Control.

Moreover, airborne monster beasts are harder to spot and hunt than their earthbound counterparts.

Thus, materials from flying monster beasts are far more valuable than those from regular ones.

Mo Hua tilted his head skyward and indeed spotted several demon birds, brown with hooked beaks and talons, leisurely flying about.

Mo Hua smiled faintly.

After returning to the sect, Mo Hua made preparations. He even specifically requested Master Gu to craft several Spirit Swords.

The design inside the Spirit Swords still included the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation.

But outside the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation, Mo Hua added a layer of Flame Fire Formation.

The edges of the sword were also purposefully smeared with the poisonous blood of monster beasts.

After finishing his preparations, Mo Hua headed once more to the Refining Demon Mountain.

He found a concealed mountain peak, sat cross-legged, laid the Spirit Sword before him, and then unleashed his Divine Sense, scanning for airborne monster beasts in the sky.

The sky was azure blue, the clouds as light as drifting steeds.

Mo Hua sat solemnly with his eyes closed.

Occasionally, venomous demon birds flew by, but he paid them no mind.

Until a gray and bald hawk falcon soared directly overhead.

Mo Hua finally stirred his Divine Thought, opened his eyes, which gleamed with a spirited clarity.

Cangtuo Eagle!

A primary rank Second Grade hawk falcon monster beast, its feathers crimson, with gray plumes atop its head, capable of flight. Its beak is as hard as stone, talons like iron, fiercely savage, preying on both monsters and humans.

This was the airborne monster beast Mo Hua carefully selected for testing his sword.

There were many demon birds in the sky, but not all of them could be slain.

Some had impenetrably hard feathers, Sword Qi might not break them;

Some moved in flocks, killing one could provoke the pursuit of an entire group;

Some were too powerful and couldn't be messed with;

Others were cunning and suspicious, with a sharp sensing ability...

By contrast, Cangtou Eagles were the best choice.

While their internal demonic power was strong, their feather and skin defense and monster sensing abilities were just average.

They didn't have a habit of traveling in packs, so they were the easiest to target.

Mo Hua activated the Sword Controlling Technique, directing the sword via Divine Sense while simultaneously locking onto the Cangtou Eagle with his Divine Thought.

Once it descended to hunt, less than 150 zhang above the ground...

Killing intent flashed in Mo Hua's eyes.

A beam of golden light tore through the air.

This golden light moved swiftly, streaking across the sky in strands, reaching the Cangtou Eagle's position in mere moments.

The Cangtou Eagle sensed impending disaster, shrieked desperately, but it was already too late.

The golden sword pierced the body of the Cangtou Eagle, immediately activating the formations. The internal Gold-Cutting Sword Formation erupted with layers of Sword Qi, shredding half of the eagle's wing, while the Flame Fire Formation ignited its feathers, filling the air with a mist of blood.

The Cangtou Eagle plummeted like a kite with its string cut.

Mo Hua utilized Water Passing Step, flashing swiftly to the spot where the eagle fell.



The Cangtou Eagle wasn't dead. Its savage eyes remained fixed on Mo Hua, filled with hatred as if it wished to peck out Mo Hua's eyeballs and devour his flesh.

But a grounded eagle is no better than a chicken.

Its wing, torn apart by Sword Qi, left it unable to fly, its fate already sealed.

Mo Hua spent some effort using both formations and spells before finally slaughtering the Cangtou Eagle.

Afterward, he labored painstakingly to pluck its feathers, strip its flesh and bones, and extract its Demon Core.

As Mo Hua wasn't a Body Cultivator, his strength was lacking, making the task clumsy and time-consuming.

Still, after nearly an hour of work, he managed to complete it.

Yet during the process of skinning the eagle, Mo Hua couldn't shake the feeling that the demonic power within it felt somewhat familiar.

But it shouldn't be...

Mo Hua frowned slightly.

He clearly remembered this was his first time hunting such hawk-like monster beasts.

Why did it seem so familiar?

Mo Hua thought over this for a while but couldn't figure it out. As it was getting late, he temporarily set aside his doubts and descended the mountain.

Arriving at the mountain gate, Mo Hua sold the Cangtou Eagle.

As the eagle was relatively small in size, its materials limited, and its feathers partially destroyed by the sword formation, its selling price wasn't exceptionally high.

Nonetheless, it fetched a clean thousand Merit Points.

After deducting the cost of the Spirit Sword, he still profited several hundred Merit Points.

Mo Hua couldn't help but feel delighted.

If all his Sword Control practice continued like this, not only would he hone his skills, but he'd also earn a fortune in Merit Points!

Mo Hua returned to the sect feeling satisfied.

Following that, Mo Hua settled into a period of steady routine.

He spent the days cultivating, attending lessons, and studying formations.

During vacation periods, he would go to Refining Demon Mountain to practice his sword, kill eagles, and earn Merit Points.

His days were exceptionally fulfilling and notably "wealthy."

His Merit Points steadily piled up.

The Refining Demon Mountain also remained tranquil.

Currently, a large portion of the mountain's outer territories were occupied by Taixu Sect disciples.

Refining Demon Mountain is dangerous, and monster hunting is fraught with peril.

For sect disciples lacking monster-hunting experience, it is even more so.

Thus, newcomers typically wouldn't venture recklessly into the mountain for hunting.

During this period, disciples from other sects of the same generation mostly spent their time cultivating, waiting until their foundations were secure before attempting to hunt monsters later.

Taixu Sect was the exception.

Or rather, this generation of Taixu Sect was the exception.

With Junior Brother Mo Hua leading the way, most Taixu Sect disciples adapted to the life of the Refining Demon Mountain much sooner.

They claimed large swaths of prime territory early on.

The Sever Gold Sect, for reasons unknown, also entered the mountain early.

However, in their contest with Taixu Sect, they suffered defeat and were forced to avoid Taixu Sect, seeking alternative spots for monster hunting.

Some disciples from other sects also entered the mountain ahead of time.

But their numbers were few, only five or six, merely scouting the mountain's conditions.

Then they saw Taixu Sect, groups of disciples, team after team, organized, disciplined, equipped with uniform Spiritual Artifacts, and following standardized monster hunting procedures, executing their hunts in a "militarized" fashion.

At just a glance, they understood the situation.

Taixu Sect, at least this generation of Taixu Sect disciples, was temporarily unchallengeable—best to steer clear...

Thus, while other parts of the mountain had skirmishes and conflicts.

Within the territories occupied by Taixu Sect on the outer mountain, the disciples, all of the same sect, with the same Junior Brother leading them, maintained remarkable harmony.

And so, time passed again, reaching the second half of the year.

The Refining Demon Mountain's outer territories began to see an influx of disciples.

Many sect disciples, having solidified their cultivation over several months, began attempting monster hunting.

This included disciples from Tai'a Sect and Rushing Void Sect, who had once been allies to Taixu Sect...

Chapter 1296: Tai'a

Refining Demon Mountain, Outer Mountain.

In a forested area, several disciples dressed in Tai'a Sect Taoist robes moved cautiously, sweeping their gazes around as they walked slowly forward.

Leading the group was a tall and upright man with a handsome and refined face, holding a crimson-gold Yellow Maple Longsword.

He was none other than Ouyang Feng, the senior brother of the Tai'a Sect, who had interacted with Mo Hua when he first entered the Taixu Sect.

There were five others with him as well.

Among them, four were older in age and at the Foundation Establishment Late Stage, the same rank as Ouyang Feng.

Trailing behind them was a thin and slightly dark-skinned little cultivator, who looked somewhat frail and displayed a more nervous, wooden expression.

After walking for some time, a Tai'a Sect senior sister turned and advised the little cultivator:

"Little Wood, we can only take you twice to familiarize yourself with the terrain of Refining Demon Mountain. From now on, monster hunting will be up to you."

"Two years from now, the Debating Sword competition will take place. Your elder brother is busy and may not have time to look after you, so you'll have to understand."

The little cultivator, addressed as "Little Wood," stole a glance at Ouyang Feng, who was walking ahead—tall, straight-backed, and with his sword-like eyebrows and starry eyes—and then nodded slightly.

"Elder Sister Qian, I understand," he murmured softly.

This senior sister's name was Ouyang Qian, also a member of the Ouyang family. Hearing this, she smiled, patted Little Wood's head, and advised:

"Refining Demon Mountain is dangerous, so be careful."

"Understood," Little Wood nervously replied.

However, being naturally taciturn and not good with words, he didn't say much more.

As the group walked on and reached the mountainside, a Tai'a Sect senior brother with a long face and the surname "Ma" suddenly frowned and said:

"It's been a while since we last came to the Outer Mountain—why have all these peaks been occupied?"

Ouyang Feng's gaze flickered slightly.

The Tai'a Sect senior sister named Ouyang Qian also extended her Divine Sense and, a moment later, said in surprise: "Why are there so many people in this mountain?"

They were all disciples at the Foundation Establishment Late Stage.

Refining Demon Mountain was vast, and disciples at the Foundation Establishment Middle Phase and Late Stage hunted in different areas.

Due to the complex mountain terrain and crisscrossing paths, the routes to different hunting areas varied as well.

The peak they were on was part of the outer periphery, an area for low-grade monster beasts.

Ouyang Feng and the others had come here only when they were at the Foundation Establishment Middle Phase and first began hunting monsters.

Later, when they entered the Inner Mountain to hunt monsters of Second Grade Middle Stage or higher, they hadn't returned since.

According to their previous experiences, there shouldn't be too many disciples heading into the mountains at this time, and the Outer Mountain should be relatively quiet. They didn't expect to find so many disciples in the mountain today.

"Which sect's disciples are these?"

"Judging by their Taoist robes, it looks like... Taixu Sect?"

The group exchanged puzzled glances.

In the Qian Learning State Boundary, the Four Great Sects reigned supreme.

However, in Refining Demon Mountain, the Four Great Sects each had their own designated territories and very rarely interacted with one another.

Outside of the Four Great Sects, they could never have imagined that those occupying the peaks wouldn't belong to the Twelve Streams' Sever Gold Sect, known for their heavily aggressive Sword Qi.

Nor would they have expected it to be one of the top-ranking sects among the Eight Great Gates.

Instead, it turned out to be the Taixu Sect, a sect that had always been tepid, neither rushed nor outstanding, seemingly on the verge of falling to the bottom ranks without anyone noticing...

"How could it be the Taixu Sect?"

"I don't know..."

"Does the Taixu Sect have any formidable Sword Dao heritage?"

"Our Three Sects share some historical ties—Tai'a Sword Casting, Chongxu Sword Qi, and Taixu Sect's Sword Intent, perhaps?"

"I'm not sure. The Elders rarely mention it."

"But Sword Intent is far too difficult, isn't it? Isn't it essentially untrainable at the Foundation Establishment level?"

"Then how are they hunting monsters?"

"Through Tao Cultivation Martial Arts? Or Spells?"

The group looked increasingly confused but decided to continue forward, choosing narrower paths while keeping their movements discreet.

Soon, they saw group after group of Taixu Sect disciples dressed in uniform armor, wielding Spiritual Artifacts, moving through the mountain with coordinated steps and orderly formations.

Although they were some distance away, they still caught glimpses of the monster-hunting process.

First, the disciples scouted and tracked their targets; then, they set a Formation for an ambush.

When the Formation exploded, heavily injuring the monster, a team of disciples surrounded and attacked it swiftly and efficiently, acting in seamless coordination as though they had practiced countless times.

The Tai'a Sect group was secretly stunned.

This wasn't ordinary sect disciples hunting monsters.

Even Taoist Soldiers hunting monsters weren't much different from this.

Moreover...

The long-faced, Ma-surnamed Tai'a Sect senior brother furrowed his brows and said: "Since when did the Taixu Sect excel in Formations?"

The traps set for ambushes, the armor worn, the Spiritual Artifacts wielded.

All of it bore Formation-specific designs tailored to specific functions.

These Formation Diagrams were engineered based on monster habits, trap characteristics, and the construction of the Spiritual Artifacts, refined into tools, standardized into hunting procedures, and even disseminated among disciples...

This wasn't something an ordinary disciple could achieve.

They themselves had stumbled through hunting monsters with much difficulty at the start, fully understanding how challenging it was.

And they could also fully grasp the terrifying advantage of such a streamlined hunting system.

Compared to other sect disciples, the Taixu Sect's "monster hunting" was an entirely different concept.

Ouyang Feng's eyes revealed a thoughtful look as he ordered:

"When you return, tell the next batch of junior brothers to avoid these peaks in Refining Demon Mountain and not to provoke the Taixu Sect disciples lightly."



Though the Tai'a and Taixu Sects shared some historical ties, they were ultimately separate sects now.

Once divided, emotional bonds would inevitably fade over time.

Moreover, even within the same sect, disciples often engaged in open and covert rivalry, leading to grudges. Inter-sect relations were even less cordial.

In Refining Demon Mountain, cultivators hunting monsters, harvesting materials, and earning Merit Points had always been fertile grounds for conflict.

If their sect's disciples clashed with Taixu Sect disciples, judging by the current circumstances, they would undoubtedly suffer significant losses.

The Taixu Sect's hunting teams, operating in squads of five with elaborate Formations, well-equipped Spiritual Artifacts, and disciplined coordination akin to Taoist Soldiers, were more than a match even for powerful monster beasts, let alone other cultivators.

Chapter 1297: Tai'a (2)

If it were truly intended to target cultivators, the situation would be simply unimaginable.

Therefore, it's best to avoid it in advance, lest conflicts arise between the sect disciples, fostering enmity and leading to an uncontrollable scene.

What's more, Ouyang Feng himself is on good terms with the disciples of Taixu Gate from the same cohort.

Considering family ties and principles, he also does not wish for the junior brothers and sisters beneath him to become hostile with Taixu Gate.

"Alright."

The other disciples of Tai'a Sect responded solemnly.

Ouyang Feng swept his gaze around, looked at the Little Wood beside him, and spoke:

"These mountaintops are all occupied by Taixu Gate. I'll take you to a more remote place and personally hunt a few monster beasts for you to observe..."

He patted Little Wood's shoulder, "You'll have to rely on yourself in the future."

"Mm!" Little Wood nodded gravely.

A trace of warmth surfaced on Ouyang Feng's face, but deeper in his eyes, there was worry.

Subsequently, the group from Tai'a Sect crossed several mountain peaks, left the territory of Taixu Gate, and arrived at the edge of a forested area. Together, they killed two monster beasts.

Ouyang Feng remained silent.

Meanwhile, Ouyang Qian explained the precautions of monster hunting to Little Wood, one by one.

Little Wood listened attentively.

"Now that you've just entered the mountains, your experience is shallow and your techniques are unfamiliar. Remember not to be too greedy, rushing to kill strong monster beasts like tigers, leopards, and Bear Pi right away."

"Start by hunting weaker monster beasts..."

"Monster beasts are cunning; you must be extremely vigilant. Until the monster beast has completely ceased breathing, you cannot relax, or great calamity may follow."

"Some monster beasts have thick skin and bleed profusely, while others possess strange and treacherous demonic powers. They may attack in close quarters or unleash water, fire, or toxic gases from afar—you should be mentally prepared beforehand."

"Never confront a monster beast alone."

"At least gather a group of five before..."

While Ouyang Qian was patiently explaining to Little Wood, she suddenly stopped mid-sentence, startled, and looked up. They saw a streak of golden light flash in the sky, followed by an eruption of sword qi radiating outward.

A ferocious eagle was shredded by the sword qi, bursting into a cloud of blood mist and plummeting downward with a resounding thud.

Ouyang Feng's pupils contracted slightly.

The expressions of the others changed as well.

"Sword Control!"

Ouyang Qian's beautiful eyes widened slightly in astonishment as she muttered:

"Such rapid Sword Control!"

"The distance... over a hundred yards. Foundation Establishment Peak? Or Golden Core?"

"The sword qi hasn't crystallized—it doesn't look like Golden Core..."

"This is the Outer Mountain of Refining Demon Mountain. Who is controlling the sword here?"

The group's expressions turned heavy.

Little Wood recalled the celestial speed and sharpness of the sword control he had just witnessed, the radiant sword light, and couldn't help but gaze longingly.

"That Sword Control is incredibly formidable... but I wonder why the Spirit Sword's quality seems a bit lacking..."

He silently mused to himself.

Among Tai'a Sect, the long-faced senior brother surnamed Ma narrowed his gaze slightly and said to Ouyang Feng: "The golden sword light mixed with the aura of goldstone—it seems to be the sword technique of Sever Gold Sect..."

"This person might be an expert Sword Cultivator from Sever Gold Sect."

Senior Brother Ma paused momentarily and added, "Brother Feng, why don't we try to make their acquaintance?"

Ouyang Feng's gaze darkened slightly.

The others froze for a moment as well, "Sever Gold Sect?"

"Why make their acquaintance?"

"Sever Gold Sect's temperament is narrow-minded, and its reputation is poor. If this truly is someone from Sever Gold Sect, no matter how remarkable their swordsmanship, they likely aren't a virtuous character. Our differing principles mean there's no need to forge connections."

Senior Brother Ma shook his head, "How can you be so hasty in judgment? A sect is a sect, and an individual is an individual—they are not the same."

"Moreover, in recent years, our Tai'a Sect has forged ahead steadily, now ranking foremost among the Eight Great Gates."

"Sever Gold Sect has likewise made great strides. Though it ranks among the Twelve Streams, it's actually not inferior to the Eight Great Gates."

"If our Tai'a Sect wishes to go further, we must forge broader alliances—it would be foolish to reject other sects out of mere prejudice."

"Senior Brother Ma's argument does make some sense," Ouyang Qian pondered briefly before looking toward Ouyang Feng. "Big Brother Feng, what do you think?"

Ouyang Feng silently gave Senior Brother Ma a glance, his expression somewhat obscure, pondering something unfathomable. Finally, he nodded and said:

"Let's take a look."

He, too, wanted to know when Sever Gold Sect produced a genius in sword control capable of slaying an eagle demon from afar.

Such a figure, if not a Taoist friend, would inevitably be a great rival in the future.

The group began moving along the mountain path toward the direction where the eagle demon had fallen, but as they approached, they all froze in place.

Even Senior Brother Ma's expression turned stiff.

At the spot where the eagle fell, there was no master Sword Cultivator from Sever Gold Sect.

There was only a little cultivator skinning the eagle.

His pale hands gripped a small knife, delicately removing feathers one by one and slicing through the flesh and skin.

As Ouyang Feng and his companions approached, the boy looked up and revealed a youthful face with features as intricately detailed as a painting, albeit carrying a hint of heroic spirit. He greeted them with a cheerful smile:

"Senior Brother Feng, long time no see!"

The group from Tai'a Sect was stunned, collectively turning their gaze toward Ouyang Feng.

Ouyang Feng also froze for a moment, but when he recognized the small young cultivator's face, he exclaimed in shock: "Mo Hua?"

"Yes." Mo Hua replied with a smile and a nod.

Ouyang Feng's gaze shifted away from Mo Hua, looking down at the bloodied remains of the ferocious eagle demon that had been gutted, then back up at Mo Hua, his tone tinged with surprise:

"This eagle..."

"I found it!"

Mo Hua lied effortlessly.

Not that he intended to deceive, but saying he had learned sword control and used a flying sword to slay the eagle demon would only invite disbelief.

Besides, it's better to stay low-key when possible—explaining everything would be troublesome.

The group from Tai'a Sect bore complex expressions.

Wandering the mountains only to stumble upon an eagle monster conveniently slain by someone, just lying there for you to take...?

What kind of luck would that be?

But then... if he hadn't found it, could it possibly be that he killed it?

That seemed even less likely.

Foundation Establishment Middle Stage—what sword could he control? Besides, there was no sword qi emanating from him. At a glance, it was clear he wasn't a Sword Cultivator.

Chapter 1298: Tai'a (3)

Ouyang Feng looked around and asked, "Are there any other cultivators nearby?"

Mo Hua shook his head, "I wouldn't know."

Ouyang Feng released his Divine Sense to scan the surroundings but indeed found no traces of others.

He glanced at Mo Hua again, his brows twitching as he asked, "You... didn't come to the mountain alone, did you?"

If it were someone else, he wouldn't have thought so.

But Mo Hua...

He had worked alongside Mo Hua on rewards before and knew this Junior Brother, although he seemed naive, was bold, meticulous, resourceful, and unyielding in his ambitions.

A lone trip into Refining Demon Mountain was not beyond him.

Indeed, Mo Hua had entered the mountain alone.

He had come to practice Sword Control by himself.

One sword, one eagle, a clean profit of 800 Merit Points.

Such a venture wasn't suited for teamwork, nor was there any need for it.

But strictly speaking, he wasn't entirely alone in the mountain.

The vast wilderness was filled with his "Junior Brothers," scattered across nearby mountain ridges, enabling him to navigate the terrain with ease.

"Not exactly," Mo Hua gestured toward a nearby mountain ridge and said, "I have plenty of little brothers."

Ouyang Feng and the others were taken aback, unsure of what this Junior Brother meant...

"Plenty of little brothers"? What did that even mean?

However, since Ouyang Qian and the others were unfamiliar with Mo Hua, they didn't feel it appropriate to inquire deeper.

Ouyang Feng, being more acquainted with Mo Hua, didn't delve further either, as they were among other Tai'a Sect disciples.

Meanwhile, Mo Hua was already adeptly skinning and cleaning the eagle, storing its materials into his Storage Bag.

Although he claimed the eagle was something he stumbled upon,

Even if it was scavenged, it was still his!

And since it was his, it should be tucked away quickly to avoid unnecessary trouble.

Seeing Mo Hua's sharp, self-assured demeanor, never one to suffer losses, Ouyang Feng couldn't help but laugh and shake his head, a faint warmth flickering at the corners of his mouth.

He glanced over at the timid Little Wood by his side, inwardly sighing.

If Mu'er had just half... no, even a fifth of Mo Hua's cleverness...

He wouldn't be so prone to suffering losses in the future.

"It's getting late. We should take our leave so as not to disturb you," Ouyang Feng said, then glanced at Mo Hua and reminded him, "Be careful in the mountain."

"Mm, mm." Mo Hua nodded, "Don't worry, Senior Brother Feng."

Ouyang Feng didn't say any more, heading toward another mountain trail. Yet, he hadn't walked far when he suddenly stopped in his tracks.

Scenes of Refining Demon Mountain flashed through his mind.



The disciples of Taixu Gate had entered the mountain ahead to hunt monsters...

Traps, armor, spiritual artifacts... all embedded with formations.

Standardized hunting practices.

Mo Hua had just remarked, "I have plenty of little brothers..."

Ouyang Feng's heart clenched, his expression tinged with disbelief.

"Could it be..."

Unable to resist, Ouyang Feng turned his head to look at Mo Hua again.

Mo Hua had already finished cleaning the eagle. His lean frame, pale face, and hands stained with monster blood carried an air of detached calm.

Looking at the ferocious dead eagle before him, it was as though he were merely gazing upon a chicken he had just slaughtered...

Ouyang Feng's pupils contracted as he promptly called out:

"Mo Hua."

Hearing this, Mo Hua paused, a hint of puzzlement flickering in his gaze as he turned to Ouyang Feng, who, after a moment of thought, pulled a slightly dark-skinned, thin Tai'a Sect disciple closer and spoke gently:

"This is Ouyang Mu, my younger brother..."

A fleeting trace of affection flashed through Ouyang Feng's eyes as he smiled and said to Mo Hua, "If you encounter him in the mountains, I must trouble you to look after him."

At these words, Ouyang Mu froze.

The other Tai'a Sect disciples were equally stunned.

Ouyang Feng, a direct lineage disciple of Tai'a Sect, with Superior-Grade Spiritual Roots, extraordinary talent, and great respect among his peers,

Usually appeared affable and gentle yet remained inwardly proud, never asking anyone for favors.

No one had expected him to turn to a junior cultivator from another sect today, requesting him to look after his younger brother.

The revelation was beyond everyone's expectations.

Mo Hua, however, thought little of it.

He shared a good relationship with Senior Brother Feng, having completed many missions with him and received much guidance in the past.

Now watching over his younger brother was a natural gesture.

"Mm, mm." Mo Hua nodded repeatedly, "Don't worry, Senior Brother Feng. If the opportunity arises, I'll be sure to look out for him."

Mo Hua glanced again at the slim, dark-skinned cultivator beside Ouyang Feng and silently committed his name to memory:

Ouyang Mu.

Chapter 1299: Little Wood

After exchanging a few pleasantries, both sides parted ways.

Mo Hua bid farewell to Ouyang Feng, then strolled through the mountains for a while. He picked out a grey-headed eagle, summoned a flying sword to slaughter it, and proceeded to dissect its materials.

As night fell, Mo Hua descended the mountain and exchanged the materials at the mountain gate for merit points.

Solo Sword Control—he killed two avian Monster Beasts and earned nearly 1,800 merit points.

Mo Hua was deeply satisfied.

However, as he descended the mountain, he glanced back at the Refining Demon Mountain and noticed that not only the mountain gate was bustling with activity, but there were also significantly more disciples hunting Monster Beasts within the mountain itself.

"Getting livelier by the day..."

Mo Hua smiled faintly, reflecting to himself.

After Mo Hua left, a figure emerged at the mountain gate after some time.

The disciple guarding the gate immediately cupped his hands and greeted:

"Elder Xun."

"Mm."

Xun Ziyou nodded in acknowledgment.

A Tai'a Sect Elder stationed at the mountain gate, who was familiar with Xun Ziyou and shared a decent relationship with him, couldn't help but remark with curiosity:

"Ziyou, how come you've been heading into the mountains so often lately? This isn't like you..."

He knew Xun Ziyou was naturally a lazy man.

Usually, he'd lounge at the mountain gate, drinking tea, enjoying the breeze, and chatting. If there weren't any pressing matters, he was reluctant to budge.

Yet unexpectedly, he had changed his habits recently, practically living in the mountains.

Xun Ziyou let out a deep sigh, feeling helpless.

There was no other choice—"Little ancestor" had gone into the mountains, so he had to follow too.

He wouldn't even mind running his legs off.

But if that little ancestor were to lose a single strand of hair, it would spell big trouble for him.

Xun Ziyou sat down wearily, poured himself a cup of hot tea, and tried to steady his nerves.

For some reason, every time Mo Hua entered the mountains, he couldn't help but feel a little on edge.

Especially that Sword Control—it made his heart tremble.

He never expected that this "little ancestor," who clearly did not engage in Sword Cultivation and wasn't a Sword Cultivator, could come up with such a technique. Strictly speaking, it was a type of "pseudo-swordsmanship," seemingly half-baked yet inexplicably and astonishingly effective.

Was the boy just daringly imaginative?

Or had his own mindset grown overly conservative with age?

What made it even more astonishing was this Sword Control Technique—it was incredibly fast, covered long distances, consumed minimal Spiritual Power, and didn't rely on Sword Qi mastery.

It was truly absurd.

A Foundation Building Middle Stage cultivator commanding a sword for 170 to 180 zhang without the slightest degradation in speed or accuracy—what kind of concept was that?!

Xun Ziyou's eyelid twitched uncontrollably.

Fortunately, this little ancestor's Spirit Sword was mediocre, and he had yet to figure out how to construct a Sword Array.

Otherwise, at the Foundation Establishment Realm, he would truly be an unstoppable force.

If this type of Sword Control were perfected, a single sword could strike in a flash—others might lose their lives before even catching sight of his shadow.

Xun Ziyou was both astonished and awed.

The ancestor deserves to be called the ancestor; truly keen-eyed and farsighted.

To perceive Mo Hua's exceptional nature from such seemingly "waste-like" mid-lower grade Spiritual Root qualifications—it's clear that experience comes with age...

Xun Ziyou shook his head and took another sip of tea.

"There are too many Taixu Sect disciples in the mountains—I should keep a watchful eye."

He casually made up an excuse.

The Tai'a Sect Elder found no reason to doubt him and nodded in agreement:

"That much is true..."

Within Refining Demon Mountain, the peaks of several Outer Mountains were now crowded with Taixu Sect disciples.

It was indeed worth keeping an eye on.

"Speaking of which," the Tai'a Sect Elder mused curiously, "the disciples from your sect this year seem peculiar—completely different from the demeanor of previous batches..."

Xun Ziyou held his cup of tea, paused mid-sip, and sighed inwardly:

That's all because of Mo Hua!

He managed to shift the entire batch's culture and energy.

Previously, Taixu Sect disciples had never been like this...

While the overall Sect atmosphere remained relatively harmonious, every disciple—especially those of prominent families—was arrogant, proud, and unwilling to submit to one another.

In Refining Demon Mountain, they would compete fiercely against each other, refusing to be outdone.

But now, every disciple seemed exceptionally disciplined, uniform in appearance, wearing similar armor, wielding identical Spiritual Artifacts, and following the same "strategy" to hunt Monster Beasts in organized groups.

Even the regular cultivation and daily affairs in the Sect ran more harmoniously, largely thanks to this "Junior Brother" maintaining order and having a steady influence.

On the contrary, other sects hadn't changed much.

Their disciples were still preoccupied with standing out, competing against other Heavenly Prides, and striving to carve out their futures.

As Xun Ziyou reflected on Mo Hua's calm and approachable demeanor, a sentence suddenly surfaced in his mind:

"Water benefits all things and does not contend; because it does not contend, none can contend with it..."

Killing as sharp as a sword, calm as gentle water.

Xun Ziyou pondered deeply, internally shaken.

The Tai'a Sect Elder noticed Xun Ziyou's prolonged silence and looked at him questioningly.

Detecting this gaze, Xun Ziyou ambiguously replied: "That, I wouldn't know either..."

"However, it's worth noting that formations and Spiritual Artifacts are meant to serve their purpose. To maximize their use and potential is a form of skill in itself."

The Tai'a Sect Elder deliberated for a moment before nodding slightly:

"What you say does make sense."

Xun Ziyou suddenly remembered something and said to the Tai'a Sect Elder:

"Some of your Tai'a Sect disciples have been growing closer to Sever Gold Sect in recent times, it seems?"

The Tai'a Sect Elder silently glanced at Xun Ziyou, his gaze carrying subtle implications.

Xun Ziyou froze momentarily and frowned: "What are you planning?"

The Tai'a Sect Elder's expression remained unreadable.

Xun Ziyou understood instantly.

The two stood up and entered the inner chamber, activating the Sound Isolation Formation.

The Tai'a Sect Elder surveyed his surroundings, then lowered his voice:

"Ziyou, you and I have been close for years. I won't hide it from you, but these words—you should only hear them in this room. Do not let them spread elsewhere."

Chapter 1300: Little Wood

Xun Ziyou's gaze darkened slightly, and he nodded.

The Elder of Tai'a Sect spoke in a solemn tone: "Our Tai'a Sect wishes to advance further!"

Xun Ziyou's gaze stiffened slightly, and he nodded lightly, "You want to join the Four Great Sects?"

The Elder of Tai'a Sect looked as if it were only natural.

Xun Ziyou frowned, "Impossible, the Four Great Sects and Eight Great Gates are fixed, and cannot easily be altered due to the outcomes of one or two debates."

The Elder of Tai'a Sect smiled faintly, "It's going to change."

Xun Ziyou's gaze became sharp.

He had heard this news before, but had not taken it seriously.

Sect reform is a significant matter, and if truly implemented, the resistance would be immense.

It wasn't the first time over the past hundreds of years that such suggestions have been made, but they mostly ended as thunder without rain, eventually forgotten.

"Really?"

"Before the dust settles, nothing can be certain. But supposedly, the probability is high."

The Elder of Tai'a Sect continued, "If sect reform truly takes place, breaking the current structure of the Four Great Sects and Eight Great Gates, then our Tai'a Sect's opportunity will arise!"



"This opportunity is a once-in-a-lifetime chance!"

"As you said, the Four Great Sects and Eight Great Gates are fixed and won't change due to momentary fluctuations in sect strength."

"Even if our Tai'a Sect were genuinely stronger than the Four Great Sects, we wouldn't easily ascend to their rank."

"But as long as sect reform occurs, anything is possible!"

Xun Ziyou considered briefly and then said in a somber tone: "So, you plan to collaborate with Sever Gold Sect?"

"It's not 'collaboration,'" the Elder of Tai'a Sect seemed mildly annoyed, "such a distasteful way to put it... It's mutual support, aiding one another."

"Our Tai'a Sect wishes to advance further, moving from the Eight Great Gates to the Four Great Sects."

"Sever Gold Sect, naturally, also desires progress, moving from the Twelve Streams to the Eight Great Gates."

"Although, officially, the Eight Great Gates and Twelve Streams are not ranked strictly, the sect hierarchy and public reputation differ significantly."

Xun Ziyou's expression turned somewhat grim, and he said helplessly:

"If some advance, others will inevitably regress..."

"If Sever Gold Sect progresses and joins the Eight Great Gates, won't our Taixu Gate regress, dropping into the Twelve Streams?"

The Elder of Tai'a Sect sighed, "That depends on Taixu Gate itself."

"When it comes to sect interests, no one else can be relied upon—it all depends on yourselves."

"Let me be candid: if your Taixu Gate truly excels during this opportunity, ascending directly to the Four Great Sects is possible."

"If you fail to measure up and fall from the Eight Great Gates, who can you blame?"

Xun Ziyou sighed softly.

The Qian State Dao Debate and the competition among Heavenly Pride candidates—how easily can one 'excel' in such circumstances...

The Elder of Tai'a Sect glanced at Xun Ziyou, took a sip of tea, and spoke slowly:

"Our Tai'a Sect Leader has already spoken with the Chief Elder of Sever Gold Sect. I don't know the specifics, but it's presumably about sect reform or mutual support."

"Sever Gold Sect has an extensive network."

"Certain strengths, which are beyond Tai'a, Chongxu, and Taixu—the three aligned sects."

"The sects intend to nurture ties, and naturally, there's more interaction between the disciples below."

He sighed again, "Given our long-standing rapport, I won't hide this from you—I'm merely giving you a heads-up. It's best for Taixu Gate to stay vigilant."

"The Dao Debate Congress is the truly critical matter."

"Our three sects share a lineage and origins; we were the same alliance generations ago. I sincerely hope that when Tai'a Sect ascends to the Four Great Sects, Chongxu Gate progresses further, your Taixu Gate doesn't end up falling from the Eight Great Gates."

The Elder of Tai'a Sect looked at Xun Ziyou with a complex expression.

Xun Ziyou's demeanor was grim as he took a long, deep breath and said:

"Understood..."

...

The issue of reform stirred hidden currents among the higher levels of various sects.

Yet Mo Hua remained completely unaware, nor did anyone bother mentioning it to a little disciple like him.

He still cultivated in silence, attending daily lessons.

At the same time, he painted formations relentlessly day and night, aiming to break through his realm to achieve Divine Sense at the Eighteen Patterns level and subsequently learn Eighteen-Pattern formations.

But the restrictions of the Heavenly Dao Laws persisted.

His Divine Sense could not grow.

Whenever he had spare time, Mo Hua would also study the Heavenly Dao Law within his Sea of Consciousness, attempting to grasp its mystery.

But after countless hours of meditation and pondering, he still gained nothing.

After all, matters at the level of "laws" were far beyond the comprehension of a little cultivator in the Foundation Establishment Realm like him.

Only now did Mo Hua realize he had been somewhat arrogant before.

He could only take a step back.

Rather than seeking to understand the mysteries of the law, he simply hoped it would 'eat its fill' and leave him alone, so it wouldn't obstruct his breakthrough in Divine Sense.

As Mo Hua refined his Divine Sense further, the law gradually loosened its grip as well.

But when it would finally 'be fed' and lift its restrictions remained unknown...

...

During the free time period, Mo Hua practiced swordsmanship, hunted hawks, and earned merit points as usual.

With one swift strike, golden light flashed, and the hawk plummeted.

Mo Hua rushed over with his blade, drained its blood, plucked its feathers, skinned it, removed its bones, and gathered various materials.

By noon, he felt a bit weary. He drank some fruit wine and ate some spiritual meat before climbing atop a tall tree to rest with his eyes closed.

But he hadn't rested long before he sensed faint movement.

Mo Hua opened his eyes and peered down through the dense leaves, spotting a group of five battling a monster beast.

These five were dressed in the Taoist robes of Tai'a Sect.

The other four were unfamiliar to Mo Hua.

But one of them was a "familiar face"—the younger brother Senior Brother Feng had entrusted him to watch over, Ouyang Mu.

Unlike the sword-browed, star-eyed, tall and heroic Senior Brother Feng,

This younger brother appeared slim, with bronzed skin, looking very much like a "Little Wood."