

# THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

## Chapter 15: Payment of Sect Dues

In the sect, the outer disciples are recruited to impart knowledge and skills for cultivation. Upon joining, disciples are required to pay a fee called "sect dues."

Different grades of sects demand varying amounts of dues, with higher-grade sects charging more.

Tongxian Sect, being a first-tier sect within the cultivation world, is the largest in Tongxian City, despite being the only first-tier sect there. The annual dues here are a hundred spirit stones, not including other miscellaneous fees.

A hundred spirit stones are not overly expensive but are by no means cheap—it's roughly what an average Qi-cultivating rogue cultivator might save up in a year, assuming no injuries or other major expenditures.

Should there be illness or disasters, or expenses that require a significant number of spirit stones, it's possible to end up with nothing for the year.

The New Year is a happy time, but once it's over, the heavy burden of cultivation life seems to press down again.

Mo Shan guiltily placed a storage bag on the table, "I borrowed some spirit stones from a few brothers, plus some I had saved up, totaling over eighty..."

Liu Ruhua comforted, "I'll also talk to the manager at the Spirit Meal Tower tomorrow to get some spirit stones in advance..."

Just as Mo Shan was about to reply, he noticed Mo Hua eavesdropping at the door.

"Hua'er!"

Caught, Mo Hua sheepishly smiled and ran over to sit by his mother.

Liu Ruhua affectionately pinched Mo Hua's ear, scolding, "So young, and already eavesdropping!"

"Dad, Mom, are we short on spirit stones?"

Mo Shan said, "We are a bit short, but your Uncle Ji said yesterday he'd lend me some, and he made me promise to tell you to study well at the sect."

"Uncle Ji?"

"Indeed, your Uncle Ji praises your intelligence all the time," Liu Ruhua said, stroking Mo Hua's head.

"But Uncle Ji's family isn't exactly flush with spirit stones either," Mo Hua noted.

Mo Shan sighed lightly, "I'll pay him back sooner after the New Year. Nowadays, who has extra spirit stones?"

"I do!" Mo Hua chuckled.

Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua were taken aback.

Mo Hua trotted back into the house and then out again, clutching a storage bag.

Opening the bag, fifty spirit stones glinted and sparkled, a dazzling sight. However, the emotional scene of his parents praising his thoughtfulness didn't happen.

Mo Shan's expression was grave, Liu Ruhua furrowed her brows.

"What's wrong?" Mo Hua asked nervously.

"Where did these spirit stones come from?" Mo Shan asked evenly.

"No one gave them to me. I earned them myself!"

Mo Shan paused, "You... earned them?"

Liu Ruhua's expression softened, pulling Mo Hua into her arms, "Tell Mom how you earned them."

"I drew array patterns for Destiny's Shop. They're simple ones, but I earn a spirit stone for each."

Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua exchanged looks, realizing their son had been mostly indoors, coming and going briefly—earning spirit stones by drawing arrays.

Looking again at the bag's contents, one stone per array, nearly fifty in total...

Liu Ruhua hugged Mo Hua tighter.

Mo Shan struggled for words, finally just reaching out to gently stroke Mo Hua's head.

"These spirit stones are your hard-earned money. Keep them for cultivation or to buy something nice. I'll figure out something for the sect dues."

Mo Hua, knowing his father's reluctance to use the stones, quickly added, "Then keep them for me, Mom and Dad. I'm just a kid; I can't use so many, and it's easy for others to steal or rob me."

Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua found no words to refuse.

"Alright, we'll keep them for you."

"Okay!" Mo Hua nodded firmly.

"Alright, it's getting late, you have school tomorrow, go to bed early."

"Okay, good night, Mom and Dad!"

As Mo Hua got up to return to his room, he turned back, "Mom and Dad, use them if you need to, don't save them for me."

Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua couldn't help but laugh and cry at the same time.

Watching Mo Hua return to his room and close the door, Mo Shan sighed and smiled bitterly, "As a father, I'm not even close to how sensible my child is."

Liu Ruhua comforted, "What are you saying? It's good that Hua'er understands and supports us. We should be happy he can earn spirit stones on his own. But..."

Liu Ruhua looked down at the spirit

stones, then up at her husband with concern, "He's so young, can he really draw arrays and earn so many? I'm afraid someone might take advantage of his age..."

"I'll check it out tomorrow."

Mo Shan said, his gaze sharpening.

The next day, Mo Hua got up on time, practiced his cultivation, and went with Liu Ruhua to pay the sect dues and register for school at the outer gate of Tongxian Sect.

Mo Shan had left early as Liu Ruhua mentioned, to prepare for a hunt with several demon hunters deep in the mountains.

After handling the dues and registration at the outer gate, Liu Ruhua couldn't help but take a few more glances at Mo Hua.

Once inside the sect for cultivation, except during holidays, it was rare to see their son.

Liu Ruhua gave a few more instructions on good cultivation practices, relationships, and looking after oneself, before leaving reluctantly.

Mo Hua waved from the gate until Liu Ruhua's figure vanished at the turn of the road, then turned around.

Instead of entering the sect, he first headed to Destiny's Shop on North Street to pick up materials for twenty Blazing Fire Arrays, agreeing to deliver them within half a month.

The sect had a monthly break, and Mo Hua planned to use these to meet and trade with the manager.

The materials for twenty arrays, and the manager, considering past pleasant dealings with Mo Hua's... elder brother, and the increasing quality of delivered arrays, only asked for ten spirit stones as a deposit.

After settling matters, Mo Hua left Destiny's Shop satisfied.

Unbeknownst to him, a burly man silently watched him leave.

After Mo Hua was gone, the man entered the large doors of Destiny's Shop.

The bell rang as the manager looked up to see a plainly dressed but striking man with piercing eyes, giving off an imposing air.

The manager could tell at a glance that the man was a demon hunter, a seasoned one who had seen real combat. His attitude wasn't great, looking at the manager as if he were a beast about to be slaughtered.

Although the manager believed his own cultivation wasn't inferior, a real fight would be a different story, as demon hunters lived on the edge, constantly battling demons.

Weighing his options, the manager straightened up and cautiously asked, "Esteemed Daoist, what array are you interested in?"

The burly man was Mo Shan. He spread out a crumpled piece of paper with an array sketch, some parts incorrectly copied and smudged.

"What array is this?"

"Blazing Fire Array."

"Do you accept these arrays?"

The man's tone made the manager uncomfortable. Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't bother, but today he felt the need to be courteous and thorough with a customer.

"Of course. It's a commonly used array, essential for ordinary cultivator households, so it's in high demand."

Mo Shan asked, "The child who just left, does he draw arrays for you?"

The manager replied, "Such matters cannot be disclosed. Destiny's Shop upholds the privacy of our clients, it's our principle."

Mo Shan's gaze sharpened, prompting the manager to think quickly. While adhering to principles is important, flexibility is necessary in the cultivation world.

"Not him, but his elder brother."

Mo Shan frowned, "Elder brother?"

"Yes, what can such a young child draw? He's just running errands for his brother, who draws the arrays."

"Did he tell you that himself?"

"Of course," the manager answered, "otherwise, why would we do business with a child?"

After speaking, the manager watched Mo Shan warily:

"As for the child's full name and residence, I can't disclose that."

Mo Shan scoffed. As a father, I know better than you. But knowing Mo Hua wasn't being exploited, Mo Shan's demeanor softened, and he bowed slightly, "I apologize for the disturbance, I'll take my leave."

The manager breathed a sigh of relief, his demeanor slightly arrogant as he nodded.

As Mo Shan turned and left, only when his figure disappeared did the manager finally exhale deeply, muttering discontentedly, "Didn't even buy anything..."